



Field Research Re-engagement

Guiding principles for ramping up field research

1. The safety of the workforce and everyone associated with its return, including members of surrounding communities, is the leading priority.
2. Planning will be as transparent as possible to permit individual faculty to make plans that conserve their time and effort.
3. Graduate students or postdoctoral researchers may not be compelled to conduct field research activities as a condition of assistantship or associate support, while public health orders governing individual activity remain in effect.
4. OVPR administrative review of school/college/unit field research plans in concurrence with their approvals of PI safety plans will occur to ensure coordination, effectiveness and compliance in health and safety.

Guidelines for performing field research

1. You will be required to record daily the following screening that asks:
 1. Do you have symptoms of: Fever (over 100.4°F or 38°C) or feeling feverish; New shortness of breath; New cough
 2. Do you have **two** of any of these symptoms: Chills; Muscle aches; New runny nose, nasal congestion, or sore throat; New loss of sense of smell or sense of taste; New headache; New diarrhea; New rash
 3. Have you had close or household contact in the last 14 days with someone diagnosed with COVID-19? (Close contact is being within 6 ft for ≥15 minutes) (If your close contact is providing clinical care for Covid positive patients while following appropriate health system protocols, answer No)
 4. Have you traveled internationally by airplane in the past 14 days?
2. If your answers to the screening disallow you from being present at work (pursuant to an applicable Executive Order, University policy, or otherwise) or you are not listed among the approved personnel designated by your school/college/unit, you will not be allowed to perform field research.

3. Any employee who has a positive intake screen will be referred for follow-up with the Occupational Health Services Hotline (734-764-8021).
 1. Occupational Health Services (OHS) will conduct the initial triage for employees with a positive screen
 2. OHS employees are trained to determine the need for a COVID-19 test, etc.
 3. There is a process in place for employee testing, either with off-site testing or at University Health Service.
 - a. Employees will not be allowed to work until cleared by OHS.

Guidelines for individuals returning to work

1. Approval is required from School/College/Unit to re-engage in field work.
2. Before approved individuals may return to work, they must complete a training module that outlines practices for safely returning to field work.
3. Employees who are not feeling well are required to stay home.
4. According to the U-M Chief Health Officer, individuals who are at high risk for complications of COVID-19 are not required to return to work. If an employee has a concern that they may be at high risk, they should contact their own doctor or Occupational Health Services. Some examples of high risk factors are:
 1. Age greater than 70,
 2. Persons with primary or acquired immunodeficiency,
 3. Persons on anti-rejection therapy following solid organ transplant or bone marrow transplant,
 4. Persons on biologic therapeutic agents, such as tumor necrosis factor inhibitors,
 5. Persons with malignancy and ongoing or recent chemotherapy, or
 6. Persons receiving system immunosuppressive therapy, including corticosteroids equivalent to 20 mg/day or prednisone for >2 weeks.
5. No undergraduate students are permitted to perform field research.
6. Employees are encouraged to use personal protective equipment and hand sanitizer on public transportation, per the [governor's Executive Order 2020-91](#).
7. Work that can be done remotely must continue in that fashion.
8. If your work requires your presence on campus and you do not wish to report for work, you may be able to utilize paid leave options, including the COVID-related paid time off or vacation time if approved by the supervisor. Voluntary furloughs may be a possibility. Please discuss your options with your supervisor.
9. Graduate Student lab engagement should follow [Rackham Guidance](#). Specifically the manner in which graduate students return to research in the laboratory or field should be mutually agreed upon by faculty mentor/PI and the graduate student. This agreement should be part of the work plans that faculty develop with their graduate students as part of the ramp up. Faculty should create pathways for graduate students to return to research that address both the priorities of the student and the priorities of the PIs research projects. If not fully aligned, the following factors can potentially provide

flexibility: (1) Engage the research group as a team to complete high-priority field tasks in ways that accommodate the individual situations of team members; (2) Incorporate variable levels of research activities (e.g. field research, data analysis, experimental design) into the work plans of graduate students during the initial ramp up in ways that accommodate their individual situations; (3) as needed, the student's department or program can work with the faculty and student to develop alternative methods for academic and research progress.

1. In addition, the graduate student's department or academic program should review faculty/student work plans to ensure safety and equity. In the event that the manner in which a graduate student returns to laboratory or field research cannot be mutually agreed upon by the faculty member and student, the department or academic program should assist in developing such an agreement. The graduate student, faculty member, and department can also call upon available campus resources, including those in the student's school or college, the Rackham Resolution Office, or the Dean of Students Office of Conflict Resolution.
2. Confidentiality of a graduate student's individual circumstances should be maintained by the faculty mentor.

Guidelines for preparing the field research operation

1. Each laboratory/studio must provide all of the following items before reopening: safe field research schedule/plan and individual duty list, that, at all times, maximizes employee spacing and complies with social distancing and all relevant PPE. The plan must be approved by your school/college/unit. All of the described procedures must be followed and adhered to:
 1. This safe field research plan/schedule should minimize the number of people at any one location at any one time. Approvals of safety plans will be given by each school's research leadership, with concurrence from OVPR. Please follow guidance from your school or unit on the form and process for obtaining approval to return to field research.
 2. Field Research Operation Plan must include:
 1. Contingency plan for carrying on research if one or more personnel becomes sick or is no longer willing to risk conducting the research.
 2. Description of the research activities and what precautions are being undertaken to limit potential disease exposure or transmission (i.e., personal protective equipment, social distancing).
 3. Justification as to why delaying the research will have a detrimental impact on the research project or the student's progression towards a degree.
 4. List of all engaged personnel, their contact information and an emergency contact.

