



The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA.
Office of the Vice President for Research & Partnerships

A Framework for Restarting On-Campus and Field-Based OU-Norman Research and Creative Activity

Phase 1

Since March 24, the university has operated its research and creative activity enterprise largely remotely, with only work defined as essential in the March 22 memo from the Vice President for Research and Partnerships (VPRP) taking place on campus ([Phase 0](#)). At this time, we are implementing a framework for the restart of nonessential on-campus and field-based research and creative activity operations that consists of a series of phases that gradually ease restrictions and requirements on personnel who return to the Norman campus for research purposes. This document describes Phase 1, the optional first stage in returning authorized nonessential research workers to their activities. Our top priority during Phase 1 is to pilot test a series of measures that will be vital to fully opening the campus in the fall. We are testing an approach that is designed to (a) promote a safe and secure working environment, and (b) learn and inform later stages of the campus restart. Later phases of this framework as well as a plan for the Tulsa campus will be described in future communications.

PHASE 1 IS INFORMED BY THE FOLLOWING GUIDING PRINCIPLES.

1. Our ultimate priority is to promote the safety of our community by following all university policy directives regarding shelter-at-home, travel, social distancing, and hygiene. Our framework and guidelines are informed by and consistent with Local, State, and National Public Health Authority directives.
2. In order to promote safety while enabling certain research and creative activity to restart operations on campus and at field sites, the goal will be to minimize the density of people working in any one location at any given time, while at the same time maintaining all laboratory safety procedures and standards.
3. Priority in Phase 1 will be given to (a) Phase 0 research and creative activity already in place, and (b) **sponsored** research and creative activities that absolutely require a physical presence in a campus laboratory or at a field site and cannot be accomplished remotely¹.
4. Phase 1 will commence on or about May 20. Only a limited number of specifically authorized faculty and staff will be able to return through the Phase 1 program at this time. Depending on the evolution of the Covid19 pandemic in the U.S., in the State of Oklahoma, and within Norman and the OU Campus, future Phases this summer may add personnel to those authorized in Phase 1 to be present on campus and at field sites. Activities will quickly return to Phase 0 should circumstances force a closing down of the campus.
5. In order to minimize the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 while resuming our sponsored research, we will implement a pilot program—based on the best science we

¹ Deans will work with chairs and directors to support safe retrieval of research materials from offices that may be needed to perform work from home. These will be one-time only activities. Individuals who enter their offices on a one-time basis to retrieve research materials are not included in the pilot program described in this document



know and understand today—to test, contact trace, retest, physically distance, and as necessary isolate participating faculty, students and staff (which hereon is understood to include post docs, research assistants, research engineers and other research-related personnel and support staff) who are allowed to return to campus and field site research and creative activity operations as part of this Phase 1.

6. This pilot will help us prepare for the fall testing and oversight program. Participation in the pilot is voluntary; however, testing and contact tracing will be mandatory for all those wishing to return to campus and field research operations in Phase 1.
7. In addition, to obtain permission to restart on-campus and field research and creative activity for Phase 1, a detailed COVID-19-specific Conduct of Operations plan (COP) must be approved by the VPRP office prior to restart. Details of the contents of and approval process for the COP are provided at the end of this document.
8. Following approval for Phase 1 restart by the VPRP, responsibility and authority for safe conduct of operations is delegated through the Deans to the Chair and Director level². Reviews will be performed by the Office of the VPRP as needed.
9. COPs must contain a section detailing how the research/creative activity can be quickly and safely ramped down should the need to do so arise.

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES THAT WILL BE CONSIDERED FOR APPROVAL TO RESTART RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY OPERATIONS IN PHASE 1

As we emerge from the current situation (Phase 0), the following types of activities—activities consistent with the principles above and that absolutely require a physical presence in a campus laboratory or at a field site and cannot be accomplished remotely—will be prioritized and considered for approval to restart in Phase 1.

- Ongoing essential work as defined in the March 22 memo from the VPRP office (Phase 0).
- Sponsored research and creative activity where federal agency or other sponsor expectations, deadlines, and milestones necessitate an immediate return to the lab or other research/creative activity spaces.
- Research or creative activity that if delayed is likely to have a significant detrimental impact on the career success of tenure track faculty.
- Research or creative activity which is absolutely critical to the completion of a graduate student thesis/dissertation no later than the fall term 2020, or of a post-doctoral researcher assignment that requires a physical presence in a campus laboratory or field site and cannot be accomplished remotely.
- Work at core facilities required to enable the execution of campus- and field site-based research.

