
ADDRESSING THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON RESEARCH AND TRAINING PRODUCTIVITY IN RESEARCH FUNDING APPLICATIONS

Research Services Office
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The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant interruptions to research and training activities. Both external and internal funding bodies recognize that the pandemic may have negatively affected applicants' research and training productivity, and peer reviewers are asked to take these impacts into account when assessing applications. Applicants are encouraged to address and contextualize these interruptions or slowdowns in their research funding applications.

This document is adapted in part from the [guidelines for the NSERC Research Community](#).

General information:

- You may indicate periods when you were unable to work.
- You may describe slowdowns and delays caused by interruptions in access to research sites, spaces, or materials.
- You may describe slowdowns and delays caused by illness/mental health, caregiving responsibilities, living circumstances, working environment or other pandemic-related circumstances that have reduced the research and training capacity of you or your highly qualified personnel (HQP).
- Include the duration of general slowdowns, interruptions or formal leaves, with start and end dates.
- Where applicable, indicate the time you were taken away from research/training (e.g., two days per week) or the percentage reduction in your usual research/training activities (e.g., "My research and training capacity was reduced by 50 percent") over the relevant period.
- You are not required to disclose any personal information related to illness, mental health or family circumstances.

EXAMPLES OF IMPACTS:

The section below describes some of the types of COVID-related impacts you may wish to describe in your application with some text examples included. In many cases, researchers will be affected by a combination of two or more of these circumstances and impacts.

Please note that this is **not an exhaustive list** of possible impacts and interruptions.

Interruptions/slowdowns related to modified working arrangements

- This may include difficulties concentrating, a noisy living situation, sub-optimal home office space, slow internet access, etc.
- Include the date range and provide the time away from work or percentage reduction in research time.

Example:

“Since March 2020 when I have been working from home, my working space and living situation have not been conducive to an efficient research environment. As a consequence, my research capacity has been reduced by 30 percent.”

Interruptions/delays in data collection or lab work

- Describe the circumstances and their impacts, as applicable; for example:
 - Closure of labs and/or operation of labs at reduced capacity
 - Inability to conduct research involving human participants
 - Lack of access to fieldwork sites
 - Lack of access to libraries and archives
 - Inability to travel for collaborative/multi-site research
- Include the date ranges for these interruptions or slowdowns.

Example:

“Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, research at my lab was suspended beginning on March 16, 2020. The lab remained closed until mid-June, when it was deemed safe to reopen at reduced capacity. Since then, the lab has been operating at 50 percent capacity. These closures and necessary restrictions have significantly slowed progress on my group’s current research projects.”

Interruptions/delays in partnered or community-engaged research

- Describe the circumstances and their impacts, as applicable; for example:
 - Inability to meet in person with partners for necessary face-to-face work
 - Inability to visit partner sites for data collection, technology development, etc.
 - Inability to safely conduct research with a community partner
 - A partner organization experienced reductions in staff or resources and was not able to proceed with the partnership as planned
- Include the date ranges for these interruptions or slowdowns.

Examples:

“Our research team has established a partnership with XX company to develop a new product; this partner has committed to provide all of the necessary testing equipment at its facility. Due to COVID-19, access to this facility was severely curtailed between March 2020 and January 2021, which significantly delayed progress in achieving project milestones.”

“My current program of research is centred on community-engaged research with vulnerable populations who are especially at risk for COVID-19. This research was placed on hold between March and July 2020 while the research team and community partner developed effective and culturally appropriate means of remote engagement and research co-creation.”

Personal or family circumstances related to health and well-being

- You may indicate interruptions related to personal/family health issues (including mental health), caregiving or bereavement.
- You are not required to include personal details; you do not need to indicate the specific nature of an illness or provide documentation.

- You may simply state that you were unable to work (or your productivity was reduced) for a specified period of time due to health/medical or associated caregiving reasons.
- Provide the date range and indicate if this was a full leave or if it was a reduction in time (including the time away from work or the percentage reduction in research time, wherever possible).

Example:

“I have experienced ongoing health issues between March 2020 and February 2021, which have negatively affected my research productivity. During this period, my research and training capacity have been reduced by 30 percent.”

“A member of my immediate family experienced a serious medical issue and required substantial care. As a result, I was on leave and unable to work between April 15 and July 31, 2020.”

Increased child care, elder care, or other caregiving activities

- Provide the date range and indicate the time away from work or the percentage reduction in research time or capacity, wherever possible.

