

BOSTON UNIVERSITY RESEARCH Research Recovery Guidance

This guidance is part of BU's [Research Recovery Toolkit](#). Updated June 26, 2020.

Overview

We need your help staging BU's research recovery. Currently the overwhelming majority of BU research is conducted remotely. There are very limited approvals in place for essential personnel to manage critical research and COVID-19 related activities. We are now asking you to develop a plan for a staged return process, with the next stage being defined as "Low Density." During this stage we anticipate that there will be minimal on-campus presence for research operations. Access to campus will be limited and coordinated, with lab groups working in shifts, limited (25-30%) density in lab spaces managed through approved plans, and no shared uncleaned surfaces.

Everyone has a role to play. Our PIs are in the best position to craft a research-group-specific implementation plan for the different stages of research resumption. Please use your judgment to customize these guidelines to your specific situation. In turn, departments are in the best position to assess these proposed plans, and to iterate with departmental PIs to implement. Approval by the Associate Dean for Research at each School along with approval of School/College plans by the Office of Research will ensure commonality of principles in implementing approaches across the enterprise and coordination between multiple departments using the same building.

This guidance is evolving. Due to the need to have a complete understanding of all of the work taking place on campus, eventually ALL PIs will be required to fill out the forms and templates required for ramp-up. Yet much of the initial guidance below is intended for experimental research labs, as we expect computational, theoretical, and non-experimental groups to continue with remote work until further notice. We do expect this guidance to evolve over time. Please continue to check back for updates.

General Principles

1. Enable research to move forward while minimizing infection risk to researchers
2. If any work can be done remotely (data analysis, discussions, etc.), do it remotely
3. Do not congregate or meet in person
4. Prioritize junior researcher productivity (untenured faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and doctoral students)
5. Implement social distancing, cleaning of shared spaces/doors/instrumentation
6. Open communications and reporting of concerns, including protocol breaches, suspected illnesses

Suggested Practices

Reduce Density of People in Lab and Shared Facilities

1. Limit laboratory access to essential personnel and activities to minimize density and reduce the risk of disease transmission.
2. Postpone non-essential research and non-essential visitors from the laboratory. Undergraduates research on a case-by-case basis.
3. Work remotely whenever possible (when not engaged in bench work). Working from BU offices and cubicles is still discouraged in this “Low Density” phase, unless an in-person presence is absolutely required.
4. Work with your team to prioritize essential vs. non-essential studies, and adjust expectations and plans in light of reduced laboratory time.
5. Consider having teams share responsibilities, so each person can easily cover and share other teammates’ research as needed.
6. Continue to rely on virtual meetings for any group discussions, even if you’re in the same building.
7. Reduce the density of researchers in the group.
 - Reduce to ~1/3 of ‘fully operational’ occupancy.
 - Ideally, create three sub-teams and isolate sub-teams to distinct schedules (e.g., Team A works M-W-F, or mornings), to reduce cross-team contact. Strive to limit the connections between these subgroups. View some [possible options](#) for scheduling sub-teams.

See also: [Social Distancing in BU Laboratories](#)

Implement Best Practices to Reduce Transmission of Infection

As we re-enter the campus, we should strive to minimize the spread of any infection. The spread can be suppressed both (i) by minimizing the interactions between distinct subgroups and (ii) by minimizing the use of shared surfaces.

1. **Any direct contact between individuals in the laboratory is to be avoided at all times.** Encourage team to operate as if lab-mates were potential infectious carriers.
2. **Facial coverings are mandatory indoors**, as well as outdoors where social distancing of at least six feet is not possible. Members of the community are responsible for providing their own personal/cloth masks in light of the [state mandate](#), effective May 6, 2020. Labs are encouraged to purchase separate masks for lab personnel to use while in the lab, as well as other PPE sufficient to carry out research-related activities for the next 2-3 months.
 - a. *Types of masks:* Cloth masks should *not* be worn in labs. Laboratory personnel should remove their face covering before entering the lab and wear a surgical mask along with the other required PPE for lab work. Surgical masks do not replace the use of a respirator. Lab workers required to use a respirator such as an N95 must wear them for appropriate protection. Learn more in this [guidance](#) from EHS.

