Guidelines for NAU Researchers: Phase 2 Operations
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Contents
1. Summary of Research Operational Phases
2. Phase 2 Operations Guidelines
   2.1 Individual plan for re-accelerating research
   2.2 General guidelines
   2.3 Guidelines for on-campus laboratories
   2.4 Guidelines for field work
   2.5 Guidelines for research-related travel
   2.6 Guidelines for human subjects research

1. Summary of Research Operational Phases

As described in the Plan for Re-accelerating Research, guidelines are given for three phases of on-campus or field work:

Phase 1 Operations: Continued on-campus and field work identified as critical research per the Guidelines for NAU Researchers: Phase 1 Operations.

Phase 2 Operations: On-campus and field work previously identified as critical research (in Phase 1 Operations), as well re-acceleration of research that has been modified or delayed in scope or execution as a result of the pandemic.

- Operations are accompanied by the implementation of healthy hygiene practices, physical distancing plans, the provision of necessary PPE, and plans for work shifts spread in time and limiting the size of collocated groups.

Examples of activities that may be pursued in Phase 2 Operations include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Graduate and undergraduate student research projects where a delay in the work could impact completion of the project.
- Research activities toward completion of grant deliverables.
- Collection of data on projects with longitudinal study components.
- Research that can safely and effectively operate with limited access by staff or with a staggered work schedule.

Phase 3 Operations: Full return to pre-pandemic levels of research activity without restrictions to group size or physical distancing dependent upon and in alignment with guidance from state, university, and local authorities.
2. Phase 2 Operations Guidelines

2.1 Individual plan for re-accelerating research

*Before re-accelerating research, each principal investigator and/or laboratory supervisor should create an individual plan for re-accelerating research, to be reviewed by the appropriate College Dean, the Office of Research Compliance, and the Office of Environmental Health and Safety.*

This plan should take into account the guidelines given below, and overarching AZ Executive Orders, guidance from public health authorities (including the CDC, state, and county) and all university guidance and procedures related to returning to full campus operations (e.g., under limited authorization for travel and compliance with guidance on self-screening and use of masks).

A template “Worksheet for Re-accelerating Research” has been created as an aid and a “Checklist for Re-accelerating Laboratory Activities” is also provided by the Office of Environmental Health and Safety.

**Before re-accelerating on-campus or field work research** principal investigators and laboratory supervisors should …

- E-mail the completed plan and checklist as attachments to ovpr@nau.edu as a convenient collection point. After approval by your Dean, the plan will be loaded into the principal investigator or laboratory supervisor’s laboratory "documents" tab in BioRaft

- Actively share this plan with all members of your research team

- Discuss any questions or concerns that members of your research team may have, and respect an individual’s right to express these questions or concerns

- Ensure adequate stocks of personal protective equipment (PPE) are present in the laboratory

**After re-accelerating on-campus or field work research** principal investigators and laboratory supervisors should …

- Continue to ensure that adequate stocks of PPE are maintained in the laboratory

- At regular intervals, self-assess your team’s adherence to your individual plan for re-accelerating research
• Continue to actively monitor information regarding the conditions of the pandemic and guidance from national, state, local, and university authorities, and be prepared to modify your activities if necessary

• Continue to be respectful and appreciative of your students, technical staff, and campus colleagues as we all navigate these challenging times

2.2 General Guidelines

• All researchers must read current recommendations from the CDC:

• All researchers should be mindful of their own well-being and that of others, and should not come to campus or interact with other employees if they are displaying symptoms of an illness or otherwise do not feel well, or have come into contact with someone identified as capable of transmitting Covid-19

• All researchers must ensure physical distancing at all times and in all spaces according to the most recent guidance (at least 6 feet separation from each other person)

• All persons engaging in on-campus or fieldwork research activities are advised to wear face coverings; researchers are also strongly encouraged to also wear them in public settings, on-campus or in the field, as per CDC guidance

