

Office of Research

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FAQs for Research During the Safe Start Time Period: Phase 2 for Reopening

Note: this is a rapidly evolving situation. The answers below represent our best understanding at this time and will be updated as circumstances warrant.

GENERAL TOPICS

Why is the UW allowing research to occur? Aren't we all supposed to stay home?

Research is a core function of the University. As such, the Governor's order allows the University to designate a critical workforce to maintain research continuity.

Many UW employees deemed critical to the University's operations are still working on-site under this directive – practicing appropriate social distancing and other safety techniques – as they staff critical functions, such as our medical enterprise, facilities, and support systems for online learning. That is the case for other sectors as well, such as transportation, energy, and telecommunications, to name a few. Of course, restrictions to ensure social distancing apply in all of these cases.

The impacts of this crisis are vast and deep across our city, our country and the world. We do not know all the areas of research that will be critical for battling the pandemic or for recovering from it, but we do know many will have a role to play. Some areas of research may not be obvious now but should be considered for continued operations. Our research is funded largely from taxpayer dollars, and we have a responsibility to the state and the nation to help in any way we can, both for the current crisis and for the upcoming recovery. It is critical that we balance the need to reduce the number of people coming to their places of work with the need to support the state and the nation. It is expected that during Phase 2, all researchers will carry out any work they can do at home, will minimize the time spent on-site, and will minimize the number of personnel at on-site research facilities at any one time. In addition, it is still the case that no one can be pressured to carry out on-site research if they are concerned about their safety, the safety of others, or if they have home-care obligations. If we all work together on these goals, we will be able to meet this challenge.

Are we now under suspended operations?

No. The University has not declared "suspended operations" and there is currently no intention to do so. A suspension of operations is generally invoked when there are physical challenges that make the campus unsafe, such as snow and ice. As a reminder, the University never closes.

Instead, for the COVID-19 crisis, we have transitioned to what we are terming restricted operations and operate in accordance with orders from the Governor and public health agencies.

What is the difference between "essential personnel" and "critical personnel"?

The essential personnel designation is invoked when the University is in suspended operations, which is not currently the case. While our current "essential" designations may be informative, they may also be insufficient to respond to COVID-19 specifically. Essential personnel are required to work at their usual location, while others are allowed to do so. In our current situation, critical personnel are employees who are

critical to the operation of their unit – including laboratories – and must perform at least some of their duties on-site. Only critical personnel are allowed to come to their usual work location, and not stay at home. For research, critical personnel are those who are involved in carrying out research and, in addition, those who carry out specific critical functions supporting research, such as maintaining critical equipment, caring for animals, monitoring safety issues, etc. that require them to come to their usual work location.

How is the UW safe-guarding research personnel?

Our first priority is to keep our community healthy and safe. Follow the required safety standards:

- Employees who are sick must stay home
- All employees who can telework or work from home without impacting critical operations must do so
- Employees who come to their normal worksite need to adhere to appropriate [social distancing and safety](#) standards which include:
 - [Social distancing](#) of at least 6 feet
 - Frequent laboratory [decontamination](#) and [disinfection](#) procedures
 - Personal safety with appropriate personal protective equipment and frequent hand-washing
 - Please see the posted [guidance for working at onsite research facilities](#)

What is the time period of the Governor’s Safe Start directive?

The [Governor’s Safe Start](#) directive initiated May 5, 2020, we are in [Phase 2](#).

TOPICS REGARDING PLANNING FOR RETURN TO IN-PERSON RESEARCH

On-Site Research

Do I need to stop doing research that I am currently carrying out at home?

No. The Governor’s directive only applies to activities that involve researchers (or to individuals participating in some human subjects research) leaving home.

What areas of on-site research are allowed?

