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Updated FAQs, April 23

Published: April 23, 2020

UMS launches Maine Welcome degree completion program, April 23

Published: April 23, 2020

UMS forms Fall 2020 Safe Return Planning Committee

Published: April 21, 2020

UMaine System Planning to Welcome Students to Campus For Fall of 2020

Published: April 21, 2020

UMS announcement on CARES Act distribution and fee adjustment policies, April 14

Published: April 14, 2020

UMaine research and Graduate School

Note: These UMaine/UMM FAQs are subject to change at any time. Please check this site regularly for the latest information as it becomes available. The most recent additions and changes are at the top of this page. Last modified April 13, 2020.

The Office of the Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School, in collaboration with other offices at the University of Maine, continues to monitor COVID-19 developments that may impact research and graduate studies. We are available to assist the university community with information and support. As needed, we also are available to provide assistance to University of Maine System campuses for COVID-19-related questions pertaining to sponsored research activity.

On-Campus Research and Fieldwork

What are the guidelines for research lab operations?

Research lab guidelines are available on the Office of Research Compliance website.

What should I do about disposal of hazardous waste?

Visit the UMS Safety and Environmental Services Portal for more information.

What research is allowed on-campus and in the field?

In response to Governor Mills' Stay Healthy at Home Mandate, on-campus and fieldwork research and scholarly activity is now limited to essential activities. While "essential research and scholarly activity" is defined below, we would like to clarify that all research/scholarship conducted away from university facilities and field sites may continue without approval, including "essential research and scholarly activity". We are requesting census information about research and scholarly activity being conducted away from university facilities and field sites via the same form with a subset of information and no approval needed. We wish to encourage researchers and scholars working in areas not considered "essential" to continue their work under the new conditions we all now face. Also, please note, students would report through their advisors.

What are essential research and scholarly activities?

- Research and scholarly activity that is critical to the health of the public
- Research and scholarly activity of national or state importance
- Research and scholarly activity that involves the protection of valuable resources such as cell lines, animal lines, instrumentation requiring regular attention, etc. which cannot be shut down and must be kept going at a basal level
- Research and scholarly activities that directly support current Business and Operations designated as critical infrastructure in the Governor's mandate; general university research and scholarly activities in those designated areas would not typically qualify as "essential".

How do I get approval to conduct my essential research and scholarly activity?

Effective April 9, essential research and scholarly activity which involves activity on the University of Maine's Orono or Machias campuses, its other facilities in the state, and/or in the field, is transitioning from a notification to an approval process. The request form requires a justification for why the activity cannot be delayed, why it is essential research as defined above, information regarding the associated research personnel (including students) and the steps that will be taken to ensure the safety of participants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

New requests will be forwarded to the appropriate college dean or center director who will review the activity to both determine essentiality and ensure that established unit-specific safety protocols are followed. If approved by the college/center, the OVPDGS will review the request and make a final determination which will be communicated to the individual with a copy to the applicable college/center.

University of Maine Research Administration

What is the impact on proposal deadlines and award actions/subawards?

Our federal sponsors are monitoring the situation closely and may extend application deadlines if conditions associated with COVID-19 worsen. If federal agencies officially close, submitted proposals will most likely remain in a queue and awards may be delayed, pending resumption of normal operations, as has been the case during federal budget-related shutdowns. Find research-related updates online at this link.

How should I notify my grantor of programmatic impacts and request project extensions?

All communications with external sponsors regarding project impacts from COVID-19 must be coordinated with the Office of Research Administration. Please provide your ORA central office representative with any proposed communication for review. Contact information: ora@maine.edu; 581.1484

Should I notify my sponsor if certain project activities of a funded research project cannot be completed or have to be suspended as a result of COVID-19?

Yes. Please coordinate any communication to a sponsor with ORA. Examples of impact include: canceling a funded conference, inability to conduct fieldwork because of travel restrictions, inability to meet the scheduled deliverables or aims/goals/SOW, absence of PI or key person for more than 90 days. Contact information: ora@maine.edu; 581.1484

Are travel cancellation costs due to COVID-19 allowable as direct charges to sponsored projects?

Find research-related updates online at this link. Make sure to document these unanticipated costs for potential recovery.

Will the Office of Research Administration's proposal submission timeline be waived for proposals related to the study of COVID-19?

Given the urgency of federal agencies and other sponsors to immediately begin studies related to COVID-19 and its long term effects, the university will prioritize all such proposal opportunities. Please begin by submitting your Notice of Intent in PARS. Upon receipt, ORA will coordinate with the Office of Research Development and other offices to mobilize all available resources to assist with the submission.

