Principles and Procedures for On-campus Research at Carleton University

This document will be updated as provincial and municipal policies and guidelines evolve and in response to pronouncements by public health authorities.

May 15, 2020
**PRINCIPLES**

Resumption of on-campus research activities will need to be progressive in order to be compatible with provincial, health authorities, and municipal policies and guidelines and relevant Carleton policies and procedures, including the Building Access Protocol. Not all buildings will be reopened at the same time.

- No research activity that can be carried out remotely (e.g., from home) will be approved to be carried out on campus. If the research involves a combination of activities that must be conducted on campus and activities that can be conducted remotely (e.g., data analysis and other computer work), researchers must not carry out the portion of research activities that can be performed remotely while they are on campus. Exceptionally, some limited on-campus data analysis work could be approved for cases where the experimental work process includes idle/waiting periods that are significantly shorter than a standard work day.

- Any research carried out on campus, and any research involving in-person interactions with human participants, whether carried out on or off campus, will require prior approval of the relevant line Dean.

- All permissions will be granted for a limited time period (with possibility of renewal) and can be revoked at any time.

- Every researcher (faculty member, registered graduate student (hereafter, graduate student), postdoc) who decides to ramp up their research must be prepared for a sudden shut down following University or government directives or should other circumstances arise that would limit activities (e.g., a reported case of a COVID infection in a lab group).

- Every primary researcher (i.e., sole investigator; principal investigator; graduate student supervisor; or, in the case of projects involving external partners, lead researcher at Carleton) must take responsibility for not only adhering to safety protocols but must ensure that such protocols are adhered to by personnel (including research assistants and students, both undergraduate and graduate) under their supervision or guidance. Primary researchers are responsible for ensuring the safety of the work environment of the personnel under their supervision or guidance and are expected to be responsive to concerns expressed by these individuals about their work environment.

- All researchers who are granted permission to pursue research have a duty of care for themselves and others to protect all from the transmission of or exposure to the virus.

- Any situation that changes the circumstances surrounding the granting of permission must reported in a timely manner by the primary researcher for subsequent review by the relevant Dean who shall then seek input from Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) and Risk Management.

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• It must be noted that the same principles will apply to research that cannot be carried out from home but is carried out off campus (e.g., field research; or off-campus, in-person research with human participants) although: (i) if the research is carried out in a third-party host organization, any additional constraints imposed by this host organization will also apply; and (ii) such research may not allow for as much coordination as on-campus research, so that an abundance of caution must be applied to these projects, including proper consideration of travel limitations, and shared equipment use. As usual, before any field research can be undertaken, it is also mandatory to ensure insurance coverage for all participants. For additional details, please contact: risk@carleton.ca

• Given the varied nature of research activities taking place in the University, individual Faculties may add additional conditions for specific types of research situations.

• Research that includes in-person participants faces specific challenges; the same principles as above should be applied in deciding whether it can be started. The first priority should be to move to on-line participation; if that is not possible, participation respecting physical-distancing provisions recommended by public health authorities are to be considered; finally, if the latter is not possible, the implementation of physical barriers would have to be considered, including for instance Plexiglas dividers and the wearing of non-medical face coverings.

Prioritization of research requests will be based on:

• The contribution to graduate student project completion and, in particular, the research of those students who are close to graduation.

• The urgency of carrying out the research project because of timing issues (e.g., seasonal requirements, specific timelines for testing), funding issues, or if activities are linked to a non-negotiable research contract.

Research requests will not be approved:

• unless Facilities Management and Planning (FMP) and custodial services have the demonstrated ability to service buildings in which research activities are to occur and ensure health and safety; and

• the availability of a robust and viable pipeline for procuring required PPE for the proposed research, as appropriate, has been demonstrated.
PROCEDURES

• A primary researcher wishing to start on-campus research activities will submit a detailed research resumption plan, supported by their Chair or Director, to their Dean (or the Dean’s delegate) detailing how the proposed research plan abides by all the rules for on-campus work, including any additional conditions set by each Faculty. For the format of this plan see below: APPENDIX I: Template Information for Research Resumption Plans.

• Graduate students and postdocs with research projects independent of a faculty member must seek permission to resume on-campus (and relevant off-campus) research activities through their supervisors.

Notification of Change:

• Primary researchers, as well as independent graduate students and postdocs, must immediately inform the Dean (or the Dean’s delegate) of changes to the research activities from those which authorization was granted. Independent graduate students and postdocs are required to inform the Dean of such changes through their supervisor.

• Failure to comply to the research resumption plan after commencement of the research could lead to the suspension of the approval of this plan, at the discretion of the Dean. Additional measures may be undertaken in some cases.

Each Faculty may decide to request a pre-stage approval at the unit level. This unit-level resumption plan must include, at a minimum:

• Details about location of activities, research trainees, and personnel.

