



RESUMPTION PLAN



UF|Research RESUMPTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the framework for resuming research activities throughout the University of Florida. The goal is to secure a fully reconstituted research enterprise, akin to that which existed prior to the onset of the pandemic, while minimizing the risks of coronavirus transmission at the workplace through the deployment of personal protection equipment (PPE), social distancing, testing and contact tracing, and other workplace practices.

The UF research enterprise is committed to responsibly executing the research mission of the university as we and others within our communities work collectively to resume activities without triggering an increased prevalence of COVID-19 that would overburden our healthcare systems and resources that will be needed to care for those in our communities impacted by the pandemic. This reengagement will proceed through a staged process so as to responsibly manage the return of on-site research activities that were interrupted by the pandemic.

This framework applies to the entire range of research conducted by faculty, staff and students associated with the University of Florida, and is specifically applicable to all experimental research spaces, including those on the Gainesville campus, campus-owned/leased spaces, UF/IFAS Research and Education Centers, field stations and nature reserves, and within UF Health.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. The safety, health, and welfare of our students, faculty, staff and the public remains paramount. Efforts to reengage on-campus activities will be designed so as to minimize the risk of workplace exposure to or transmission of COVID-19, upholding our commitment to maintaining safe lab environments.
2. All UF research faculty and staff must comply with the UF Health Test and Trace initiative, including any requirements for individual testing prior to returning to campus.
3. Safety requirements expressed herein are additional to any existing workplace safety requirements, including requirements for personal protective equipment and persons working alone.
4. Reopening research activities will progress slowly, under managed and controlled conditions, and in stages that gradually allow more people to return safely to lab and field research.
5. An equitable review process will be created whereby the college deans, working with the chairs and center directors, prioritize and guide reengaged activity requests to be made to the Vice President for Research for review and approval.
6. The major components in the plan to reengage on-campus research activities while minimizing the risk of workplace transmission of COVID-19 will be:
 - Personal Protective Equipment – Masks or cloth face coverings are required. Employees are encouraged to provide their own washable cloth mask or disposable mask, as long as they are appropriate for the workplace. Specific laboratories may require higher levels of protection, based on planned activities, laboratory configuration, and/or biosafety level requirements. Masks/face coverings are not required in non-public areas, such as in an isolated setting of a personal office or at your desk, as long as you are not interacting with others and can maintain safe social distancing (staying at least 6 feet apart).
 - A strong emphasis must be placed on hand-washing, with provision of stations for hand washing and/or hand sanitizing at entry points and key points within laboratories/research spaces.
 - A strong emphasis should be placed on maintaining social distancing (at least 6 feet), both within and outside of the laboratory/research area. Wearing a mask does not obviate the need for social distancing.
 - Social density – To facilitate a staged entry of personnel into laboratory space, while maintaining social distancing, targeted occupancy limits are provided for laboratories at each entry stage; achieving these occupancy levels may require both spatial and temporal separation of personnel, and may require flexibility in scheduling of laboratory activities. However, sufficient personnel must be present in the laboratory at all times to assure adequate supervision of laboratory activities and adherence to standard laboratory safety precautions.
 - Facilities should establish a program for regular cleaning of “common” touchpoints within the laboratory, such as door handles, throughout the workday.
 - “In person” group gatherings should be discouraged, and common meeting areas, such as lunchrooms, should be closed. Meetings, when essential, should be held in open, well-ventilated spaces, with attendees continuing to maintain a distance of 6 feet apart. Outdoor areas reduce the likelihood of aerosol transmission of the virus, and,

when and where possible, use of outdoor areas for essential meetings (and lunch) should be encouraged.

- Test and Trace initiative – Anyone who has a fever or thinks that he/she might be ill must leave the building immediately, return home, and make arrangements for testing through the UF Health Test and Trace initiative.
- Special accommodations may need to be made for persons who are designated as being at “high risk” for more serious complications associated with COVID infection.
- Additional measures may be deployed per additional public health and epidemiology guidance provided by UF Health.