Please follow this [decision tree](#) to determine whether your research is allowed. In general, these areas are allowed:

1. Areas of research previously allowed (still allowed):
 - Research that will help deal with the pandemic
 - Public health research
 - Research that has the potential to lead to therapies to treat human health problems
 - Research that will help the nation recover after the pandemic eases
 - Research involving long-term experiments, or maintaining vital equipment, cell lines, animals, and other time-sensitive research items, for which a pause would cause undue harm and/or cost
 - Some areas of research that involve human subjects, travel, or field work that are already allowed. Please check the links above for more information and for additional allowable research that will be announced in the next few weeks
2. Newly added areas of research as of Phase 2:
 - All areas of research that are **required to meet an upcoming deadline**
 - All facilities that support research, if the support cannot be carried out remotely

Note that certain types of human subjects research are not allowed. Be sure to check this [link](#) for that information. See this [link](#) for an explanation of how these two sets of criteria interact. In addition, restrictions exist for [fieldwork](#) and for research involving [travel](#).

What conditions must be met for my research group to carry out on-site research?

All three of the following conditions must be met for your research group to carry out on-site research:

1. Your research falls into the categories noted at this [link](#)
2. You are able to follow the required safety standards and you have a health and safety plan approved at the division/department/school/or college level:
 - Employees who are sick must stay home
 - [Social distancing](#) of at least 6 feet
 - Frequent laboratory [decontamination](#) and [disinfection](#) procedures
 - Personal safety with appropriate personal protective equipment and frequent hand-washing
 - Please see the [checklist for returning to on-site research](#)
3. Personnel are available and willing to carry out the work safely

Note that certain types of human subjects research are not allowed. Be sure to check this [link](#) for that information. In addition, restrictions exist for [fieldwork](#) and for research involving [travel](#).

What safety precautions must be taken for me to carry out on-site research?

- Employees who are sick must stay home
- [Social distancing](#) of at least 6 feet
- Frequent laboratory [decontamination](#) and [disinfection](#) procedures
- Personal safety with appropriate personal protective equipment and frequent hand-washing
- Please see the [checklist for returning to on-site research](#)

Note that certain types of human subjects research are not allowed. Be sure to check this [link](#) for that information. In addition, restrictions exist for [fieldwork](#) and for research involving [travel](#).

I work on COVID-19 related research. Can I require my research personnel to come in to my laboratory to carry out this research?

Research personnel may not be **required** to come to campus or to their usual work location or go into the field, **unless** they are deemed critical personnel **and** their presence on-site is required to maintain critical operations. All other research personnel must be given the option to work remotely for the next two weeks, even if their job involves work on COVID-19 related research. Note that any research personnel who plan to come to their usual work location need to be designated as critical personnel, part of a list you provide to your unit administrator.

I carry out research that meets the criteria for "critical," but requires two people to work together at less than 6 foot distance for short periods of time. How can I carry out this research?

If 6 feet distance is not possible due to the safety requirement, the University will consider exceptions to social and physical distancing if all other options to accomplish the essential work are not possible. Please see this [link](#) for more information. Approval from the department level unit and additional procedures and personal protective equipment (PPE) are required.

I have sensitive equipment that needs daily maintenance. Can I come in to do this work?

Yes, if you have been designated as "critical personnel" by your supervisor to carry out this work, **and** you follow the safety conditions:

- If you are sick or experiencing even mild symptoms of illness, you are required to stay home

- [Social distancing](#) of at least 6 feet
- Frequent laboratory [decontamination](#) and [disinfection](#) procedures
- Personal safety with appropriate personal protective equipment and frequent hand-washing
- Please see the posted [guidance for working at onsite research facilities](#)

Does the new directive change the already announced restrictions on human subjects research?

No, those restrictions are still in place. Please see the current restrictions and guidance for [human subjects](#).

If I work with animals, will I be able to resume or continue my research?

