

RETURN TO RESEARCH PLAN

Vice-President (Research)
University of Regina



August 24, 2020



University
of Regina

REVISION HISTORY

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF REVISIONS
May 29, 2020	<p>Reformatted report</p> <p>Added Phase 1 actual roll-out date</p> <p>Added Phase 2 detail</p>
June 3, 2020	<p>Appendix B has been updated to a newer, revised version</p> <p>Appendix C has been deleted – the self-monitoring checklist has been replaced with a recommendation to complete Canada’s COVID-19 self-assessment tool. Revisions made throughout the body accordingly.</p> <p>Former Appendix D becomes Appendix C and has been updated.</p> <p>Former Appendix E becomes Appendix D</p>
July 20, 2020	<p>Clarified number of individuals per lab in Phase 2</p>
August 7, 2020	<p>Major reorganization of the plan main body and appendices</p> <p>Overview table on page 4 has been updated</p> <p>Phase 3 details have been added</p> <p>Phase 1 and 2 detail has been moved to appendices</p> <p>Supporting documents previously in appendices have been replaced with links to where the current and updated versions can be located (Appendix A)</p>
August 12, 2020	<p>Campus-wide mandate for mask use added</p>
August 13, 2020	<p>Library resources subsection added to Phase 3</p>

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OVERVIEW

The University of Regina’s back to research plan entails a four-phased approach that aligns closely with the provincial government’s Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan. The three principles that underlie the ‘back to research plan’ include:

1. the health and safety of the campus community;
2. the health and safety of the larger provincial community;
3. and, a deliberate focus to ensure continuity of research for faculty and graduate student researchers.

Working closely with the Senior Research Team, the Research Office Staff, the Chair of the Research Ethics Board, the Council Committee on Research (CCR), and the Health, Safety and Wellness team, we have designed a four-phase back to research plan. The plan focuses on three core areas of research, including lab/studio work, field research, and research involving contact with human participants.

For the reader’s convenience, Phase 3, targeted to launch on September 1, is detailed in the following pages. Phases 1 and 2 have been relocated from the main body of the plan to Appendices B and C, respectively. Appendix A lists links to important supporting resources provided by the Research Office and by the Health, Safety and Wellness team.

The four phases of the research plan are summarized in Table 1.

The phased approach to returning to research activities will be closely monitored in relation to the Government of Saskatchewan’s future COVID-19 public announcements, and the guidelines will be adjusted accordingly.

Table 1: Summary of the four phases of the University of Regina’s Return to Research Plan

RETURN TO RESEARCH PHASES (VPR permissions are required for all types of research in Phases 1, 2, and 3)			
PHASES	LABS AND STUDIOS	FIELD RESEARCH	HUMAN PARTICIPANTS
Phase 1 Red – Highest Level of Provincial Restrictions (Launched May 25)	RIC, Research Park, Riddell basement One individual per PI per space	No undergraduate student researchers allowed	Not permitted
Phase 2 Orange – Moderate Level of Provincial Restrictions (Launched June 8)	RIC, Research Park, Riddell, Education Building, Lab Building Two individuals per PI per space	Undergraduate student researchers allowed	Permitted within U of R controlled spaces only (i.e. no research in the community) Physical distancing must be maintained at all times
Phase 3 Yellow – Low Level of Provincial Restrictions (Target September 1)	All buildings on campus Face coverings (medical/non-medical mask, shield, or both) in shared spaces are required Three individuals per PI per space	No change from Phase 2	Research in the community is permitted with physical distancing and the use of masks indoors Campus-wide requirement for face coverings for indoor shared spaces (e.g. medical/non-medical face masks, face shields, or both) Lab/studio-based research where physical distancing is not possible for short periods of time is permitted
Phase 4 Green (Timing TBD)	No Provincial Restrictions		

Phase 3 Yellow - Low Level of Provincial Restrictions (Target September 1)

Preamble

Phase 3 builds upon Phases 1 and 2 (refer to Appendices B and C). And, it represents a substantial change as Phase 3 moves to off-campus research and begins to consider non-U of R (community members) coming onto campus for research activities. This increases the networks of connectivity and correspondingly elevates risk for potential transmission. Therefore, our policies need to be reflective of the elevated risk and it needs to be mitigated appropriately.

