



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

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Dear all,

I would like to express the Government's gratitude for the vital work currently being carried out across the research sector to address the impacts of COVID-19. Research and innovation will be key to successfully meeting this challenge.

Recognising the fast-moving nature of the COVID-19 outbreak and recent advice regarding increased home-working, social distancing and self-isolation, I thought it would be helpful for me to convey some messages regarding research activities taking place in universities and other research institutions.

First, as part of the effort to suppress the spread of COVID-19, I know, and am grateful, that universities and other research institutions are already considering how physical attendance can be reduced. We encourage everyone who can to work from home. I appreciate the difficulties that the measures on social distancing will cause for many in the research community and would like to thank everyone in advance for their co-operation in this matter.

Second, I am also grateful for the work you are doing, and would encourage you to continue doing, looking at where it is possible to continue with your science and research programmes, particularly looking to protect the following:

- **Science and Research which is considered to be of critical urgency or importance** – this may be for medical reasons or for reasons of national security;
- **Science, Research or technical work where the pausing of activity is either not possible or would severely impede research delivery** – for example, this may include very long-term experiments or projects where the time frequency of observation is critical;
- **Science, Research or technical work which requires ongoing maintenance and supervision activity** – this may be for reasons of regulatory, legal or health and safety or other on-going requirements. For example, this would include the care of living specimens, including animals, plants and bacterial cultures. It may also include research which makes use of hazardous materials or which involves the regular maintenance of key equipment or facilities.

I recognise that there will be examples of research which cannot be undertaken readily now that social distancing measures are in place. I am also clear that decisions about what should be stopped or paused will be best made by universities and research institutes themselves, balancing the need to support ongoing activity with the requirement towards ensuring the health and wellbeing of staff and researchers within your care.

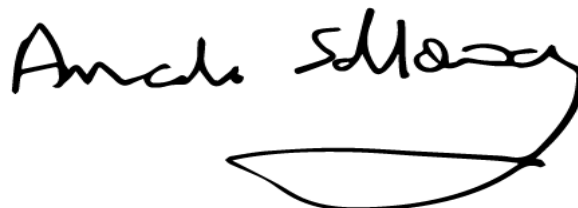
Third, I am aware too that some researchers will be concerned about the delivery of their projects and about their employment terms and conditions in the short and medium term, particularly where research projects may not complete in the expected timescale. I am sure that universities and research institutions will provide continued and meaningful assurance to their staff on this matter. As the Prime Minister said, now is the time to stand by your workforce.

Fourth, I am conscious of the consequent pressures the current situation places on universities and other research institutions. With this in mind, BEIS has established a joint team involving UKRI, DfE and other government departments and agencies to consider what measures are necessary to support universities, the research community and research institutions during this very difficult time. In addition, Research England and devolved Funding Bodies will be in touch with universities to establish a formal channel of communication to institutions on research issues. UKRI will also continue to engage with the range of research organisations, institutes and facilities it funds outside the HE sector.

Finally, as you all know, the UK is home to some of the most talented, dedicated and innovative researchers in the world. It will be through the expertise of your institutions and your teams that we will find the way to overcome the challenges we currently face. Many of you are already working on these challenges or offering to do so, whether through research staff, infrastructure or work with industry on vaccines, ventilators and testing equipment. To ensure we are making the most of the UK's brilliant researchers, I will be asking officials in BEIS and UKRI to work with the research sector on how we can collectively respond to the immediate and longer-term challenges arising as a result of COVID-19.

I am keen to continue talking with and hearing from the research sector during the challenging weeks ahead. As the Chancellor said, we want to look back on this time and remember how, in the face of a generation-defining moment, we undertook a collective national effort - and we stood together. Thank you again, therefore, for all you are doing.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Solloway". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end that loops back under the name.

AMANDA SOLLOWAY MP
Minister for Science, Research and Innovation