

## **Plans for Reopening Laboratory Research at SMHS**

Reviewed with input by Council of Chairs, Senior Associate Deans

This document will guide faculty, staff and trainees as they plan for the reopening of laboratory research at the School of Medicine and Health Sciences (SMHS) in the coming weeks and months. Several taskforces have been formed to consider Testing, Building Use, and Safety and Hygiene implementation in Ross Hall.

### ***Guiding Principles***

Principle 1: The university's top priority is the emotional and physical health and safety of its faculty, staff, students, as well as the health and safety of the District of Columbia/Maryland/Virginia (DMV) region. No one should feel pressured to return to campus if they are not comfortable.

Principle 2: SMHS will follow directives from local, state, and national Public Health authorities regarding shelter-in-place and social distancing. SMHS will coordinate plans to reopen with those of other schools at GWU. Premature opening of SMHS buildings could cause a rebound in infection rates that threatens the lives of DMV residents.

Principle 3: COVID Research Task Forces on Testing, Building Use, and Safety and Hygiene have been established to provide guidance and oversight for the reopen process. In the event that research labs need to ramp down again, please consult the [Laboratory Ramp-Down Checklist](#). In addition, the Office of Sponsored Projects continuously updates information on the impacts on research activities here: <https://sponsoredprojects.gwu.edu/covid-19>.

Principle 4: The ramp up of research will be through a transparent and phased process, outlined below.

### ***4 Phases of Reopening***

Laboratory research will not be the same as it was before the pandemic. SMHS will follow these 4 phases of reopening, which are informed by our guidelines. While much of the research at SMHS has been put on hold, we have not shut down completely. Select laboratories have continued with projects at a minimum level, and essential personnel have been granted access. The Animal Research Facility (ARF), Division of Safety and Security, and Facilities staff continue to provide essential services and oversight.

#### ***Research Phase 1: Present***

Currently, only select research projects, including COVID research, are allowed to be conducted. Only essential personnel are allowed on campus. Each Principal Investigator (PI) has designated a maximum of two lab personnel as essential.

#### ***Research Phase 2 (Limited Reopening): June 8, 2020***

- Population density will be increased in a manner that is consistent with federal and state guidelines
- Maximum density will be between 12.5% and 25%. Will be calculated on individual lab basis.
- Projects not involving chemical or radiological hazards, that were halted or stopped as part of ramp-down, will be identified and prioritized for phased restart
- Priority will be given to graduate students and postdocs who are close to completing their degree/term of appointment. Rotating students will be included in density calculations.
- Undergraduates will not be allowed in the laboratories at this time
- Priority will be given to PIs with grants that are within four months of their end dates, and/or where the funding agency is not flexible with no cost extensions.

- Human research projects that are conducted on campus, and involving direct subject interactions and interventions, can be restarted while minimizing entry to Ross Hall.
- Necessary core facilities that support the research activities being resumed will be reopened. Staffing of the facilities should be kept at a minimum.

***Research Phase 3 (Expanded Reopening): Date TBD***

- Population density will be increased in a manner that is consistent with federal and state guidelines
- Projects involving chemical or radiological hazards, that were halted or stopped as part of ramp-down, will be identified and prioritized for phased restart
- Human research projects that are conducted off campus, and involving direct subject interactions and interventions, can be restarted on a case-by-case basis.
- Other core facilities that support the research activities being resumed will be reopened. Staffing of the facilities should be kept at a minimum.

***Research Phase 4: (Resume Total Research Programs) Date TBD***

- All personnel may return to campus
- New projects may be started
- All research facilities will be reopened
- Some positions will likely move to long-term and/or partial teleworking

***Determination of Phase 2 personnel***

Each PI will determine who from their laboratories should return to work during this phase. Some considerations:

- PhD students and postdocs who need to need to complete experiments to meet a thesis deadline, a paper submission, or a grant submission
- Lab members (including but not limited to staff, students and postdocs) who volunteer willingly
- Allow each lab member to return to campus at least one day a week in order to enjoy some progress on their projects
- Undergraduate and high school students will not be allowed in laboratories during the pandemic

***Scheduling and coordination of work hours***

Each laboratory should develop a calendar system to schedule work shifts throughout the week, including weekends. Shifts should be flexible and could range anywhere from 2 to 12 hours in length. An example would be to have specific people on campus on certain days of the week.

- Lab members should communicate openly and often to coordinate and adjust schedules as necessary
- Lab members should plan to use their time in the laboratory for bench time only. Updating notebooks, reading, and manuscript writing should be done from home.
- Each lab member's bench should be used only by that lab member. If this is not possible due to space constraints and benches must be shared, then complete and proper decontamination of the bench space must be done after each use.

***Health and Safety***

- Students, staff, and faculty who feel ill, no matter the cause, must stay home and not perform work of any kind in the laboratory. They should communicate by phone or email to relevant parties (professors, supervisors, etc.) to let them know they are sick.

- Workers must maintain a minimum distance of six feet from others when in the laboratory
- All workers must wear face masks at all times. No one will be allowed entry into the building without a face mask. The school will provide cloth masks which can be taken home and washed. To report a violation, contact the [Office of Ethics, Compliance, and Privacy](#).
- Periodic schedule of cleaning/decontamination (elevators, bathrooms)
- If you think you or someone you know has been in contact with someone who is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, please complete this form: [GW Possible Contact Form](#)
- GW's live-answer Information Line, for COVID-19 related questions, is available Monday through Friday (9am – 5pm) and can be reached at 1-855-GWU-INFO (855-498-4636).

***Housecleaning, Disinfection***

- CDC's [Best Practices for Cleaning and Decontamination](#)
- To report a violation, contact the [Office of Ethics, Compliance, and Privacy](#)

All faculty, staff, and students must adhere to GWU Policies regarding COVID-19. We are confident that faculty and staff understand the importance of these policies and will operate their laboratories accordingly.

- [Prevention Guidelines](#)
- [Travel Information](#)
- [Working From Home](#)
- [SMHS Health Updates](#)
- [Ways To Help](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [University Updates](#)

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