

Guidelines for Reopening Laboratory-Based Research: Phase 1

The following guidelines are effective starting May 26, 2020. They are intended to facilitate the resumption of some on-campus research activity in laboratories, but in no case should they be interpreted to permit behaviors that violate our overarching obligation to protect the health and safety of the community. They have been developed by the Research Continuity Working Group in consultation with the COVID-19 Task Force, the Health/Epidemiology Working Group, campus partners, and best practices from peer institutions. These guidelines will be revised as necessary, e.g., due to changing circumstances or requirements or based on institutional experience. In particular, we will use data from the Health Screening Tool, as well as local and State epidemiological data, to inform future decisions to expand or restrict access.

Please note that under the leadership of Dean of Libraries Susanne Mehrer, the libraries are engaged in a separate process to plan for ramping up on-campus activities, including access to research materials. Additional details will be announced as soon as possible. In the meantime, the Library will continue to make items from its physical collections available via curbside pick-up.

All research activity must comply with the requirements outlined below, but numerous other requirements also apply, including NH State Guidance, as well as the Dartmouth and Dartmouth-Hitchcock guidelines, such as Dartmouth's "Employee Guide for Working on Site" and the documents on the COVID-19 websites for Dartmouth (link [here](#)) and D-H (intranet link [here](#)). The guidelines below supplement, and also summarize, key aspects of these overarching requirements. However, the summaries provided here do not override or limit restrictions imposed by those guidelines.

A. Who may be on campus for laboratory research?

1. All individuals who can perform their work remotely must continue to do so.
2. Undergraduate students may not engage in on-campus research under phase 1.
3. No visitors, including visiting scientists, are allowed in Dartmouth buildings without a formal appointment at Dartmouth. Please also see the Dartmouth-Hitchcock guidelines for visitors (intranet link [here](#)).
4. Individuals who have been outside of NH/VT must self-quarantine according to State guidelines (link [here](#)) for 14 days before returning to campus. Anyone who initiates travel domestically outside of NH/VT must follow current guidance before returning to work.
5. Individuals may not work on campus or at Dartmouth-Hitchcock/DHMC if they have been:
 - a. diagnosed with COVID-19 or exposed to someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19, unless the researcher has been approved to return to work by a public health official and their supervisor/advisor; or
 - b. instructed to refrain from attending work by Dartmouth College Health Services, Dartmouth-Hitchcock or by a public health official.
6. In compliance with NH State guidelines, any individual who is scheduled to be on campus must report their temperature and answer five health-screening questions before beginning work.
 - a. For Dartmouth-Hitchcock employees working at labs at Dartmouth-Hitchcock/DHMC (e.g., Borwell, Rubin, Williamson), entrance screening fulfills this requirement.

- b. All Dartmouth researchers (including those working at D-H/DHMC) must check-in via Dartmouth's online screening tool (link [here](#)) before beginning work, and comply with any guidance provided by the online screening tool, including a recommendation not to report to work and to notify their supervisor or advisor. Individuals who do not have access to a thermometer at home may visit a temperature-screening station:
 - i. 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, Dick's House foyer;
 - ii. 7:00 am to 5:30 pm 53 Commons North Dining; and
 - iii. 5:30 am to 9:30 am Hop Hallway near Hinman Mail area.
(please check Dartmouth's COVID-19 website (link [here](#)) periodically for updated times and locations)
 - iv. Dartmouth-Hitchcock entrances.
7. Individuals who are scheduled to perform research on campus, but are concerned about health risks, may request an alternative work arrangement through institutional processes for seeking disability-based accommodations. Faculty with concerns should contact their school Deans. Dartmouth staff requests should be made through human resources (HR) at human.resources@dartmouth.edu or 603.646.3411. Graduate students and post-doctoral requests may be made to the dean of the Guarini School, Geisel professional students may contact the dean's office, and Thayer professional students may contact the [Senior Associate Dean](#). Dartmouth-Hitchcock employees should refer to this [link](#).

B. Requirements while on campus.

1. As noted in the preamble, all overarching rules for each campus (Dartmouth and Dartmouth-Hitchcock) apply, including in particular, the importance of good hygiene practices.
2. In particular, all individuals must observe rules governing the use of face coverings consistent with public health guidance, including CDC recommendations. Currently:
 - a. At Dartmouth-Hitchcock/DHMC, face coverings are required except in closed, one-person offices.
 - b. In Dartmouth buildings (in Hanover and other sites), face coverings are required outside the laboratory and wherever physical distancing cannot be maintained.
3. All individuals must adjust their behavior to minimize the risk of transmitting the virus. Some specific examples:
 - a. Access only those rooms that are required for work. Do not use common areas (e.g., break rooms, kitchens, classrooms, and conference rooms).
 - b. Do not congregate and minimize the time spent in public spaces (e.g., bathrooms, entryways, corridors).
 - c. Wash hands if moving between rooms or pieces of equipment.
 - d. Elevators: Only one person at a time may be in each elevator.
 - e. Stairs: Please observe one-way rules if posted.
 - f. Bathrooms: Occupancy should be limited to the extent compatible with physical distancing requirements.
4. At this time, pets may not be brought to campus. No animals are allowed in Dartmouth buildings with the exception of service animals and service animal trainees.

