

# Principles and Process for Research Return to Campus

The University of Cincinnati may now focus on the principles and processes required to return to on-campus research activities. This guidance has been prepared to assist our research community with accomplishing this task. **This guidance is not authorizing a return to research as usual...significant restrictions remain in place to support the health and safety of all involved.**

## Principles for Research Return

The following principles **must** be followed in allowing on-campus research:  
**(5/20/2020 - updated mandatory actions for all on-campus research activities)**

- All research activities that can be completed remotely (e.g. data analysis, report generation, lab meetings) must continue to be performed in a remote work environment.
- Any and all on-campus research activities should follow the cognizant Public Health Authority directives.
- Employees who meet the CDC's definition for those who are at higher risk for severe illness (see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>) may request reasonable accommodations by contacting the Human Resources Department.
- Student, staff and faculty safety, health and well-being are the most important considerations when allowing any on-campus research activities. To achieve this principle, the following actions will be mandatory for all allowable activities:
  1. Before returning to campus for the first time, all employees must successfully complete a brief online information session administered by University Health Services to ensure awareness of CDC and ODH guidelines. The tutorial can be found [here](#).
  2. Before coming to campus each day, all employees must complete a self-administered wellness check based on CDC and ODH guidelines. The wellness check can be found [here](#). All employees who have symptoms that may relate to COVID-19 should contact University Health Services immediately at [COVIDWatch@uc.edu](mailto:COVIDWatch@uc.edu).
  3. All employees must wear facial coverings on campus, except while eating or alone in a private space. For more information on facial coverings, including exemptions to this requirement, click [here](#).
  4. All employees must adhere to social-distancing requirements detailed [here](#).

5. All areas must clean and sanitize their workplace settings throughout the day. These efforts will supplement cleaning and sanitizing activities that will occur after hours by our facilities staff. Click [here](#) for specific directions.
  6. All employees must continue to abide by restrictions on travel detailed [here](#).
  7. All employees who meet the CDC's definition of individuals at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 may continue to work remotely. CDC information on risk factors is available [here](#). Please contact Human Resources to submit a request to work remotely due to being at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
  8. For more information on mental health resources, please click [here](#).
  9. For more information on maintaining a safe work environment as well as wellness and support resources, please click [here](#). Before returning to campus for the first time, all supervisors and lab leaders must complete a health safety assessment of their workplace setting. Find more information, including deadlines for completion, [here](#).
- To accommodate these safety principles, laboratory directors, faculty mentors and principal investigators must develop a plan to promote safety. Plan templates will be provided by your college to assist in addressing these safety principles. Each plan will require you to:
    1. Develop a process to record daily personnel activity and entry/exit from research space;
    2. Establish a laboratory space cleaning/disinfecting schedule;
    3. Develop a plan to maintain spatial and temporal distancing of personnel (e.g. consider shift scheduling/cohorting to minimize personnel density);
    4. Coordinate research involving shared spaces to maintain distancing requirements.
  - Research locations and dimensions for planning purposes can be found at <https://space.uc.edu/>.
  - Research directors/faculty mentors/PIs should assume that additional Stay at Home orders can be authorized at any time to combat future outbreaks of the virus. Now is not the time to be starting new long-term research projects.

## Preparing for Research Return

- Laboratory directors, faculty mentors and principal investigators can begin preparing for the return of on-campus research activities. Suggestions to ensure appropriate and successful on-campus activities include:
  1. Identify crucial contingencies that must be accomplished first before broader research can be conducted (e.g., restarting/recalibration of equipment, restarting cell cultures, gradual expansion of animal colonies, availability of core facilities). Begin planning research return based on these contingencies.
  2. Prioritize on-campus research to those most crucial experiments/studies/data gathering that can maximize off-campus data review/evaluation and/or proposal/paper preparation/submission while minimizing research time and need to be on-campus.
  3. Identify needed supplies, reagents and the like that should be procured and available before on-campus research can resume.

4. Discuss with trainees and staff current research status and develop plans for progress under limited on-campus access and that may be impacted by limited availability of core facilities/collaborators/supplies, by social distancing requirements, illness/quarantine within the research location or building, or a new 'stay at home' order. Create clear plans of action during the research return that are agreed upon by all parties.

## Phased Approach to Research Return

- Research return plans may include allowances to begin preparing on-campus research laboratories or facilities prior to June 1st. Those allowances would be for preparations that are essential for a resumption of research. Examples include, but are not limited to: cell culturing, expanding animal colonies, instrument calibration, etc.
  - Documentation must be provided that describes the personnel to be involved, the location, the frequency and duration (e.g., weekly for 2 hours), and the health, safety & wellness plans and processes.
- Research activities during the month of June will be limited as follows:
  1. Weeks of June 1st and June 8th: Personnel restrictions –generally no more than 25% of the total research team present in a single research location at the same time.
  2. Weeks of June 15th and June 22nd: Personnel restrictions –generally no more than 50% of the total research team present in a single research location at the same time.
  3. The limitations above must always adhere to social distancing guidelines.
  4. Contiguous research spaces are considered as a single research location
- These research personnel restrictions will be re-evaluated in late June/early July. Researchers should assume limitations and plans in place for week of June 22nd will be continued indefinitely. As the campus status changes, researchers will be informed.

## College Documentation and Approval Process

The Office of Research has created a template to be used by each college to document the research plans and standard operating procedures for safety, scheduling and access, along with a multi-week plan for research activity prioritization under limited access conditions. Only the Dean or their designee may modify the template to accommodate college-specific needs. *Under no circumstances should the information relating to Research Location Health and Safety Plans and Personal Protection Plans be deleted or otherwise not provided for review.*

Each Dean or their designee will identify the appropriate approval chain for these research plans. College-wide summaries of approved plans must be provided to the Vice President for Research via email no later than **May 28th** for activities planned to begin the week of June 1st. A summary form to be completed by each college will be provided by the Office of the Vice

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President for Research.

In addition, each department or unit area that will be having researchers return must identify a point of contact and establish a process whereby mail, package and cleaning supplies delivery can be accommodated. Each Dean or their designee is responsible for communicating this unit-level information to **Joe Harrell** in Facility Services.

Any approved requests for on-campus access ahead of the June 1st research return date must be submitted to **Heather Geers** for final review and approval by the Vice President for Research.

### **Additional Information and Resources**

- [Good Health Practices](#)
- [Guidance on Undergraduate Researchers on Campus](#)
- [Guidance Regarding Shared Research Space and Core Facilities](#)
- [Guidance to AHSS Scholars Regarding On-Campus Research Not Involving Standard Laboratory Facilities](#) (updated 05/14/2020)
- [Guidance for Research Return Health & Safety Plans](#)
- [Guidance on Conducting Research at Off-Campus Locations](#)
- [Guidance on Conducting Human Subject Research](#) (updated 10/05/2020)
- [Return to On-Campus Research Guidance for Business and Grant Administrators](#)

**Faculty and Principal Investigators (PIs) should always keep the safety and well-being of their trainees and research staff as their top priority.**

All documents also available on [our researchhow2 page](#).