

City College of New York Research Reopening Process

This document summarizes the plans for The City College of New York (CCNY) to safely begin to reopen research operations on the Harlem campus and to satisfy State, City and University guidelines for maintaining safety of all researchers and essential staff, including custodial workers and public safety officers.

1. Health and Safety

The procedures and guidelines below cover both researchers and essential workers, primarily Facilities and Public Safety staff, who also provide service to the ASRC building.

Physical Distancing

- a. For any research activities occurring indoors, total occupancy is limited to 50% of the maximum occupancy of a particular area as set by the certificate of occupancy.

CCNY has a variety of research facilities with different layouts e.g. individual laboratories separated by physical barriers and shared spaces with open plans. Any plan to restart research requires plans customized for individual research spaces. There are detailed plans in place for each research building on campus, for each floor and each space to ensure that they conform to the occupancy limits consistent with the phasing-in of onsite research described in Section 2. These individual plans will be carefully scrutinized by the Research Reopening Review Board before researchers are given access. It is important to note that only those research operations that cannot be performed remotely are being allowed to resume.

- b. A distance of at least 6 ft. must be maintained among individuals at all times, unless safety or the core activity requires a shorter distance. Any time individuals must come within 6 ft. of another person, they must wear an acceptable face covering.

The detailed occupancy plan for each individual research space has been designed to ensure that a distance of 6-feet or more is maintained between individuals under almost all circumstances. In the rare cases (e.g. see 3. below) where this distance requirement is not met, appropriate PPE will be used according to New York and CDC guidelines.

Contact between custodial workers and researchers will be minimized. Custodial workers will *not* clean laboratory spaces. Laboratory and associated equipment cleaning is the responsibility of the researchers. Researchers will place trash cans and other items for disposal in the hallways for pickup so that there is no need for custodial staff to enter the laboratories.

Public Safety officers operate behind desks at building entrances and will maintain a minimum of 6 feet from anyone entering. Officers will be provided with masks, and gloves if needed. Only authorized personnel are allowed to enter buildings and anyone entering must be wearing a mask.

All essential workers will generally work solo. In circumstances where two or more workers must work together, social distancing will be observed. In either case, masks will be required.

- c. Pickups and deliveries will left outside of laboratories and offices to prevent close contact or with Public Safety Officers at the front desk of the building. Special arrangements for delivery of such large or hazardous items must be approved by the Director of Environmental Health and Occupational Safety.
- d. Human research subjects must be considered when calculating facility capacity and abide by all distancing, PPE, and other requirements for personnel contained within this guidance. Human subject research will be avoided as far as possible until Phase 4 of the NY State reopening plan. In the rare circumstances where research protocols require human subjects, to be on site both the researchers and the subjects will be included in determining the occupancy. Care will be taken to minimize contact between participants including researchers and subjects; appropriate PPE will used according to the New York and CDC guidelines.
- e. Facilities and Public Safety officers will observe social distancing and wear masks in all staff meetings.
- f. Staggered work schedules, will be implemented wherever possible. This includes break times, but also staggered shift schedules to reduce the total number of employees on site at any given time.
- g. Prohibit non-essential visitors from entering the site, to the extent possible. No non-essential visitors will be allowed in campus buildings until further notice. Only pre-approved researchers needed to maintain research operations in compliance with the NY State Phase 1 guidelines will be allowed on site.

Gatherings in Enclosed Spaces

- a. All staff meetings, seminars and events for researchers will continue to be held virtually until further notice, as they have been during the shutdown.
- b. Communal areas such as lunch areas and cafeteria spaces will be closed. The areas will be locked where possible. Signs designating the area as 'off limits' will be posted in areas that cannot be locked. Conference rooms will be limited to three or fewer people at a time.
- c. Restrooms will be designated 'single use' with two-sided signs hung on the doors indicating 'occupied/unoccupied'. Passenger elevators will also be designated as 'single use' with appropriate signs posted inside and outside of the elevators.

Protective Equipment

- a. Provide employees with an acceptable face covering at no-cost to the employees and have an adequate supply of coverings in case of need for replacement.