• Prioritize time on-campus or in the field toward the pursuit of critical or essential research activities; planning, preparation work, and data analysis must be done remotely when feasible

2.3 Guidelines for on-campus laboratories

• All person in laboratories must wear appropriate laboratory attire and appropriate PPE (minimally lab coat and gloves, depending on activity)

• Laboratories should maintain appropriate team member physical distancing:
  o Research groups should limit laboratory access as necessary to ensure proper physical distancing is maintained at all times; the appropriate number of team members working in the lab at a given time will vary by the available space; staff
members of the Office of Environmental Health and Safety are available for consultation to assist in determination of laboratory capacities

- It is preferable for work to be performed during normal work hours to maximize levels of supervision of team members and ready availability of any needed assistance; if team members need to conduct work outside of regular hours, the individual plan for re-accelerating research should include how you will ensure laboratory and personal safety during off-hours work.

- Requirements for PPE and physical distancing must also be applied to in-person research group meetings so use of tele- or video-conferencing is recommended, and on-campus space should not be used for research activities that can be performed at home/remotely.

- Implement coordinated workflow that includes scheduling of all entries and usage of shared research spaces.

- Laboratories should maintain an increased cleanliness:
  - All breakrooms should remain closed except for food storage or eating; individuals should not eat in a group; all eating areas must be disinfected before and after use.
  - All laboratory benches, instruments, and equipment should be disinfected before and after use; common touch points (door knobs, light switches, faucet handles, etc.) should be disinfected at the end of each shift.
  - Thorough hand washing must occur upon entry and prior to exit of laboratory spaces.
  - Research groups and owners of shared spaces must develop and post specific decontamination protocols.

- Spot checks by the Office of Environmental Health and Safety, aided by unit staff, of on-campus compliance will occur; these checks will focus on compliance assistance.

- Please be aware that the Office of Environmental Health and Safety and other campus support services are much more limited than normal during operations adapted to the present public health situation, including on-campus staffing of incident response specialists; please implement additional non-routine lab-based precautions whenever conducting work with physical or health hazards.
2.4 Guidelines for fieldwork

- Approval for field work activities should continue to follow rules set forth in the Guidance for NAU researchers: Phase 1 Operations
- Ensure that “Acknowledgement of Risk” forms for all participants are up-to-date and reviewed following Guidelines by the appropriate Dean and Vice President

2.5 Research-related Travel

At present NAU has suspended all non-essential university travel (https://in.nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/206/COVID-19-Travel-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf). As stated in the referenced document: “Any travel that is deemed “essential” will have to be approved by the department’s Vice President/Provost in writing. The Vice Presidents/Provost will confer with the President before a final determination is made.”

Modifications to this policy may be made as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves; please check for changes in the university travel policy.

2.6 Human Subject Research

Researchers who plan to return to or begin in-person research activities with human subjects should follow the guidance from the NAU Institutional Review Board. Specifically, investigators must consider potential Covid-19 exposure risks to participants, research teams, and to the community.

Specifically, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator (PI) to notify the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of any plans to continue in-person research activities or revise research procedures in response to COVID-19. Human subject research protection guidance is to move to remote activities as much as possible. PIs must include a plan to minimize risk of COVID-19 transmission to human subjects and should act in a way that will prevent or minimize human subjects from violating existing AZ Executive Orders and CDC guidance. Re-scheduling in-person activities to a later time does not need to be reported to the IRB provided these changes do not negatively impact participant safety and welfare.

If a PI needs to make modifications to an approved research protocol, such as, key personnel, recruitment text or location, informed consent, data collection, or eligibility, these changes must be reviewed by the IRB per amendment guidance. Whether and when this may be advisable will vary depending on the protocol activities and the risk and benefit to the study’s participants.
IRB operations continue as normal and submissions will continue to be processed in a timely fashion. Please visit the NAU IRB website for up-to-date IRB submission instructions, guidance and FAQs, or contact the IRB office (irb@nau.edu, 928-523-9551).