If your work meets the allowable conditions, animal research is being supported. Please follow this [decision tree](#) to determine whether your research meets the conditions for continuation. If so, you must be able to follow the safety conditions:

- Regularly inform personnel that if they are sick or experiencing even mild symptoms of illness, they are required to stay home
- [Social distancing](#) of at least 6 feet
- Frequent laboratory [decontamination](#) and [disinfection](#) procedures
- Personal safety with appropriate personal protective equipment and frequent hand-washing
- Please see the posted [guidance for working at onsite research facilities](#)

Note that one of the areas of critical duties involves the care and well-being of animals used for research. Even if you are not actively carrying out research on animals, if you are responsible for their care and well-being, you must have designated critical personnel for that purpose.

What facilities are open to support my research?

As of this time, all central research support offices are functioning remotely (e.g. OSP, HSD, GCA, ORIS, OAW, EH&S). Recharge or cost center facilities that support research are assessing their situation on a case by case basis. Please contact them directly. Most are listed along with contact information on a searchable site [here](#).

Will I be able to submit proposals through OSP?

Yes, all those eligible to submit proposals under usual conditions can continue to submit proposals. OSP is working remotely, accepting proposals through [SAGE](#) and carrying out review and submission.

Can I still carry out human subjects research?

Some human subjects research is still possible, but restrictions exist. Please read more about this topic [at the Human Subjects Division's website](#). See this [link](#) for information about how the human subjects restrictions interact with the more general limitations on UW research.

I need to finish experiments the next two weeks to meet my thesis deadline, and I have a job waiting for me. Can I go into my lab to get this work done?

Note that certain types of human subjects research are not allowed. Be sure to check this [link](#) for that information. For other research, this is allowed as long as you can follow the required safety conditions:

- Regularly inform personnel that if they are sick or experiencing even mild symptoms of illness, they are required to stay home
- [Social distancing](#) of at least 6 feet
- Frequent laboratory [decontamination](#) and [disinfection](#) procedures
- Personal safety with appropriate personal protective equipment and frequent hand-washing
- Please see the posted [guidance for working at onsite research facilities](#)

I have a job lined up and have accepted it, but it requires that I submit the paper I am working on. Can I come into the lab to finish up a few experiments to meet that requirement?

Note that certain types of human subjects research are not allowed. Be sure to check this [link](#) for that information. For other research, this is allowed as long as you can follow the required safety conditions:

- Regularly inform personnel that if they are sick or experiencing even mild symptoms of illness, they are required to stay home
- [Social distancing](#) of at least 6 feet
- Frequent laboratory [decontamination](#) and [disinfection](#) procedures
- Personal safety with appropriate personal protective equipment and frequent hand-washing
- Please see the posted [guidance for working at onsite research facilities](#)

I carry out research that meets the criterion for "critical," but for safety reasons, requires a minimum of two or more people to be in the laboratory. How can I carry out this research?

If 6 feet distance is not possible due to the safety requirement, in RARE INSTANCES, the University will consider exceptions to social and physical distancing if all other options to accomplish the essential work are not possible. Please see [EH&S guidance](#) regarding exceptions. Approval from the department level unit and additional procedures and personal protective equipment (PPE) are required.

Fieldwork

Am I allowed to do fieldwork, or carry out work in a remote location other than my home?

Check with your unit for their advice and go over these documents: [UW Fieldwork Health and Safety Plan \(COVID Return: Phases 1-2\)](#) and [Returning to In-Person Research Involving Fieldwork: Decision Tree](#), regarding guidance for carrying out field work. In general, if your research falls into one of the allowed categories, your travel is local, the travel can be carried out safely, you feel comfortable carrying out that travel, AND you can stay 6 feet away from all others both during the travel and during the field work involving longer travel and/or conditions that require some time at less than 6 ft distance, more restrictions will be in place. Please refer to the guidance noted above.

Do I need to fill out every section of the Field Health and Safety Plan for my fieldwork?

It depends on your research. Not all elements of this [plan](#) are appropriate for all fieldwork. Local fieldwork with no overnight stay will not require as many elements as fieldwork with extensive travel and/or multiple overnight stays. Please consult your local unit requirements if you are unsure which apply to your fieldwork.