As another step to minimize density on campus, and to ensure that everyone can be tested for COVID-19, only between 500 and 700 people will be initially approved to reenter the campus for research and creative activities during the launch of Phase 1.

Conversely, the following types of activities will NOT be allowed to restart in Phase 1:

- Any activity for which the research/creative activity can continue online and/or be done from home.

² In specific cases where multidisciplinary research associated with a single program happens in a specific building (e.g. the Advanced Radar Research Center at the Radar Innovation Laboratory or the Center for Risk and Crisis Management), authority is delegated to the Center Director level

- Activities that require more than 2 people per 500 square feet of workspace (research lab, studio, archive, etc.) to be completed.
- Any activity that requires close contact (less than six feet) with other people. For example, activities that require multiple people traveling in one vehicle where physical distancing guidelines of six feet or more cannot be kept, or being together in close proximity, or any activity that requires human contact such as putting electrodes on a research subject.
- Undergraduate students will not be allowed in university research spaces or field sites during Phase 1 unless approved specifically by the VPRP in consultation with the Provost and the VP for Student Affairs. Depending on the duration of Phase 1, this directive might be reconsidered in the future.
- Any activity for which there is not sufficient personnel protective equipment (PPE) available to perform the work safely.

In addition, it is recommended that faculty, graduate students, or staff who fall into one the categories presently defined by the CDC as being at higher risk for severe illness from COVID19 exercise extreme care if and when participating in allowed on-campus or field site research or creative activity.

REQUIREMENTS FOR APPROVAL TO START RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY WORK DURING PHASE 1.

Conduct of Operations Plan (template [here](#))

- Every activity proposed for restart in Phase 1 must have an approved COP
- The COP form is to be filled out by the Principal Investigator of the research or creative activity team
- COPs must be submitted by the PI of every activity to his or her department chair or school director who will approve and forward to the College Dean and/or designated Associate Dean. After review by the Dean's office, the Dean will approve and forward to the VPRP office for final approval confirmation by the VPRP.
- Every COP must detail:
 - the nature of the work to be performed;
 - the sponsor(s) of the work;
 - the Principal Investigator(s), additional research faculty, students and staff;
 - the location/s where the research or creative activity will be performed.
- Every COP must detail the inventory of PPE available to safely execute the work, and how that inventory will be kept updated. To access the university's PPE inventory for research and creative activity, please contact Melany Dickens-Ray at mdickens@ou.edu
 - Every faculty member, graduate student and staff must agree to wear PPE, including cloth face masks, at all times while on campus or a field site (surgical-grade N95 or KN95 masks should be reserved for medical and first responder personnel).
 - PPE includes but is not limited to
 - Face masks capable of protecting against transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (all personnel)
 - All standard PPE necessary for safe laboratory practices
 - Face shields as needed to perform laboratory or field work
 - Plastic shields between work stations as needed to minimize potential SARS-CoV-2 transmission
- Every COP must detail the mechanisms that will be put in place to achieve the lowest density of people reasonable to carry out research.

- Work must be able to be completed with no more than 2 people per 500 square feet of workspace, utilizing shift scheduling wherever possible, and requiring all personnel to wear masks. All safety protocols must be maintained.
- All research group and team meetings should continue to take place online; in-person group meetings are strongly discouraged. Should the need arise for an in-person meeting, such meetings must follow physical distancing requirements. All meetings with 10 or more participants must be remote, online meetings.
- All travel to and from field sites must follow all physical distancing and OU, local, state and CDC travel guidelines.
- All faculty, graduate students, and staff participating in research and other creative activities must follow physical distancing protocols at all times.
 - To this end, the COP must address how work schedules will be staggered and work shifts implemented to maintain low personnel density as required.
- For certain activities within the University Research Campus where multidisciplinary research associated with a single program happens in a specific building (e.g., the Advanced Radar Research Center at the Radar Innovation Laboratory or the Center for Risk and Crisis Management), the Center Director will be responsible for initial approval, and he/she will submit the COP directly to the VPRP office for final approval.
- Once a COP is approved by the School Director or Department Chair, concurred by the College Dean, and approved by the VPRP office, research activity on campus or at field sites can only start after the faculty, graduate students and staff associated with the activity have received the results of the SARS-COV-2 test.
- As outlined above, every COP must contain a detailed a plan describing how all nonessential research activities will be safely ramped down and suspended within a maximum of 48 hours, should a directive to do so be given by the University.

