

Key principles for research in times of corona

The corona crisis has had a major effect on not only our teaching but also our research. With decisions about research from home, the health and welfare of researchers is paramount. Now the government has decided to continue the measures to contain the further spread of the virus over the coming weeks, it is important to see whether our research can continue.

The government measures and decisions will continue to inform our decisions about whether research is possible.

1. Health is paramount

The first principle that guides decisions on whether research can be conducted from home is the health and welfare of the researcher. Due consideration should be taken of the personal circumstances of the researcher and their loved ones. We will seek tailor-made solutions wherever possible.

2. Not everything is feasible

We trust that everyone will do what is possible and understand that in these times not everything will be feasible.

Managers must show leniency to their staff. When assessing our researchers' performance, we will take account of delays or fewer publications or grant applications, for instance.

We advise researchers to make a note in their CV if they have had to cancel lectures or presentations or have been unable to visit conferences.

We will make an inventory within all the faculties and within the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) of problems that our researchers are facing and which arrangements can be made throughout the University (and possibly nationwide) to solve these. Here too, tailor-made solutions and leniency are the guiding principles.

3. Research delays

Research may encounter serious delays. This could be because it cannot be conducted at home (practicals, empirical research), because providing remote teaching takes too much time or because of personal circumstances, often the combination of caring duties and working from home. This may make it difficult to complete projects within the duration of the contract. Wherever possible, we will seek tailor-made solutions here. Researchers and their managers will work together to reach realistic agreements that are based on the specific circumstances of the researcher.

Researchers will consider, in consultation with their research group, supervisor and manager, how to their research can continue as much as possible.

Staff members will try to contact each other online and look at where collaboration is possible and meaningful, and how they can help each other out.

4. Always seek practical solutions

For each research project or group, we will consider which possible organisational or other measures will enable the research to continue. This could mean changing the research design, postponing specific research actions, granting temporary access to crucial systems or increased access to data files or collections, etc.

Researchers who have to complete their project will receive special attention. If necessary, the relevant funders will be asked for an extension. If the research can be adapted within existing national agreements, this discussion will take place within the institutes.

5. Support with remote research

The research support departments will proactively look for possibilities to help researchers with remote research.

It goes without saying that a close eye will be kept on data protection, including personal data, and that care will be taken to maintain academic integrity.

6. Access to buildings and infrastructure

For physical access to buildings, the guidelines of the Netherlands National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) prevail. Exceptions are possible in a number of cases: for critical processes and vital services such as animal care, corona-related research, long-term lab research that cannot be discontinued without major loss of data and the operation of crucial research equipment.

Research that will help fight coronavirus will be facilitated wherever possible, with due observance of the safety regulations.

The Dean will decide which research an exception applies to.

No new experiments may be started.

In all cases, appropriate safety measures will be taken, such as access control, attendance registration and limiting the number of people per room.

We will ensure we are well prepared for when the RIVM guidelines are relaxed. We will develop scenarios describing the conditions under which regular activities can recommence to ensure that no time is lost.

7. PhD research

PhD supervisors will keep an eye on the possible consequences of the crisis for PhD candidates. They will be in regular contact with their PhD candidates about problems conducting research, potential delays to their PhD and the candidate's personal circumstances.

The practical side of online PhD defences can be found in the [Leiden University Protocol for Online PhD Defences 2020](#) (PDF).

8. Research grants

Many organisations have extended their application deadlines for research grants. Managers will make new and realistic agreements with researchers about possible grant applications. Further rules and regulations on research will be issued by the Dutch Research Council (NWO), European Research Council (ERC), Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and other funders in the coming weeks. Leiden University is intensively involved in the development of these rules and regulations.

9. International collaboration

For international research new agreements will be made with international partners about the online continuation of research to ensure that, wherever possible, this does not come to a standstill. Even if research cannot continue, it is very important to stay in touch with our partners and networks.

10. Conferences and events

In line with the new government measures, no events may be held or organised at the University until 1 June. All planned events have been cancelled. However, international contacts are of great importance in the academic world and this requires some investigation of new online concepts for conferences.

11. Visibility of special crisis expertise

We encourage people who possess expertise that is particularly relevant at this time of crisis to make that expertise visible in consultation with their communication department.

12. Other questions

Decision items and questions about the research can be submitted via the faculty crisis teams to the Research project group set up by the Central Crisis Team. The Central Crisis Team will try to reach a decision on these.

A regularly updated overview of the current research situation will be available on a central website.