

Resuming Research Activities Under Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Updated December 2020

Overview

This document presents a framework for resuming research activities at the University of Texas at Tyler. The overall goal is to gradually reconstitute our research enterprise, parallel 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, social distancing, and other established workplace practices.

Guiding Principles

1. Information outlined in this document are based on guidelines from the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the [Texas Health & Human Services](#).
2. The research framework applies to the complete range of research activities conducted by faculty, staff and students associated with the University of Texas at Tyler, and is applicable to all research spaces, including those on the branch campuses and remote field research sites.
3. The resumption of research framework is intended to progress slowly, under managed conditions, to gradually allow researchers to resume lab and field research activities.
4. The University cannot possibly guarantee “zero cases” of any ailment. But, the University wishes to protect the health of its community members to the greatest extent possible while acknowledging that conditions and risks may change.

General Policies

The following outline delineates major components in the framework to reengage research activities while minimizing the risk of workplace transmission of COVID-19 and maximizing safety.

1. Stay home if you feel sick due to COVID-19 concerns (e.g. you have a cold, high body temperature, sinus infection or a similar condition). Communicate with your supervisor if you wish to self-isolate due to COVID-19 concerns.
2. Work from home with approval from your supervisor if you are in high risk categories, 65 or older and/or with pre-existing health conditions.
3. Maintain existing safeguards for reducing risk of transmission of COVID-19 infection to yourself and others by maintaining social distancing (6 feet or more) and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) including gloves and masks.
4. Ensure that work scheduled in the Vivarium is approved by the Principal Investigators whose research represents the type of animal investigations carried out in the facility to avoid crowding in procedure rooms and other areas.
5. Establish a program for regular cleaning of “common” touchpoints in research facilities, such as door handles, throughout the workday.
6. Wash your hands for 20 seconds or more before and after any activity.
7. Observe cough etiquette and personal hygiene at all times.
8. Conduct field or lab-related meetings, seminars, research presentations and alike remotely (e.g., via Zoom or Microsoft Teams), unless face to face meetings can be conducted with safeguards for reducing risk of transmission of COVID-19 infection to yourself and others.
9. It is expected that you not use public transportation, including airlines, when traveling to conferences, research labs or field sites.
10. Consider using videoconference arrangements when attending or delivering presentations remotely. To protect the health of conference goers and presenters, follow the advice of institutional health officers, health authorities and, for larger conferences, national guidance for travel before attending conferences.

11. You and an appropriate number of research collaborators are permitted to be on field research sites and in research labs at any one time as long as you maintain safeguards for reducing risk of transmission of COVID-19 infection to yourself and others. If the field research sites or labs have more employees, develop a shift system that works best for your particular research setting.
12. If you are involved in field research requiring overnight travel, you are permitted to use field vehicles to travel to research sites as long as you travel alone and stay overnight in hotels using single-occupancy. You are also permitted to travel with research collaborators on field trips provided your travel in separate vehicles, stay in separate hotel rooms (or a maximum of two occupants per double room), and maintain safeguards for reducing risk of transmission of COVID-19 infection to yourself and others.
13. If you are involved in research requiring field crews (e.g., conducting aquatic surveys with multiple people in a single boat), you are permitted to travel with field crew members by allowing one person per bench in each vehicle (car, truck, or boat), and to sample from the same vehicle with each person occupying a single seat or bench.

Additional Guidance

1. Sponsored research activities may be subject to additional guidelines presented by the sponsoring agencies. Consult with program officers from the respective funding agencies for updates concerning your sponsored projects.
2. Research monitored by research committees such as IRB, IACUC, and/or IBC may be subject to additional guidelines presented by these oversight committees. Consult with the relevant committee chairs regarding conducting approved research protocols, sanitizing research lab surfaces and equipment, or other research-oriented matters.
3. Consult the following documents from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and the [Texas Department of State Health Services \(DSHS\)](#) for excellent guidance on specific actions that should be taken as businesses reopen.

Contact the following individuals for specific questions regarding your research.

1. For questions related to conducting research with human subjects, contact Dr. David Pearson, IRB Chair, via e-mail dpearson@uttyler.edu.
2. For questions related to conducting research with animals, contact, Dr. Brent Bill, IACUC Chair, via e-mail bbill@uttyler.edu.
3. For questions related to biosafety, contact Dr. Ali Azghani, IBC Chair, via e-mail aazghani@uttyler.edu.
4. For questions related to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), contact Paula Tate, Director of Environmental Health and Safety, via e-mail ptate@uttyler.edu.
5. For other questions pertaining to other aspects of research, contact Kouider Mokhtari, Associate Provost for Research & Scholarship, via e-mail kmokhtari@uttyler.edu.

For More Information

1. Check the Office of Research & Scholarship [website](#) for updates on resuming research activities.
2. E-mail questions or research inquiries to research@uttyler.edu.