Have funding agencies released specific guidance?

Find an updated list of funding agency guidance and other research-related updates online at this link.

Is UMaine's Office of Research Administration available to assist other UMS campuses with COVID-19-related questions pertaining to sponsored activity?

As needed, UMaine's Office of Research Administration is available to provide assistance to UMS campuses, faculty and staff for COVID-19-related questions pertaining to sponsored activity. Such inquiries can be directed to ora@maine.edu; 207.581.1484.

University of Maine Research Compliance

What should I do to plan for the continuation of my research with respect to research compliance?

Research compliance guidelines are available on the Office of Research Compliance website.

Off-Campus Research

What is considered off-campus research?

Field work, research at cooperating and affiliated institutions, internships and practicum.

What policies and procedures apply to off-campus research?

All policies and procedures that apply to on-campus research also apply to off campus. Additional policies and procedures may be required by off-site entities.

Undergraduate Research

Will undergraduate researchers be permitted on campus to work in research labs?

Yes. Undergraduate researchers must coordinate with their research mentor. On-campus students must seek an exemption from to remain living in a residence hall. A statement from their research mentor should be submitted with the exemption request. Conducting the work remotely must be given first priority. Except regarding federal work study students, who are subject to federal work study rules, all rules that apply to staff working on-campus, also apply to students working on campus.

Will summer research programs proceed as planned?

At this time no changes have been made, but this may change.

Office of Research Development

Will Research Development support continue during COVID-19?

During the UMaine and UMM COVID-19 response, the Office of Research Development is available to support faculty, staff, and students developing their research programs. More information is available on our site.

Graduate School FAQs

How will course grading change for graduate level courses (500 and above) as a result of the transition to remote learning?

Due to smaller class sizes and discussion-oriented mode of instruction, graduate level courses are often easily adapted to a remote learning format, and so, no change in grading will be necessary for the majority of graduate courses. However, because of the potential impact on graduate students for childcare, or from the illness of the student or family members due to COVID-19, instructors are encouraged to be flexible to the greatest degree possible in allowing late assignments and granting incomplete grades.

The following guidelines outline the pass/fail grading policy for graduate courses:

- All graduate courses that were originally listed as online/distance education courses will remain under the originally established grading option.
- Most graduate courses are small, seminar courses that are easily adaptable to a remote learning format. However, at the discretion of the instructor, and taking individual program accreditation requirements into account, courses that are not easily adaptable to a remote learning format, including experiential learning courses (e.g. laboratories, practica, clinical experiences, internships) may be converted to a P/F grading option, if not already in this grading format.
- Undergraduate students may individually declare the pass/fail grading option in a graduate course unless the course was originally listed as an online course or unless the course credits were to be used in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a graduate degree (e.g. 4+1 programs).
- Undergraduate students may use the credits in a graduate course that has been changed to a pass/fail grading option in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a graduate degree.
- Graduate students may use the credits from a 400 level course with a pass/fail grading option in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a graduate degree as long as the course is approved by the program and the Graduate School to count for the degree.

Will Stodder Hall remain open for graduate students?

Students must request an exemption from the Graduate School to remain in the residence hall.

What are the plans for graduate students who use the overnight accommodations in Stodder Hall?

Given that on-campus instruction has been suspended, any future room reservations will be placed on hold and reviewed on a case by case basis. Please contact the Graduate School (207.581.3291) for more information.

Should UMaine graduate research assistants and graduate teaching assistants continue to report to work like other university employees?

Most graduate assistantship (research, teaching, and work-study) appointments will remain in effect until the appointment end date, although work conditions may be adapted as necessary. Graduate assistants should check with their supervisors regarding expectations and should also report any travel outside the state to their supervisors (see FAQ on UMaine Community Members Returning to Campus). Working remotely should be done, if possible.

How should graduate students who are planning their oral defenses to graduate in May 2020 proceed?

Any student who is planning to defend a thesis or dissertation prior to the end of the spring semester is encouraged to consult with their advisory committee about remote defenses using Zoom or another virtual meeting product. If a remote method is not possible, an exemption must be sought from the Graduate School.

What plans are in place for prospective graduate students who would like a campus tour?

All campus tours undertaken by the Graduate School have been suspended for the remainder of the spring 2020 semester. In the interim, admissions counselors are available to meet virtually via Zoom. Contact graduate@maine.edu or 207.581.3291 to set up a remote meeting.

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