As restrictions are still in place for Phase 3, all activities within the three core areas of research (lab/studio work, field research, and research involving contact with human participants) require the approval of the Vice-President (Research) before proceeding.

The recent spikes in positive cases within regions of Saskatchewan remind us that the pandemic is far from over and therefore we must remain diligent in ensuring we are using best practices for mitigating the risks of transmission while still providing reasonable opportunities for more researchers to return to their activities. Consistent use of multiple protective measures can significantly reduce risks of transmission.

General Mask Policy Statement

With the inclusion of human-focused research activities in Phase 3 there is a need for mandatory face mask/shield use. Therefore, in accordance with the campus-wide mandate, for any indoor research activities occurring in shared spaces, **masks will be mandatory for researchers AND participants**; this includes research labs where **more than one** individual is in the lab at any given time. For more information including face mask use, face mask requirements, appropriate use of masks and more, the reader is referred to the University of Regina website (<https://www.uregina.ca/term-updates/health-safety/masks/index.html>).

Human-participant Focus

Human-participant research which involves non face-to-face interaction (e.g., interviews, focus groups, conversations occurring over phone, Zoom, Skype, FaceTime) has been permitted in Phases 1 and 2. And, it remains within acceptable standards as this type of interaction can be undertaken with no risk to the researcher, research assistants, or participants.

Given the current messaging from the Chief Medical Officer as relayed through the Government of Saskatchewan and in light of businesses reopening, it seems appropriate to allow some level of face-to-face research with human participants to proceed.

Defined eligible forms of human-participant focused research recognizes that there are multiple ways of referencing this kind of work that is discipline specific (human-centred; community-engaged/ based/ oriented; socially-engaged practice). For example within art-making, the following are used to address nuances in methodologies: public practice, socially engaged art, community art, new-genre public art, participatory art, interventionist art, collaborative art, relational art and dialogical aesthetics.

Medium risk research with human participants can readily proceed (e.g., face-to-face research). For this document, “risk” refers to risk of transmitting SARS-CoV-2 and contracting COVID-19. Research can proceed if:

- The total number of people meeting for the research activities is less than 10. Ideally, research is conducted with a minimum number of people [i.e., one researcher (graduate student or faculty member), one participant].
- Physical distancing can be maintained with reasonable certainty.
- Protective face covering measures are in place; that is, medical/non-medical masks (e.g. cloth). Ample scientific evidence is now available to support this.
- Stringent hand hygiene and disinfection procedures are followed.
- Equipment or objects are not shared between people (e.g., pens, paper, markers, etc.). If they are shared, they must be disinfected before another person uses it.
- All participants and parties consent to meet in person.
- All parties are healthy, and have not been knowingly exposed to anyone tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 or displaying symptoms of COVID-19. Anyone who is sick must stay home. The space is properly cleaned after the meeting / interaction.
- The project has received ethics approval from the U of R REB.
- All study participants must use Canada’s COVID-19 Self-Assessment app daily.

Higher risk research with human participants may be considered if **a high standard of care can be assured with confidence**. High risk research is considered that which in the course of the activity the participant will be expected to have heightened levels of respiratory droplet/aerosol release.

High risks practices also include those:

- Involving vulnerable populations as identified by the Government of Saskatchewan (e.g. existing health conditions and older adults)
- Involving more than 10 people in a space
- Activities in which physical distancing cannot be maintained at all times
- Activities in which all parties cannot wear masks or other personal protective gear
- Activities that require high respiration rates or induce forceful expiration of respiratory droplets/aerosols.