C. Requirements in the laboratory

1. During phase 1, each research group may have only one individual in the laboratory at a time. To the extent possible, use online communication instead of in-person “buddy systems.”
2. If a research group already has individuals working in the laboratory under an exception, that exception will continue, but additional individuals can be scheduled only when team members are not working under the exception.
3. Researchers permitted to work under these phase-one guidelines may only work in the laboratory during building research opening hours, to enable facilities staff to provide required disinfection of common areas. Unless otherwise announced for a particular building, research opening hours are Monday – Friday from 8:00 am – 6:00 pm.
4. To ensure adherence to the one-person rule and to permit contact tracing if needed, each research group must use a trackable scheduling mechanism (e.g., Google calendar, Thayer Lab Scheduler), must keep a record of who has been in the lab, and must provide the schedule to institutional officials as needed for contact tracing purposes related to COVID-19. Scheduling should allow appropriate time between experiments to complete disinfection by the departing and the incoming lab members. The time required may vary depending on the complexity of the protocol, but in general should not be less than 30 minutes.
5. Before any member of a research group is scheduled to return to work on campus during phase 1, the Principal Investigator must complete the COVID-19 laboratory safety protocol worksheet (linked [here](#)) and submit it to EHS, cc to all lab members. At a minimum, the protocol must:
 - a. Identify the individual in the laboratory who will serve as the designated COVID-19 contact person, for lab members and Dartmouth officials.
 - b. List all lab members. Each PI must also enter this information electronically through a NetID tool (linked [here](#)) that will be available starting May 21.
 - c. List all rooms that will be accessed.
 - d. Specify any procedures necessary to restart equipment safely.
 - e. Describe disinfection of all work areas and equipment with an approved EPA disinfectant (see list [here](#)) by each individual before starting and after completing work. The disinfection protocol must meet EHS guidelines and must be developed in consultation with all lab personnel. The guidelines are linked [here](#).
 - f. Have been discussed and reviewed by all members of the laboratory prior to submission.

Except for emergency situations, any subsequent changes to the COVID-19 laboratory safety protocol must be communicated to all laboratory members and to EHS prior to implementation.

6. Each day, principal investigators must confirm that their lab members have passed the online health screening before they begin their shifts. A confirmatory email listing only the final recommendation (cleared for work or not) will be sent to the individual’s PI automatically upon completion of the online screen.
7. Each individual who wishes to perform laboratory work during phase 1 must first review the EHS training video (link [here](#)) and email confirmation to the PI.
8. Laboratories are responsible for providing gloves and other personal protective equipment that may be required for their work. Stockrooms will have limited supplies available.

9. For situations in which more than one person may be in a single laboratory space, EHS must review and approve a plan to ensure strict physical distancing and appropriate protective measures for each of the following situations before work begins under Phase 1:
 - a. Research groups that work in shared laboratories (e.g., open labs in Burke, LSC, Williamson, Rubin, etc.).
 - b. Core facilities or shared resources with users from multiple research groups.
 - c. Laboratories in which safety or training considerations require the physical presence of two or more individuals at a time (“buddy system”).
 - d. On-campus work by outside vendors, e.g., for equipment repair, maintenance, or calibration, except if approved through a central Dartmouth or Dartmouth-Hitchcock process.
10. Key points are summarized in the Appendix.

D. Priorities.

Laboratories and core facilities may need to prioritize some experiments and users during this period of limited access. To the extent possible, such decisions will be made by the PIs of the labs or the cores. In general, we encourage PIs to consider the following factors:

1. Graduate students and post-doctoral fellows facing deadlines (e.g., fellowship expiration, visa status, imminent completion of thesis research).
2. Junior faculty (especially with promotion deadlines in the near future).
3. Projects with funding concerns (e.g., end of funding, sponsor inflexibility, milestones, or application deadlines).
4. Least demand on limited campus resources (security, core facilities).

E. Future steps:

We recognize that laboratory-based research is just one part of a complex landscape of scholarly and teaching activities at Dartmouth, all of which have been affected by COVID-19 restrictions. Under the guidance of the COVID-19 Task Force, multiple working groups are considering how best to move forward, in conjunction with deans and academic leaders. A few of these efforts are listed below:

1. As noted in the preamble, a parallel process is underway to coordinate the ramp-up of support from the library system, under the leadership of the Dean of Libraries.
2. To the extent compatible with our regulatory and ethical obligations, the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Health IRB and CPHS will explore permitting resumption of limited in-person interactions in the context of human-subjects research protocols.
3. Based on the experience of multi-PI open labs and core facilities, in preparation for Phase 2, we plan to create a framework to permit scheduling of more than one person per research group, subject to physical distancing and other requirements.

Appendix: Summary of Key Points

While all of the above guidelines apply, it is particularly important that PIs address these key requirements before any work resumes:

- Individuals who can work from home must continue to do so.
- Only one person per research group (PI) may be on campus at a time, and only during building research opening hours.
- Each PI must consult with all lab members to complete the COVID-19 laboratory safety protocol worksheet, and must submit it to EHS, cc to all lab members. This plan must be complete, but EHS approval is not required for a research group that operates in its own closed off space.
- Each lab member must watch the EHS training video and email confirmation to the PI.
- Access to shared spaces is possible only in compliance with an EHS approved plan.
- All individuals must complete the online health screen (TSA) each day before beginning work. PIs must monitor compliance.
- Work surfaces and shared equipment must be disinfected according to EHS guidelines at the beginning and end of each shift.
- Do not access areas not required for work.
- All individuals must practice outstanding hygiene consistent with public health guidelines, in order to minimize the risk of the spread of COVID-19.
- Comply with all applicable guidelines (including Phase 1, NH State Guidance, CDC recommendations, Dartmouth, and Dartmouth-Hitchcock)