

Expectations for Working in Research Laboratories During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This document contains expectations for researchers returning to campus as phased University operations resume (Phase 1 and Phase 2). During these phases, precautionary measures are in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. For the safety of themselves and those around them, all Yale faculty, trainees, staff, and essential visitors (e.g., contractors, vendors) are expected to comply with these expectations. Failure to do so will result in corrective actions. We thank you for your full cooperation.

The information in this document is intended to be generally applicable to returning to work in a research laboratory on campus. (Training for staff who do not enter laboratory spaces can be found [here](#).) The information provided is in addition to any specific requirements and approvals by other internal review committees, such as the IBC, IRB, YARC, IACUC, Radiation Safety Committee, Laboratory Safety Committee, or Environmental Health & Safety.

In addition to these practices for laboratories, researchers should observe the same precautions in all public spaces, such as parking lots/garages, elevators, stairways, and bathrooms. Consider making common entry and exit points one way. These spaces should be posted with appropriate signage on occupancy and use requirements. Signs are available on the [YPPS website](#).

Working alone in laboratories is not recommended, although it is recognized that certain tasks under this guidance may need to be performed by someone alone in a laboratory. If it is determined that lab staff will need to work alone, refer to the document, "[Yale University Guidelines for Working Alone in a Laboratory](#)."

The table at the end of this document discusses requirements specific to each phase of research reactivation. Please reference this table for guidance appropriate to Yale's current phase when you see a # after the guidance below. This # references the row of the table pertaining to the specific guidance.

The expectations discussed below can also be found in the [Reactivation Training for Researchers](#) required of all laboratory staff prior to their return to campus. Ensure all returning employees complete the Return to Work training appropriate for their position.

Physical Distancing

- If your work does not require you to be on campus, you are encouraged to conduct your work from home ([#3](#)). If you come to campus, follow all return to work guidance as outlined in this document.
- Maintain appropriate distancing in laboratories ([#5](#)).
 - Define and post maximum occupancy limits for any shared spaces. Close and label any shared spaces that do not fit social distancing requirements and are not to be used. Signs are available on the [YPPS website](#).
- Limit on-campus staff to only those approved for access ([#1](#)), and keep staffing to the minimum necessary to perform the research ([#5](#)). Examples of how to manage staffing levels include:
 - Limit occupancy of any indoor space to 50% normal occupancy (or less as needed to maintain appropriate distancing ([#5](#))).
 - Set up shift scheduling where small groups or cohorts of staff work alternating schedules.
 - Provide time whenever possible between each work shift to minimize overlap and allow for cleaning of the work environment at regular and appropriate intervals.
 - Whenever possible perform non-laboratory work outside of the laboratory (at home).

- Restrict laboratory visitors to only essential visitors (e.g., contractors, vendors, custodial, EHS, monitors, etc.). Any visitors to the lab must follow all guidance outlined in this document and follow the applicable [Guidance and Requirements for Vendors](#).
- Group meetings restricted, depending on phase ([#5](#)), and should be avoided unless absolutely necessary. Participants must maintain the required distancing ([#5](#)) and wear PPE appropriate for common/public spaces ([#9](#)) at all times.
- When using break or lunch rooms, alternate break or lunch schedules to reduce the number of employees in the room at any one time, always respecting physical distancing requirements. Eating and drinking is not allowed in laboratories. To avoid potential cross-contamination, use of shared food refrigerators in break rooms is discouraged.
- Set up a scheduling system and disinfection protocol for common equipment/dispensing areas to avoid congregating and cross-contamination in those areas.
- Avoid using coworkers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment. Clean and disinfect before and after each use if sharing such equipment, spaces, furniture, or tools is necessary.
- Where practicable, change work processes to assign specific tasks to the same person to avoid movement across laboratories. Ensure that personnel have the required training if they are performing new tasks.

