

# **Phasing-In of On-site Research in Science, Engineering and Medicine at CCNY**

(June 5, 2020)

This document provides guidance on how to prepare to phase-in on-site research operations at CCNY in a safe and orderly manner. While we must follow New York State, NYC, and CUNY guidance, it is important to begin planning for the phasing-in of on-site research projects (independent of on-campus teaching), reopening research facilities, and commencing with suspended on-site projects, which will advance discovery and innovation, and aid in the economic recovery of the City and State.

## **Research Facilities**

The guidance below applies only to research laboratories, core facilities, and field locations as performed by the CUNY School of Medicine, the Grove School of Engineering, and the Division of Science and those members of the Psychology Department who conduct laboratory research. The progressive increase of access in graduated stages, is planned thoughtfully, based on continual monitoring of health and safety, and follows Federal, State, City, CUNY and CCNY guidance. If situations change, it is understood that these stages may regress temporarily until benchmarks of safety are again reached. Equity, fairness and transparency are essential.

## **Guiding Principles**

Our first priority and guiding principle must be the health and safety of the CCNY community, which includes our research faculty, staff, graduate students, the support staff that we rely on at CCNY such as Security and Facilities, and our stakeholders. Researchers/PIs should continue to work remotely to the greatest extent possible (including conducting writing and analysis, lab meetings, talks, journal clubs, etc. using computer platforms such as Zoom). Individuals with health-related vulnerabilities or living situations that put others at risk are encouraged to continue to work remotely. No one should feel coerced or pressured to return on-site, especially during the initial phasing-in of research. Only authorized researchers should be on-site, and only for specific tasks that require the use of on-site facilities. Researchers should plan on-site activities utilizing minimum co-location and a minimum number of personnel.

## **Planning Public Health Protocols**

**All personnel must wear facial coverings upon entering CCNY facilities and in common areas and practice social distancing, i.e. preserve a distance of at least 6 ft while on campus.**

The Research Phasing-In process will continue to work closely with Security, Environmental Health and Occupational Safety (EHOS) and other CCNY campus departments to establish the following protocols.

- Facilities maintenance, including cleaning and sanitation
- Protocols for access to and control of buildings and laboratories
- Development of pathways for reporting and remediation of unsafe working conditions
- Personnel screening procedures (e.g., screening questions before being on-site, temperatures, etc.)
- Contact tracing and tracking, as well as communications regarding any personnel who have been on-site and who learn they are infected with COVID-19.

Research laboratories, under the supervision of a faculty member or principal investigator who wish to resume research activities will follow a process that includes providing basic laboratory and personnel information and submitting a detailed research planning proposal (template to be provided) that will include the following information.

- Access to appropriate PPE
- Justification for prioritizing research activities and staff
- Establishing (staggered) personnel schedules to minimize density and interactions on-site
- Guidelines for the duration that researchers can be on-site
- Social distancing guidelines based on the size and ventilation of the space
- Plans for safe use, cleaning, and disinfection of shared laboratory equipment
- Safe use of all spaces and hazardous chemicals
- Ability of personnel to travel to the campus or site safely
- Plans for clearly communicating laboratory coordination efforts and facility use
- Ensuring compliance to the plan and all guidelines and remedying any problems that may arise.

A committee of administrators, faculty, and both research and support staff will review these applications, work with investigators to address concerns, and approve plans for research re-entry. This approval must be in place before access to campus buildings is allowed and research activities resume.

## General Considerations

### Planning to be On-Site

The early stages of these guidelines in particular are to be primarily, if not exclusively, for research and other activities that can only be done on campus. Therefore, time in office spaces is expected to be at an absolute minimum. Common space areas such as lounges, conference rooms and pantries should be used as little as possible and only under conditions where distancing remains possible and appropriate cleaning and disinfection protocols can be conducted following their use. Researchers should plan for and avoid contact with others on-site when they are conducting tasks that include prolonged periods of waiting (e.g. incubation, cycling, staining, etc.) or if they take a break during lengthy periods of time on campus.

### Equipment and Facilities

To the greatest extent possible researchers should operate equipment remotely, and minimize sharing of equipment and devices. For equipment/devices that must be shared, plans should be devised for thoroughly disinfecting equipment/devices between use by different individuals. For laboratories with chemicals, on-site personnel must have up-to-date C14 certificates.