Participants and the researcher are mandated to wear a mask to reduce release of droplets/aerosols. **If a participant cannot wear a mask due to underlying health conditions we suggest that this research not proceed until Phase 4 of the research plan.** If a face-shield could be used or plexiglass barriers can be fabricated for the research activities to help mitigate risk in a high-risk scenario this could be considered as a means to facilitate the return to these research activities.

For human-participant research, the researchers must also avail themselves to all documents and guidelines provided by UofR Health and Safety (refer to Appendix A).

Of note, as per the Government of Saskatchewan's guidelines, older adults and / or "those with underlying risk factors should use caution" when participating in research projects.

Other Research Activities Beyond Human-Participant Focused

Given there will be a requirement for masks to be worn in shared spaces, Phase 3 provides an opportunity for **three individuals** to work within a lab simultaneously, with **no more than one** of those individuals being a low-risk member of the community (i.e. not a U of R employee or student). Office spaces where data collection or analysis research activities occur vary in size and therefore can have a **maximum of 50% seating capacity** at a given time. Notably, special accommodation must be considered for individuals who are more vulnerable to COVID-19 complications to ensure that they still have opportunities to engage in research activities while not being put at risk by working in shared spaces. As masks are only one of the many tools used to prevent transmission of SARS-CoV-2 it is essential that physical distancing practices be reinforced.

We recognize that there will be times where distancing cannot be maintained for short periods of time; for example, when students are being trained to use specific research equipment, or when interacting with a human participant for instrument set-up or assistance with equipment. However, this activity should represent only a small portion of the research activity time. Masks along with stringent hand hygiene and disinfection procedures will help to mitigate the risk of transmission. The remainder of the time will have the researchers maintaining 2 metre separation in shared spaces.

More buildings where research can take place are accessible in Phase 3 including the Classroom building, College West, the Administration-Humanities building, and the Centre for Kinesiology, Health and Sport.

Activities Not Permitted in Phase 3

- International travel: Given the current state of rates of infection and the recommendations of the provincial and federal governments, international travel for research activities will not be approved.
- Human-focus physical activity research where masks cannot be worn: If a mask cannot be worn by the participants due to underlying health conditions this research is NOT permitted. This includes other vulnerable populations as identified by the Government of Saskatchewan.
- Community research where physical distancing cannot be maintained: Even with mask use, community research occurring indoors where 2 metres of separation between participants cannot be assured is NOT permitted in Phase 3.
- Dance studios/rehearsal spaces: Dance studios and rehearsal spaces may **NOT** be accessed in Phase 3. These studios will be open as part of Phase 4.

In summary, human focused research that involves a high likelihood of significant respiratory droplets/aerosols and where face coverings (mask, shield, or both) cannot be worn is NOT permitted until the Government of Saskatchewan has removed all COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Library Resources

During the Fall semester, the Archer Library will be open for pre-booked computer usage and solo study. Access to all other services will continue to be provided online.

- Approximately 40 computers and 17 solo study spaces will be available on the main floor (“The Commons”) of the Archer Library, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. (Monday through Friday), and 8:15 – 4:15 (Saturday and Sunday). Access will be via online booking, with no walk-in option.
- Information Technology support will be available on-site for those using the Commons computers.
- The Archives Reading Room and the microform reader will be available 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Access will be via online booking, with no walk-in option. A virtual consultation will be required prior to using these services.
- Face masks will be required while in the Library.
- There will be no public access to floors 3, 4, 5, or 6 of the Archer Library or any of the group study rooms.
- All library information services will continue remotely. To ask a question, arrange for a demonstration of library resources, schedule a virtual consultation, or contact a subject librarian please visit this page: <https://www.uregina.ca/library/help/chat-service.html>
- Access to our collection will continue to be primarily electronic/digital. Physical copies of books and other materials will be circulated through a contactless book locker system (curbside pickup) or via mail (for faculty and students living in Saskatchewan outside of Regina). More details will be shared once the lockers are in place, hopefully by mid-September. Semester-long loans will be instituted for all physical materials, but subject to recall by another borrower.
- The Archer Library is finalizing its membership in the Hathi Trust, which will allow greater access to our collection through digital lending, making more resources available to all students, staff, and faculty no matter where they are in the world. For copyright reasons, materials available through the Hathi Trust will not be available for physical lending or curbside pickup.
- Once our book lockers are in place, we will be enabling a request and recall system. In order to maintain timely access for all campus users, book fines and fees will be re-instituted for materials subject to recall.
- Quarantine restrictions of materials do not allow for a resumption of the short-term physical reserve collection or the circulation of computers and iPads.

