

Department of Biology COVID-19 (BIO-COVID) Policies and Practices

Below is a list of policies and practices in response to the growing number of COVID-19 cases in Indiana. It is an attempt to consolidate the many emails we received this week into one concise document (it will be updated over time as needed) and to integrate department-specific policies and practices. This information is culled from emails sent out by President Michael McRobbie, Provost Lauren Robel, as well as IUB deans and vice provosts, in the past week addressing policies and practices related to avoiding or reducing the spread of COVID-19 on the IUB campus.

Up-to-date information regarding IUB's response to COVID-19 is at coronavirus.iu.edu

1. Extending Spring Break to Two Weeks

As noted by the President, spring break will be extended by one additional week. It will now be from March 14 to 29. This additional week will provide more travel flexibility for all students given the stress on domestic and international travel systems. It will additionally give faculty time to prepare for completing the semester via virtual teaching.

2. Classes to be Virtual for the Remainder of the Spring Semester

IU is suspending face-to-face classes and transitioning to virtual learning for the remainder of the spring semester. Classes will not resume until March 30 (see extended spring break below). Students in courses with a clinical component or fieldwork will receive further instruction from the academic leaders in their programs as to how these will be addressed. Faculty can continue to find resources on the IU Keep Teaching website (keep Teaching.iu.edu). Students can find more information on online learning through the Keep Learning class on Expand as well as campus specific information on coronavirus.iu.edu. Associate Instructors (AIs) and Undergraduate Teaching Assistants (UTAs) will continue serving courses to support online instruction. If you do not need the services of your AIs and UTAs for your course as it moves online, or if you could use additional AI or UTA support, let Associate Chair for Teaching Troy Smith know. We may redeploy AIs and UTAs as available to provide instructional support efficiently. You should contact all of your AIs and UTAs to let them know what their duties will be as your course moves online.

3. Canceling and Postponing Events

All IU-affiliated events and gatherings should be postponed, canceled or conducted virtually for the rest of the academic semester. University-related travel (e.g., seminar trips) should also be postponed. IU will assess in the coming weeks the future of its commencement ceremonies that are scheduled to be held on each campus in May. At this point we do not know whether the semester will be extended by a week to accommodate the extended spring break.

What will not be held: In Biology, this means cancelation of any remaining departmental seminars and talks, (e.g., brownbag seminars, microfiles, ecolunch etc.), and other large (10+) journal clubs or meeting. As of now, the undergraduate awards ceremony is canceled. Decisions regarding the Biology Graduation Ceremony and the planned power outage scheduled for May 11th will be made later in the semester.

What will be held: Committee meetings can be held although it is strongly encouraged that these be held virtually. Thesis defenses can be held with the committee members in one room or virtually; the rest of the audience will watch virtually. Lab meetings of fewer than 10 people can be held but again being held virtually is encouraged. The decision is at the discretion of the PI after consultation with the lab.

4. Access to Buildings for Teaching and Research

Our buildings remain accessible in order to facilitate your online teaching and lab work. If you do come to campus, please maintain good public health practices, including social distancing, within the buildings. Do not come in if you are sick, or if you are in a vulnerable group identified by the CDC. Please maintain good public health practices, including social distancing, within the buildings. Err on the side of caution. Biology has been informed by Major Brad Seifers, University Director for Emergency Management and Continuity and Provost Lauren Robel that the university will not be any denying access of essential people into a locked or key-card protected space without sufficient warning and IU Police will not be checking Crimson cards. That said, visitors to all IU campuses are strongly discouraged.

Jordan, Myers and Simon Halls will be locked 24/7 at this time. Your lab or office keys can be used to unlock the exterior doors. Please check to see if your key works, and if not, pick up a key from the JH storeroom by March 19th. Also, keep in mind you should also be able to gain access to the building via the tunnels that connects them (though some doors require card access).

The first floor Greenhouse will be closed to the public for the remainder of the spring semester to minimize foot traffic. It will still be available for research projects but key access is required. (Most of you who use the greenhouse for research have keys already, but please get them if you do not).

As of now, the Biology Storeroom will remain open with reduced hours (9:00-4:00, Monday-Friday). Purchasing staff will largely be working from home so only 1-2 staff will be there to help with storeroom purchases, so please be patient and try to socially distance yourself and not linger in the storeroom. Please note, if the campus closes at a later date the storeroom will also likely close, requiring all your purchases to shift to online. Purchasing will continue off campus as allowed by the university.

5. Laboratory Research

Efforts to maintain the research mission of IU should continue; however, these efforts are subject to grant conditions, approved protocols, public health best practices, and common sense. If essential work must be completed in a specific lab, faculty are encouraged to stagger the times during which students are present. In addition, when completing work in person, please use social distancing techniques (e.g., “elbow bump” and “Dracula sneeze”). Delay projects that are not time sensitive; telecommute to work stations, where applicable; and do not staff a lab to complete nonessential tasks. Essential staff and researchers (e.g. those who maintain fly stocks, animal colonies, strains, cell lines etc. may be required to come to work to maintain their duties. Please stay in contact with your supervisors to determine your work duties.