7. Routine decontamination of workplaces will be performed consistent with EH&S requirements.
<http://www.ehs.ufl.edu/resources/covid-19/>
8. Decontamination and entry into research areas that were previously occupied by persons who test positive for COVID-19 should be done in coordination with EH&S.
9. The guidance provided within this framework applies primarily to experimental research activities. Computational and theoretical research activity will likely continue off campus until later stages of reentry in order to accommodate experimental research activity at UF research sites and facilities.
10. Sponsored research activities may be subject to additional guidelines presented by the sponsoring agency.
11. Guidelines for the resumption of undergraduate research activity will be developed separately.
12. The prevalence of COVID-19 at UF and within the region will be continuously monitored through UF Health. Adjustments in the level and modality of on-campus activities may prove necessary. The evolution and improvement of this and other actions in managing UF research activities throughout the period of the COVID-19 pandemic will follow the leadership provided by UF Health.

APPROACH

The following guidance presents a staged approach that takes into account the differing opportunities and demands within the varied UF research locations. The allowed activities and the operational conditions are presented for each stage and each research location category. Each stage of research introduction is informed by factors external to UF, factors largely based on the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Movement into stages will be determined by the UF Vice President for Research based on factors identified herein and input from UF units, UF leadership, and UF Health.

Special Note:

All university faculty and staff are encouraged to maintain existing safeguards for reducing risk of transmission of COVID-19 infection to themselves and others. If an employee feels sick, they must remain at home, and arrange for testing as soon as possible through the Test and Trace initiative. Questions regarding a known or suspected contact with a COVID-19 positive individual within the workplace environment can be directed to the Test and Trace initiative.

UF Research Resumption					
RESEARCH LOCATION	Stage 0	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Remote Field Site					
Allowed Activities Mask Requirements: None*	Essential Only	Critical and Time Sensitive	Begin Gradual Return to All Activities	Continue Gradual Return to All Activities	Gradual Return to All Activities
Targeted Occupancy Limits#	Social Distancing	Social Distancing	Social Distancing	Social Distancing	Social Distancing
Structured Field Site					
Allowed Activities Mask Requirements: Cloth**/None	Essential Only	Critical and Time Sensitive	Begin Gradual Return to All Activities	Continue Gradual Return to All Activities	Gradual Return to All Activities
Targeted Occupancy Limits#	Social Distancing	Social Distancing	Social Distancing	Social Distancing	Social Distancing
Open (Bay) Facilities, Laboratories and Offices					
Allowed Activities Mask Requirements: Disposable or Cloth**	Essential Only	Critical	Time Sensitive	Begin Gradual Return to All Activities	Gradual Return to All Activities
Targeted Occupancy Limits#	1 person/room or 1,000 ft ²	1 person/room or 500 ft ²	1 person/room or 250 ft ²	1 person/room or 150 ft ²	TBD
Human Contact Spaces					
Allowed Activities Mask Requirements: Surgical	Essential Only	Critical	Time Sensitive	Begin Gradual Return to All Activities	Gradual Return to All Activities
Targeted Occupancy Limits#	Custom Determination	Custom Determination	Custom Determination	Custom Determination	TBD
External Factors that Influence Stage Transitions	Active COVID-19 cases in community; limited testing & contact tracing. Limited availability of PPE. Stay-at-home directives in place for region.	Active COVID-19 cases in community but within manageable capacity for healthcare system; Testing and contact tracing available; PPE available. Stay-at-home directives loosening.	Active COVID-19 cases in community but within manageable capacity for healthcare system; Testing and contact tracing available; PPE available. Stay-at-home directives eased.	Active COVID-19 cases in community but within manageable capacity for healthcare system; Testing and contact tracing available; PPE available. Stay-at-home directives eased.	Active COVID-19 cases in community but within manageable capacity for healthcare system; Testing, contact tracing, PPE available; Stay-at-home directives eased.
Clinical Trials and Health-related Human Subjects Research	Guidance on resuming health-related human subjects research and clinical trials will be provided by the Office of the Associate VP for Research, CTSI, and OCR (link to here: https://clinicalresearch.ctsi.ufl.edu/covid-19/resuming-hsr-study-activities/)				
* Masks are not required in open fields but must be worn in social situations and when entering common spaces ** Specific labs may require higher levels of protection, based on activities, lab configuration, and/or biosafety level # Targeted occupancy but with adequate personnel to assure adequate lab supervision and adherence to standard lab safety precautions UF requirements regarding laboratory safety supersede these research mask and occupancy requirements					

PRINCIPAL DECISION COMPONENTS

The factors to be considered for resuming research activities comprise a varied set of prioritizations and limitations. Chief among these is the requirement of a staged approach to reentry, with both a recognition of the operational limits of those stages and an articulation of the research priorities allowable at each stage.