In addition, we expect all personnel to follow certain behavioral patterns that will help further promote a safe and secure working environment, such as:

- All laboratory personnel should use the EHSO Resuming Research Activity [checklist](#) ensure laboratory safe operations.
- This is an opt-in program; no member of any research team should be pressured to return to campus or participate in field research activities if they are not comfortable doing so. If you are a staff or student employee and are feeling pressured to return, please contact Carrie Irwin, cirwin@ou.edu. If you are a faculty member and are feeling pressured to return, please contact Chris Walker, chriswalker@ou.edu
- Develop a personal transportation plan that minimizes proximity to other people. Consider cycling, walking, or driving instead of public transit.
- Be present in the research lab or creative activity space only as long as necessary. Minimize time around other people.
- Remember that transmission of the SARS-COV-2 virus may occur from people with no symptoms. At this time, in the absence of a vaccine, consider that everyone, including yourself, may be infected with the virus and always use all appropriate precautions.

Participation in Pilot Program

As indicated above, as part of the Phase 1 restart OU will conduct a voluntary pilot program of testing, [contact tracing](#), and retesting that will help inform and maximize—based on our current understanding

of the science of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and COVID-19 disease—the safety of subsequent Phases as we gradually ease restrictions for returning to the campus this fall.

The following will be required of all Faculty, Students and Staff who opt to participate in Phase 1 and who are part of an approved COP:

- Agree to receive a PCR test to determine the presence or lack thereof of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in their body prior to being allowed back on campus, and to complete a [health screening questionnaire](#), developed by our physicians at the Health Sciences Center, within 24 hours of arrival on campus. Details of how to sign up, consent, and when and where these tests will be conducted and how results will be reported will be sent to all individuals with an approved COP via text or email.
- Agree to comply with safety and preventive measures detailed in the approved COP and any subsequent instructions from VPRP or the University President, understanding that a failure to do so may require immediate termination of the activity in part or in its entirety.
- Faculty, students and staff participating in research and creative activities that begin to experience the [symptoms](#) that could be consistent with COVID-19 such as fever (temp $\geq 100.4^{\circ}$ F), chills, cough, shortness of breath, body aches, loss of taste and/or smell, and/or extreme fatigue, must leave the campus and should immediately contact the campus health clinic (Goddard 405-325-8732) for further guidance regarding restrictions to return to campus. Infrared thermometers will be available at the entrance to buildings for people to use as needed.

Schedule for Phase 1

The first cohort to go back into campus and field sites to perform approved research and creative activities is expected to commence work on May 20. We expect this cohort will not exceed 300 people. One additional approved cohort up to the maximum of 700 people for the Phase 1 program will start on May 27. No additional Phase 1 cohorts will be allowed to start after that date regardless of the total number of people (not to exceed 700) approved by May 27.

The proposed schedule for the May 20 cohort (subject to change) is as follows:

- COPs due to Office of the VPRP from College Deans by 5 pm on Monday, May 11.
- OVPRP review of COPs on Tuesday, May 12.
- Notification via email or text to PIs of results of COP evaluation on May 13. For those (up to 300 total) whose COP is approved notification will include details of how to register for Covid-19 testing as well as location and time.
- Covid-19 tests will be administered by Goddard health clinic on May 14-15
- Test results will be communicated to individuals within 72 hours
- Those whose COP is approved and have tested negative for the SARS-COV-2 virus will restart research and creative activities on May 20

For those whose COP was approved for restart in Phase 1 but not included in the May 20 cohort, or whose COP was not received in the OVPRP by May 11, the following schedule will apply:

- COP due to Office of the VPRP from College Deans no later than 5 pm on Friday, May 15.
- OVPRP review of COPs finalized on Tuesday, May 19.
- Notification via email or text to PIs of results of COP evaluation on May 20. For those (up to 700 total for all of Phase 1) whose COP is approved, notification will include details of how to register for Covid-19 testing as well as location and time.

- Covid-19 tests will be administered by Goddard health clinic on May 21-22
- Test results will be communicated to individuals within 72 hours
- Those whose COP is approved and have tested negative for the SARS-COV-2 virus will restart research and creative activities on May 27

No additional COPs will be accepted for review or considered for approval by the OVPRP for Phase 1 after the Friday, May 15 deadline.