

Guidelines for Resuming Field Research

April 28, 2021

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the [Plan for Phased Resumption of On-Campus Research for Princeton University \(Plan\)](#). While the Plan focuses on on-campus research, field researchers are encouraged to become familiar with it, as it provides general safety and precautionary information that may be practicable for field research being performed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Plan describes four levels of on-campus operation, which include 1 (normal operations), 2 (phased resumption), 3 (essential operations), and 4 (operations suspended). Princeton is currently in level 2. These guidelines will be revised in accordance with major changes to guidance issued by Princeton University, or any other relevant major changes to the current understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Scope: These guidelines apply to all field research faculty, students, researchers, staff and postdoctoral researchers who may be considered part of the research team, regardless of whether the research occurs domestically or internationally. These guidelines apply to all forms of field research whether they arise from the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, or engineering and applied sciences. Field research is any form of research conducted outside of a laboratory, academic building or library. [Human subjects research guidelines](#) are handled separately from field research.

As described in more detail below, each Principal Investigator (PI) is required to submit a [Field Research Plan](#) (FRP) to their department chair or institute director for approval. Once approved, the PI then submits the plan to the Dean for Research (DFR) for review and approval prior to conducting any field research. A template of this plan is provided in the FRP link above for your convenience. You may choose to use a different format, but the information included in the template must be provided in order for DFR to make a complete assessment of risks and proposed mitigation strategies. The plan should be submitted to researchplan@princeton.edu. DFR, working with Environmental Health and Safety (EHS), will manage the review process and communicate the determination(s) to the PI and to the department chair and manager. The PI is responsible for securing any additional approvals, including those required by the department, for travel, funding, local permits/permissions, as well as research compliance-related approvals such as from the IACUC, IBC, and export control.

General Guidelines

- Field research that is conducted outdoors entails lower risk for the spread of COVID-19 than indoor laboratory research. We recognize that in some situations (e.g. sample collection or observational research performed alone in the field), many aspects of the University Plan may not apply. However, there are also situations (e.g. pop-up field labs, shared equipment, etc.) when many aspects of the University Plan do apply and researchers should plan to follow the University guidelines, as appropriate and relevant, regarding social distancing, hygiene, sanitation, PPE, space requirements, and self-monitoring as outlined in the [Guidelines for Safe Research During COVID-19 Pandemic](#). If University guidelines cannot be followed due to circumstantial or research-related reasons, this must be disclosed in the FRP, along with plans to minimize the risk of spread or being infected by the virus.
- Travel may be an important aspect of field research. Travel associated with field research must comply with all [University travel guidelines](#), and PIs must ensure that all travel proposed as part of field research is permissible under University policy. The approval of the Field Research Plan does not include permission to travel, which must be secured separately according to the travel guidelines linked above.
- Researchers must follow all local, state, federal and applicable University guidelines, including as relate to quarantines before and after travel, symptom tracking, hygiene, sanitation, isolation if feeling ill, masking, physical distancing and gathering limits.
- Each Principal Investigator (PI) is to submit a [Field Research Plan](#) (FRP) to their department chair or institute director for approval prior to submitting to DFR (researchplan@princeton.edu) for review and approval. In making its determination, DFR will consult with EHS, UHS, IACUC, IBC, IRB, or any of the deans or department chairs as appropriate to safeguard individual researchers.
- Every researcher (faculty, student, postdoctoral researcher or staff), who is part of a team, must self-evaluate and report symptoms every day prior to

beginning their research, using the [Daily Symptom Check](#) self-screening app in [TigerSafe](#) or by visiting the [Daily Symptom Check webpage](#).

- In accordance with the University's phased resumption of research plan no coercion and safe workplace statements ([Section 4](#)), it is expected that the FRP will be shared with all researchers working on the project and that all have confirmed they feel that proper safety precautions have been implemented in order for the research to be conducted safely. If a researcher has raised concerns that cannot be easily accommodated through adjustments to the FRP, they should first reach out to EHS (ehs@princeton.edu) and then contact Director of Undergraduate Research Pascale Poussart (poussart@princeton.edu) for concerns related to undergraduates, Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs Christine Murphy (cm15@princeton.edu) for concerns related to graduate students, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Karen Haskin (khaskin@princeton.edu) for concerns related to DOF-appointed researchers including postdoctoral researchers, and/or Human Resources for concerns related to research assistants, laboratory technicians or other staff.
- PIs must monitor the local situation where the field research is occurring with regards to the progress, phase or level of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as required local public health measures. PIs can find useful current COVID-19 risk information for the United States on the [New York Times](#) and [COVID Act Now](#) websites; for international locations, PIs may [contact Princeton Global Safety & Security](#) for assistance in identifying reliable sources for risk data. If concerns arise or the situation deteriorates, the PI should alert members of the research team, EHS, their department chair and their dean, regardless of whether they are on site or not.
- PIs should periodically check-in with their students and research team to understand their feelings and level of anxiety with respect to continuing their work in the field during the changing COVID-19 environment. If, at any time, students or members of the research team express concerns about their personal safety, the PI should alert EHS, their chair and their dean.

For the purposes of this guideline, field research is divided into three categories, based upon the ability to maintain social distancing. Specific considerations, which are to be addressed in the [FRP](#), are listed for each category.

Category #1: Field researchers who are acting alone, live locally, have no need to travel or can travel alone using their own personal vehicle, and whose research does not bring them into contact with others.

Category #2: Field researchers working alone or as part of a team where social distancing is easily maintained.

Category #3: Field researchers working alone or as part of a team where social distancing guidelines cannot be easily maintained.

Conditions that must be met for each research category

Category #1: This category of research presents low risk of exposure. Researchers should follow social distancing and face covering guidelines established by the University as well as the [CDC guidelines on how to protect yourself and what to do if you are sick](#). Any travel involved must comply with [University travel guidelines](#). This research may proceed once the FRP is submitted and approved by the DFR.

Category #2: This category of research presents minimal risk to participants if the research is designed to minimize travel and contact with other individuals. This research may proceed once the FRP is submitted and approved by the DFR. In addition to the conditions outlined above for category #1, the following additional restrictions apply to category #2:

- Travel must comply with [University travel guidelines](#).
- Researchers should follow, as appropriate and relevant, social distancing, hygiene, sanitation, PPE, space requirements, self-monitoring, and all local, state, and/or national government requirements.
- In-person interactions should be as brief as possible consistent with the study procedures.
- The number of required research personnel present should be limited to the minimum required to perform or assist with the interaction.

- If all research personnel do not have the required PPE recommended by Environmental Health and Safety's [Guidelines for Safe Research During COVID-19 Pandemic](#), such PPE must be provided by the Princeton researcher to other participants. All researchers should wash their hands before and after a research interaction and wear an appropriate [face covering](#).

Category #3: This category of research presents greater than minimal risk to the researcher and those they may come in contact with in order to meet the goals of the research. This research may proceed once the FRP is submitted and approved by the DFR. Any travel involved must comply with [University travel guidelines](#). In addition to the conditions outlined above for category #2, the following additional restrictions apply to category #3:

- EHS must review and approve all practices in which social distancing, hygiene, sanitation, PPE, and space requirements cannot occur, especially with respect to animal, data set, sample, or environmental manipulation, lodging and dining.
- EHS must review and approve the use of any equipment that is used by multiple users.