City College of New York has purchased sufficient surgical masks to ensure individuals who return to campus to restart research are protected. Surgical masks will be available at the entrance points of the research buildings on campus, such as Marshak Science Building, Center for Discovery and Innovation (CDI) and the Grove School of Engineering (Steinman). Personnel entering buildings will be required to wear a mask.

All essential workers will be provided with masks and other appropriate protective gear.

Public Safety officers operate behind desks at building entrances and will maintain a minimum of 6 feet from anyone entering. Officers will be provided with masks, and gloves if needed. Only authorized personnel are allowed to enter buildings and anyone entering must be wearing a mask.

- b. Acceptable face coverings include but are not limited to cloth (e.g. homemade sewn, quick cut, bandana), surgical masks, and face shield. However, cloth, disposable, or homemade face coverings are not acceptable for workplace activities that typically require a higher degree of protection for PPE due to the nature of the work (e.g. if working with flammable materials or chemicals, ensure face coverings are flame-resistant).

If contact with hazardous materials require more stringent protection, personal protective equipment as dictated by Environmental Health and Safety for the hazardous agent will be used.

- c. Clean, replace, and prohibit sharing of face coverings. Consult the CDC guidance for additional information on cloth face coverings and other types of personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as instructions on use and cleaning and disinfection.

Surgical masks are not allowed to be shared and cannot be easily disinfected. When surgical face masks are visibly soiled, moist, and damaged, they will be appropriately disposed of.

- d. Train employees on how to don, doff, clean (as applicable), and discard PPE. All personnel will be instructed to properly remove face coverings by either by viewing the video "[How to Put On and Remove a Fabric Face Mask](#)" by Grundy County Memorial Hospital and [How to Put on a Surgical Mask](#) by NurseMinder, or by demonstration in staff meetings. Personal fabric masks should be washed and dried completely prior to reuse. Data indicate procedures may be available to clean and disinfect surgical masks; however, CCNY recommends surgical masks should be disposed of immediately and not reused.

- e. Limit the sharing of objects, such as tools, equipment, machinery, touchscreens, and vehicles, as well as the touching of shared surfaces; or, require individuals to wear gloves (trade-appropriate or medical) when in contact with shared objects or frequently touched surfaces; or, require individuals to perform hand hygiene before and after contact.

Sharing of objects used in the course of work by Facilities staff will be limited and any objects that must be shared will be cleaned by the users at the end of each use, and again by the next user before commencing work.

Researchers will book time slots to use Core Facilities using appropriate calendars. This will ensure that they will be the only ones who will occupy that space at that time. If more than one investigator needs to use a Core Facility concurrently, social distancing, and protective equipment will be used as appropriate. Users will be instructed on proper cleaning procedures and will be required to clean the equipment after use, in preparation for the next user. Prior to using equipment, users are also required to clean the equipment. The use of gloves to handle shared equipment will be required. Care will be taken to ensure cleaners or disinfectants will not be harmful to the shared equipment. A UV wand may be used to disinfect the equipment, if appropriate. The time between Core Facility appointments will also be extended (30 minutes to one hour) to minimize interactions and allow disinfection to be completed.

Hygiene, Cleaning, and Disinfecting

- a. Adhere to hygiene, cleaning, and disinfection requirements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Department of Health (DOH) and maintain logs on site that document date, time, and scope of cleaning and disinfection.

To reduce exposure for custodial personnel, all campus personnel will be required to clean their own spaces. This includes desks, lockers, and any other spaces dedicated to a single person. Appropriate cleaning supplies will be provided by the College.

Campus cleaning plays an important role in mitigating COVID-19. To that end, each researcher is asked to clean their work areas and office areas with disinfectant wipes and/or quaternary disinfectants provided by the College at a frequency as deemed appropriate. From a campus perspective, staff are asked to pay particular attention to the following categories: tables; doorknobs; light switches; countertops; handles; desks and benches; phones; keyboards; faucets and sinks; and touch screens. Common surfaces frequently touched by multiple people such as elevator buttons, security desks, and door handles to buildings and stairwells will be cleaned and disinfected at least daily by the custodial staff.

Logs will be maintained documenting cleaning and disinfection schedule for core research facilities and common areas maintained by CCNY. The Facilities Department has oversight of all common areas and supervisory staff to oversee that the work is completed.