### Research Involving Human Participants

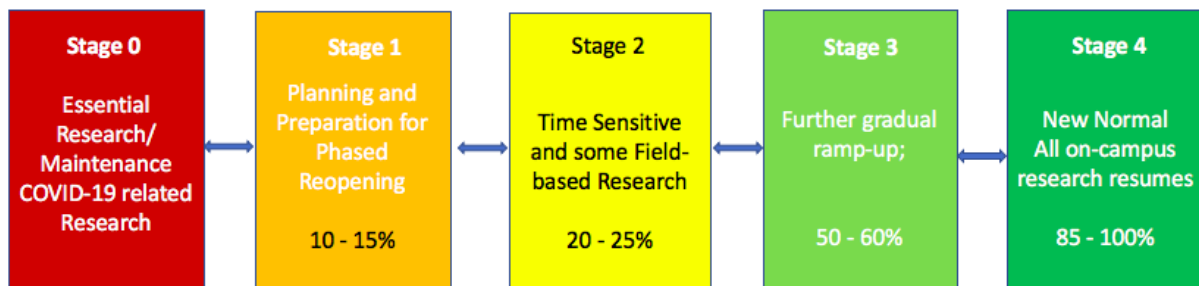
Only approved research with human participants that has been deemed essential should be conducted face-to-face. Research with vulnerable individuals or minors should be avoided. Appointments should be scheduled to avoid potential overlap between participants. Time on campus should be limited to tasks requiring essential face-to-face contact, with all other tasks conducted remotely. Any modifications to protocols require IRB approval.

## Animal Research

Researchers should prepare for maintenance and supply changes in case a rapid pause of on-site activities is needed. Any modifications to animal protocols require IACUC approval.

## Phasing-In of On-Site Research

Schools/Divisions should continually monitor the phasing in process, to assure public health and safety. Researchers should be prepared to make changes on short notice, depending upon compliance requirements as dictated by health and safety directives. Stages may be paused or, if transmission rates, new cases, or other benchmarks of public health risk change for the worse, then stages may regress back to previous levels, including returning to Stage 0. Researchers should not start new long-term projects or stage in projects that cannot be stopped on short notice in Stages 0 – 3. PIs have first-line responsibility for the conduct of their research groups and compliance with policies and rules developed during the phasing-in of research.



### **RESEARCHERS SHOULD CONTINUE TO WORK REMOTELY WHENEVER POSSIBLE**

**Stage 0 – (Essential; < 10% Capacity)** Pause all on-site research except for essential, approved research (typically COVID-19 related), utilizing a limited number of personnel for facilities maintenance.

**Stage 1 – (< 15% Capacity)** Planning begins when NYC Region enters Phase 1. Includes:

- Ongoing essential research/maintenance
- Designation of additional temporary essential personnel (e.g., researchers/PIs) solely for the purposes of planning and preparation of phasing-in research on-site, for Stage 2 which may include preparing equipment, checking supplies, and/or purchasing required items
- Addressing considerations of the research space and any relevant particulars (e.g., ventilation, equipment cleaning, sharing of equipment and space), working in conjunction with CCNY EHOS
- Creating multiple pathways for research staff to report unsafe working conditions
- Approval prior to going on-site. Researchers must obtain approval from the CCNY Research Reopening Review Board (RRRB) to conduct research on-site and for all on-site research staff and human participants if relevant. Documentation of appropriate approved protocols (e.g., IRB, IACUC) must be included in requests for campus approval
- All laboratories and personnel that can continue their research remotely should continue to do so.

**Stage 2 – (20 – 25% Capacity)** Begins contingent on RRRB approval of laboratory research reopening plans and following State, NYC and CUNY re-opening benchmarks. Includes:

- Ongoing research/maintenance and planning, training, and approvals
- Expansion of on-site access to approved high-priority research. High-priority research may include:
  - Externally funded, deadline-driven work requiring stipulated deliverables (grant/contract deadlines), that must be conducted on-site or in the field (with documentation of deadlines)
  - Externally funded research that must be conducted on-site or in the field (with award documentation)
  - Research by graduate students who are near degree completion (with advisor or area head support)
  - Untenured faculty research (with chair support)
  - Research requiring season-specific sample collections
- Planning for phasing-in of research not included in Stage 2.

**Stage 3 – (50- 60% Capacity)** Begins with no increased risk of infection from NYC Region in Phase 2, a minimum of two weeks of CCNY Stage 2 campus health monitoring, and following additional State, NYC and CUNY re-opening benchmarks. Includes:

- Essential research, planning, and priorities of Stages 0 – 2
- Expands on-site access to approved research
- Recommended Stage 3 priority research may include:
  - Additional faculty (with chair support)
  - Additional graduate students and postdoctoral research associates (with advisor/mentor support)

**Stage 4 – (New Normal; 85 - 100% Capacity)** Begins with the availability of a vaccine, herd immunity (preponderance of population has antibodies which are deemed protective), or the availability of other effective and readily available prophylactic or therapeutic health advances, or the elimination of evidence of viral transmission. Stage 4 expands on-site access to campus approved research, with recommended priority research including undergraduate/medical students.