

Department of Sociology
Covid impact statement
Fall 2021

It has been recommended that each department write a Covid impact statement, outlining how the types of research and teaching that faculty do in our discipline have been affected by the pandemic.

It goes without saying that all of our faculty were adversely affected by the increased teaching responsibilities and retooling that were required for remote teaching during Spring 2020, AY 2020-21, and for some faculty members, into AY 2021-22. Graduate and undergraduate classes on qualitative research methods (most of which have students applying the methods in the real world) had to be more thoroughly redesigned, but all faculty had to spend extensive time preparing their classes for remote instruction.

Covid had a disproportionate impact on faculty relying on in-depth interviewing, participant observation, and archival work. For these qualitative researchers, multiple types of data sources were all but wiped out for a period. It was impossible to travel to archives or to conduct participant observation for more than a year, with many trips delayed longer than that. In-person interviews were not feasible and, while Zoom interviewing was possible, some chose to wait until it was viable to travel again to do face-to-face data collection, since online interviewing is at best an imperfect replacement for most qualitative methods. Library services at UCSD also were impacted, which had trickle-down effects on faculty's ability to get assistance for their projects.

Quantitative researchers, particularly those who use governmental data on one protected, non-internet connected machine in their office, were adversely affected by protocols not allowing faculty to come to campus at the beginning of the pandemic, and then by only being able to have one GSR or one faculty member in the office at any given time. This reduced the rate of progress on many projects.

Colloquia by invited speakers -- important opportunities for faculty and graduate students to come together and discuss new ideas -- could not be held. On the other side, most of us had our own talks cancelled, rescheduled and, in some cases, moved to Zoom. Many of us experienced long wait times to receive book manuscript and paper reviews from editors.

Our department also saw sabbaticals that were delayed because of restrictions, particularly among those whose sabbaticals included international travel. It is also important to note that service work increased dramatically during this period, since we had to attend to more student crises. We found that the effects on productivity were particularly pronounced for those with school-age children and/or other care responsibilities, and that the overall psychological and emotional effect of the pandemic also likely entailed lower productivity by faculty.

Finally, it should be noted that Covid will likely have continued impact on faculty research productivity in future review cycles. Even in cases where faculty had sufficient published work to meet department standards in their first review cycle since the pandemic hit, the pipeline for research publications in the next review cycle (due to all of the factors named above) may be negatively impacted.