



## **College of Public Health**

### **Research Ramp-Up Planning**

#### Planning Committee:

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## College of Public Health Research Ramp-Up Planning

### COMMITTEE CHARGE

Develop a protocol for ramping up research activities that meets the needs of the CPH and can be tailored as University guidance is issued. Consider priorities, budget implications, support needed, communication, and protocols for decision-making.

The **guiding principles** for decision-making are:

1. keep people safe
2. flexibility and fluidity
3. mission alignment
4. budgetary consideration

### STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS (these may change as we near dates for ramp-up)

Step	Status
Identify considerations for ramping up for the types of research conducted by CPH	Developed by committee – see below
Develop a set of priorities for ramping up research	Completed
Identify interest/intent to ramp up research	Form due May 26, 2020
Provide guidelines, checklists, and resources for research teams to develop safety plans. Our process for requesting approval will need to be approved by OVPR, and research teams will need to develop a safety plan.	Completed
Assist teams in developing their safety plans, integrating them with University guidance.	To begin June 1, 2020
Begin approval of requests to ramp up some research activities.	To begin once plans are submitted

## **RESEARCH TYPES IMPACTED BY COVID-19**

1. Lab based animal research
2. Lab based wet labs (cell and biological samples).
3. Lab-based research that doesn't involve any biologic elements
4. Field research that must be collected off-site, including human subject research offsite. This can include such things as the collection of environmental samples; in –person data collection such as surveys or focus groups; community-engaged activities).
5. Human subject research on campus that involves contact with human subjects
6. HSO approved research that doesn't involve human subject contact, and non-human subject/exempt research conducted on campus that does not involve on-campus facilities
7. Research and Engagement activities and events – events, project meetings, group training, symposiums, board or advisory meetings
8. Research administration and compliance activities

NOTE: COVID-specific research can be categorized as above, but would be a higher priority (see priorities, below)

## **COVID-19 RESEARCH CONCERNS IN RESEARCH SPACES (Guidelines provided below)**

1. Individual health/symptom monitoring
2. Worker number and density
3. Safety of work environments within CPHB research spaces
4. Safety of work environments external to CPHB (non-CPHB research space, non-UI research space, field work).
5. Interaction with human subjects
6. Interaction with CPH external partners (not protected by compliance offices)
7. Efficiency of research team/partner collaboration
8. Travel for research
9. Data security and compliance (also as an issue for continued remote work)
10. Student involvement in research

## **PRIORITIES FOR RESEARCH RAMP-UP**

1. Priorities for research return to campus:
  - a. Highest priority:
    - i. research that cannot be conducted other than on campus or in the field
    - ii. research that is necessary for student progression (grad only)
    - iii. time-sensitive COVID-related research
    - iv. time-sensitive research that might result in not meeting the approved scope of work or with considerable budgetary impact

CPH will follow guidance from Human Resources to work with individuals, based on their specific needs, as research ramps up.

**College of Public Health**

COVID-19 Research Categories and Related Concerns

Research Category	COVID-19 Related Concerns									
	1. Individual health/symptom monitoring	2. CPH researcher number and density	3. Safety of CPHB research spaces	4. Safety of non-CPHB research spaces	5. Interaction with Human Subjects	6. Interaction with CPH external partners	7. Efficiency of research team/partner collaboration	8. Travel for research	9. Compliance and Data Security	10. Student Involvement
1. Lab-based research involving animals	X	X	X	X			X		X	X
2. Lab-based research involving biological samples)	X	X	X	X			X		X	X
3. Lab-based research that doesn't involve biological samples or animals (facilities-only)	X	X	X	X			X		X	X
4. Field research/activities	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5. Research involving human subjects on campus	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
6. HSO approved research that does not involve interaction with subjects	X	X	X	X			X		X	X
7. Research and engagement activities/events/meetings	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
8. Research administration and compliance activities	X	X	X				X			

## GUIDELINES FOR COVID-19 RESEARCH RAMP-UP

Guidelines have been developed based on feedback from the committee as well as documents and policies on the Office of the Vice President for Research *COVID-19 Information for Researchers* website (<https://research.uiowa.edu/covid-19-information-researchers>)