APPENDIX A

University of Regina Resources Supporting the Return to Research Plan

Resources Provided by the Research Office

The Research Office's COVID-19 and Research web page (<https://www.uregina.ca/research/policies-forms-top/covid-19-research.html>) provides information and links for researchers including:

- Research risk assessment application process, form, and work schedule template
- Helpful tips for your research risk assessment submission
- FAQs for Researchers and Graduate Students
- A link to COVID-19 Resources Canada
- A table of Risk Assessment Committee meetings and submission deadlines.

Since these resources are updated on regular basis, researchers are recommended to periodically check the Research Office's web pages.

Resources Provided by Health, Safety & Wellness

The Health, Safety & Wellness team's COVID-19 Resources web page (<https://www.uregina.ca/hr/hsw/COVID-19-Resources/index.html>) provides information and links for researchers including:

- Research Safety – COVID-19 Guide
- Research Safety – Exposure Control Awareness Training for COVID-19
- Self-Monitoring.

Since these resources are updated on regular basis, researchers are recommended to periodically check HSW's web pages.

APPENDIX B

Phase 1 Red – Highest Level of Provincial Restrictions (Launched May 25)

Phase one red is highly restrictive and aligns with phases one and two of the provincial five-stage plan for reopening the economy. During this phase, only labs and studios located in the RIC, Research Park, and the basement of the Riddell building will be open.

All researchers returning to labs or going into the field must first complete a risk assessment form. Once completed, the form is evaluated by the Risk Assessment Committee (RAC). Following the RAC's recommendations, the forms must be signed by both the faculty Dean and the VPR before any research activities may commence.

Restrictions

- Any research activities requiring face to face interactions with human participants are strictly prohibited
- Any research activities that occur within a community are strictly prohibited
- Any research activities that involve human contact with bats is strictly prohibited
- No undergraduate students are permitted in labs in phase one
- All researchers and student researchers returning to campus must complete an online health and safety module on the University of Regina's Covid-19 research protocols.

Implementation

Risk assessment

- A risk assessment form (see Appendix A) has been created for researchers to complete in order to obtain permission to return to research activities (lab or field-based). For lab- or studio-based activities, the researcher completes a two-week schedule showing who will be occupy the space and when.
- The RAC meets weekly to review incoming submissions. A health and safety review is prepared (see Appendix B) and the submission is discussed.
- The RAC provides recommendations to the respective Dean(s). The Dean reviews and recommends to the VPR who has approval authority.
- The researcher is notified of the VPR's decision (copying the respective Dean) and is provided with a copy of the health and safety review and a set of guidelines / protocols for working safely (see Appendix C). The notification also informs the researcher of the requirement to complete the online training module and to obtain signed consent of graduate students.
- Researchers must complete a pre-screen and daily COVID-19 self-monitoring checklist.

- Campus Security, Facilities Management, and Supply Management Services are informed of newly approved research activities (explained more fully in sections to follow).
- Ongoing, the researcher continues to complete and submit two-week schedules.