I need to drive to a local estuary to obtain some water samples, and I need a coworker to come with me to help. What parts of the Field Health and Safety Plan do I need to fill out?

First, be sure there is no way the samples can be collected safely by one person. If single person work is not possible, then because the work is local, involves same day activities, and only involves one other person, the Plan can be streamlined. These sections are important: Site Information, Attestations of Health, Activities Equipment and Supplies, and Personal Protective Equipment. Be sure to look through the other sections to be certain you have thought through any relevant issues noted there. Social distancing should still be practiced. If that is not possible, you need to propose protective measures in your [Field Health and Safety Plan](#), which must be approved by your Department Chair or equivalent. You must minimize the time spent at less than 6 feet of distance and minimize the number of people involved. Face coverings and increased hand-washing/hand gel application is necessary. UW's [Department of Environmental Health and Safety](#) is available to provide advice on working safely at less than 6 foot distances, as necessary.

Remember, when interacting for significant time periods with more than one person at under 6 foot distance, if anyone is diagnosed with COVID-19, the entire team will need to self-isolate for two weeks. Thus, it is important to institute a high level of protection.

Note that it is important to ensure you have permission to take samples and that you know the local COVID-19 related requirements.

My fieldwork involves going into a local community and interacting with individuals. Is this work allowed, and do I need to fill out the Field Health and Safety Plan?

Such work may be allowed, subject to guidance by the UW Human Subjects Division (HSD) [here](#). Completion of HSD's "CHECKLIST for Human Subjects Research during the COVID-19 Pandemic" is required.

My fieldwork requires me and my team to work with heavy equipment that requires multiple people to be closer than 6 feet of distance. Is this allowed?

If your work requires you to be less than 6 feet of distance, you need to propose protective measures in your Field Health and Safety Plan, which must be approved by your Department Chair or equivalent. You must minimize the time spent at less than 6 feet of distance and minimize the number of people involved. Face coverings and increased hand-washing/hand gel application are necessary. UW's [Department of Environmental Health and Safety](#) is available to provide advice on working safely at less than 6 foot distances, as necessary.

Remember, when interacting for significant time periods with more than one person at under 6 foot distance, if anyone is diagnosed with COVID-19, the entire team will need to self-isolate for two weeks. Thus, it is important to institute a high level of protection.

I am participating in fieldwork on a cruise, and I will be required to observe the ship-mandated protocols before, during, and after time on the ship. Do I also need to fill out the UW Field Health and Safety Plan?

No, it is sufficient to provide the ship's protocols in writing to your Department head or equivalent for approval, if the ship's protocol has the same information as required in the UW field safety plan. If not, supplement the ship's protocol with any additional required information where possible. If this fieldwork involves international travel, you must apply for a [waiver](#) through the Office of Global Affairs. Such waiver requests must adequately justify why the research is critical, why it cannot be delayed, and include health and safety protocols to be followed.

I have heard that in order to carry out fieldwork on a ship, it is necessary to quarantine for 2 weeks and then be tested before boarding. Does the UW require the same?

Those embarking on a cruise with a UNOLS vessel must adhere to the UNOLS quarantine and testing requirements. For other research cruises, while UW does not require them at this time, quarantine and testing are highly recommended for any research cruise of significant duration. EH&S is in the process of developing requirements and guidance on this topic. Of course, all requirements under which the ship will be operating for the cruise, including the ship's protocol, must be met.

Our fieldwork is carried out at a different site by personnel we hire who are already at that site. Since there is no travel involved to the site, do I need to fill out a Health and Safety Plan?

Yes, you need to consider the health and safety of those personnel. They must follow and be trained on University and all local requirements. The requirements and training must be documented. In addition, if they are UW employees, they must carry out the required daily symptom attestation in Workday or via other acceptable means as determined by HR. Information on symptom monitoring is listed on the [UW Guidance for Symptom Monitoring for COVID-19](#). If they are not UW employees, you must have them attest each day in a

written format on paper, email or an online survey. If the field site is not their usual workplace and they must travel to the field site itself, then that travel needs to be addressed in the Health and Safety Plan. If the fieldwork involves time on a boat, additional considerations should be addressed, including the safety of the crew, cleaning and disinfection schedules, PPE, procedures for responding to illness developed after boarding, and social distancing.

