

Returning to In-Person Research Involving Fieldwork: Decision Tree

Last Update: 6/23/2020

The information provided below refers to the gradual reopening of research involving fieldwork during Phase 2 of the [Governor's Safe Start Plan](#). Since this is a rapidly moving area, please check the [UW Coronavirus website](#) and [EH&S COVID-19 Health and Safety Resources](#) often for updates.

The decision to begin to return to in-person fieldwork should be based on following this decision tree and in close consultation with your department chair or director, and College or School. Each dean-level unit may have specific requirements in addition to those listed here, so please be certain to check your local requirements before acting on the information contained herein. See the [University of Washington COVID-19 Prevention Plan for the Workplace](#) and [COVID-19 Prevention Guidelines for Small Boat Operations](#) for further details on Unit-level prevention plan approvals.

For the purpose of this decision tree, field work is defined as follows: activities authorized by the University conducted for the purpose of study, research, service, or teaching which are undertaken by faculty, staff, students, and/or volunteers. These activities take place outside the usual assigned workstation or location for faculty, staff, students, and/or volunteers. Usual workstations include labs, desks, and on-campus/home offices.

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

- [human subjects research](#)
- [research requiring travel abroad](#)

Decision Tree

Does your fieldwork meet the following criteria for implementation under Phase 2 of the [Governor's Safe Start Plan](#)?

1. Is your fieldwork allowable?

Question 1a. Will your fieldwork help deal with the pandemic, help the nation recover after the pandemic eases, fall into the category of public health research, have the potential to lead to therapies to treat human health problems, or otherwise fall within the [Governor's definition of essential critical operations](#)?

Question 1b. Is your fieldwork required to meet an upcoming deadline? Examples include funding deadlines and seasonally-dependent data collection/field work.

Question 1c. Do you help support a facility that supports research?

Question 1d. If applicable, does your fieldwork meet the criteria for continuation for research involving [human subjects](#) or [travel](#)?

If you answer "yes" to any of Questions 1a-1c and "N/A" or "yes" to Question 1d, go to Question 2. If you cannot answer "yes" to any of Questions 1a-1c, then you are not allowed to carry out your fieldwork during Phase 2.

2. Will you be able to develop and implement a SPECIFIC Project Health and Safety Plan for your fieldwork that meets the university's safety standards below?

Question 2a. Can you establish a framework for your fieldwork that:

- verifies the health of the entire field team prior to departure, includes daily health attestations, and minimizes external interactions during the entire project period;
- ensures individuals who are experiencing illness symptoms do not participate in the fieldwork (including the ability to isolate individuals if they begin to feel ill while in the field);
- maintains social distancing of at least 6 feet through scheduling and/or physical distancing
- provides and utilizes additional appropriate PPE for times when distancing is impossible;
- documents a symptom attestation for the entire field team prior to departure and minimizes external interactions during the entire project period?

If you answer “yes”, go to Question 2b. If you answer “no”, but you believe you have an extraordinary circumstance, contact [HSD](#) for human subjects research, or [EH&S](#) (at 206-543-7262 or ehsdept@uw.edu) for all other research.

Question 2b. Do you have the appropriate cleaning supplies and ability to clean/sanitize 1) PPE and equipment before and after each use, and 2) frequently touched surfaces in all shared work and living spaces on a daily basis?

Question 2c. Do you have the appropriate type and amount of personal protective equipment for each member of the field team?