- b. *Exceptions:* (a.) If you have a medical condition that prevents you from wearing a mask you must obtain a note from your primary care physician and contact [ROHP](#) or the BU Occupational Health Center via COVID-19 Employee Support at 617-358-4990 prior to being cleared to enter a BU lab or facility. (b.) You may also take face coverings off in private offices (with walls/door). Face coverings are required in cubicles.
 - c. *Ordering PPE:* Sourcing & Procurement strongly encourages you to leverage BU's [preferred supplier channels](#).
- 3. **Wash hands frequently.** Researchers are strongly encouraged to perform an extended and thorough soap-and-water hand washing upon entry into and prior to exiting the laboratory, and on a regular basis during lab occupancy. In addition, we advocate using disposable wipes on all door handles, avoiding direct contact with those shared surfaces.
- 4. **Researchers will clean their laboratories**, and place waste receptacles in the hallway for Facilities to empty. This will eliminate the prospect of connecting otherwise separate groups through shared staff access. View EHS [guidance](#) on cleaning laboratories.
- 5. **Regularly clean and disinfect shared surfaces**, including instruments, doors, tables, keyboards, cabinet handles, hoods, etc., to reduce the likelihood of person-surface-person transmission. Implement wipe-downs of all shared surfaces after each use, and again at the end of a team shift.
 - a. For shared areas, identify who is responsible for cleaning the space.
 - b. For shared equipment, identify how it can be cleaned and who is responsible. (See [guidance](#) on disinfecting microscopes.)
 - c. Include a daily log to track and coordinate your efforts.
- 6. **Use gloves wisely.** Wearing gloves does not reduce the surface-hand-face transmission mechanism. When glove use is to protect from hazardous materials (radioactivity, BSL2 materials such as human cells or genetic materials, chemicals), dispose or set aside these gloves before contacting general use surfaces such as doors, freezers, or general laboratory equipment.
- 7. **Make a plan for lunch breaks.** Lunch breaks should be staggered, and physical distancing of at least six feet is required when eating with masks off. Encourage individuals to eat outside at least six feet apart when the weather is nice.

Prioritize Communication & Safety

- 1. Once established, distribute your plan and work schedule to your team.
- 2. Laboratory staff should consider the operational rules developed to be an extension of the laboratory safety plan and supervisors should ensure that all members of the lab understand what is expected.
- 3. **Lack of compliance with the policies will result in revocation of laboratory access privileges.**

Be Prepared for Illness

Anticipate the possibility of illness on your team. Ensure all returning researchers are aware of their screening and reporting obligations. Anyone who has a positive COVID-19 test,

experiences symptoms of COVID-19, or comes in close contact with someone who has tested positive needs to remain out of the workplace and contact the appropriate office:

- **Students** should contact Student Health Services (SHS) by messaging a nurse in [Patient Connect](#)
- **Faculty and staff** should call the COVID-19 Support Line at 617-358-4990

SHS or BU Occupational Health Center (BUOHC) will:

1. Evaluate the report and advise the individual on whether they need testing or other medical attention;
2. Determine whether an employee needs to be off work and for how long, or whether a student needs to quarantine;
3. Notify the employee, manager and HR of any leave or restriction; and
4. Notify EHS and Facilities of positive cases so they can determine the necessary cleaning and disinfecting of space.

When a positive case is confirmed, SHS or BUOHC will conduct contact tracing and will notify and advise all potentially exposed persons, following public health guidelines.

Be Prepared to Ramp Down

Be prepared to shut down or rapidly ramp down on short notice. Given the possibility that research will have to be scaled back again with little notice, we encourage you to ramp up projects that can be ramped down quickly and with relatively little cost and complexity.

Animal Research

1. Carefully review the full [Animal Science Center guidelines](#) for the research recovery process.
2. Communicate with ASC leadership and facility managers to ensure consistency of guidelines for ramping up of research using animals.
3. Coordinate with ASC facility managers to avoid unnecessary overlap of work in animal housing rooms and to ensure the density of personnel within the facility is below the maximum threshold.
4. Communicate with ASC to ensure rapid notification of illness in ASC staff or research personnel.
5. If possible, have a designated lab member that takes multiple animals from animal facility and returns them, to reduce traffic through animal facilities.
6. Coordinate scheduling of surgery rooms to avoid overlap of personnel using surgical facilities.
7. In the early phases of ramping up, de-prioritize high-volume animal experiments for which scaling back would be costly.
8. Minimize active animal cages to minimize risk to lab and animal care personnel.

Human Subjects Research

Visit [this page](#) on restarting human subjects research activities.

Please visit the full [Research Recovery Toolkit](#) for details on process, planning templates, and additional resources.