- b. Provide and maintain hand hygiene stations in facility, including handwashing with soap, running warm water, and disposable paper towels, as well as an alcohol- based hand sanitizer containing 60% or more alcohol for areas where handwashing is not available or practical.

Hand hygiene stations containing alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol will be provided and maintained at the entrance to all facilities. Within research areas sinks with warm water, hand soap and disposable paper towels will be available.

If research areas do not have sinks, then hand sanitizer will be made available.

- c. Provide and encourage participants to use cleaning/disinfection supplies before and after use of shared and frequently touched surfaces, followed by hand hygiene.

Restroom facilities will be stocked with soap and disposable paper towels and restocked at a minimum on a daily basis at a minimum. All research labs will be supplied with a quaternary disinfectant, or equivalent, that will be used by research staff to clean high touch surfaces at a frequency as deemed appropriate for the labs.

Research labs follow strict guidelines for the use and care of laboratory equipment. In cases where equipment may be used by more than one researcher, that equipment will be cleaned with disinfectant or alcohol wipes.

NYS DOH and CDC posters are located throughout the building and in research lab spaces that outline the principles of proper hand washing. Building monitors available throughout the buildings will also be used to communicate CDC hand washing and cleaning/disinfection procedures.

- d. Ensure that equipment is regularly cleaned and disinfected including at least as often as employees change workstations.

Campus personnel will be responsible for the daily disinfection of their work environments and equipment located within these environments. Common surfaces frequently touched by multiple people, should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily. More frequent cleaning and disinfection will be undertaken based on level of use.

- e. Regularly clean and disinfect the site and more frequently clean and disinfect high risk areas used by many individuals and frequently touched surfaces, using registered disinfectants on the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) list of products identified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as effective against COVID-19.

The College owns a variety of equipment that will be used regularly in consideration of the control of COVID-19. These include: Quaternary Disinfectants; Kaivac No-Touch Cleaning

Systems; Portable Hand-Held Ultraviolet Light Disinfecting Equipment; Steam Cleaners; Hand Operated Electrostatic Misters.

- f. Rigorous cleaning and disinfection must occur at least after each shift, daily, or more frequently as needed.

Researchers will clean and disinfect their labs, together with high touch surfaces and shared instrumentation. The cleaning for common areas of the building will be handled by the CCNY Facilities Department who use products and equipment designed to neutralize germs and bio-contaminants. The Facilities Department will pay particular attention to common areas of the building that represent high touch surfaces, restrooms and other areas that may be unique to the individual buildings.

- g. Provide cleaning and disinfection of exposed areas in the event of an individual is confirmed to have COVID-19, with such cleaning and disinfection to include, at a minimum, all heavy transit areas and high-touch surfaces (e.g. lab tables, elevators, facility entrances, badge scanners, restroom handrails, equipment, door handles).

Should an individual be found to have contracted COVID-19, the areas where the individual worked or traveled will be closed until safe to enter according to CDC guidelines, and then cleaned with quaternary disinfectants or disinfectants approved for use in disinfecting COVID-19. Further, the campus owns a variety of equipment that will be deployed based upon the nature of the lab and the types of equipment that need to be disinfected. Examples include but are not limited to hand-held UV disinfection units and electrostatic misters. Finally, if needed, the campus will hire an outside vendor to disinfect affected areas.

- h. Prohibit shared food and beverages (e.g. buffet style meals).

Sharing of food and beverages is prohibited, as is the use of common dining areas unless a separation of at least 6 feet can be maintained.

Communication

- a. Signage around campus reminds all personnel of the CDC guidelines for COVID-19 safety in the workplace.
- b. The Director of Environmental Health and Occupational Safety sends a daily bulletin to all Facilities staff to inform them of any potential coronavirus contaminated areas on campus due to individuals who have symptoms of, or a positive test for, COVID-19. These areas of campus will be closed until they are safe for reentry.

Training

- a. All essential workers will be required to take training that includes basic information about COVID-19, how it is transmitted, how to prevent transmission, and how to recognize symptoms. Training will also include the proper use of PPE, and basic cleaning of personal spaces. This is covered in detail in the accompanying Facilities manual.
- b. Researchers will be required to complete an online module offered by the CITI Program that provides an overview of COVID-19, prevention strategies, recommended laboratory practices and points to consider for students, staff and faculty.