• Evidence of approval by the Animal Care Committee, Biohazards Committee, the Research Ethics Board, and other similar bodies (updated to reflect current conditions, where required), as appropriate.

• Schedule and description of research activities.

• Description of common/shared spaces and equipment needed to conduct the research, if any.

• Description of the cleaning procedure to be used between shifts and after the use of equipment, as appropriate.

• Measures taken to abide by rules for on-campus work; should it be impossible to respect physical-distancing provisions recommended by public health authorities, a detailed description of additional measures to be taken is required.

• Description of recommended and required personal protective equipment (PPE).
Approval will include an approved start date for each proposal and the time period for which the approval is in effect (approvals are renewable upon consideration by the Dean or the Dean’s delegate).

Prior to approving a resumption plan, the Dean will seek input from EHS and Risk Management. If any issues are identified at this stage, the Dean will seek modifications, as appropriate, to the proposed resumption plan. The Dean will approve the resumption plan once these issues, if any, have been addressed to the satisfaction of the Dean, EHS, and Risk Management.

A primary researcher may not start on-campus research activities before following the above process and obtaining the required written authorization of the Dean (or the Dean’s delegate).
APPENDIX I: Template Information for Research Resumption Plans

1. Name of the primary researcher (or research supervisor)
2. Academic home unit
3. Nature of the proposed research (suggested length: 300 words)
4. Description of the activities that are requested to be performed on campus and the ones that will continue to be performed remotely
5. Schedule and description of activities
6. Evidence of approval by the Animal Care Committee, the Biohazards Committee, the Research Ethics Board, and other similar bodies (updated to reflect current conditions, where required), as appropriate
7. All buildings and room numbers for which access is requested
   a. List of the equipment being used and frequently touched surfaces and a strategy to clean them, including cleaning supplies required and confirmation of a robust viable pipeline for procuring these supplies
   b. List of materials brought into the room and how they will be disinfected
8. Confirmation that FMP and custodial services are able to service all buildings and rooms for which access is requested and ensure health and safety
9. For each person for whom access is requested:
   a. Name
   b. Nature of connection to primary researcher
   c. Time for which access is requested (day of week; in and out times)
   d. Building(s) and room number(s) to be accessed
10. Maximum number of people working at the same time in the identified room(s)
11. Additional common/shared rooms that need to be accessed by trainees or personnel during this period
12. Capacity to respect physical-distancing provisions recommended by public health authorities for all work areas (Y / N)
   a. Description of the plan to ensure that these physical-distancing provisions are respected
13. For research activities for which physical-distancing provisions recommended by public health authorities cannot be maintained:
   a. Identify room(s) for which this is the case
   b. Provide a detailed safety plan (which could include, for example, altered shifts to reduce numbers of individuals in the room(s) at any one time, directional movement within research bays, restricted access to specific areas, details on the implementation of physical barriers, non-medical face coverings and the wearing of PPE)
14. The specific PPE required for the safe utilization of all rooms for which access is requested
15. Estimate of monthly need for PPE for the safe utilization of all rooms for which access is requested
16. Confirmation of the availability of a robust viable pipeline for procuring the required PPE
17. Considerations for quick ramp-down of research activities, if this were required: identify specific steps needed; how long it would take to implement these steps; the consequences of doing so
18. If applicable, a list of projects using the same or nearby space for which research resumption plans have already been approved; in such cases, a description of the expected health and safety implications of the additional activities requested is required
APPENDIX II: Procedure for Reporting Non-compliance

- It is of paramount importance that all community members involved in on-campus research activities comply with established safety policies and procedures.

- It is important to note that some circumstances can lead to perceptions of non-compliance, when there is none (an example would be the case of individuals working in close contact, but who happen to live in the same apartment). In many cases, a quick discussion with the individuals involved will help resolve such perceptions.

- Reporting procedures are as follows.

  - Non-compliance with safety policies and procedures within a research space is reported to the relevant Dean. Any other member of the Carleton community who is in receipt of a report of non-compliance should forward it promptly to the relevant Dean.

  - The Dean must investigate the situation without delay, beginning by contacting the primary researcher, then any other member of the research team, if applicable. The Dean may request advice from Environmental Health and Safety (EHS).

  - As part of the investigation, the Dean (or the Dean’s delegate) may do a visual inspection of the relevant research space.

  - If a claim of violation of safety policies and procedures is substantiated, the Dean will consult the University General Counsel, the Deputy Provost, the Associate Vice-President (Strategic Initiatives and Operations), and/or Labour Relations as required to determine appropriate measures, which may include:

    i. Indefinite suspension of on-campus research activities; or

    ii. Other measures such as sending some of the research staff home until additional measures can be put in place (e.g., appropriate PPE is provided). This preferable to an indefinite suspension of research activities in cases where that measure would unduly penalize other researchers (especially graduate students and postdocs).

- Research activities can resume only when the Dean is assured that safety policies and procedures can and will be followed.

- The disciplinary process can be initiated, if warranted.