Example:

“I have a young child, and our child care provider was closed between mid-March and early September 2020. Due to increased caregiving responsibilities, my research/training capacity during this period was reduced by 50 percent, and my research productivity has been significantly affected.”

Increased administrative burdens

- Explain how the increased administrative work was related to the pandemic.
- Include the date range and provide the time away from work or percentage reduction in research time.

Example:

“I have taken on substantially increased administrative work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am the Chair of XX Committee, which has seen its usual workload significantly expanded as it undertakes tasks related to urgent matters and contingency planning. As a result, between March and December 2020, the time I have been able to devote to research and HQP training has decreased by approximately 20 percent.”

Increased time/focus on teaching

- Explain how the increased time or focus on teaching was related to the pandemic.
- Include the date range and provide the time away from research or percentage reduction in research time.

Example:

“In March 2020, the University moved to remote teaching, and all of my classes have continued remotely since then. Between March 2020 and February 2021, I have devoted increased time to teaching as I have adapted my courses to online delivery, offered increased one-on-one support to students, and provided accommodations and flexibility to international students who are

currently residing in other parts of the world. As a result, the time I have been able to devote to research and HQP training has decreased by approximately 20 percent.”

Impacts on research outputs

- Describe the impacts, as applicable; for example:
 - Writing, refereeing, revision, or publication of articles, books, book chapters, conference proceedings, etc., has been interrupted or delayed
 - Scholarly conferences have been cancelled or postponed, or have not been effective in a virtual format
 - Invitations to speak/planned keynote addresses have been cancelled or postponed, or have less available as events have been reduced in scope
 - Other knowledge mobilization/knowledge translation activities have been delayed
- Include the dates or date ranges of the affected activities.

Examples:

“As a result of reductions in research time, my publication timelines have been significantly delayed. I have been unable to complete the final chapter of my book, *Book Title*, for XX University Press; the book manuscript was originally scheduled to be submitted in fall 2020. In addition, “Article Title” was previously submitted to *Journal Name*, and revisions were requested in September 2020 (see “Forthcoming Contributions” in my CV), but these revisions have been delayed.”

“Due the pandemic and the related travel restrictions, three of the invited lectures I had scheduled between March and July of 2020 were cancelled or postponed. These invited talks included prestigious events at X University, Y International University, and Z Society.”

Impacts on HQP training and supervision

- Describe the impacts, as applicable; for example:
 - Recruitment of new trainees was not possible or was interrupted
 - Trainees were delayed in beginning or completing lab work, field work, or other research activities
 - Trainees experienced health challenges, had caregiving or family responsibilities, or had increased administrative or teaching responsibilities
 - Trainees experienced reduced productivity due to their living situations or working environments
 - Planned co-publications with trainees were interrupted or delayed
 - Trainees could not present their research at conferences or workshops that were cancelled, postponed or reduced in scope
 - International trainees experienced particular challenges
 - Students were delayed in commencing or completing their degrees
 - Additional time was required to support and mentor trainees who experienced personal difficulties during the pandemic
- Include the date ranges of these interruptions or slowdowns.

Example:

"I was unable to recruit a number of summer undergraduate students to my research group, as originally planned for May to July 2020, and research interruptions between March and December 2020 have led three of my current graduate students to experience delays in the completion of their degrees. As a result, I have supervised/mentored a lower number of HQP than would be typical at my career stage."

NOTE: Do not disclose any personal information about trainees and their health and/or family circumstances. This information is considered confidential.

WHERE TO INCLUDE THIS INFORMATION IN A RESEARCH FUNDING APPLICATION:

In most cases, you can indicate these impacts in your CV in a section dedicated to career interruptions.

- In applications requiring [the CCV](#), include this information in "Leaves of Absence and Impact on Research." More than one entry can be added for COVID-19-related impacts.
- In a Canada Research Chairs nomination or renewal, include this information in the [CV details section](#) ("Interruptions and special circumstances") of the Convergence platform.
- In applications to internal research funding programs at U of T, this information can be included in the standard CV attachment.

In addition, some applications may ask you to include this information in relation to your status as an early-career researcher or emerging scholar.

- For example, in the [SSHRC Insight Development Grant](#) application, the impacts of COVID-19 on emerging scholars can be included in the calculation of the emerging scholar status in the "Scholar Type" section.
- For Canada Research Chairs Tier 2 nominees who are more than ten years from their highest degree and have experienced COVID-related impacts, this information should be entered into the [Tier 2 justification form](#).

If you have further questions about where and how to include this information, please consult with your Divisional Research Office or contact the appropriate Research Services Office staff member.