Wearing Appropriate PPE

- Wear a surgical mask or face cover as required for work in a laboratory environment ([#8](#)) or in common/public areas ([#9](#)).
- In workplace settings where employees are working alone in segregated spaces (i.e., private offices, etc.), employees may remove their face covering.
- Require anybody entering the laboratory to wear a surgical mask.
- Yale University and CT guidance states that face coverings must be worn by anyone in public or in any space that is reasonably expected to be shared, including by employees while in the workplace.
- The requirement for face coverings does not apply to anyone for whom doing so would be contrary to his or her health or safety because of a medical condition. No one will be asked to provide proof of a described medical condition.
- Be aware that face coverings reduce community transmission of the virus and are not intended to provide protection for the wearer. Cloth face coverings provide a physical barrier that can help to contain the spread of respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.
- For laboratory work, a water-resistant surgical mask is required. Medical grade respirators (N95s or PAPRs) should be reserved for designated workers performing high-risk operations such as healthcare workers, police officers, and workers performing tasks designated high-risk. If performing a high-risk task, contact EHS for a hazard analysis.
- If a medical grade respirator is required for your work, follow the specific approved protocols for your research or contact EHS for assistance.

Practice Strict Self-Hygiene

- Practice good hand-washing: 20 seconds with soap and warm water or with an alcohol-based sanitizer. Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- [Self-monitor and check in daily](#) as required ([#6](#)). Recognize [symptoms](#) and self-isolate when sick. Develop a mechanism for recording staff on-site schedules to support contact tracing.
- If you are experiencing [symptoms of COVID-19](#), or suspect you are experiencing symptoms, contact Yale Health at 203-432-7978 or your health care provider for guidance.
- Stay at home whenever possible and in accordance with the work from home requirements ([#3](#)).
- Employees who are well, but who have a household member with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and call the Campus COVID-19 Resource Line at 203-432-6604.

Disinfect High-Touch Surfaces

- Clean and disinfect areas as required in laboratories ([#10](#)) and in common/public spaces ([#11](#)).
- Clean high-touch surfaces daily in common areas (e.g., tables, hard-backed chairs, doorknobs, light switches, phones, tablets, touch screens, remote controls, keyboards, handles, desks, sinks).
- Use disinfectants appropriate for COVID-19 ([EPA Disinfectant List](#)).

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		Critical Research Only	Phase 1 Highly Restricted Access	Phase 2 Restricted Access	Phase 3 Less Restricted Operations
1.	Laboratory Access	Only employees with approved exemptions for performing critical research tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration for campus access when necessary for research purposes only. • PI safety plans for individual labs. • Chair/director safety plans for common spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most on campus research possible. • Research activity must conform to physical distancing limits set by lab specific safety plans. • Access to offices and related campus facilities for activity that could be performed from home is permitted, but with appropriate safety measures, including limits related to physical distancing and use of personal protective equipment (PPE) as well as restrictions on in-person gatherings enforced. 	Some limited physical distancing or other requirements may still be in place. These will be communicated prior to Phase 3.
2.	Approved Research Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only critical research allowed. • Registration for critical research and campus access granted by petition of the PI and vetted by the department chair, cognizant dean and the vice provost. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research that <i>requires</i> access to campus laboratory facilities is allowed. • Local travel for field work permitted with authorization and when appropriate safety measures are employed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most research is allowed on campus, with physical distancing limits defined by phase. • Certain forms of on-campus work, including laboratory research and access to specialized facilities, require authorized safety plans. 	All research allowed with some limitations.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel for field work permitted for critical research only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-person human subjects research not allowed, except in a clinical or hospital setting for therapeutic purposes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel for field work permissible only as per University travel guidance with authorization and appropriate safety measures. Some in-person human subjects research permitted, with appropriate safety precautions and prior authorization. 	
3.	Remote Working Arrangements	If work can be done remotely, it <i>must</i> be done remotely.	If work can be done remotely, it <i>must</i> be done remotely.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working remotely (from home) remains strongly encouraged. All forms of approved research activity are permitted in a researcher's primary working space, such as an office or lab, even if the activity could be performed off campus, so long as physical distancing, reduced occupancy, and other measures for limiting virus spread are adhered to. 	No requirement.

