



Office of Research Compliance

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COVID-19 Guidance for Researchers

Updated 5/12/2021

Effective immediately, all research activity will now require notification versus approval, unless it involves domestic out-of-state and international travel, which is currently prohibited, unless an exception is sought and granted.

Researchers are still asked to follow all UMS, State, and CDC guidelines. Currently these guidelines require approval by the Office of the Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School for domestic out-of-state and international travel for research, which also requires an exception from UMS Risk Management. Please note that research with human subjects has transitioned to a lower level of restriction as highlighted below.

While we still ask that you submit your research activity via the [online form](#), which has also been simplified, for notification. The Office of the Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School will still review these submissions and may contact you with any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your patience during this time and we hope that these changes will make it easier to conduct your research, while doing so safely. Questions about the Research & Scholarly Activity Reporting form may be directed to Tammy Crosby (tammy.crosby@maine.edu).

As a reminder, additional COVID-19 Research Guidelines are available at the links below:

- [Guidance for Research](#)
- [Graduate School Community Guidelines](#)
- [Office of Research Development Guidelines](#)
- [Office of Research Administration Guidelines](#)

The response to COVID-19 continues to be a rapidly evolving situation even at this stage of the pandemic and this guidance is subject to change. Please continue to regularly check the UMS Information page (<https://www.maine.edu/health-advisory/>) and the UMaine Information page (<https://umaine.edu/coronavirus/>).

Field Research – Updated 4/22/2021

Faculty and staff are encouraged to discuss proposed field work plans with their college or center prior to submitting a request. [Specific guidance for field research \(PDF\)](#) has been developed to provide an overview of key review criteria and safety considerations for fieldwork activity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Human Subjects Research – IMPORTANT UPDATE Effective 5/12/2021

Researchers conducting research with human subjects are encouraged to design their studies to be conducted remotely if at all possible as this is the safest approach for our research participants, researchers and the university community. For those studies which cannot be conducted remotely, face-to-face human subjects research may be allowed it is determined that it can be conducted safely, and must at all times be in compliance with current directives and guidance available on the UMS Information page (<https://www.maine.edu/health-advisory/>) and the UMaine Information page (<https://umaine.edu/coronavirus/>).

To determine if your human subjects research with Face-to-Face interaction is allowed at this time, please review the table in the [Human Subject Research Ramp Up Guidance \(PDF\)](#). Effective May 12, 2021, the University is transitioning to Research Activity Category ‘Lower Level (Mid-Late Phase 3)’ for HSR.

Key steps for engaging in Face-to-Face HSR include:

- HSR studies that require modifications to an IRB approved protocol need to submit an amendment package to the UMaine IRB for review and approval.
- Along with any application modifications, research teams will need to develop plans for safety and submit a [Research & Scholarly Activity Reporting Form](#).
- Key safety requirements which must be addressed in the safety plan:
 - Social distancing plans (both throughout the in-person session and between appointments)
 - Mandatory face covering for research team and participants
 - Increased disinfecting procedures

Additional COVID Requirements for Face-to-Face HSR in Research Activity Category ‘Lower Level’:

1. Research team and participant screening must be completed prior to any in-person interaction. The screening information should be collected from any new or returning participants via phone, email, or other virtual method within 24 hours of the participant’s planned study-related visit or interaction **and** immediately before in-person interaction. The screening questions to be utilized can be found in the [COVID-19 Participant Screening \(Word\)](#).
2. Research team must track activity that can be used for contact tracing in the event of a report of illness or exposure (In the study’s informed consent, ensure that you tell participants that information collected for contact tracing may need to be shared with UMaine/UMS Administration and/or Maine CDC).
3. Supply all potential participants with the handout [COVID-19 Information for Participants \(PDF\)](#) which includes information about COVID-19, additional measures implemented to reduce risk of COVID-19 exposure, and their responsibilities if they choose to participate.

Please contact the IRB office at umric@maine.edu if you have any questions about this guidance or need more information.

Animal Research

In addition to requiring IACUC approval, all not-previously approved research and scholarly activity requires notice to the OVPRDGS using the [Research & Scholarly Activity Reporting Form](#).

Before initiating an approved research & scholarly activity which involves animals, please note that permission by the applicable lab manager must be obtained prior to performing any experiments in close quarters. Please email your request to the appropriate lab manager with copy to ORC (umric@maine.edu). Your request should include applicable IACUC protocol number(s), a description of the experiment, and date of approval by, or notice to, the OVPRDGS.

We ask that you remain flexible as Animal Facility ramp-up is also dependent on all of the following:

- Appropriate animal care staffing levels
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required for entry to the facility as well as any additional protocol-specific PPE (i.e. for handling hazardous agents)
- Disinfectants required for use on surfaces within the facilities

Please contact the Office of Research Compliance for assistance (umric@maine.edu).

Be prepared: Plan for Contingencies

If and when UMS and/or State health officials provide limiting/restrictive guidance that are out of alignment with current research activities, research efforts will drop back to lower phases as appropriate and will be ramped up when the guidance changes. Thus, researchers must maintain contingency plans and be prepared to halt all activities on short notice in case this becomes necessary. ORC’s [Guidance for Research Ramp-Down \(PDF\)](#) includes information to help you prepare, or update, your contingency plans.