



27.04.20

Dear GRC Participants,

As COVID-19 reaches different parts of the globe, research councils have been trying to minimize its effects on the research community while simultaneously engaging with the science to combat the virus. Recent studies are showing that these effects vary according to gender, social class, race and ethnic background, disability, mental health and additional characteristics at the intersection of the human experience. This [policy brief](#) provides succinct information on the need for this intersectional view of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and response.

The GRC Gender Working Group acknowledges that taking the diversity of the researcher pool into consideration while thinking about policies to accommodate the myriad of situations generated by COVID-19 requires access to good-quality information. Therefore, the GWG would like to take this opportunity to: (1) present to GRC participating organisations a set of questions to consider in the early stages of formulating strategies, policies, actions and in dialogues with the research workforce, and (2) share a few examples of initiatives underway in GRC participating organisations in response to some of these situations.

This list of questions and examples are intended to provide inspiration to GRC participating organisations. They are not exhaustive and will be updated at regular intervals.

The GWG will be collating a list of examples of initiatives and related resources in coming months and would encourage GRC participating organisations who have initiatives to support the status and equality of women in research, diversity and inclusivity during this time of COVID-19 to share these with the GWG. Please send any relevant information to us and we can compile and share with others.

We envision that this work and approach will form part of the GRC regional discussions to keep coherence and momentum of the GRC process. The GWG also remains at the service of GRC participating organisations during this time and looks forward to engaging with you.

Yours sincerely

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On behalf of the GRC Gender Working Group

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Aspects to consider

1. Is your organisation taking steps to reassure the researchers that their concerns and the challenges they are facing because of COVID-19 are being taken into consideration? Even if no concrete steps have been taken yet in all areas, a short statement showing empathy and willingness to listen along with a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) would be greatly appreciated by those most impacted. Also, it would be useful to the researchers if all the information regarding COVID-19 support can be easily accessed. Some agencies have created a dedicated page that is constantly updated.
2. Are virtual convenings being encouraged in place of cancelled international conferences? What effects may this have on different members of the research community? On the one hand, virtual meetings can encourage some who may normally experience barriers traveling to international conferences – such as people with health concerns, disabilities, lack of funding, and those who have family care responsibilities to be able to engage in this vital part of academia. On the other hand, it should be recognised that virtual communications need to be accessible, and that many are currently engaged with significant family care and schooling responsibilities or COVID-19 responses, may experience connectivity or technology limitations, or other barriers, and may be excluded from these events.
3. Is your organisation deferring application dates for grants and considering no-cost extensions for research projects? This provides important room for especially those researchers with family care responsibilities to apply and to be reassured of the continuity of research projects.
4. Is your organisation considering continuing to pay stipends to students/ postdoctoral fellows who are currently unable to continue with the postgraduate studies/ postdoctoral fellowship work? For vulnerable populations, this supports their safety, health and wellbeing during this pandemic.
5. Where your organisation is considering a response to COVID-19 through a dedicated research call, are the following being considered: (1) diversity in the composition of the research team (2) diversity dimensions, including sex and gender in research on COVID-19, and (3) research on COVID-19 and vulnerable populations. Diversity, including sex and gender differences, exist in all COVID-19 research areas, making sex and/or gender issues an important component of a COVID-19 research call, and therefore calls for applications should encourage considerations of diversity, including sex as a biological variable and gender as a socio-cultural factor in research projects.

Examples of some initiatives taken so far by GRC Participating Councils:

When such measures are being designed we encourage granting councils to take into account the impacts on different groups of researchers by applying a gender lens and intersectional analysis.

1) Acknowledging that researchers are facing unprecedented challenges + FAQs

DFG: https://www.dfg.de/en/service/press/reports/2020/200318_corona_news/index.html

FNRS (Belgium): <http://www.snf.ch/en/researchinFocus/faq/Pages/faq-doc-mobility-corona.aspx>

NRF (South Africa): <https://www.nrf.ac.za/media-room/news/nrf-risa-communique-stakeholders-novel-coronavirus-covid-19>

NSERC (Canada): https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Media-Media/NewsRelease-CommuniqueDePresse_eng.asp?ID=1138

SNSF (Swiss) : <http://www.snf.ch/en/researchinFocus/newsroom/Pages/news-200319-pandemic-flexible-solutions-for-researchers.aspx>

UKRI (UK): <https://www.ukri.org/news/coronavirus-impact-on-ukri-supported-research>

2) Extensions and other measures

ANID (Chile): <https://www.anid.cl/2020/03/24/actualizacion-informativa-ante-contingencia-sanitaria/>

CIHR (Canada):

- <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/51939.html>
- <https://www.researchnet-recherchenet.ca/rnr16/vwOpprtntyDtIs.do?prog=3310&view=currentOpps&type=EXACT&resultCount=25&sort=program&next=1&all=1&masterList=true>

CONICET (Argentina): <https://www.conicet.gov.ar/prorrogas-de-becas/>

FAPESP (Brazil): <http://fapesp.br/14128>

FNRS (Belgium/Belgique):

- French: <https://www.frs-fnrs.be/fr/l-actualite-fnrs/982-covid-19-i-mesures-decidees-par-le-conseil-d-administration-du-f-r-s-fnrs-30-mars-2020>
- English: <https://www.frs-fnrs.be/en/l-actualite-fnrs>

NSERC (Canada) https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Media-Media/NewsRelease-CommuniqueDePresse_eng.asp?ID=1139

3) Gender Related Actions:

FORGEN (Community of Practice in the European Research Area): <https://forgen.act-on-gender.eu/Blog/putting-gender-lens-covid-19-sars-cov-2-funded-research>