Cross-campus scheduling capability

- Information Services is adapting the GroupWise calendar functionality to serve as a repository of all research activity – who, where and when.
- Individual two-week work schedules will be input to the system.
- Ongoing, the two-week schedules that the researcher is required to submit throughout the duration of their research activity are also input to the system.
- Once in the system, scheduling conflicts or instances where the number of researcher exceeds the safe limit for a given floor can be resolved.
- Campus Security has access to the calendars and can use them to verify authority to be on campus during the sign in process at entry control points.
- Additionally, in the unlikely and unfortunate event of an infection, the calendars would be a useful input for contact tracing.

Graduate students

- Communication with graduate students about the return to research plan and related elements have been prepared by FGSR in collaboration with UAC.
- The informed consent form (Appendix D) has been prepared by the Health and Safety Team and FGSR.

Custodial staff

- Facilities Management is notified of approved research activities and associated locations so that the required facilities (e.g. washrooms) are available and maintained.

Compliance

- The University Secretariat is copied on regular progress reporting (risk assessments, approvals, scheduling) for the purposes of monitoring compliance.
- Non-compliance will result in the immediate closure of the lab/studio or the cancellation of permissions to be in the field.

COVID-19 research protocols

- A guideline document including pre-return and daily health screening has been prepared by the Health and Safety team. This document is provided to the researcher with the VPR's approval notification.
- A COVID-19 Health and Safety training course has been developed for researchers participating in essential research, pre-approved research, equipment maintenance or animal

care. Users at this time must have receive appropriate training before working in the lab and field, including applicable University of Regina training (Biosafety, Chemical and Laboratory Safety, WHMIS, Animal, etc.) and site-specific training from supervisors.

Supply chain

- Supply Management Services have been informed of the plan to help ensure that required supplies of disinfectants, wipes or concentrate, gloves, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, etc. are procured and are available in Science Stores.
- Supply Management Services also receive notifications of newly approved research activities to assist them with anticipating demand over time.

Key Messages

The University of Regina is following a four-phased return to research plan that aligns closely with the provincial government's Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan.

During this phase, only labs and studios located in the Research and Innovation Centre, Research Park, and the basement of the Riddell Centre will be open. Entry and exists points will be the loading docks, and all researchers must sign in and out upon entry and exit.

All researchers must conduct a research risk assessment to be evaluated by the Risk Assessment Committee and approved by the appropriate Dean and VPR before returning to campus.

Stage one will implement a number of health and safety protocols including

- Physically distancing of no less than 2M in laboratories, with only one person per principle investigator in each lab. Working alone protocols must be in place if only one person in lab/studio at any time.
- A university-wide tracking system to record who is in which lab at what time, which will serve to ensure compliance and be used if we ever required contract tracing.
- As determined by a risk assessment enhanced cleaning protocols in labs/studios will be implemented.
- Pre-return and daily health screening will be required through Canada's COVID-19 Self-Assessment app (see this website for instructions and download information).
- All graduate students must sign an informed consent to engage in lab/studio research or to enter the field

No undergraduate students will be allowed in labs/studios or in the field in phase one.

All researchers and research students returning to campus must complete an online health and safety module on the University of Regina's Covid-19 research protocols.

Non-compliance will result in the immediate closure of the lab/studio or the cancellation of permissions to be in the field.

APPENDIX C

Phase 2 Orange - Moderate Level of Provincial Restriction (Launched June 8)

The U of R Phase 2 can begin to accommodate human-participant focused research activities in addition to the lab based Phase 1 re-opening. Phase 2 affords the opportunity to increase the number of on-campus buildings that have research activities and includes research spaces in the Lab Building and Education Building, additional studio space in the Riddell Centre. Also expanded is the scope of room access for research activities (e.g. access to offices to conduct research activities). Finally, Phase 2 permits undergraduate students to re-enter research spaces.

All researchers returning to labs or going into the field must first complete a risk assessment form. Once completed, the form is evaluated by the Risk Assessment Committee (RAC). Following the RAC's recommendations, the forms must be signed by both the faculty Dean and the VPR before any research activities may commence.