Screening

- a. All workers have been informed, and will be reminded regularly, that they should not report to work if they are unwell.
- b. Each staff member will be required to respond to a simple, four-question, survey before reporting to work. The employee is asked if he or she has had any symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days, has tested positive in the past 14 days, been in close contact in the past 14 days with someone who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, or notified by a medical provider or the NYC Test and Trace team to remain home because of COVID-19. Anyone who answers “yes” to any of the questions is not allowed to come to campus.
- c. All personnel will be required to immediately notify their supervisor or Human Resources if their responses to any of the aforementioned questions changes, such as if they begin to experience symptoms, including during or outside of work hours.
- d. Any individual who screens positive for COVID-19 symptoms will be provided with information on healthcare and testing resources. Human Resources is responsible for notifying State and local authorities if an individual associated with the College, or a visitor to the College, tests positive for COVID-19.
- e. The College will follow the [DOH Interim Guidance for Public and Private Employees Returning to Work Following COVID-19 Infection or Exposure](#) for protocols and policies regarding employees returning to work after a positive COVID-19 test or exposure to someone who has had a positive COVID-19 test.
- f. The Director of EHOS is responsible for reviewing the daily screening questionnaires. He may delegate the daily review to the shift supervisor for Facilities and Public Safety, in which case the shift supervisors must report to the EHOS Director any individuals who answers “yes” to any of the screening questions in item b.
- g. The Director of EHOS is the site safety monitor who will monitor continuous compliance with all aspects of this safety plan.

- h. Researchers will sign in and out at the front desk of each building. Facilities and Public Safety personnel work known shifts in specific locations. This will provide the necessary data for contact tracing should an individual test positive for COVID-19. The College will cooperate with the State and local health department to trace all contacts in the workplace dating back 48 hours before the individual first experience COVID-19 symptoms, or tested positive, whichever is earlier.
- i. The City University of New York has established a mechanism that tracks employees who have tested positive for COVID-19. For CCNY employees that have tested positive, they have a responsibility to contact the CCNY COVID-19 hotline at (212) 650-8801 or (212) 650-7682.

Reporting Unsafe Practices

- a. Unsafe practices should be reported immediately.

All personnel should report unsafe practices to their supervisor. Confidential reports can be made to the Associate Provost for Research, the Provost, the Vice President for Operations or Human Resources.

Resolving issues with unsafe practices in research labs is ultimately the responsibility of the Provost. Resolving such issues among Facilities and Public Safety staff is ultimately the responsibility of the Vice President for Operations.

Employer Plans

- a. This safety plan will be conspicuously posted at the entrance to each building (Steinman, Marshak, CDI) and by the elevator on each floor in use by researchers.

2. Phasing-In of On-site Research in Science, Engineering and Medicine

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.

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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) oResearch 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.

General considerations for phasing-in of 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.

3. Campus Approval Process

To manage the reopening, researchers who wish to restart their laboratory operations must submit a research reopening plan for review by the Research Reopening Review Board (RRRB) which consists of faculty and administrators from Science, Engineering and the Medical School, as well as the Director of Environmental, Health, and Occupational Safety and the Assistant Vice President for Facilities. The RRRB submits vetted plans to the Provost for final approval.

Once plans are approved, re-entry to the campus buildings will require a two-step verification for each lab member who wishes to come to campus for research activities during the first stages of reopening:

- 1) Approved researchers will complete a contact form that will be used to generate the list of approved personnel for Public Safety. This needs to happen only once.
- 2) Second, a web-based app will be used to fulfill the mandatory daily health check requirement by New York State. All researchers returning to campus will need to register using the new COVID-19 health screening questionnaire (they only need to register once). Upon registration, researchers will be provided a unique visitor ID. Each day, prior to returning to campus, researchers will use the same system to answer four questions. Researchers who are cleared via these questions will receive a confirmation email containing a prominent symbol. Researchers who complete step one above will be sent the COVID-19 health screening registration link as soon as it is available.

Upon arriving at the appropriate building, Security will check an approved list for the researcher's name and users will be asked to show Security the confirmation symbol indicating completion of the daily questions and an approved authorization (note that this can quickly be completed on a smartphone if one forgot to do so prior to coming to campus).