

## **Plans for Reopening Research across Campus**

This document will guide faculty, staff, and trainees as they plan for the reopening of research in the coming weeks and months. The first responsibility of Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) is to their own studies, so for the purposes of research planning, GRAs should be considered as students first, and as employees second.

### ***Guiding Principles***

Principle 1: The university's top priority is the emotional and physical health and safety of its faculty, staff, and students, as well as the health and safety of those living in the District of Columbia/Maryland/Virginia (DMV) region. No one should feel pressured to return to a research laboratory setting if they are uncomfortable doing so.

Principle 2: All schools and units will coordinate their plans to reopen with those of other schools and units sharing adjacent space as well as with central administration while following directives from local, state, and national public health authorities regarding stay-at-home orders and social distancing. Prematurely opening buildings may result in a sharp increase in infection rates that threatens the lives of the GW community and DMV residents.

Principle 3: COVID Research Task Force(s) has/have been established to provide guidance and oversight for the reopening process. In the event that research labs must ramp down again, appropriate protocols should be followed and the [Laboratory Ramp-Down Checklist should be consulted](#). In addition, the Office of the Vice President for Research continuously updates information on the impacts on research activities here: <https://sponsoredprojects.gwu.edu/covid-19>.

Principle 4: The ramp up of research will follow a carefully planned, orderly, transparent and phased process, as outlined below.

### ***Phases of Reopening***

Research (both lab-based and social sciences research) will not be the same as it was before the pandemic. While much of the research at the university has been put on hold, we have not shut down completely. Select laboratories have continued with projects using appropriate safety equipment and maintaining proper social distancing. The Office of Animal Research, the Office of Laboratory Safety, the Division of Safety and Security, and Facilities staff will continue to provide essential services and oversight.

#### ***Research Phase 0: Current State***

- Continue research that is possible through entirely online means.
- Select research projects, including COVID-related research, are allowed to continue or commence.
- Only essential personnel are allowed on campus.
- Core facilities are available under special consideration and maintain specific requirements for safety.
- Strict observation of all safety protocols to include, but not limited to, social distancing, personal hygiene, decontamination and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

#### ***Research Phase 1: Limited Reopening (June 8, 2020)***

- Population density may be increased in a manner consistent with university, federal and district or state guidelines (12.5-25% of a lab's or program's staff may be allowed on campus at any one time subject to considerations in the sections below).
- Strict observation of all safety protocols to include, but not limited to, social distancing, personal hygiene, decontamination and appropriate use of PPE.
- Projects not involving chemical or radiological hazards, stopped as part of ramp-down, will be identified and prioritized for phased restart.

- Priority will be given to graduate students and postdocs who are close to completing their degrees/terms of appointment. This includes students and postdocs working on analytical and computationally oriented research.
- Priority will be given to principal investigators (PIs) with grants within four months of their end dates, and/or where the sponsor is not flexible with no cost extensions.
- Research projects conducted on campus using human subjects, and involving direct subject interactions and interventions, can be restarted in a manner consistent with the GW Medical Faculty Associates (MFA), university, federal and district guidelines.
- Necessary core facilities will be reopened in a limited capacity. Staffing and operations of the facilities will be kept at a minimum and training of new users may be suspended.

### ***Research Phase 2: Expanded Reopening (Date TBD)***

- Population density will be increased over Phase 1 in a manner that is consistent with university, federal and district and state guidelines.
- Projects involving biological, chemical or radiological hazards, stopped as part of ramp-down, will be identified and prioritized for phased restart.
- Research projects conducted off campus using human subjects, and involving direct subject interactions and interventions, can be restarted in a manner consistent with MFA, university, federal and district or state guidelines (to include travel restrictions).
- Other core facilities will be reopened. Staffing and operations of the facilities will be expanded as needed.

### ***Research Phase 3: Resume Total Research Programs (Date TBD)***

- All personnel may return to campus following any new and/or permanent implementation of safety guidelines.
- New projects may be started.
- All research facilities will be reopened.
- Undergraduate researchers will be allowed back in laboratories subject to safety guidelines.

### ***Determination of Phase 1 Personnel***

Each PI or unit head will determine who from their teams should return to work during this phase. Some considerations:

- PhD students and postdocs who must complete experiments to meet a thesis deadline, submit a paper for publication, or submit a grant proposal.
- Team members who volunteer to return.
- Undergraduate and high school students will not be allowed in laboratories. Requests for exceptions must be approved by the school's associate dean for research and forwarded to [askovpr@gwu.edu](mailto:askovpr@gwu.edu) for review and final approval.
- Expertise needed to operate facilities.
- Attempt to allow each lab member to return to campus at least one day a week in order to enjoy some progress on their projects.

### ***Scheduling and Coordination of Work Hours***

Each laboratory, facility and team should develop a calendar system to schedule work shifts throughout the week, including weekends. Shifts should be flexible and could range anywhere from 2 to 12 hours in length. An example would be to have specific people on campus on certain days of the week.

- Team members should communicate openly and often to coordinate and adjust schedules as necessary.

- Team members should plan to use their time in the laboratory for bench time only. Updating notebooks, reading, and writing should be done remotely.
- For laboratory work, a team member's bench should be used only by that team member. If this is not possible due to space constraints and benches must be shared, complete and proper decontamination of the bench space must be done before and after each use.

### **Health and Safety**

- Students, staff, and faculty who feel ill, no matter the cause, must stay home and not perform work of any kind in the laboratory. They should follow standard protocols for unplanned absences and communicate by phone or email to relevant parties (professors, supervisors, etc.) to let them know they are sick.
- Workers must maintain a minimum distance of six feet from others when in the laboratory and other shared facilities.
- Workers must wear face masks at all times and access to PPE and cleaning supplies is critical.
- Labs and core facilities may require additional PPE and cleaning protocols.
- If you think you or someone you know has been in contact with someone who is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, please complete this form: [GW Possible Contact Form](#).
- GW's live-answer Information Line for COVID-19 related questions is available Monday through Friday (9am – 5pm) and can be reached at 1-855-GWU-INFO (855-498-4636).
- Consequences for not following health and safety protocols are at the discretion of the PI or lab/unit head, but should be approximate to the following. If the non-compliant individual is the PI or lab/unit head then the Associate Dean for Research should be notified.
  - First infraction – documented warning.
  - Second infraction – suspension from the lab or facility for one (1) week. Notification should be provided to the non-compliant individual's supervisor and directed to the Associate Dean for Research to manage the suspension.
  - Third suspension from the lab or facility for one (1) week. Notification should be provided to the non-compliant individual's supervisor and directed to the Associate Dean for Research to manage the suspension.
  - Subsequent infractions – Notification should be provided to the non-compliant individual's supervisor and directed to the Associate Dean for Research to take appropriate action.

All faculty, staff, and students must adhere to GW policies regarding COVID-19. We are confident that faculty and staff understand the importance of these policies and will operate their laboratories accordingly.

- [University Updates](#)
- [Prevention Guidelines](#)
- [Travel Information](#)
- [Working From Home](#)
- [SMHS Health Updates](#)
- [Ways To Help](#)
- [FAQs](#)

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