RAMPING UP RESEARCH

Prepared by the Office of Vice-President Research & Innovation
RAMPING UP RESEARCH: Stage 1

Preamble

As we work our way through the maze and unpredictability of COVID-19, we want to be fully prepared to safely ramp up research and eventually restore all research that has been placed on hold and/or has been transformed through the process of observing the directives we have received from public health, the province and the university. We recognize that research regularly occurs on and off campus and encompasses fieldwork, lab and studio work, and work in other contexts. Keeping the health, safety and well-being of York students, staff and faculty above all else, we are developing plans and making decisions for moving forward. While we may have to accept that the virus will continue to live amongst us, harm reduction is the key and we will continue to follow the advice of public health officials.

In terms of research, we in the VPRI are working closely with the Faculties, university planning and operations groups to ensure that we are coordinating and integrating our plans as seamlessly as possible. The many-faceted complexities of our research at York have led us to construct several phases of the ramp up, recognizing that we may have to pivot at any point. And these pivots may land us anywhere between straight ahead or a 180-degree return to closure. With input from the Deans, the Associate Deans Research, the Council of Research Directors and many others, the following document outlines the phases we are anticipating as well as the principles and safety precautions we are advocating.

We are committed to ramping up research as effectively and efficiently as possible, seeking to restore and build on the strengths each researcher brings to the university’s mission. While care for ourselves and for those with whom we work is paramount, each individual is best positioned to determine the choices which serve their needs in terms of health, comfort and responsibilities. No one should compromise their own health and well-being, nor that of another. It is important to note that individual actions in this regard can have consequences for the whole university: a single outbreak could affect the entire campus. The guide and forms which follow are based in both the immediate needs and long-term success of researchers and research at York. It is expected that Faculties will adapt these forms to satisfy their specific needs.

Principles for campus coordination and integration and fieldwork requirements

- Observation of applicable public health guidelines
- Staged ramp up of research
- Adherence to York, Toronto, Ontario, federal and relevant jurisdictional directives
- Alignment with multiple university priorities
- Coordination and integration with university planning

Principles for Ramping Up

- All research activity that can be feasibly and safely conducted off campus without significantly compromising the integrity of the work including ethical standards and protocols, maintenance of confidentiality etc. remains off campus. This includes all forms of research that have been put on hold and those which are on-going.
Researchers must comply with public health and York health and safety guidelines/directives as required to reduce the risk of virus transmission.

Research which requires attendance of participants on campus is discouraged. Where it is deemed essential, all measures as laid out in this document must be strictly adhered to.

Researchers should be mindful that some research employees may be unable to return to work for health-related circumstances associated with COVID-19 or travel. Researchers may direct York research employees to Employee Well-Being to assist with return to work planning and any necessary accommodations. Further, researchers should be mindful that some research employees may have care responsibilities and as such may request the opportunity for flexibility in their scheduled hours of work.

Researchers with approval to pursue research must take appropriate steps to reduce the risk of transmission of or exposure to the virus within their research space whether on or off campus.

Research involving in-person participants should be conducted online where possible. Where in-person work is required, researchers should employ appropriate measures to reduce the risk of virus transmission including physical distancing and the use of non-medical face masks. Where physical distancing is not possible, other suitable procedures such as the use of PPE, enhanced sanitation protocols, and physical barriers such as Plexiglass dividers are required.

Face-to-face data collection involving vulnerable populations should be deferred until a later date.

Researchers involved in extended travel within or beyond Canada should be knowledgeable of up to date and relevant local, national and international protocols, guidelines, and requirements which will include 14-day quarantine periods upon arrival and return. In some cases, borders may remain closed and non-essential travel to such locations may not be permitted.

Note that these principles with appropriate adaptation for context apply to ramping up fieldwork and other forms of off campus research.

In York affiliated off-campus spaces for which there are shared operational responsibilities, the researcher working in such a space must coordinate the standards for a return to work along with the affiliated institutional partner.

If a third party is involved (e.g. regional park, industrial partner, etc.), they may impose specific additional requirements to which researchers must adhere. Field researchers should seek formal approval for work in such sites.

On-campus research

All on-campus research requires prior approval by the researcher’s Dean or designate.

Approval will be guided by coordination and integration with university planning.

Permissions for campus access may be reversed based on university or government direction.

Researchers who resume research on-campus should be prepared for a sudden closure based on university or government direction.

Any situation that alters the health and safety of personnel or changes the circumstances around which approval for access was granted must be reported in timely manner to the Dean or designate for review.

Given the varied nature of research activities taking place at the university, individual Faculties may add specific conditions to research or facilities including setting timelines related to specific situations.

Research space will be monitored by York security.
• Observing public health guidelines to maintain a safe distance on elevators of 2 metres apart, where this is not possible limit the number to two persons per elevator.
• Researchers must complete the on-line safety compliance module.