3. Distribute a list of duties to be performed by personnel, indicating the location and designated time of day for such duties to be completed.
 4. Develop a means of designating who is present at the field research space at any given time, preferably through an online sign-in tool to minimize touching items such as a physical sign-in sheet, or other mechanism of controlling the number of people at the same location at the same time.
 5. Note that, depending on the research area/experiment, safety guidelines for the specific field research project may require more than one person to be present at a location at one time. In this case, the individuals present must maintain at least a 6-foot separation at all times. If the appropriate physical separation cannot be maintained, this work cannot be started.
 6. Move equipment to create at least 6 feet between users.
 7. PI safety plans should include attestation that field locations must not be used for social gatherings or group meetings.
2. Masks
1. Employees authorized to return to field research work must be provided a cloth face covering and instructions on cleaning and maintenance. Refer to EHS [Face Covering Usage for COVID-19](#)
 2. A new mask will not be provided daily, so employees must retain their mask and bring it with them daily, after complying with all relevant and applicable cleaning and care requirements. Refer to EHS [Face Covering Usage for COVID-19](#).
3. Create a safe space and maintain at least 6 feet between field researchers at all times.
1. The cloth face covering should be worn when in outdoor situations where 6 feet of social distancing cannot be maintained, and always worn when going indoors where others may be present. If your research requires heightened PPE, that should be worn in lieu of the face covering for that task. Proper hand hygiene before and after using any face covering is critical.
 2. Wash your hands with soap upon entering and before leaving the field location (this could be the transport vehicle), and wash them after touching shared accessory devices like phones (use speaker phone if possible).
 3. Wear eye protection when there is a potential for splash or splatter to the face, or when surface contact is a possibility, e.g. microscopy work.
 4. Minimize shared items (pens, notebooks, frequently used reagent bottles, etc.). As much as possible, each person should have their own.
 5. All principal investigators must formally assign a daily sanitation role which includes daily decontamination of procedures including the cleaning of all door handles & lock keypads, keyboards/mice/desks for shared equipment computers, telephones, printer, cameras, microscopes, transport vehicles, etc.
 6. Provide disinfecting supplies and require workers to wipe down their work stations at least twice daily, per the [governor's directive](#).
 7. If it can be done safely, use paper towels or Kimwipes when handling common field items, field equipment and door handles.

8. Wipe or spray door handles with 70% ethanol (or other EPA-registered disinfectant) after use. See [EHS guidelines](#).
9. Overclothes or coveralls are recommended to protect personal clothing. Follow [EHS guidelines](#) for cleaning and disinfecting hard, non-porous surfaces.
10. Remove overclothes and gloves when leaving the field location.
11. Consider footwear and clothing as a possible transmission source. You should have a pair of shoes that you use for field use that you do not wear into your place of residence. Such shoes could be left just inside the door of your place of residence.
12. Be sure to disinfect surfaces, such as tables and chairs, before and after using such facilities.
 1. Cups, mugs, plates, and silverware must be washed with soap before and after use.
 2. Wash your hands after using a break room.
4. Create a plan for shared equipment. All shared equipment must be disinfected before and after each use.
 1. Wear disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting equipment. Discard (where supplies allow) or disinfect gloves after each use with 70% ethanol or sanitizer.
 2. Special care should be taken to disinfect equipment that makes direct physical contact with skin, including eyepieces for microscopes, touch pads, etc.
 3. Use disposable tissues, Kimwipes, etc. to touch surfaces that cannot be disinfected, and/or when gloves are not available.
5. Create a plan for interacting with individuals while in the field
 1. Transfer of items should be arranged by leaving them in a designated area for a no-contact approach, as opposed to handing them over in person. The timing of these transfers should be closely coordinated to ensure the safety of all involved, as well as to eliminate the potential for lost or otherwise unattended items in the field.
 2. Research studies must be carefully and thoughtfully planned given the likelihood that support services will be operating at reduced levels.
 3. Use of shared facilities and other equipment must be pre-arranged in order to avoid accidental contact. Be sure that all users understand field sign-in procedures.
 4. Use precautions when entering a restroom, shared use facility, or other common areas. Call out to assess occupancy or create an "occupied" door sign. Use a disposable towel or Kimwipe to touch door handles and faucets, and wash your hands upon entering and leaving.

Travel procedure

1. Field research resumption is being expanded and principal investigators can now submit safety plans for domestic field research that is out of state, as well as in-state field research with appropriate safety plans in place that account for local health guidance.
2. Minimize Staff Involved: You are expected to conduct the essential field research with the fewest staff needed to complete the activity, while ensuring employee safety. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator (PI) to remain in frequent communication with employees conducting essential field research. At a minimum, PIs are expected to require employees to check in when they begin and end work.
3. One Person per Vehicle: Only one person per vehicle is allowed for any travel related to essential research activities. This policy applies to travel using a University vehicle or a personal vehicle.
4. One Person per Room: Any overnight lodging must be one person per room.

Creating a culture and opportunity for continuous improvement of field and health safety

1. Frequent communication from OVPR and EHS regarding safety, research re-engagement and important public health updates.
2. You will largely be in isolated areas and responsible for maintaining public health standards so that field research can remain open.
3. Report safety issues, including personnel who are ill or not following safety protocols, via the [U-M compliance hotline website](#). You can also report concerns by calling 866-990-0111 or contacting EHS at 734-647-1143 or emailing EHS.
4. OVPR and Occupational Health Services will track aggregate data on COVID-19 illness with weekly reports.