Unit-Driven Prioritization

Identifying and approving research activities at the various stages of reentry will be coordinated through an online approval system. Department chairs will be the first-level approvers. Deans (or designee) will review and approve at the college level. Specific activity requests will be reviewed and approved based on programmatic priorities as defined by those department and college units. Additional reviews by Office of Clinical Research, Animal Care Services and Export Control may be conducted as needed. While the primary identification of research priorities lies with the deans and department chairs, ultimate approval will be by the Vice President for Research.

Essential Research Activity

Essential research support functions could include maintaining basic animal and plant care, maintenance of cell lines, and maintenance of equipment or building infrastructure that could not be shut down during the current pause in on-site research. Also included are mission-critical research activities deemed essential, such as projects addressing the COVID-19 crisis, deliverables for projects that qualify as part of the Defense Industrial Base or support other essential services, and human subject research that would negatively impact the health of research participants if stopped. Designation of these and other research activities as essential requires written approvals by the investigator's dean (or designee) and the Vice President for Research.

Critical Research Activity

Critical research activities are identified and prioritized at the unit level as those activities with the greatest time and research productivity constraints. These can include, but are not limited to, seasonal data collection such as field and agricultural work; experiments that are urgently required to satisfy project deliverables, milestones or reporting; or projects whose continued pause or deferral would lead to catastrophic delay or loss of research results and subsequent success. Also included would be core research facilities that are likely needed to support critical activity, with each core subject to the operational constraints of their local building and administrative status. Designation of Critical Research Activities requires written approvals by the investigator's dean (or designee) and the Vice President for Research.

Time-Sensitive Research Activity

Time-sensitive research activities are defined at the unit level as those activities with elevated, but not critical, time and research productivity constraints. These can include activities for graduate students and postdocs close to completing their degree/term of appointment and research for completion of grants with end dates within 3 months, where the funding agency has not granted leniency. These activities also include field research and extension activities that are highly dependent upon weather and other seasonal constraints. Designation of Time-Sensitive Research Activities requires written approvals by the investigator's dean (or designee) and the Vice President for Research.

WORKPLACE DEFINITIONS

UF has varied work spaces, each with unique environmental and activity conditions that can influence how many people can safely work in that place at any point in time. Stages and phases of research resumption must be matched to research location types.

Remote Field Site

Remote field sites are characterized primarily as being in remote areas with no physical structures and little chance of researchers interacting with the public.

Structured Field Site

Structured field sites are those where buildings or other structures have the potential to bring personnel into closed spaces and increasing contact with other persons. Primary examples include the IFAS Research and Education Centers.

Open (Bay) Facilities

Open (bay) facilities are large areas internal to buildings that have no or few internal walls and can potentially accommodate multiple research activities. Examples include greenhouses, high bay areas, fabrication areas, and large laboratories, including teaching facilities, gait labs, robotics labs, wind tunnels, and structural/architectural/materials labs.

