

Returning to In-Person Research: Decision Tree

Last Update: 3/23/2021

Note: The information provided below refers to the gradual reopening of research during the Governor's Phase 3 directive. Since this is a rapidly moving area, please check the UW Coronavirus [website](#) often for updates.

Note: Special restrictions are still in place for certain types of research, which supersede other allowances. At this time, even if your research may be eligible based on the guidance below, it may still be restricted under these human subjects, travel, and field work directives:

- [Resuming Some Human Subjects Research](#)
- research requiring [travel](#)
- research involving fieldwork: [UW Fieldwork Health and Safety Plan \(COVID Prevention\)](#) and [Returning to In-Person Research Involving Fieldwork: Decision Tree](#)

Note: Each dean-level unit may have specific requirements in addition to those listed here. Be certain to check your local requirements before acting on the information here.

The decision to begin to return to in-person research should be based on following the decision tree at the bottom of this document and in close consultation with your department chair or director, and College or School.

What areas of in-person* research are allowable under the Governor's Phase 3 for reopening the state directive?

**in-person refers to an in-person, face-to-face, and/or facility-based activity.*

Unless already determined to be an exception, all research must be carried out while maintaining social distancing of 6-feet at all times. It is your responsibility to ensure critical tasks not possible to be performed while maintaining the current 6-foot separation requirement are reviewed and approved by the unit head or designee, and consult on enhanced safety protocol with [EH&S](#) as needed. See the checklist on the *University of Washington COVID-19 Prevention Plan for the Workplace* on the [EH&S COVID-19 Health and Safety Resources](#) webpage and review the guidance on "[Research at Less than Six Foot Apart.](#)"

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.

Newly added areas of research as of Phase 3:

- 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 (see the, "[Travel and study abroad](#)" section of the [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#) page and the [Office of Global Affairs, Travel Restrictions Policy](#) page.)

I have reviewed this guidance, including the decision tree below, and I am still not sure my research qualifies, who can I ask?

Send your question to research@uw.edu with the subject line COVID-19 and we will reply as soon as possible.

Decision Tree

Decision tree to determine whether your in-person research meets criteria for operation under Phase 3 of the [Governor Inslee's Healthy Washington: Roadmap to Recovery](#)? Be certain that your research meets the criteria for research involving [human subjects](#) or [travel](#).

1. Safety standards--can you accommodate all of the safety standards below?

Question 1a. Can you maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet at all times when researchers are in the facility? This will preclude teaching new techniques to others, unless it can be accomplished while maintaining at least 6 feet distance. It will also preclude techniques that need more than 2 hands, unless an alternate approach can be devised, and it will preclude dangerous experiments that require two people in close proximity, unless such experiments, a) meet the [guidance from EH&S](#) (see the *University of Washington COVID-19 Prevention Plan for the Workplace*), b) meet the requirements in "[Research at Less than Six Foot Apart](#)," c) are approved by the department chair or equivalent and, included in the [UW Fieldwork Health and Safety Plan \(COVID Prevention\)](#). In some cases, it will require strict scheduling.

If yes, go to question 1b.

Question 1b. Can you carry out frequent laboratory decontamination procedures? This requires access to disinfecting solutions or wipes, and a schedule to wipe down surfaces regularly, wipe down common equipment before and after use, and wipe down lab benchtops before and after use.

If yes, go to question 1c.

Question 1c. Can you maintain personal safety with appropriate personal protective equipment and frequent hand washing?

If yes, go to question 2.

If you answer yes to all of these questions, go to question 2. If you answer no to any one of them, you are not allowed to carry out your research during Phase 2.

2. Personnel

Question 2a. Do you have personnel available to carry out the research? It may be difficult to hire new personnel under the current situation.

If yes, go to question 2b.

If no, you are not allowed to carry out your research during Phase 2

Question 2b. Are the personnel you need to do the experiments willing to come into your facility to carry them out? You cannot pressure or require them to work, unless they are critical personnel for specific tasks. In that case, you still cannot ask them to do more than is required by their designation.

If yes, **you are approved** for carrying out in-person research, subject to any additional requirements your local unit may have in place and the current restrictions on some human subjects research, travel, and field work. Please be sure to minimize the number of personnel in your research space at any one time.

If no, you are not allowed to carry out in-person research during the Governor's Phase 2.

Consult your departmental, school or college requirements on approvals or reporting of your return to research plans.