### Individual health/symptom monitoring

1. Generally, everyone who is working at the UI needs to develop a cautious mindset:
  - Assume that others you come into contact with throughout your workday/shift may be carriers of the Covid-19 virus.
  - Assume you may be an asymptomatic carrier of the Covid-19 virus.
  - Assume the spread of the virus may have already occurred in the physical environment.
2. Individuals working at the university should follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines and recommendations: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>
  - Keep a minimum of six feet between you and other individuals while at work.
  - Wash and sanitize your hands frequently throughout the workday/shift, especially after touching frequently used surfaces.
  - **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.
  - Cover coughs and sneezes and wash hands.
3. In addition to the above listed guidelines and recommendations, the UI has established the following safety guidelines for employees and supervisors:
  - To the extent possible, everyone on campus is to maintain a minimum of six feet separation throughout the day when arriving and departing from work, during breaks, in locker rooms, when in or on motorized vehicles, and throughout the workday.
  - To the extent possible, supervisors should assign only work that can be accomplished with no less than six feet between individuals.
  - To the extent possible, employees are to conduct their work assignments while maintaining a minimum of six feet separation from other individuals.
  - If work assignments are necessary that will require working in close contact with others (six feet or less), supervisors will detail the appropriate safety actions, which may include wearing a face mask and/or face shield.
  - Even when maintaining a safe distance from other individuals, employees are permitted to wear cloth face masks throughout the workday in accordance with CDC guidelines.
  - Develop a personal transportation plan that minimizes proximity to other people.
4. Do NOT return to work if you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms. Some COVID-related symptoms are in the list below. No single symptom is a perfect indicator, and we

urge personnel to err on the side of caution.

- Fever
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Loss of taste or smell

5. If you come to work and start showing any possible symptoms of illness, you must leave as soon as possible and inform your PI and/or local HR leader.
6. Steps for Self-Reporting COVID-19 Diagnosis to the University (Employees and Supervisors)
  - [https://coronavirus.uiowa.edu/sites/coronavirus.uiowa.edu/files/2020-05/COVID19\\_Self\\_Reporting\\_Diagnosis\\_050620.docx](https://coronavirus.uiowa.edu/sites/coronavirus.uiowa.edu/files/2020-05/COVID19_Self_Reporting_Diagnosis_050620.docx)
  - [https://coronavirus.uiowa.edu/sites/coronavirus.uiowa.edu/files/2020-05/COVID19\\_Self\\_Reporting\\_Diagnosis\\_050620.pdf](https://coronavirus.uiowa.edu/sites/coronavirus.uiowa.edu/files/2020-05/COVID19_Self_Reporting_Diagnosis_050620.pdf)
7. Create a plan in the event of a possible or confirmed case of COVID-19 among lab personnel.
  - Resources are available for self-reporting on the [UI Campus Coronavirus Updates](#) page under Faculty or Staff.
  - Your PI or senior HR leader will follow the [COVID-19 self-reporting protocol](#) to request a cleaning and ensure appropriate notification to fellow employees.
  - The PI should contact their HR supervisor immediately (in CPH Kay Shie).
8. If a positive/presumed positive employee has been identified, the PI should contact their HR supervisor immediately (in CPH: Kay Shie). Working with HR:
  - The PI should close off and discontinue work in all areas in which the employee spent substantial amounts of time while possibly infectious.
  - The PI will request that the research area be cleaned by contacting FM@YourService or (319) 335-5071.
  - The HR leader will supervise communication with the research team following University guidelines.

### **Personnel number and density**

While the spread of COVID-19 remains active, we will have reduced capacity in our research spaces. Safety plans need to identify methods to limit the number of personnel in a workspace, accommodate social distancing when possible, and to ensure adequate protection for all personnel.

1. If multiple people work or interact in the same research space, create a schedule, identify someone to be in charge of maintaining the schedule, and adhere to it. This schedule should minimize the number of people in each laboratory room at any one time, which may require working in shifts and signing up for equipment. A Microsoft Teams or Sharepoint site or other secure online tool can be used to identify who is present in the

research space at any given time and be used as a mechanism for controlling the number of people in the lab at the same time. Open floorplans will require a communication system that spans the entire shared area.

- Distribute a list of duties to be performed by critical personnel with location and designated time of day.
  - Stagger break times to minimize contact between people in rooms used for eating or drinking.
    - Be sure to disinfect surfaces such as tables and chairs before and after use.
    - Wash your hands after using a break room.
2. Create safe spaces to maintain at least 6 feet of distance between researchers at all possible times. Some ideas to support distancing include:
- Post a map inside the entryway with maximum room/bay occupancy to maintain social distancing.
  - Small, narrow rooms on the order of 100-150 square feet (sf) can likely only accommodate one person at a time.
  - Square or rectangle rooms larger than 200 sf can possibly accommodate more, but keep the number to a minimum.
  - To the extent possible, move equipment to create at least 6 feet between users.
  - Use tape to mark out 6-foot spaces for high traffic areas or bottlenecks. If possible, set up one- way traffic zones to minimize interactions.
  - Avoid having individual workstations in areas of high traffic or frequently used shared equipment.
  - If you cannot maintain at least 6 feet of social distance in any direction because of research activities (e.g. animal necropsy), ensure the PE plan addresses close contact.

