

## Guidelines on undergraduate researchers in UMass facilities in Spring 2021

October 21, 2020

UMass Amherst welcomes as many interested and qualified students as possible to participate in high-quality research opportunities. Currently, the COVID-19 pandemic conditions require strict adherence to Health & Safety protocols in research spaces and requires some more advance planning. This guidance is for undergraduate students to plan a face-to-face research experience and for their faculty advisors.

- On-site laboratory and field work remain subject to limitations required to mitigate the health and safety risks of COVID-19.
- Research that can be conducted remotely is not subject to these limitations, and it is recommended that projects be adjusted to remote work where possible.
- Students doing on-site laboratory or field work, including human subjects research, should ultimately be registered for academic credit (e.g., honors thesis, or independent study) but may be approved on an RLOP prior to registration. Exceptions to this, e.g., for student employees may be made by the relevant dean or their designee.
- The work must be approved under a Research & Libraries Operating Plan (RLOP) as required for all on-site laboratory and field work, including human subjects research. These approvals depend on the space available in research laboratories and the availability of appropriate supervision permits.
- Undergraduates who were approved on an RLOP in the Fall who are continuing in the Spring unless the project, lab space, or faculty advisor is changed.
- Priority will be given to graduating seniors who require the course to satisfy a graduation requirement, e.g., to complete an honors thesis.

This update replaces the Guidance provided on July 15, 2020 for the Fall 2020 semester and is effective for the Spring 2021 semester. A Research & Libraries Operating Plan may include undergraduate researchers under the following conditions.

- They are **Experienced** researchers, i.e., with a full semester of previous work and training in the same research area, or
- They are **New** researchers (i.e., not experienced) but they
  - Satisfactorily complete a specific program of training described in the RLOP as the first activity in their work and
  - Receive direct supervision by faculty or an **Experienced** researcher or staff member during the first semester of working in the facility or the field
- The number of **New** undergraduate researchers working in the facility or the field must not exceed the number of individuals who are present to provide direct supervision.

- All undergraduate researchers strictly observe the university Health & Safety provisions, including COVID-19 testing as required by the university, and any other protocols specific to the research project.
- Faculty should review all health and safety expectations relating to the approved research, including University requirements, with all members of the research group.

Everyone involved must be aware that the work may have to cease if there is a deterioration in the public health situation. So, the research should be structured where possible to allow completion without access to the lab or field site. For instance, data analysis, report writing, etc. should be postponed in favor of gathering data as early in the semester as possible.