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4.	In-Person Human Subjects Research	Not allowed, unless the research qualifies for the critical research exemption.	Not allowed, except in a clinical or hospital setting for therapeutic purposes.	Allowed with approval by the HSR committee , with appropriate PPE, symptom screening and other safety measures typical of a clinical setting.	All research allowed, but some restrictions based upon safety and physical distancing requirements may still apply.
5.	Physical Distancing Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the density of trainees/staff/faculty to the degree practicable by working in shifts or limiting concurrent use of research areas. • Minimize the time and distance between trainees/staff/faculty with the goal of a minimum six-foot distance at all times. • When practicable, one person per research bay. • No group meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the occupancy of any indoor space to 50% normal occupancy or less if needed to maintain required distancing. • Maintain 6-foot distance while working in the laboratory. If it is impossible to perform your work at a distance of 6 feet, contact EHS to perform a job hazard analysis. • When practicable, one person per research bay. • No indoor group meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the occupancy of any indoor space to 50% normal occupancy or less if needed to maintain required distancing. • Maintain 6-foot distance while working in the laboratory. If it is impossible to perform your work at a distance of 6 feet, contact EHS to perform a job hazard analysis. • When practicable, one person per research bay. • Indoor group meetings, if necessary, are limited to 5 people. 	Some social distancing measures still in place, depending upon Yale and State of CT guidance. Large gatherings in particular may be restricted.
6.	Symptom Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-monitor daily for symptoms of COVID-19 and stay home if ill. • If you are ill, follow Yale Health guidance and report to your direct supervisor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-monitor daily for symptoms of COVID-19 and stay home if ill. Use the University Check-In Application. • Develop mechanism for recording staff on-site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-monitor daily for symptoms of COVID-19 and stay home if ill. Use the University Check-In Application. • Develop mechanism for recording staff on-site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-monitor daily for symptoms of COVID-19 and stay home if ill. Use the University Check-In Application. • If you are ill, follow Yale Health guidance and

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		Critical Research Only	Phase 1 Highly Restricted Access	Phase 2 Restricted Access	Phase 3 Less Restricted Operations
			schedules to support contact tracing. • If you are ill, follow Yale Health guidance and report to your direct supervisor.	schedules to support contact tracing. • If you are ill, follow Yale Health guidance and report to your direct supervisor.	report to your direct supervisor.
7.	Virus and Antibody Testing	Conducted based upon public health guidance.	Yale faculty, staff, and trainees authorized to be on campus are invited to be screened for COVID-19. To learn more about the program, determine your eligibility for participation, and schedule testing, please visit the Pilot COVID-19 Screening Program webpage .	Yale faculty, staff, and trainees authorized to be on campus are invited to be screened for COVID-19. To learn more about the program, determine your eligibility for participation, and schedule testing, please visit the Pilot COVID-19 Screening Program webpage .	Conducted based upon public health guidance.
8.	PPE Requirements in Laboratories	PPE appropriate for critical research tasks.	Water-resistant face mask is required. Specialized PPE may be required, as specified by EHS.	Water-resistant face mask is required. Specialized PPE may be required, as specified by EHS.	Use of water-resistant face mask and specialized PPE may be required depending on public health and EHS guidance.
9.	PPE Requirements in Common/Public Spaces	Face cover required.	Face cover required.	Face cover required.	Face cover may be required, following public health guidance.
10.	Laboratory Cleaning	Lab staff responsible for disinfecting laboratory spaces.	• Lab staff responsible for disinfecting laboratory spaces (click here for guidance). • Have a system to regularly clean and	• Lab staff responsible for disinfecting laboratory spaces (click here for guidance). • Have a system to regularly clean and	Normal laboratory cleaning process/schedules resumed.

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			disinfect shared objects, equipment and surfaces.	disinfect shared objects, equipment and surfaces.	
11.	Common Space Cleaning	Heightened cleaning by custodial staff.	Heightened cleaning by custodial staff. Click here for guidance on disinfection of public areas.	Heightened cleaning by custodial staff. Click here for guidance on disinfection of public areas.	Follow public health guidance.

Acknowledgements:

YALE NUS Social Distancing Best Practices

UC San Diego Campus Guidance

State of CT: Safe Workplace Rules for Essential Employers