Restrictions

- Any research activities that occur within a community are strictly prohibited
- Any research activities that involve human contact with bats is strictly prohibited
- All researchers and student researchers returning to campus must complete an online health and safety module on the University of Regina's Covid-19 research protocols.

Implementation

Continuity with Phase 1

- All elements implemented in Phase 1 described above continue into Phase 2.
- All researchers must conduct a research risk assessment to be evaluated by the Risk Assessment Committee and approved by the appropriate Dean and VPR before returning to campus.
- The centralized scheduling tool is to be expanded to include additional research spaces in the Riddell Centre, the Laboratory Building, and the Education Building.

Changes for Phase 2

- Two individuals per PI (or one individual plus PI) are permitted in a lab / space conditional on the ability to maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet).
- Undergraduate research students are permitted to re-enter research spaces.
- Research activities are permitted in the Laboratory Building, the Education Building and additional studio space in the Riddell Centre.
- Medium-risk research with human participants (e.g. face-to-face) can proceed. Face to face research activities are permitted only in University-controlled areas upon approval by the Research Ethics Board (REB) and the Risk Assessment Committee (RAC).

More detail regarding Phase 2 changes is provided in the Key Messages section that follows.

The Vice-President (Research) informed the research community on May 29 at 1:30 at the fifth Virtual Research Town Hall.

Roll-out of Phase 2 will be timed with the Province of Saskatchewan's Phase 3.

Key Messages

The U of R Phase 2 can begin to accommodate human-participant focused research activities in addition to the lab based Phase 1 re-opening. Phase 2 is divided into two research relevant categories: 2a). Lab based activities with no human subjects and 2b) human participant focused research where restrictions are reflective of the Phase 2 parameters in the Saskatchewan Government's plan.

Phase 2 has multiple dates of implementation as specified by the classification of activity. For example the opening of additional on-campus buildings in Phase 2a will occur first.

Phase 2a- On Campus Lab focus

Phase 2 affords the opportunity to increase the number of on-campus buildings that have research activities and includes research spaces in the Lab Building and Education Building, additional studio space in the Riddell Centre. Also expanded is the scope of room access for research activities. For example, graduate students can return to computer simulation labs and graduate student offices where it is essential for them to access the office for research based activities. However, only one student is permitted in the office space at any given time- subject to approval of the room scheduling. Faculty Associate Deans (Research) can help to coordinate the room scheduling, as needed or required.

Requests for access to space must still be taken through the Risk Assessment Process.

Phase 2b- Human-participant Focus

On June 8, the Province of Saskatchewan proposes to enter into Phase 3 of re-opening the economy. In light of the businesses eligible to be open in Phase 3, it seems appropriate to allow some level of face-to-face research to proceed.

For Phase 2, medium risk research with human participants can proceed (e.g., face-to-face research). For this document, "risk" refers to risk of transmitting and contracting COVID-19. Research can proceed if:

- The total number of people meeting for the research activities is less than 10. Ideally, research is conducted with a minimum number of people (i.e., one researcher (graduate student or faculty member), one participant).
- Physical distancing can be maintained with reasonable certainty.
- Protective measures in place- i.e. face masks (PHAC is advising this for individuals going out in public).

- Stringent hand hygiene and disinfection procedures are followed.
- Equipment or objects are not shared between people (e.g., pens, paper, markers, etc.). If they are shared, they must be disinfected before another person uses it.
- All participants and parties consent to meet in person.
- All parties are healthy. Anyone who is sick must stay home. The space is properly cleaned after the meeting / interaction.
- The project has received U of R REB ethics' approval.
- All study participants must use Canada's COVID-19 Self-Assessment app daily.

Of note, as per the Government of Saskatchewan's guidelines:

- older adults and / or "those with underlying risk factors should use caution" when participating in research projects
- if a researcher or participant becomes symptomatic while on campus, the individual must immediately isolate, inform the Vice-President (Research), and call HealthLine 811.