

## **Plans for Reopening Research across Campus – Release 3**

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 Provost 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 or adapted to being conducted virtually, 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, and the Division of Safety and Facilities will continue to provide essential services and oversight.

#### ***Research Phase 0***

- 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. Any lab and shared area may be utilized up to 25% of its capacity. Principal investigators or project leaders may determine how best to divide responsibilities or rotate team members to ensure a safe density of personnel subject to considerations in the sections below. Coordination will be essential in areas shared by multiple projects or teams from multiple departments and schools.
- 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, Limited Reopening (October 9, 2020)**

- Per [university guidance](#), as of Friday, August 28th at 5:00 pm, access to all of GW's campuses was limited to ONLY those who have special permission to be on campus. Those who are granted permission have received detailed information that includes how to participate in a mandatory training, undergo regular COVID-19 testing, and strictly follow all public health guidelines in effect.
- Strict observation of all safety protocols to include, but not limited to, social distancing, personal hygiene, decontamination and appropriate use of PPE.
- Population density may be increased in a manner consistent with university, federal and district or state guidelines. Any lab and shared area may be utilized up to 50% of its capacity. Principal investigators or project leaders may determine how best to divide responsibilities or rotate team members to ensure a safe density of personnel subject to considerations in the sections below. Coordination will be essential in areas shared by multiple projects or teams from multiple departments and schools.
- Projects involving biological, chemical or radiological hazards, stopped as part of ramp down, will be identified and prioritized for phased restart.
- Investigators can restart research projects conducted *off campus* using human subjects, and involving direct subject interactions and interventions, in a manner consistent with MFA, university, federal and district or state guidelines (to include travel restrictions). [The GW Office of Human Research has provided additional guidance.](#)
- Priority will be given to students and postdocs who are close to completing their degrees/terms of appointment or need access to campus facilities to fulfill academic requirements. This includes students and postdocs working on analytical and computationally oriented research.
- Most core facilities have reopened. Staffing and operations of the facilities will be expanded as needed while adhering to all safety and density guidelines. Training of new users may remain suspended.
- Undergraduate and graduate students have been approved to work on site in laboratories on a very limited basis. If not already granted access, requests must be submitted by the student to the school's Associate Dean for Research with supporting documentation from the principal investigator. Requests must acknowledge that the student will follow all required safety protocols. The Associate Dean for Research will review and seek final approval.
- If faculty or staff require access to campus in order to conduct research and have not yet received permission, requests must be submitted in a timely fashion and are being managed as follows:
  - Faculty requests must be submitted to the school's Dean for Faculty Affairs
  - Staff requests must be submitted through their HR Client Partner, with approval from the unit Dean or Vice President

### **Research Phase 3: Resume Total Research Programs (June 11, 2021)**

- All research personnel may return to campus, with the support of their supervisor, by following the verification process of vaccine completion. Additional information can be found [here](#).
- 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.
- High school students will not be allowed in laboratories. Undergraduate students will be allowed in laboratories on a very limited basis. 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 update their schedules to adhere to current public health protocols.

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

### **Health and Safety**

- GW will require students, faculty, and staff who are in person to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Limited exemptions will be granted for medical or religious reasons. More information can be found [here](#).
- 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 wear face masks indoors at all times and access to PPE and cleaning supplies is critical.
- Social distancing requirements are no longer in place.
- 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. If the non-compliant individual is the PI or lab/unit head then the Associate Dean for Research should be notified.

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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