Procedure
• A researcher wishing to resume or ramp up on-campus or fieldwork research activities will submit a detailed application to their Dean or designate. The application form will be made available by the researcher’s Faculty. This application will detail how the proposed research activities comply with all the rules for reducing the risk of virus transmission as outlined above. (For links to current rules/guidelines including public health guidance and travel information, please click on York’s COVID 19 guidelines.)
• No researcher may resume on-campus research activities prior to obtaining the approval of the respective Dean or designate. This authorization may include Faculty-specific conditions dependent on the particular research situations and contexts to ensure compliance with the rules for on-campus research.
• The Dean or designate in consultation with Faculty Executive Officers will consider each request individually and may prioritize approval based on capacity of Facilities Services (FS) and Security to fulfill required health and safety protocols.
• The Dean or designate will submit approved protocols to the Office of VPRI who will communicate with the Emergency Operations Centre/ Committee to enable coordinated access, tracking and movement of traffic on campus in relation to all scheduled activities.

Other considerations
Time-sensitive research
We want to be especially sensitive to specific research activity necessary to minimize negative impact to an overall research agenda. Such activity may include but is not limited to:
• graduating students’ completion;
• long running research projects where integrity will be compromised if they are further delayed;
• research with a contract end date that cannot be renegotiated;
• research that affects critical career milestones/timelines, grant application deadlines, seasonal timing issues, etc.

Shared Research Spaces
For shared research spaces (labs, studios, library, fieldwork spaces) occupancy should be limited to those people necessary to conduct the research. Reduction of the risk of virus transmission may require significant revision of normal procedures, such as:
• Reducing laboratory, building/room or studio occupancy.
• Continuing remote work to the extent possible for activities such as literature review, data analysis, and writing.
• Consulting with York Libraries regarding access to archives, the need for specific materials or access to collaborative space.
• Establishing rotating shifts for those necessary to the research.
• Reducing the number of researchers present depending on the size of the research space (lab, studio, meeting room). Maximum density should be kept to less than 1 person per 100 sq. Ft. In the case of labs, there should be no more than 1 person per laboratory bench, hood, glove box, biosafety cabinet, etc., at any time.
• Establishing one-way flow through doorways and around the research space if possible, e.g. designate and label an entrance and exit door for each research space; mark safe distances with tape; provide directional markers within the spaces.
• Posting repeated signage regarding appropriate protocol throughout the spaces where researchers will be traveling and working.
• Providing hand sanitizer where no hand washing is easily accessed.
• Where back-to-back lab efforts or meetings are required, a 30-minute window should be considered to clean high touch areas such as doors, handles etc. before the next group of participants enters the research space.

Facilities and Security

We also want to emphasize the complexity of these considerations for ramping up research. A safe and comprehensive process involves many divisions, including Facilities Services and Security and the people working within them as well as employees from a number of affiliations. Examples of their own considerations include: cleaning, inspections, HVAC and mechanical checks; the need to modify workspaces, limit the number of persons in elevators, develop appropriate access routes, institute infection control which may involve their use of PPE, physical distancing, and reduction of touch points; health and safety training for their personnel related to COVID-19; surveillance for access control; efficient approaches for procurement.

Framework for ramping up research

Aligning with Ontario’s framework for reopening the province; approximately 2-4 weeks for each phase

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<th>Phase</th>
<th>York</th>
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| 0     | • VPRI, Deans, Associate Deans Research, Council of Research Directors develop framework in communication with Emergency Operations Committee (EOC)/ Emergency Planning Group (EPG)  
• Once approved, VPRI communicates framework to community  
• Researchers submit research plans to Dean or designate including size of research space, total # of research staff/students, schedule of research staff/students to allow physical distancing, observation of public health guidelines, compliance with university requirements, etc.  
• Dean or designate in consultation with Faculty EOs prioritizes gradual return based on access to research spaces for  
  o preparation (e.g. culture cells, tune up equipment)  
  o Research required for imminent graduate student completion  
  o time sensitive research requiring the use of on-campus space.  
Dean or designate customizes the approval form to meet the needs of the disciplines. |
1. Dean or designate works with researchers and Faculty Executive Officers to complete/approve ramping up research plans, communicate phased return plans with scheduling to VPRI; VPRI consolidates for Facilities Services (FS), Security
   - Facilities Services (FS): cleaning and preparing labs, washrooms; installing hand sanitizer in research spaces/access points; signage. Cleaning needs and responsibilities determined both regular and one-time preparation.
   - Security: develop plans to monitor access routes and appropriate use of research spaces
   - Permission for one off access continues maintaining current process (Dean or designate → VPRI)
   - All researchers, students and staff take on-line training module remotely (Teresa DuCroix to develop) prior to returning to campus.

