Returning to Campus Research Activities

Click the sections below to view relevant information. Please email research@utdallas.edu for specific questions.

Research in Shared Spaces

Shared Spaces are defined as research spaces where members of a research group routinely interact with each other in the same space, such as science and engineering labs, core facilities, shared spaces in institutes or centers. To the greatest extent possible, research personnel should continue to work from home; in particular, all vulnerable individuals are encouraged to continue to work from home. Research personnel should be aware that depending on the situation, such as an outbreak of COVID-19 or Stay Home executive orders, research may have to be ramped down again within a short amount of time. Click here to view Signage that should be placed in strategic and relevant areas to remind personnel of the health & safety guidelines required to remain compliant.

Health & Safety Guidelines

Required Daily Health Checks

All faculty, staff, and students reporting to campus must be enrolled in the Daily Health Check process, and will receive a health check survey by email or text on a daily basis. Prior to coming to campus, individuals must self-screen for any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19 infection, and must include new signs/symptoms among their household members:

- Cough, shortness of breath, persistent pain/pressure in their chest, chills, repeated shaking with chills, runny nose or new sinus congestion, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, fatigue, new GI symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea), new loss of taste or smell, a fever great than 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit, or known close contact with a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19.
- If you or your household members have any of the symptoms on any work-day, do not come on campus. Complete your daily health check survey and contact your immediate supervisor as soon as reasonably possible. Follow the guidelines on the UT Dallas Covid-19 website in the case of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. The COVID-19 Coordinator, Office of Emergency Management and Continuity Planning (OEMCP), and UT Dallas Safety Team will provide additional guidance regarding individual and facilities follow-up actions that may be needed.

Campus Tracing

- UT Dallas COVID-19 campus tracing teams will evaluate daily health check responses, as well as individual reports of suspected/confirmed exposure to COVID-19 disease, to initiate the campus tracing process. Campus tracing occurs for the following scenarios: Scenario 1 - Positive for COVID-19; Scenario 2 - Exhibiting Symptoms of COVID-19; Scenario 3 - Close Contact. The campus tracing teams will gather information from campus personnel, initiate response actions/notifications, and inform affected campus community members of next steps and follow-up procedures.
- Every individual must maintain and regularly update a list of substantive and known face-to-face interactions that they have had during work hours of the preceding two weeks (i.e., lab members they interact with on a daily basis, human subjects they came in contact with during study procedures, etc.). In the case of a coronavirus infection, this list should be made available to university personnel.

Proactive COVID-19 Testing Program

- To support continuing safety measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 on campus, the University offers proactive testing for UT Dallas faculty, staff, and students at no cost to personnel. All research personnel not working remotely are strongly encouraged to participate in the weekly testing program. Testing sites are located on campus, and testing is provided by appointment only to ensure physical distancing and cleaning protocols are maintained. Contact your Supervisor to enroll in the proactive testing program.

Meetings & Visitors

- Routine lab/research group meetings should not be conducted face-to-face; conduct meetings virtually.
- Please move all of your visitor meetings and consultations online.
- Research Safety staff will assist Central Receiving in safely handling and delivering packages containing chemical, biological, or radiological materials to laboratories.
- Vendor visits to research laboratories should be coordinated through Research Facilities Operations.

Social Distancing & Spacing

- CDC guidelines for social distancing of 6 feet or greater must be maintained.
- Shared research spaces must have no more than one (1) individual per 200 sqft per room/workspace unless further density is justified and approved. The PI is responsible for ensuring that this rule is followed at all times. Space out desks and workstations; desks in common areas must be arranged so that individuals occupying desks at the same time are at least 10 ft apart (consider temporary walls between workstations if this spacing cannot be achieved). If a space is designed for single occupancy, the space should not be occupied by more than one individual on the same day.
• Maintaining appropriate fire barriers and life safety protections in buildings and work spaces is critical. Furniture or other items that are rearranged to support physical distancing cannot block or diminish paths of travel (aisles, hallways, corridors), or in any way hinder access to egress doors. Personnel and units must not prop open or inhibit the operation of doors, especially doors that are designed to be self-closing for fire safety or security purposes.

Hygiene Etiquette

• Wash/sanitize hands frequently. At a minimum, this includes before entering and upon leaving a laboratory.
• When available, use soap and water and scrub hands for a minimum of 20 seconds.
• If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol and cover all hand surfaces and rub until dry.
• Cough/sneeze into a tissue. Dispose of used tissues immediately into a trashcan and then wash hands. If there are no tissues available, cough/sneeze into the crook of your elbow, not your hands.
• Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth. This can accelerate the spread of infection.
• Wear personal protective equipment, as appropriate in the laboratory.

Face and Hand Coverings

• Face masks/face coverings must be worn at all times in spaces that involve close proximity with other people and when other people are present.
• Hand coverings/gloves should only be worn during work tasks where use is specified by a hazard assessment. When disposable gloves are worn by research personnel, gloves must be discarded after each use. Do not wear gloves in public spaces/common areas, to prevent cross-contamination.
• Masks and gloves must be available in shared research spaces. Obtaining these items is the responsibility of the PI.
• Gloves must be worn and removed properly when individuals interact with human subjects in close proximity or when in contact with shared devices or equipment.
• Masks and gloves must be made available to human subjects and visitors prior to entering lab spaces. Human subjects and visitors must wear masks and must be given the option to wear gloves.
• If other protective equipment is needed, the PI must ensure their availability. If any of these are needed and not available to the lab, the lab is not allowed to remain open.

Work Area Safety

• If research is conducted by a single individual in a lab setting where under normal circumstances, two or more individuals are present, notify at least one other person outside the lab as a safety precaution prior to entering the lab and upon leaving.
• Please contact Research, Campus, and Environmental Safety (safety@utdallas.edu) to request support, when more than one person may be needed to safely operate equipment.

Disinfecting Labs & Equipment

• Disinfect common research areas and frequently touched surfaces (lab benches, doorknobs, sink handles, freezer doors, fume hood sashes, keyboards, microscopes, etc.) at the end of each shift prior to the next shift arriving at the workplace.
• Designate one or more individuals responsible for cleaning and disinfecting and have them document on a daily work sheet that they completed the cleaning.
• Minimize the sharing of equipment and devices. If they need to be shared, thoroughly disinfect the device between uses by different individuals.
• Please go to the Office of Research website for frequently asked questions on disinfecting labs.

Return to Research Process

Elect

In order for lab personnel to return to campus, they must first be approved (or elected) by the Principal Investigator (PI) of their lab. Please follow the process as described below.

1. Elect Personnel: PIs complete this form to designate research personnel who will need to come to campus to complete research activities.
2. Complete and Certify Training: Elected personnel and the PI will each receive an email containing 2 links. The first link is to a required training module and the second link allows personnel to submit their certification form after the training has been completed.
3. Reserve Research Time: After training has been completed and certified, within two business days, personnel will receive email authorization to reserve research time on campus using Lab Resources Scheduler. Time slots available will be specific to their lab PI.
   a. A phase-specific capacity is enforced by the scheduler for PI-elected personnel via available slots in the system. Certain slots are restricted to categories of personnel such as PI-specific, undergraduate-specific, and undergraduate mentor-specific. The slots should not be utilized by other personnel.
   b. Research personnel should each individually reserve campus time, i.e. the principal investigator should not make reservations for their elected personnel.
   c. For situations that may require exceptions, please submit your election and contact Kathan.McCallister@utdallas.edu for confirmation of mitigations and to receive approval.
4. **Daily Health Checks:** All research personnel will be required to complete the Daily Health Check daily. They will be received via email or text message, depending on communication preference.

- **Training & Certification**
  1. Navigate to [eLearning](#) and sign-in using your NetID and password.
  2. Click “Safely Resuming On-Campus Research” under “My Organizations”. Then, click “Returning to Research Training” to begin the training.
  3. After you’ve completed training, click the second link in the email to complete the “Declaration of Commitment to Public Health Practices” form to certify that you have completed and understood the training.

After completing training and certification, personnel will be notified via email that they have been authorized to reserve time on campus specific to their PI.

- **Reserve Campus Time**
  Log into [Lab Resources Scheduler](#) using your NetID and password. Personnel will only be able to see the availability of Resources (Campus Time) that they have been granted permission to reserve. Time on campus can only be reserved from 8:00AM-10:00PM, including weekends. Remember that personnel will be notified via email that they have been authorized to reserve time on campus specific to their PI only after they complete training and certification.

**Reservation Rules**
- Check-in & check-out is required through the scheduling system.
- In adherence to social distancing, there is a 30 minute buffer that is automatically added between reservations.
- Reservations must be booked at least 30 minutes in advance.
- Campus Time can be reserved from 8:00AM-10:00PM, including weekends.
- You may check-in for a reservation up to 15 minutes before the reservation starts and check-out up to 30 minutes after the reservation ends.

**Bookings**
1. In the top navigation bar, click on ‘Schedule’, and select ‘Bookings’
2. This view is akin to a gantt chart; you can see the resource schedule for both PI slots. Click on the calendar icon, or the green arrows, to adjust the date time frame.
3. Click on a time slot and fill out the reservation form. Note that you can click and drag to select a longer period of time.
4. Once you have reserved a time slot, you will receive a Daily Reservation email containing a link to access the check-in process. This should only be completed when you enter the building at your reserved time slot.

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**Onsite Check-in & Check-out**

When entering/exiting a building, check-in/check-out through the Lab Resources Scheduler. You will receive an email on the day of your reservation with a link that will take you directly to the reservation. Alternatively, find the reservation manually by navigating to ‘Bookings’ or ‘My Calendar’.

**Check-in**

Navigate to the reservation details. In the top right, an orange check-in button will become available once it’s time to check-in. Click it to check-in.
- The button will appear 15 minutes before the start of the reservation, allowing you to check-in early.
In the dashboard section of Lab Resources Scheduler, under the section "Upcoming Reservations" you can alternatively check-in by pressing the yellow check-in button.

**Check-out**

Navigate to the reservation details. In the top right, click on the same button that now reads as 'check-out'.

- The check-out button will disappear 30 minutes after the reservation has ended. In other words, you will miss the check-out window if you attempt to check-out 30 minutes after the reservation has passed.
- If you sign-in early, the check-out button will not appear until after the official start of the reservation.
- In the dashboard section of Lab Resources Scheduler, under the section "Upcoming Reservations" you can alternatively check-in by pressing the yellow check-out button.

To see a step-by-step visual walk through, visit our how-to guide.

**Human Subjects Research**

In addition to following the Return to Research Process as described in the section above, labs must also follow IRB protocol before beginning human subjects research in-person with participants.

**Research In-Person with Participants Process**

1. **Select Research Personnel.** PIs can select up to 4 research personnel that will be designated for in-person contact with human subjects (HSR Personnel). PIs must email research@utdallas.edu with the Name and NetID’s of their research personnel selection and request the number of existing campus time slots to be re-designated as active human subject research slots.

2. **Consent.** COVID-19 testing is performed by UTSW and individual consent to share the results is required. Therefore, after the selection process, designated HSR Personnel will be contacted via email with a link to a questionnaire and the consent form. HSR Personnel must complete the questionnaire and sign a consent form in order to conduct in-person human subjects procedures. The consent form will only need to be signed one time while the HSR Personnel is designated to run in-person human subjects experiments, regardless of the number of times the HRS Personnel is tested.

3. **Designating Expected Contact with Human Participants.** HSR Personnel are required to take at least one COVID-19 test, although two are recommended, for every week that they intend to come in contact with human subjects. After a research participant is scheduled for an in-person study session with a PI’s lab, this session must be added to the Lab Resources Scheduler (LRS) using the human subjects research slots added in item #1 above. For more information on how to use LRS, click here. Note: these research slots are meant to indicate HSR Personnel’s expected contact with human subjects and do not actually schedule an appointment with a human participant.

4. **HRS Personnel Testing Appointments.** Brain Health Imaging Center (BHIC) affiliated-personnel must schedule their respective COVID-19 testing appointments in LRS under the schedule titled “Campus Time - HSR COVID-19 Testing”. All other HRS Personnel will follow the standard campus COVID-19 testing process and should contact c19resource@utdallas.edu for more information.

5. **Testing Results.** Results will typically be available within 12 – 24 hours of testing. If the COVID-19 test results are negative, then the HRS Personnel may proceed to their previously scheduled appointments with human subjects. If the test results are positive, the research personnel will be contacted by the COVID-19 coordinator and should NOT proceed to their human subjects’ appointments. Participant appointments will be rescheduled or an alternate lab HSR Personnel assigned to run the participant. A negative result is required to resume in-person procedures after the period of quarantine and the HSR Personnel is cleared to return to campus.

6. **Repeat.** Steps 3 – 5 shall be repeated each week that a PI plans to run in-person human subjects experiments at UTD.

**Testing Process**

It is recommended, if possible, that a PI divides their 4 research personnel into “A” and “B” teams. The teams would take turns meeting with human participants. For example, in the case of an unexpected event such as a positive COVID-19 test from team A, team B would still be operationally available.
There are two testing locations at UTD: the UTD BrainHealth Imaging Center at the BrainHealth Performance Institute (BPI 1.2C1) and Blackstone Launchpad (located in the main floor of Parking Structure 3) on main campus. COVID-19 tests will be administered at UTD and submitted to the University of Texas Southwestern (UTSW) for analysis. Results will typically be available within 12 – 24 hours of testing. From UTSW, test results are relayed to the COVID-19 Coordinator (Karlynda Poage). If there is a positive result, the HSR Personnel who tested positive will be contacted by the COVID-19 Coordinator via phone and a timeline of the 2 days prior to testing will be developed. COVID-19 Coordinator will follow up on the phone call with an email for documentation. COVID-19 Coordinator will contact the Lab PI listed on the Veoci consent form, the Office of Research, and facilities to ensure the lab is cleaned appropriately.

Positive Results

- HSR Personnel who tested positive will quarantine for ten (10) days after receiving the test results. They will not be able to return to campus until they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours and have seen an improvement of any (if HRS Personnel is symptomatic).
- If HSR Personnel had contact with participants, the Lab PI will notify participant(s) who had contact with the COVID-19 positive HSR Personnel via phone for verbal notification followed by an email / letter for written documentation. The Lab PI will reach out to the COVID-19 Coordinator for assistance on the appropriate language to use in the notification to participant(s).
- After HSR Personnel are cleared to return to campus, a negative test result is required before they resume in-person procedures with human participants.

Negative Results

- Negative test results will sent to HSR Personnel, the Lab PI, and the Office of Research via email.
- Lab members who maintain negative results will continue their research projects.

Schedule COVID-19 Testing Appointment in LRS (BHIC affiliated-researchers only)

⚠️ The information below currently only applies to BHIC affiliated-researchers only. At present, all others should follow the standard campus scheduling process. If you have not received information on the standard campus process, please email c19resource@utdallas.edu for more information.

- **Location:** BrainHealth Imaging Center (BPI 1.2C1)
- **Hours of Operation:**
  - BrainHealth Imaging Center (BPI 1.2C1)
    - Monday 8:00AM-11:00AM and 2:00PM-3:00PM
    - Wednesday 8:00AM-11:00AM and 2:00PM-3:00PM
- **Appointments** must be scheduled 24 hours in advance.
  - For example, to schedule a 2:00PM appointment on Monday, 10/12/2020, the reservation must be made before 2:00PM on Sunday, 10/11/2020.
- COVID-19 testing appointments are scheduled in 5 minute increments.

1. To schedule a COVID-19 testing appointment, you must select the schedule "Campus Time - HSR COVID-19 Testing (BHIC)" in the drop down, as outlined in red on the image below. Be sure to schedule the appointment at the correct testing location. See here for more information on how to use the Lab Resources Scheduler.
Schedule Campus Time for Human Subjects Research

The method of scheduling campus time for human subjects research is similar to how regular campus time slots are scheduled.

- Human Subject Slots are cyan.
- A 30 minute buffer still applies between participants.
- Only 3 research personnel per lab, given the COVID-19 test restrictions, can visit participants in a given week.
  - For example, let's say a PI has elected 6 personnel to conduct research in-person. Visits with participants begin the week of 10/12/2020. Only 3 of the elected personnel would be able to see participants that week. If the other 3 personnel need to see participants on the week of 10/19/2020, then they would take the COVID-19 test on Monday the 19th, and the 3 personnel from the previous week (10/12/2020) wouldn't be allowed to take the test for the week of 10/19/2020 and would have to work with their peers to determine when they should schedule their next COVID-19 test to visit participants. In summary, the elected HSR personnel must coordinate with their peers and PI to determine who will be visiting participants on a given week to comply with the COVID-19 test restrictions.
- PIs are responsible for ensuring that only 3 of their lab personnel visit campus on a given week and have taken their COVID-19 test.
- Besides following campus guidelines regarding how many people can be in the same place at once, a lab must follow IRB protocol.
Choose a time on the “Human Subject Slot (#)” to schedule campus time for human subjects research, see the image below as reference. For more information on how to use the Lab Resources Scheduler, click here.

Animal Research

The process to elect personnel, train, and reserve campus time must be followed in addition to the animal research guidelines below.

Restricting entrance to the animal facilities

- By entering the facility, research personnel certify that they do not exhibit any of the symptoms at the time of entering the facility: new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, or feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit. If they exhibit any of these symptoms or if the investigator knows that they have come in close contact with a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19, they are not allowed into the animal facility.
- Investigators not abiding by the social distancing or use of a proper PPE will have their animal facility access removed.

Prepare for supply changes

- LARC currently has enough inventory of PPE and cleaning agents to cover current needs within the animal facility. The situation, however, may change rapidly. Investigators are prohibited from removing PPE and cleaning supplies from the animal facility. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in denial of future access to the animal facility during the pandemic. LARC will inform everyone if rationing of PPE supplies is required.

IACUC approval

- If any modifications to the animal protocol are being made due to the COVID-19 situation (for example, shortening procedure durations or ordering animals over the number approved by the IACUC), please ensure a modification form is submitted.

Additional Resources

Resources for training student researchers

- Social Ethical Responsibility of Conducting Academic Research in the Pandemic Era (non-Human Subjects Research)
- Social Ethical Responsibility of Conducting Academic Research in the Pandemic Era (Human Subjects Research)

Please visit the FAQ for frequently asked questions.