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Office of the Vice President for Research

COVID-19 Guidance for the UConn Research Community

› Ramp-Up: Phased Process for Reopening Research at UConn and UConn Health

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Questions?

OVPR Contacts or email ovpr@uconn.edu

Ramp-Up: Phased Process for Reopening Research at UConn and UConn Health

Consistent with Governor Lamont's [April 30th Update on Connecticut's Coronavirus Response Efforts](#), the OVPR is targeting a phased reopening of UConn and UConn Health research programs to begin on May 20, 2020 (Phase 2 in the posted Ramp-Up: Phased Process for Reopening Research at UConn and UConn Health). This document provides guiding principles and processes for a phased approach to reopening research at UConn and UConn Health while addressing state and federal directives and guidelines related to COVID-19. Instituting a similar process will be established for the Arts and Humanities that reflects the specific needs and concerns of scholarly activity in those areas.

Principles

- The health and safety of faculty, staff, students, patients, the public, and human research subjects will be protected.
 - Directives and guidance from local, state, and federal authorities to minimize disease spread and exposure will be followed, such as restrictions related to essential businesses, social distancing, reduced density, stay-at-home, and masks.
 - Faculty, staff, and students are not required to work in either on-campus research or in field research while stay-at-home directives are in effect, or in a manner contrary to current and applicable directives and guidance from local, state, and federal authorities. Faculty, staff, and students may choose to work either on campus or in field research while stay-at-home

directives are in effect, but their choice to do so must be made voluntarily and without undue influence or coercion. Any request to work on campus or in field research can be declined at any time without any fear of retaliation or retribution while work-from-home directives are in place. Any concerns can be reported anonymously through the REPORTLINE by calling a toll-free number at (888) 685-2637, the [Office of University Compliance's website](#), [🔗](#) or the [Ombuds Office](#) [🔗](#). The University welcomes and encourages good-faith reporting. As such, individuals who submit a report or participate in a compliance investigation in good faith are provided protection from retaliation per the [University's Non-Retaliation Policy](#) [🔗](#).

- On-campus or field research can proceed only to the extent it can be done safely and in compliance with regulatory requirements and University policies. Safety must be rigorously maintained. All University policies and requirements, as well as all local, state, and federal regulatory requirements remain in place and must be followed, unless there is written guidance or documentation that they have been modified or suspended.
- Research involving human subjects can proceed only to the extent it can be done safely and in a manner that protects the health of the subjects, researchers, and research staff. Human subjects research must follow current applicable directives and guidance from local, state, and federal authorities to minimize disease spread and exposure. All University policies and requirements, as well as all local, state and federal regulatory requirements remain in place and must be followed, unless there is written guidance or documentation that they have been modified or suspended.
- Undergraduate students will not be involved or allowed to participate in on-campus or field research activities until the University opens and these students are allowed to return to campus.
- Principal Investigators (PIs) remain responsible for providing direction and oversight of their projects, labs, and/or research sites, and personnel including graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and staff.
- Researchers must maintain plans and be prepared to halt all activities on short notice if this becomes necessary.
- The ramp up of research will be through a transparent and phased process.
 - A publically available working document outlining the phased approach will be maintained and serve as guidance for the ramp up process.
- Two groups have been established by the Vice President for Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (VPRIE) to provide guidance and oversight for the process:
 - The Critical Infrastructure Workgroup comprised of five associate research deans. This group reviews and approves projects, and also provides expert guidance on research needs.
 - Research Ramp up Advisory Group. This group is comprised of senior representatives from various areas, providing a broad range of infrastructure expertise, such as Environmental Health and Safety, Public Safety, Facilities, the Graduate School, Office of the Provost, Core Facilities Directors, Human Resources, and others. This group provides guidance on the support infrastructure that is required to allow research to move forward.

Phased Ramp Up

Phase 0: Maintain Critical Research Infrastructure (March 13, 2020 – Present)

This includes unique reagents, unique cell lines, equipment, liquid nitrogen stocks, and certain long-term experiments where data integrity would be compromised by halting or stopping the projects. The process for review and approval of these projects using the [Critical Research Infrastructure Inventory \(CRI\) form](#) has been in place since March 23rd. This process is also in place to approve the initiation of new projects directly related to COVID-19. Researchers should continue to use this process for applicable projects.

Phase 1: Prepare to Resume Research (Present – May 19, 2020)

- Activities conducted by a limited number of people, with time limited access to minimize personnel density
- Develop and require training on COVID-19 related to University, state, and federal guidelines, directives, and requirements
- Begin re-breeding, expansion of cell lines, plant propagation, etc.
- Limited, reopening of work areas and labs to assess readiness and needs to restart, check, and restart equipment, and identify needed supplies
- Allow reordering of supplies, materials, animals, chemicals, biologicals, etc. needed to restart projects
- Coordinate with other units such as facilities, purchasing, and finance to identify and address cross unit impact of ramp up
- Re-open core research facilities

Phase 2: Limited Reopening (Begins May 20, 2020)

- Personnel density increased in a manner that is consistent with federal and state guidelines and directives
- Requests for Phase 2 projects are submitted using the [CRI process](#) and include a COVID-19 safety plan
- Identify projects halted or stopped as part of ramp-down not involving chemical or radiological hazards and prioritize for phased restart
 - Prioritization of groups such as graduate students and postdocs close to completing their degree/term of appointment; grants within three months of their end dates and where the funding agency has not provided flexibility in no cost extensions.
- Restart field studies depending on conditions/requirements/restrictions at field sites, such as travel restrictions, stay-at-home directives, and density and social distancing requirements
- Humanities, arts, and social science research that requires access to single occupancy spaces (e.g., office, private studio)
- Restart human research projects involving direct subject interactions and interventions conducted at UConn Health or University facilities that were halted or stopped as part of ramp-down

Phase 3: Expanded Reopening (To be determined)

- Personnel density increased in a manner that is consistent with federal and state guidelines and directives

- Requests for Phase 3 Projects are submitted using the [CRI process](#) and include a COVID-19 safety plan
- Identify projects halted or stopped as part of ramp-down involving chemical or radiological hazards and prioritize for phased restart
- Restart human research projects involving direct subject interactions and interventions conducted off campus that were halted or stopped as part of ramp-down
- Restart humanities, social science, and arts research/scholarship involving direct interpersonal interactions or engagement

Phase 4: Transition to Research as Usual (To be determined)

- Begin initiation of new projects
- Project submissions no longer required to use the CRI process
- Open all research facilities

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