I need to carry out fieldwork on day trips in a small boat. What precautions should I take?

Please see the EH&S guidance, [COVID-19 Prevention Guidelines for Small Boat Operations](#).

PERSONNEL-RELATED TOPICS

Why aren't all graduate students and postdocs required to be at home?

Most are at home. Some graduate students and postdocs have been designated "critical personnel", who are needed on-site to maintain critical equipment, care for animals, monitor safety issues, etc. They are required to carry out this work on-site. Anyone, including graduate students and postdocs, who is designated critical and directed by their supervisor to report to work, needs to report to work. However, if critical employees are in a high-risk category or are concerned about safety, supervisors are asked to do their best to accommodate their employees without impacting critical operations. If accommodations are not possible, please contact central Human Resources for problem solving and support. No graduate student or postdoc will be required to come to their usual place of work during the Safe Start Phase 2 time period. Accommodations will be made.

What should I do if my research mentor asks me to do something I don't consider safe?

Some units have a process in place for such situations, be sure to check first. In general, you should discuss this issue with your unit head (Chair, Director, or Dean) or the lead administrator of your unit. If this is not feasible and if you are in a Department, contact your Dean's Office. If your employment contract is under a collective bargaining agreement with the University, you can also contact your union representative.

What if I have undergraduates in my laboratory? Can they still work on their research, if they are willing to do so?

Certain types of human subjects research are not allowed. Be sure to check this [link](#) for that information. In addition, restrictions exist for [fieldwork](#) and for research involving [travel](#). Note that some Schools, Colleges, or Departments may make local decisions about undergraduate research that are more restrictive. Be sure to check with your unit head about this.

For other research, undergraduates may carry out research remotely. If the research is critical, they may carry out on-site research, but only if they are deemed critical personnel. If they are deemed critical personnel, they must follow the required safety conditions:

- Regularly inform personnel that if they are sick or experiencing even mild symptoms of illness, they are required to stay home
- [Social distancing](#) of at least 6 feet
- Frequent laboratory [decontamination](#) and [disinfection](#) procedures
- Personal safety with appropriate personal protective equipment and frequent hand-washing
- Please see the posted [guidance for working at onsite research facilities](#)

In most cases, these conditions could only be met if the student were already trained and semi-independent, in order to keep the 6 foot distance required.

Are undergraduates allowed to carry out in-person research either for pay or for 499 credit?

Certain types of human subjects research are not allowed. Be sure to check this [link](#) for that information. In addition, restrictions exist for [fieldwork](#) and for research involving [travel](#). Note that some Schools, Colleges, or Departments may make local decisions about undergraduate research that are more restrictive. Be sure to check with your unit head about this.

For other research, undergraduates may carry out research remotely. In addition, they may carry out approved on-site research, but they must follow the required safety conditions:

- Regularly inform personnel that if they are sick or experiencing even mild symptoms of illness, they are required to stay home
- [Social distancing](#) of at least 6 feet
- Frequent laboratory [decontamination](#) and [disinfection](#) procedures
- Personal safety with appropriate personal protective equipment and frequent hand-washing
- Please see the posted [guidance for working at onsite research facilities](#)

In most cases, these conditions could only be met if the student were already trained and semi-independent, in order to keep the 6 foot distance required.

How will I get paid if I am assigned to be doing lab work but I am required to stay at home?

All opportunities for telework for non-critical staff should be explored and implemented. If you **cannot** telework, your unit should contact central Human Resources immediately to evaluate if you may be appropriate or eligible for reassignment to critical areas of work. If non-critical staff **cannot** telework and **cannot** be reassigned, units will work with central Human Resources to find a solution.