



## Letter of Information – Survey

# When the Labs Closed: Graduate Students' & Postdoctoral Fellows' Experiences of Disrupted Research During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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### Purpose of the Study

We would like to invite you to take part in a study on the impact COVID-19 had on your research. The purpose of this survey is to examine the impact of research disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic on graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. Information gathered during this survey will be written up as a scholarly journal article and potentially presented at conferences. What we learn from this survey will help us identify areas of support needed by graduate students and postdoctoral fellows during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as support needed once the pandemic dissipates. We also want to identify best practices of how to quickly shut down laboratories, and provide support to students and fellows, that could be used if similar situations arise in the future.

You are eligible to take part in this study if you:

1. Are a graduate student or postdoctoral fellow in Canada
2. Engage in laboratory-based research
3. Have had your research stopped or paused by the COVID-19 pandemic

### Procedures involved in the Research

You will be asked to complete one online survey. This survey is **voluntary**. You will be provided with a link to complete the survey on LimeSurvey. It should take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. This survey will be open from April 27, 2020 to June 8, 2020. If you wish to participate, please complete the consent module at the beginning of the survey and then fill out the following questions.

### Potential Benefits

This research may benefit you directly if your supervisor, department or faculty implements recommendations based on our findings. We hope what is learned as a result of this study can be used to inform what supports should be offered to graduate students and postdoctoral fellows during COVID-19 and once laboratory research resumes. These findings could also inform the development of best practices to quickly shut down laboratories. We would like to publish our findings so that they can be used design supports for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the future.

### **Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts**

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. You may feel uneasy or embarrassed answering questions about your feelings or worries related to COVID-19 and research disruption. You do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable.

### **Confidentiality**

You are participating in this research anonymously. No one, including those handling the data, will know that you participated. However, others may be able to identify you based on references you make or detailed information you provide. We may display full quotations from descriptive sections as representative statements. Please keep this in mind in deciding what to tell us. Key demographic information will be anonymized during analysis, with only cohort data being featured in the final manuscript. We will also de-identify identifying information which is provided in narrative responses, such as if you mention your university name or names of colleagues.

All electronic data will be kept on a computer protected by an encryption, firewall, and password, where only the research team will have access to it. Once the study is complete, an archive of the data, without identifying information, will be maintained until publication. This will be deleted following publication of findings (within five years). The electronic cohort description data will be kept indefinitely as the data will be published.

### **Participation and Withdrawal**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can stop (withdraw) from the study at any point before submitting your survey responses. Once you have submitted your responses for this survey: your answers will be put into a database and will not be identifiable to you. This means that once you have submitted your survey, your responses cannot be withdrawn from the study because we will not be able to identify which responses are yours.

### **Information about the Study Results**

We expect to have initial analysis completed by late June 2020. A pre-print publication will be uploaded to bioRxiv in early July 2020. When our research article is published in a peer reviewed journal, we will make a summary of the publication available on the Truant Laboratory Website (<https://raytruantlab.ca/>).

### **Questions about the Study**

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact us at: [truantr@mcmaster.ca](mailto:truantr@mcmaster.ca) or [suartce@mcmaster.ca](mailto:suartce@mcmaster.ca).

This survey is part of a study that has been reviewed by the [Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board \(HiREB\)](#). The HiREB protocol number associated with this survey is 10832. You are free to complete this survey or not. If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is being conducted, please contact HiREB. The HiREB is responsible for ensuring that participants are informed of the risks associated with the research, and that participants are free to decide if participation is right for them. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please call the Office of the Chair, Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board at 905.521.2100 x 42013.