Question 2d. Do you have an approved [Project Health and Safety Plan](#) specific to your fieldwork? This plan should describe the protocols and procedures to be used to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and respond if the virus is discovered or suspected within the field team, and include as appropriate, information specific to your proposed fieldwork on:

- Site access and documentation of permission
- Minimum number of personnel required to safely carry out the proposed fieldwork
- Documentation of personnel, contact information, and training
- Procedures for pre-departure and daily attestations of health
- Transportation logistics (including refueling procedures, sanitization procedures of personnel and equipment before/after use)
- Locations and contacts of relevant medical facilities and first responders
- First-aid training requirements and supplies (e.g., thermometers) in the field
- Provisions (including preparation, distribution, and procurement)
- Housing logistics (including at home/lodging assignments/field tents)
- Specific PPE required for the project to be carried out safely (including when/how it is to be stored, used, cleaned, and disposed of)
- Specific processes/schedules for field work activities and/or equipment that enable social distancing and frequent cleaning
- Specific cleaning procedures, including handwashing, and cooking or eating facilities, and supplies needed
- Supplemental practices and procedures appropriately modified for the needs of the specific project (e.g., UW EH&S small boat guidelines)
- Restrictions for UW employees/volunteers on leaving field site(s) during the course of the fieldwork
- Additional externally-required health and safety measures**
- A communication plan that includes receiving and sending regular updates
- Pre-departure checklists – including training, procurement of supplies, isolation protocols
- Daily checklists- including cleaning procedures, PPE use, and other decontamination procedures
- Post-return checklists – including cleaning and storage of equipment/supplies, vehicle returns, isolation protocols

- Use of virus testing prior to departure or upon return if determined by the PI or UW EH&S to help mitigate actual or perceived spread of COVID-19
- Anticipated interaction with individuals outside of the field team and mitigation of actual or perceived spread through this contact
- Protocols for responding to illness within the field team, including options of self-isolation, transportation, and treatment at nearest medical facilities, as necessary

** All externally-imposed health and safety requirements tied to the use of externally-controlled resources must meet or exceed those of the University of Washington as described in Question 2a-2c.

If you can answer yes to all of these questions, go to Question 3. If you cannot yes to any of these questions, you are not allowed to carry out your fieldwork during Phase 2.

If the answer to any of these questions becomes no at any point prior to or during the project period, you are not allowed to carry out/continue your proposed fieldwork during the Governor's Phase 2.

3. If applicable, are the externally-controlled resources required for your fieldwork available and do the conditions on their use promote the health and safety of your field team?

Question 3a. If applicable, does the property owner(s) or management entity agree that your field site(s) will be accessible during the proposed project period?

Question 3b. If applicable, will the externally-controlled resources (e.g., ships, aircraft, vehicles, etc.) required for the fieldwork be available for your use during the proposed project period?

Question 3c. If applicable, will the external collaborators required for the fieldwork be available and permitted to participate by their home institutions during the proposed project period?

Question 3d. If applicable, do the externally-imposed health and safety requirements tied to the use of externally-controlled resources meet or exceed those of the University of Washington as described in Question 2a-2c?

If you answer "N/A" or "yes" to all of these questions, go to Question 4. If you cannot answer "N/A" or "yes" to any of these questions, you are not allowed to carry out your fieldwork during Phase 2.

4. Do you have enough willing employees/volunteers necessary to safely carry out the fieldwork?

Question 4a. Do you have the required personnel available to safely carry out the proposed fieldwork?

Question 4b. Have you or will you share your approved Project Health and Safety Plan with your entire field team prior to the project start date (or departure, if applicable)?

Question 4c. Have you notified your field team that your approved Project Health and Safety Plan is meant to significantly mitigate the risk of COVID-19 exposure and transmission, but is not a substitute for self-isolation for individuals who may have concerns about their health or that of others?

Question 4d. Are the personnel required to do the fieldwork safely willing to participate under all work and living protocols established in the approved Project Health and Safety Plan? PIs/supervisors cannot pressure or require individuals to go into the field.

If you can answer “yes” to all of these questions throughout the duration of your fieldwork, you are approved to implement your proposed fieldwork during Phase 2, subject to any additional requirements your local unit may have in place and the current restrictions on some human subjects research and travel.

If the answer to any of these questions is “no” at any point prior to or during the project period, you are not allowed to carry out/continue your proposed fieldwork during the Governor’s Phase 2.

I have reviewed this guidance, including the decision tree and Fieldwork Health and Safety Plan template, with my department chair/director and I am still not sure my fieldwork qualifies, who can I ask?

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