### **Safety of work environments within CPHB research spaces**

1. Ensure all personnel have appropriate PE. PE can be requisitioned through Shared Services ([uss-public-health@uiowa.edu](mailto:uss-public-health@uiowa.edu)).
  - Always use hand sanitizer or wash hands when entering and exiting the lab/office. Always use hand sanitizer or wash hands after handling shared accessory devices such as phones.
  - Do not begin any work until an adequate stock of personal protective equipment (PE) for the entire shift is available. There are significant disruptions in the PE supply chain during the COVID-19 outbreak.
  - Follow University guidance on use of PE. Unless otherwise indicated, applicable face coverings must be worn by all building occupants when in the presence of

others and in public settings where social distancing is difficult to maintain.

- To remove masks or face shields, do not touch the front; grab the shield/mask from the bands on the side and lift off the head. Place it front-side facing up on a horizontal surface, and then wash/sanitize hands.
- To decontaminate re-usable face shield: Carefully wipe the *inside*, followed by the *outside* of the face shield using an approved cleaner/disinfectant, inspect for damage; if damaged dispose,
- Place in clean location to fully air dry, remove gloves and wash hands
- Employees are permitted to wear cloth face masks throughout the workday in accordance with [CDC guidelines](#). N95 respirators should be reserved for healthcare providers unless previously required for the research activity.
- Do not wear potentially contaminated PE outside of the lab or office.
- To the extent possible, minimize shared items (pens, notebooks, frequently used reagent bottles, computers, desks, etc.).
- Create an enhanced cleaning schedule; see the enhanced cleaning section at the end of this document.

2. Develop a culture of safety and guidelines for office/laboratory safety behaviors.

- Communicate frequently with research team members to support compliance with safety measures and to identify any challenges to compliance and approaches to overcome them.
- Restrict items such as food/beverages or supplies from entering or leaving the research space.
- Develop a system to identify when the office/lab is occupied.
- Develop a protocol for entering/leaving the research space, ensuring that door handles and high touch surfaces are decontaminated.

3. If space is shared between research teams from multiple colleges, work with the Research Office to ensure that all activities are coordinated and all guidelines being met.

4. Create a plan for shared equipment (e.g. lab equipment) and high-touch equipment (e.g. phones, computers, doorknobs, light switches). All shared equipment must be disinfected before and after each use; high-touch equipment should be disinfected every day.

- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting.
- To the extent possible, wear eye protection or a face shield when surface contact is a possibility, e.g. microscopy work.
- Special care should be taken to disinfect shared equipment that makes direct physical contact with skin, including eyepieces for microscopes, touch pads, etc. To the extent possible, don gloves prior to touching equipment surfaces that cannot be disinfected.



- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer immediately after gloves are removed and after any surface contact.
3. Create a plan for interactions with others outside the lab. The University will issue guidance on shared spaces, and research teams should develop plans to follow this guidance.
    - Contact with other labs should be made via phone or electronic means.
    - Transfer of non-hazardous items should be arranged by leaving them in the hallway or other designated area rather than handing them over in person. Transfer of any hazardous item should be done in person while maintaining social distancing between individuals. Items should be decontaminated before and after transfer.
    - Use of shared facilities and other labs' equipment should be pre-arranged in order to minimize contact. Establish and communicate lab sign-in/sign-out procedures.
  4. When entering your office/lab for the first time, ensure that all equipment is in working order.
    - For laboratories, take an inventory of all equipment, specimens, and safety features to ensure everything is working.
    - When starting up equipment that has been idle, make sure start-up protocols are followed and only conducted by personnel approved to use the equipment.
    - Review all pre-existing safety requirements (e.g. posting of campus security numbers in the office, use of PE) and continue to follow safety protocols.
  5. Working alone exposes potential safety issues. Personnel are encouraged to notify others when they are working, and when they are performing a potentially dangerous task (e.g. working with corrosive chemicals). Use email, text, or other modes to notify others when you begin and end these tasks. When working very early in the morning or late at night, notify others when you begin work and when you have left the building safely. Researchers might opt for a 'lab buddy' system to mutually look out for each other's safety. We have now established an automated self check-in system into the buildings that will send updates to a designated person and keep track of when you have logged out of the building safely. This system is activated by scanning a QR code posted at entrances.