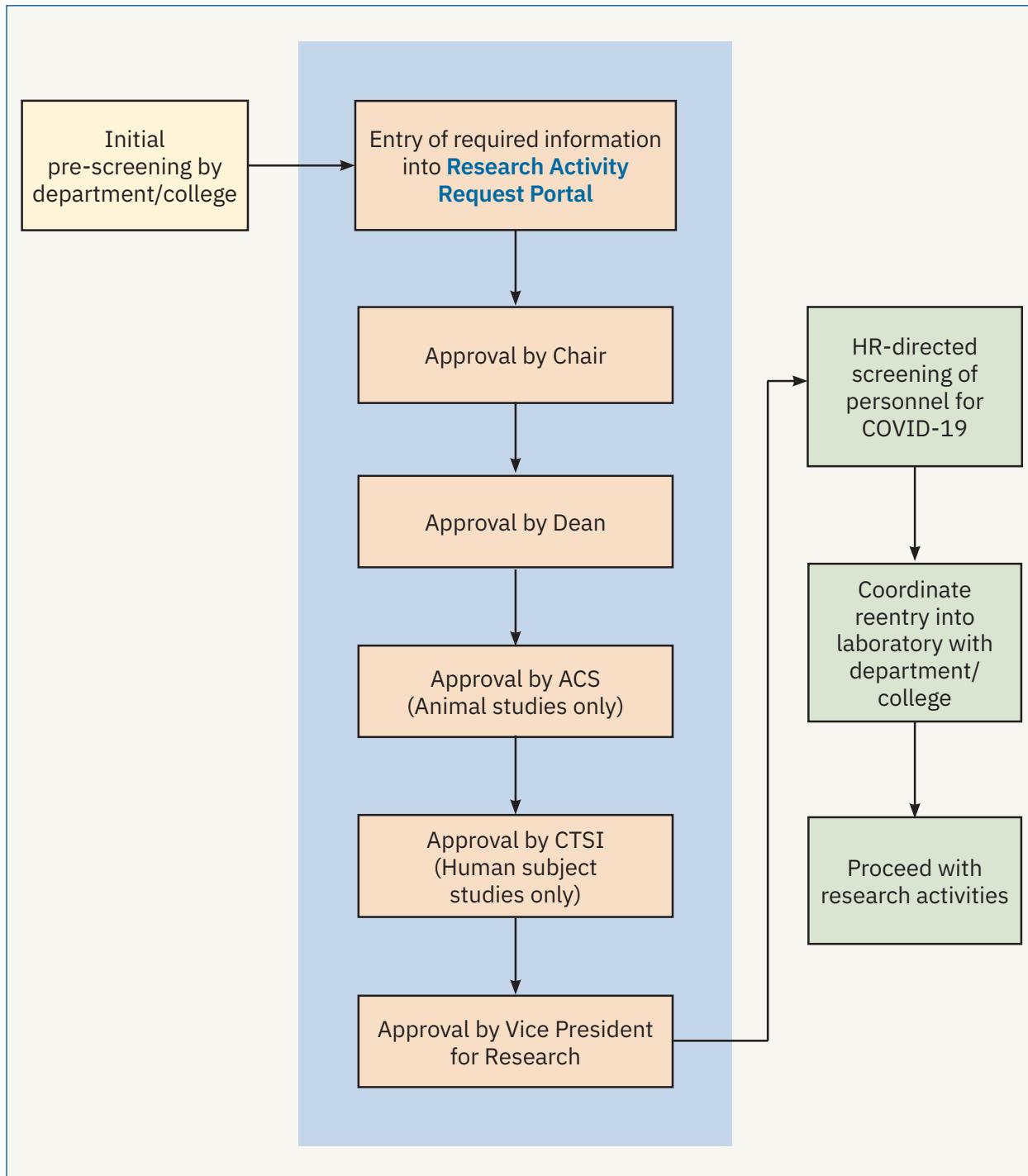
Laboratories and Offices

Laboratories and offices are rooms with floor-to-ceiling internal walls and independent HVAC. These rooms can subdivide activities. Examples include most buildings on main campus or their equivalent at off-campus facilities, and may include meeting and other rooms not typically associated with research activity. Any repurposing of rooms is subject to Environmental Health and Safety oversight.

Human Contact Spaces

Human contact laboratories and offices are a subset of laboratories and offices that, by definition or physical location, interact with patients, human subjects or the public at large. These laboratories and offices may be on the main campus or at off-campus facilities. Where applicable, CTSI and UF Health requirements, procedures and recommendations supersede those presented herein.

RESEARCH ACTIVITY RESUMPTION APPROVAL PROCESS



INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITY RESUMPTION REQUESTS

1. PI Name, UFID, and Unit.
2. Contact Phone Number and Email Address.
3. Brief description of the research activity.
4. If research activity relates to a sponsored program, UFIRST project number(s) will be required.
5. If research activity request involves the use of animals, IACUC number (s) will be required along with information regarding role of Animal Care Services (ACS).
 - ACS activities will require additional communications with ACS.
 - If research activity involves laboratory work in addition to ACS, consider submitting separate activity requests for the ACS and laboratory portions.
6. If research activity request involves health-related human subjects research, IRB and OCR number(s) will be required.
7. Rationale as to why this activity is deemed essential to begin at current stage.
8. List of any additional personnel involved in this activity.
 - Provide accurate UFID, email and phone numbers for all personnel.
9. List of all locations where this activity will take place.
10. List of dates and times when this activity will occur.
11. Description of how social distancing and/or the utilization of PPE will be managed during this activity.
12. Description of any travel required to accomplish this activity.