6. Undergraduate Students

Most labs in biology have undergraduates that either conduct research or support it. If these students are enrolled in a course for research credit (BIOL-X 490, BIOT-X 498, BIOT-X 499, etc.), they should be considered as being enrolled in a class and not expected to report in-person to fulfill their research obligations. Their supervisors should work with them to come up with ways

for them to fulfill their credit remotely (e.g., working on literature reviews, data analysis, senior thesis writing). Troy will be reaching out to students in the honors program and their faculty mentors to try to come up with a plan to allow those students to complete honors theses based on data they have in hand. Flexibility is strongly encouraged. Honors thesis defenses should be conducted remotely (e.g. Zoom or Skype). Those students paid hourly are considered IU employees and may be able to continue work in their respective labs, but should do so only after consultation with their PIs or supervisors to determine that their presence in the lab is essential and that they are comfortable reporting for work. Students who are volunteering (e.g., not receiving credit or payment) should consider deferring their work or working remotely if possible, but can work in the lab with approval of the PI or supervisor and as needed. Note that PIs may individually set a more restrictive policy on personnel in their lab to manage risks.

7. Graduate Classes, Dissertation Defenses, Preliminary Exams, and Committee meetings

Graduate Classes. Graduate classes will continue this semester, but will migrate to remote learning (as with all undergraduate classes) for the remainder of the semester with the understanding that both faculty and students will need to work together, and likely need to make compromises and alterations to the curriculum in order to accomplish this goal. For specific questions, your instructor and GPDs can help.

Ph.D. Dissertation Defenses. UGS requests that the public session of all currently scheduled Ph.D. defenses be held remotely using videoconferencing tools such as Zoom and Skype. The committee and the candidate can be in one room for the public presentation and closed door session since this involves less than 10 people. The student and the committee can also be virtual and not on campus. Note, in the past (pre COVID-19) PI and student had to be on IUs campus for the defense. We are verifying how long this modification holds true. If possible, candidates and faculty are to consider postponing scheduled defenses until after April 5. Please be cognizant when rescheduling a thesis defense, though, as students may have time-sensitive deadlines to meet for employment or visa status. Above all, be mindful of individual needs and use good judgment when planning for academic progress and completion. Graduate students with academic appointments or hourly positions, please be aware that no IU policy stipulates the termination of your position if you wish to return home at this time. As the COVID-19 outbreak—and our response to it—continues to unfold, additional guidance regarding work status will be made available. For the time being, graduate students with academic appointments or hourly positions should discuss work status concerns with direct supervisors in their programs and schools.

Preliminary Exams and Committee Meetings. This can be held in person (if less than 10 people) or remotely, and should be made in consultation with others on the committees. Again, we cannot stress enough how health and safety is most important. Postponing these events are also an option and should be discussed with your PI and Graduate program Director (GPD).

8. Staff

IU campuses remain open with limited operations. Just as virtual instruction will continue for the remainder of the semester, staff and faculty who are able to meet their work obligations from home by telecommuting, and are in a position to do so, should continue to do this. Some offices will have only 1-2 people present in a rotating basis. All individuals working remotely will have email access and phone access during working hours. Unit heads should continue to be as flexible as possible, considering the nature of the work and whether the necessary tools and technology are available to allow employees to fully perform their job duties away from campus. If you

continue to work on campus, speak with your supervisor about other measures to reduce risk, such as reducing physical paperwork by using email or scanning of documents instead, keeping a skeleton crew in the office but working from home on alternate days, shifting to more email-based work, keeping the door closed to walk-ins except by appointment only, stocking the office with hand sanitizer or Clorox wipes, working at another desk farther from others, etc.

We strongly encourage you to correspond with staff via group email accounts when possible and appropriate (see below) as this will ensure that someone responds to your request in a timely manner. Staff are committed to maintaining current service levels to the best of their ability given current circumstances, though we ask for patience and cooperation. Further, some staff, by the nature of their work, are unable to work remotely; acknowledge and thank them for their efforts when you see them...from a distance.

9. Staying Informed

As the worldwide situation with COVID-19 continues to change rapidly, it is vital that all students, faculty and staff check their IU email at least daily. Email from IU offices, along with the coronavirus.iu.edu website, will be the best way to stay informed as the circumstances concerning COVID-19 and the efforts to mitigate and control its spread continue to rapidly develop. This website includes campus-specific information, so please look for details pertaining to your campus on a regular basis.

10. Being Prepared

PIs and lab members should formulate a plan **now**, if you have not done so already. Do all or some lab members work from home?, when in the lab are the time staggered?, are only 1-2 people allowed daily to flip flies or split cells or take care of plants or animals? What projects should be continued and which can be put on hold? PIs and lab members should also prepare contingency plans should IU decide to shut down completely or restrict access to essential personnel. We can share documents to help with this process. It is never too early to have these discussions, and no one should assume personnel already know what to do in these situations; they most likely do not. You should explicitly discuss these issues as a lab group.

Finally, the Department of Biology had created a team of faculty and staff (**BIO-COVID**) who will meet regularly (via Zoom) to assess the current situation, address changes to university policy, update departmental policies and practices, and inform the department as necessary. While we hope no further restrictions or campus closures are required, the reality is that further restrictions will likely be imposed in the future. The department, however, must prepare for this possibility. Most importantly, stay safe; everyone's health and safety is our primary concern.

Group Email Accounts

Business/Payroll/HR: biopay@indiana.edu

Biocomputing: biocomp@indiana.edu

Facilities: biofacil@indiana.edu

Purchasing: biopurch@indiana.edu

Departmental Office (JH142): biorm142@indiana.edu

Greenhouses: biogreen@indiana.edu

Scheduling: biosched@indiana.edu

Graduate office: biogrдав@indiana.edu

Undergrad Advising: bioadv@indiana.edu

Undergraduate Services/UTA Coordinator biougrad@indiana.edu

Complete list: <https://biology.indiana.edu/faculty-intranet/contact/group-email.html> (CAS login required).