## **Safety of work environments external to CPHB (non-CPH research space, non-UI research space, field work).**

All research conducted in non-CPH research spaces need to meet both the guidelines for the college and for the non-CPH space. The Research Office can work with you when the guidance is in conflict. Additional considerations for field research include:

1. Create a list of all the external areas that will be accessed, and ensure that safety precautions will be implemented in each of them. Identify which areas may have people present that are not part of the study activities, and anticipate how interactions can be done safely. For example, stagger entrance to the facility to maintain social distancing.
2. When conducting research in the field, a mask must be worn when there is potential interaction with other people or when activities are in shared spaces.
3. Identify who will be present in the external research area, when they will be there, and what their activities are. Create a scheduling plan to reduce interaction.
4. Develop a communication plan to ensure all research team members are aware of the schedules and policies/procedures for working in the space.
5. Prior to beginning work, request protocols from the external common spaces, and compare these with UI guidelines to ensure all requirements are met. Generally follow the more stringent of the guidelines, and the University of Iowa guidelines must be met at a minimum.
6. When potential interaction with the public is possible, make sure all employees have identification and can describe what/why they are in the external research/field area, and that they can describe the safety precautions being taken.
7. Ensure that travel to field locations is conducted using the safest means possible (see item on travel).

## **Human Subject Research**

### **Human Subject Research Ramp-Up Stages and Timeline**

Guidance for human subject interactions is likely to change over time, and updates will be issued. Current guidelines follow OVPR notices from:

1. Stage 1 ramped down all human subject research except activities that were essential to the health and well being of the participant (May 11, 2020 (<https://research.uiowa.edu/impact/news/limited-clinical-human-subjects-research-may-resume-may-11>)).
2. Stage 2 opened trials coincident visits with clinical care (March 18, 2020 (<https://research.uiowa.edu/impact/news/covid-19-necessitates-research-activity-ramp-down>)) and included the following criteria:
  - Participation in study must not increase the risk that the participant may be exposed to COVID-19.

- Study teams must work with the health care system or clinic on appropriate scheduling of the research component of the visit; study activities must not overburden clinics.
  - Patients may be uncomfortable returning to the health care setting. If that occurs, study team members must be respectful and should be prepared to modify study visit activities with input from the subject, sponsor, and Institutional Review Board.
  - Participants may be asked to go to a different area/room within the hospital/clinic for the study procedures.
3. Stage 3 allows in-person research study visits to resume outside of clinical care settings following conditions announced by the OVPR on June 15, 2020:  
<https://covidresponse.research.uiowa.edu/topics/human-subjects#hsocovidrisks>
4. Throughout these stages, human subject participation may be, and is encouraged to be, conducted remotely (e.g. by Zoom, phone, email).
5. **Plans for the protection of human subjects/participants must include:**
- Provide information about the safety precautions and requirements to participants prior to arrival. This includes parking, entering/exiting the research facility, and use of PE by the study team and the participant. The participant notification should occur within 24 hours of the visit and include:
    - Staff should verbally confirm that the participant is well and explain the screening procedures, if any.
    - For research occurring on campus or in institutional settings, screening procedures in place at the relevant location will be followed.
    - The participant should only bring an accompanying person if they are a caregiver and necessary to attend the appointment to assist the participant. Drivers, for example, should wait in the car.
    - The participant and any participating caregiver must be informed that they will be required to wear a mask throughout the visit, and whether the mask will be provided by the study team. Individuals at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 may also be asked to wear a face shield.
    - Participants should wash their hands before and after entering the research space. Hand sanitizer should be available if a restroom isn't nearby.
    - Report a COVID positive diagnosis to the research team within 14 days from a research visit.
  - Research participants, caregivers and researchers must wear either a surgical/procedural mask or a cloth mask/face covering throughout this visit, except when removal of the mask/covering is necessary for the research procedure. Develop a plan, with appropriate PE, for activities that require physical contact with participants (e.g. blood draws):
    - Provide face shields and masks for all study personnel and participants
    - Wear gloves if there will be direct contact or contact with shared surfaces
  - Plan ahead to maintain distance in all possible instances:
    - Develop staging areas for participants and any accompanying caregivers to minimize contact.

- Develop a participant scheduling plan that ensures social distancing is met and that participants do not interact/overlap with each other.
  - Develop a plan for study procedures and notification if a team member or participant reports a positive COVID test.
  - Develop a plan to clean areas between each participant.
  - Develop a plan to share study materials (e.g. consent forms, paper surveys, electronic survey equipment, incentives) that does not risk spread.
  - Continues to use remote data collection whenever possible.
  - When possible, use non-contact methods for exchanging samples, surveys, or other study items (such as a secure lock box).
  - Consider the needs of vulnerable or high-risk populations in creating safety plans.
6. Human subject research must follow the [Guidelines for All Research Study Teams](#), [Guidelines for In Person Research Study Visits](#) and the [Guidelines for Maintaining Healthy Research Environments](#) as well as additional direction provided by their department, college or study location.
  7. All PE and safety supplies needed by UI personnel and study participants/people who accompany participants must be in place prior to research ramp-up or any participant visit.

