

Remote research activities

Advice for students and postdoctoral fellows

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Faculté des études supérieures
et postdoctorales



UNIVERSITÉ
LAVAL

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The current context of the Covid-19 pandemic is causing a major change in research activities on the **Université** Laval campus. Université Laval is closed, physical presence on the campus is strictly limited to activities deemed absolutely essential, and almost all research laboratories and equipment are no longer accessible.

This is a new situation that requires the understanding and support of all. It is essential that students and postdoctoral fellows and their research supervisors engage in a frank and open discussion on the foreseeable impacts on research activities and thesis projects and, together, identify useful ways to mitigate these impacts.¹

My research activities, my thesis or dissertation project

- As soon as possible, contact your research supervisor;
- Do not hesitate to communicate any concerns you may have about your research activities to your research supervisor;
- Clearly state the challenges you face (e.g., being a student parent, having difficulty establishing a writing routine, etc.);
- Clearly indicate the means of remote communication that you have (or do not have) at your disposal to engage in remote supervision or remote collaboration;
- Discuss with your research supervisor the issues or delays that the current situation is causing in carrying out your research activities and discuss measures and means available to mitigate its impacts;
- Be open and flexible to advice and suggestions. It is possible that your research project/activity may not be able to be carried out fully as initially agreed;
- Clearly indicate what tools you currently have at your disposal to continue, perhaps in part, the planned or newly agreed activities;
- Be positively engaged in the discussion with your research supervisor, do not hesitate to make constructive suggestions yourself to adjust your research project, knowing they must be in accordance with the rules and guidelines of Université Laval;
- Be conciliatory. The current pandemic situation is in constant evolution and the university information and guidelines are constantly evolving. It is possible that your research supervisor does not have immediate answers to all your questions;
- Be aware that your research supervisor or program director can assist you and refer you to the appropriate support services. Do you have any concerns about your finances, study

¹ This is a constantly evolving situation and the university community is asked to consult the [Covid-19 site of Laval University](#) for the most recent guidelines.

permits, family situation, health of your loved ones or your own, etc.? Do not hesitate to share your concerns. See also the last section of this document *Final Tips*.

What are the possible adjustments? Here are a few brief suggestions (to be discussed with your research supervisor, if applicable):

- Consider whether it is possible to adjust the chronology of the different steps of your research project. For example, can you already be working on: proposing a table of contents, starting or completing a relevant bibliographical review, starting or completing data analysis, working on a research protocol, proposing an experimental design, starting or completing a chapter of the dissertation or thesis or writing a scientific article, etc.?
- Is it possible to conduct your research with a portion of the data already collected rather than with the planned set of data? Similarly, is it possible to conduct the research using an existing database rather than the original data to be collected?
- If so, and in consultation with your research supervisor, is it possible to review/adjust some of the objectives of the research project to accommodate modifications?
- For research projects involving human subjects, is it possible to replace face-to-face meetings with a questionnaire, a survey or virtual meetings? If this is the case, and if modifications are made to the project, make sure to inform the Research Ethics Committee of Université Laval (Comité d'éthique de la recherche de l'Université Laval, CERUL) of these adjustments and obtain the required authorizations.
- Is it possible to postpone your internship or research stay?

Communications and virtual meetings - Good practices

Supervision and remote communication present several challenges in terms of efficiency, relevance and clarity. In these turbulent times, as everyone learns to adapt to new realities and new ways of doing things, it becomes more important than ever to use patience, respect and flexibility.

- In the current situation, it is possible that you have less availability due to other obligations (parental issues, family, etc.). Be transparent. Give clear indications as to your availability and discuss it with your research supervisor;
- Similarly, be respectful of the availability of your research supervisor and avoid interacting with him/her outside of normal working hours and preferably, agree on a convenient moment for virtual exchanges;
- Similarly, try to agree on regular and frequent discussions/communications with your research supervisor;
- Remote communication is often challenging and, in this regard, is not always a perfect substitute for face-to-face meetings. Pay particular attention to the clarity of your exchanges;

- Be aware of and use basic codes of respect when communicating via email: "netiquette"²;
- Be aware that the actual pandemic situation is evolving and that the expectations you are given by your director/supervisor may still change over time;
- Be accommodating to the speed of feedback from your research supervisor. Some people may need some time to adjust to the new situation and new ways of doing things;
- Don't remain isolated. Keep in touch with your fellow students or research group and talk to them about possible adjustments to your respective projects.

Final Tips

- As much as possible, maintain good health habits; sleep well, take time to relax, and share virtual entertainment with friends and family (video games, sharing photos, music, etc.).
- Find out more and consult the institution's resources that are available to you:
 - General information: ulaval.ca/notre-universite/coronavirus-2019
 - Financial aspect: bbaf.ulaval.ca
 - Immigration aspect: etudiantsetrangers@bve.ulaval.ca
 - Graduate studies and postdoctoral fellowship aspect: fesp.ulaval.ca
 - If you are experiencing anxiety or know someone in this situation: aide.ulaval.ca/psychologie/soutien-covid-19
- Do not hesitate to check with your research supervisor, program director, and faculty. Information is also available from: fesp@fesp.ulaval.ca

² See [netiquette-guidelines-every-online-student-needs-to-know](#)