

FAQ: Mech Grad Students COVID-19 [As of June 05, 2020]

DISCLAIMER: *In the event of a discrepancy in the answers provided here and any official communication from McMaster University, the latter prevails.*

Is there a timeline for research labs to be opened?

The university is now in Phase 1 for resuming research activity. The four phases of the University plan to increase on-campus research activity are described below. You have to strictly follow your lab SOP to ensure safety of all personnel using the lab. Your supervisor will inform you if you have been granted access to the lab.

Phase 0: Only essential research (e.g. pertaining to COVID-19) can be performed on campus. This has been ongoing since March 20.

Phase 1: Only research that is IMPOSSIBLE to perform in a remote manner will be allowed on-campus. The faculty member will prioritize which projects are to be rolled out to ensure maintenance of a suitable density on campus and within each building. Only fully trained individuals will be permitted back during this phase. The faculty member will require written approval from the Chair and Associate Dean (Research).

Phase 2: If Phase 1 is successful, while remote working will remain the preferred method, managed, staggered lab access will be allowed for postdocs and trained graduate and undergraduate students while adhering to all public health policies and university guidance.

Phase 3: If Phase 2 is successful, there will be a relaxation of staggered occupancy or space and increased opportunity for training of undergraduate and graduate students.

If one needs experimental results for completion of the thesis, what recourse do students have?

The University is currently in Phase 1 of the re-opening plan. You should speak with your supervisor to obtain access to the lab. It would be useful if you could prioritize and plan the experiments that you would perform when you get back to the lab. You may have limited access depending on how many additional students will be using the lab and equipment, since social distancing and safety measures will be in place. In the meantime, you could continue with any work started for completion of your thesis with existing results. This could include additional analysis (using your results plus additional existing results from literature), greater emphasis on modeling and analytical research, additional simulations etc.

How are online defences being carried out?

SGS has established proper procedures for online PhD defences and these have to be followed. MASc defences are arranged by the department. The online MASc defence will follow the same format as before, except it will take place via a web meeting tool (ZOOM, MS Teams, Webex). The attendance of audience members will fall to the Chair of the Defence, who has the responsibility for managing their attendance with the web meeting tool.



Can I record my defence if it is done online?

For privacy reasons, defences can NOT and should NOT be recorded.

Can I go back to my home country to work on my thesis and defend remotely?

Currently, all thesis (MAsc and PhD) defences are being held remotely. Thus, technically you could defend from your home country. However, if you return to your home country, there could be a number of issues related to your full time status, study permit and payment of stipends. You should make sure you understand all the regulations of SGS and Immigration Canada and discuss this carefully with your Supervisor.

Is it possible to go into campus and work (only using my own laptop) in the Grad Student Offices while maintaining social distancing?

This is currently NOT permitted. Even in Phase 1, this type of activity will NOT be permitted.

Are there any contingencies if graduation is delayed?

You should develop a contingency plan in consultation with your Supervisor, especially if your research is heavily experimental based and it is not possible to pivot your research. The University is considering a short extension to completion times. However, this will still only be a few weeks and you should not depend on this.

Will there be funding if I go overtime?

The Department or Faculty currently has no funding to support students that will go overtime due to COVID-19. Any additional funding beyond current commitments will need to be discussed with your Supervisor.

Can the Department provide a guideline or schedule to completion for students who are to graduate in August?

Every research thesis is unique and it is very difficult to generalize steps to completion. This is unlike a course based program where adjustments can be made to the curriculum and guidelines developed to guide students to completion. Your best resource, as with many aspects of your program, is your Supervisor. You should be in regular (more now than before) communication with your Supervisor and raise any concerns that you may have about timelines for graduation. It will also be prudent if you can develop a plan, in consultation with your Supervisor, for graduation.