PE for study participants can be ordered through shared services, and an MFK for the study must be provided. Participants are allowed to wear their own masks, but one must be provided by the study for any participant who does not have one.

**Travel for research activities** (not commuting or for non-research work). On June 12, the Office of the President announced that domestic travel was no longer restricted for University activities.

1. Travel must go through the standard workflow approval process. Only travel that is essential for approved research activities is permitted. Travel that is not specifically allowed by state guidelines (e.g. international travel) will need to be approved by the OVPR.
2. When travelling to conduct approved research activities, personnel should follow recommendations for safe social distancing. For example, the number of vehicle occupants should be limited to one or two.
3. When travelling for research activities using public transport or shared vehicles, approved research personnel must wear masks.
4. Human subjects participating in approved, in person, research should be provided with recommendations for safe travel.

### **Interaction with CPH external partners (not protected by compliance offices)**

Interaction with CPH external partners (e.g. collaborators, advisors, consultants) must be conducted virtually (e.g. Zoom, Skype, phone, email).

### **Efficiency of research team/partner collaboration**

Currently, research teams are only permitted to meet remotely.

### **Data security and compliance (also as an issue for continued remote work)**

1. To the extent possible, all CPH research activity should be conducted on UI-purchased and IT managed hardware that is not shared for multiple purposes. This includes computers used for remote work.
2. Data safety and compliance standards must be met regardless of research office personnel capacity or location of work, including remote work. If additional data security steps are needed, the Research Office and IT can help develop protocols and needed equipment.
3. For any research activity that is ramping up in a manner that differs from its original protocols, the PI needs to update the funding agency and modify approved protocols to align with current practices.

### **Student involvement in research**

1. Undergraduate students are not currently approved to conduct on-campus research.
2. Graduate students may be approved to conduct on-campus research if the research is required for their advancement to degree, or if they are continuing work on a project that has been approved for ramp-up.

### **OVPR ENHANCED CLEANING PROCEDURES:**

The efficacy of disinfectants is evaluated on pre-cleaned surfaces. Thus, surfaces that are visibly dirty should be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. Disinfection of work and common areas can be achieved with an EPA approved disinfectant. [EPA List N](#) covers disinfectants approved for coronavirus. Follow disinfectant label instructions for adequate contact time to disinfect. If possible, wet towels or wipes with disinfectant rather than spraying; spraying may aerosolize anything that is on surfaces. Do not mix different types of disinfectants and/or cleaning solutions; some may react with each other and may produce dangerous fumes.

### **General Guidance**

1. Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting, **focusing on high-touch surfaces.**
2. Practice good hand hygiene after cleaning (and always):
  - Wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
  - Hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) should only be used if soap and water are not available.

**Safety guidelines during cleaning and disinfection:**

1. Cleaning chemicals should only be used by staff trained on the hazards of those cleaning chemicals.
2. Wear disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting. Wash hands immediately after gloves are removed.
3. Wear eye protection when there is a potential for splash or splatter to the face.
4. Lab coats are recommended to protect personal clothing.
5. Store chemicals in labeled, closed containers. Store them in a manner that prevents tipping or spilling.

**Cleaning and disinfection of surfaces:**

Examples of Work Areas (labs, shared core areas, etc.):

- Benchtops, fume hood and biosafety cabinet sashes and work surfaces, centrifuge lids and bucket caps, waste container lids and handles, etc.
- Handheld devices (pipettors, pipetman, etc.) and other commonly used items.
- Shared PE (laser goggles, safety glasses, etc.).
- Frequently touched surfaces, such as light switches, door handles, knobs and push plates, refrigerator and freezer handles, equipment touch screens, elevator buttons, etc.
- Clean electronics according to manufacturer instructions.

Examples of Common areas (lunchrooms, offices, etc.):

- Refrigerator/freezer handles and shelves.
- Microwave keypad and handle.
- Sink faucets and surrounding surfaces.
- Tables and chairs
- Door handles, knobs, and push plates.
- Clean electronics according to manufacturer instructions.

Information on Facilities Management's COVID-19 operational response and custodial services can be found here: <https://www.facilities.uiowa.edu/coronavirus>