

## Virtual Interview Protocol

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

Time:

Date:

Interview Number:

Interviewer:

Letter of Information has been read

Verbal consent has been obtained

### Preamble Script

Thank you for your interest in participating in this interview. The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of research disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic on graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. You have been sent a letter of information that outlines information on the purpose of the study, data collection procedures, voluntary withdrawal, and participant confidentiality.

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 may be concerned if what you said during an interview was linked back to you personally. You do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable.

All information obtained during the study will be de-identified and aggregated during analysis. Identifications of individuals should not be possible after this process. 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. We will remove identifying information which is provided in narrative responses, such as if you mention your university name or names of colleagues.

By participating in the interview, participants agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of a meeting or data collection session. All electronic data will be kept on a computer protected by a 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. The electronic cohort data will be kept indefinitely as the data will be published.

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 decide to stop (withdraw), at any time, even after giving consent or part-way through the study. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. Information provided up to the point where you withdraw will be kept unless you request that it be removed. You can withdraw from the study within 1 week of completing your interview. After this time point withdrawal from the study is not possible, as all data will be aggregated and it will be impossible to separate individual comments.

At this time, do you have any questions, comments, or concerns before we begin? [Yes – answer the questions before continuing, No – continue to consent script]

### Consent Script

For the following statements, please answer either “Yes” or “No”.

- Have you read the information presented in the letter of information about this study on the impact of COVID-19 of graduate students and post-doctoral fellows?
- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about your involvement in this study and to receive these additional details?
- Do you understand that if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw from the study within 1 week of completing your interview?

- I know that Zoom is a an externally hosted cloud-based service and understand the small potential risk that is associated with collection of data on external servers
- Do you agree to not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of a meeting or data collection session?
- Do you verbally consent to participate in this study?

If the response to all six statements is “Yes”, continue with semi-structured interview questions. If an answer of “No” is given to any of the statements, clarify statement(s) and provide further information. If no consent is obtained, end the interview.

# Semi-Structured Interview Guide

*Note: This outline only represents the main themes to be discussed throughout the interview. Example prompts are given for each question, but may not be used depending on respondent answers. Non-leading general prompts will also be used, such as “Can you please tell me a bit more about that experience?” or “Can you elaborate more on that point?”.*

## Section A: Transition from Research to Social Distancing

**Can you tell me about your experience when there first was discussion that laboratories (yours and others) might shut down in response to COVID-19?**

- Prompt: What were you feeling at this time?
- Prompt: Were there any pre-emptive supports provided by your supervisor, department, or other campus organization?

**What happened when the laboratory you are in decided to close? Can you tell me a bit about that?**

- Prompt: What were you feeling at this time?
- Prompt: What was the laboratory closure process? If you had to do it again, are there things you or others would do differently?
- Prompt: Some laboratory groups had a staggered closure, with some people transitioning to working from home earlier than their lab mates or colleagues in their department. What was the process like in your laboratory?
- Prompt: Was there any pressure from internal or external sources to continue working in the lab?

## Section B: Current Routines While Social Distancing

**How was the transition to social distancing & working from home? What did that look like for you?**

- Prompt: What were you feeling at this time?
- Prompt: What went into your decision to move social distance in [city besides Hamilton]?

**Can you describe to me what a “typical day” looks like in your household during social distancing?**

- Prompt: How does [activity/person] impact your ability to get work done?
- Prompt: Why do you choose/include [activity] as part of your schedule?

**What are the greatest barriers to you getting work done at home?**

- Prompt: How could this be improved?
- Prompt: What are strategies you used to challenge this barrier?

**What are the best supports you have received while working from home?**

- Prompt: What other supports do you wish you were receiving?

## Section C: Concerns of the Impact of COVID-19 on Future Research and Career

**What are the biggest worries you have about how COVID-19 might impact you now or in the future?**

- Prompt: When you think about returning to the lab, what kind of feelings do you have?
- Prompt: How do you think COVID-19 might impact your personal or family life?
- Prompt: How do you think COVID-19 might impact your current research project?
- Prompt: How do you think COVID-19 might impact your scientific career?

**What kind of support/resources do you want to receive when you transition back to working in the lab?**

- Prompt: How would [resource] help you in the transition back to the lab?
- Prompt: When would be the best time for [resource] to be implemented?

### **Section D: Demographic Information**

We have a few brief demographic questions for you to answer. These responses will help us find trends across different groups of people.

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. You can decline to answer any questions without providing a reason. Key demographic information will be de-identified during analysis, with only cohort data being featured in the final manuscript.

**What is your current academic position?** [If graduate student, ask to clarify if master's or PhD]

**How far along are you in your degree or at your position?**

**In the past six months, have you been looking for a new position?** [PhD, PDF, or faculty position]

**How would you describe your area of research?**

**What kind of specialized equipment, model systems, and/or reagents do you use frequently as part of your research?**

**What is your gender?**

**In which province or territory do you attend school?**

### **Closing Statement**

Thank you very much for participating in this interview. The information you have shared is an important part of this research.

This is a reminder that should you wish to withdraw from this study, you must do so within 1 week of today, [Date of withdrawal cut off]. If you have any further questions about the study, please feel free to contact me by email at [suartce@mcmaster.ca](mailto:suartce@mcmaster.ca). You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Ray Truant, at [truantr@mcmaster.ca](mailto:truantr@mcmaster.ca).