2. Approved researchers return to research spaces for **preparation purposes only**
   - Researchers determine what supplies they need to order to function within the designated spaces and prepare orders.
   - Compliance with public health and York guidelines including physical distancing where possible guided by scheduling of research staff/students; other suitable measures such as the use of PPE as required according to public health guidance posted on [York’s COVID-19 website](https://researchguides.library.yorku.ca/covid19services/).
   - PI + number of grad students, research assistants who can be safely accommodated in the research space.
   - Permission for one-off access moves to sole purview of Dean or designate.

3. Approved research to resume for:
   - Supervised graduate students requiring access for imminent program completion.
   - Researchers requiring access for time sensitive approved research
   - Compliance with public health and York guidelines to reduce the risk of virus transmission guided by scheduling of research staff/students; other suitable measures such as the use of PPE as required according to public health guidance posted on [York’s COVID-19 website](https://researchguides.library.yorku.ca/covid19services/).
   - Library services, see [https://researchguides.library.yorku.ca/covid19services/](https://researchguides.library.yorku.ca/covid19services/)
   - Research space monitored by security.
   - Common spaces closed.

4. All (necessary) research spaces open
   - Compliance with public health and York guidelines suitable to mitigate risk.
   - All students engaged in supervised research allowed to return as articulated in supervisor’s plan.
   - Research space monitored by security.
   - Common spaces remain closed.
   - Field research compliant with public health, travel guidelines and other regulations as appropriate
   - Mandatory 14-day self isolation when returning from high risk geographic locations.
   - Indigenous ceremony compliant with university and public health guidelines
Application Form for ramping up research activities [Faculties will adapt the following form as necessary and distribute it through an online location where researchers can access it easily]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Researcher:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department and Faculty:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cell Phone:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date submitted:</td>
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</tbody>
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**Research Description**

- Proposed start date of research:
- Field and nature of research being conducted:
- Short description of the research activities that are requested to be performed on campus:
- Rationale for requesting access, addressing why research can’t be completed remotely and if there are time sensitivities related to your research and/or a critical nature (300 words)

Is there preparation time required to become research ready (i.e.: grow cell cultures, equipment calibration, procurement of reagents etc.)? (Y/N)
If yes, please describe, indicate length of time needed:

**NOTE:** During preparation time only the researcher and one other Graduate Student, Post Doc, or Technician (maximum 2 occupants) will be permitted. No undergraduate student will be permitted at this time.

- Graduate student(s) close to program completion? (Y/N)
- If yes, please provide graduate student name(s) and estimated program end date(s):

**Location(s) of facility where access is being requested:**

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<tr>
<th>Building(s):</th>
<th>Floor(s):</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Room number(s):</td>
<td>Faculty:</td>
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**Schedule of researcher presence:**

- Provide planned work schedule in facility to maintain compliance with physical distancing:
- Frequency:
- Dates:
- Times in:
- Times out:

**Contact Information and scheduling for ALL other team members requiring access to facility (use additional space as required)**

Team Members (in addition to the PI) that must have access to Research Facilities with contact information:
- Name:
- York ID# / Student #/ Employee #:
- Email:
- Cell phone:
- Position:
- Time during which access is requested:
  - Frequency:
  - Dates:
  - Times in:
  - Times out:
- Location:
  - Building(s):
  - Faculty:
  - Room number(s):
  - Floor(s):

Repeat information for each team member requiring access

### Plan for public health related measures

Describe plans to implement COVID-19 related public health measures (eg: maintaining a 2-metre distance in all work areas, PPE usage, hand hygiene, disinfection of touchpoints, scheduling lab occupancy etc.)

### Additional considerations

Ethics Protocol Approval #:

Required certifications to be obtained:

- [ ] Human
- [ ] ACC
- [ ] Biosafety
- [ ] Other (please describe in detail)

Please describe if applicable to your research:

- Special IT requirements

- Shipping/ receiving

- Chemical/radiological waste disposal

- Other
### Plan for rapid shutdown if needed

Please describe what measures will be taken if a rapid shutdown were needed, length of time it would take, consequences for research

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**Signatures:** Access to research facilities will only be granted upon approval and signature by researcher, Dean/Designate and VPRI.

I verify the content of this plan is complete and accurate and I further agree to abide by this plan, its associated principles and all York and all public health directives.

________________________________________

Researcher:

________________________________________

Date:

**On behalf of _________________ (Faculty) I authorize this plan to ramp up on campus research activities**

________________________________________

Dean or designate signature

________________________________________

Date:

**Comments including any modifications to the plan proposed above:**

Date approved for lab entry for preparation (Phase2): _________________________

Date approved for priority research activities (Phase 3): _________________________

Date approved for all research activities (Phase 4): _________________________

________________________________________

Vice-President Research & Innovation:

________________________________________

Date: