

Return-To-Campus Work Guidelines for Researchers (Faculty, Graduate Students, Staff, And Postdocs)

July 20, 2020

Following the Governor's four-phase plan to reopen businesses in the Commonwealth, Harvard has started a [phased return to on-campus research](#). This return has been [guided by protocols](#) that are in line with national and state guidelines and resources issued by the CDC and WHO. We are starting at low density, subject to approvals at the PI, Departmental/Area, School, and University levels, through an evaluation process that is based on protecting both the health and the safety of our research community and all those working in the buildings.

During the research suspension of Spring 2020, essential personnel continued to carry out vital functions that required their presence on campus. Those colleagues sustained the infrastructure and research organisms that are essential to our successful re-start of on-campus work. Moreover, much of our research is funded by foundations, federal funding agencies, and industrial contracts. In many cases, these grants and contracts carry an obligation for Harvard to conduct laboratory research in support of project goals, deliverables, and/or milestones.

Federal grant compliance regulations require an alignment between the funding source for salaries and expended effort. During the initial COVID-19 shutdown, federal funding agencies have shown considerable flexibility in charging salaries to research grant for remote workers, but this policy ended on June 17, 2020. OMB formally rescinded this memorandum on June 19th, 2020 when it issued a new [memorandum](#) extending some flexibilities with significant restriction on salaries charged.

Harvard's current policy is that, "all those who can successfully work remotely should continue to do so." This applies to all members of the Harvard community, including staff, faculty, students, and postdocs. But in some cases, purely remote work cannot accomplish a research project's goals. Staff and post-doctoral fellows supported on research funds that have an essential on-campus element are expected to fully engage in the work for which they receive salary or stipend support, as are graduate students who receive funding from federal research funds and whose progress toward their advanced degrees require on campus research. Graduate students, postdocs, and staff should consult with their Principal Investigator (PI) or supervisor about reciprocal expectations for on-campus experimental work. It is expected that experimental and hands-on work occur on campus.

Should any member of the Harvard community have concerns about returning to on-campus work due to an [underlying health condition](#) (either for themselves or a household member), they should contact the appropriate office to discuss options. Staff are encouraged to contact their local human resources office; faculty, postdocs, and other academic appointees are encouraged to contact their Office of the Dean for Faculty Affairs (see contact list below); and graduate students are encouraged to contact their school's student services office or the local disability coordinator for their school or program. Options may include informal job modifications (such as a different work schedule to minimize exposure to others) or formally requesting a disability accommodation, in consultation as needed with University Disability Resources.

If there are discrepancies in expectations for on-campus work, a conversation within the research team might help to determine whether informal job modifications or a re-arrangement of project tasks can satisfy the preferences/needs of team members.

In the event that a project-funded individual has on-campus duties and an underlying health condition for which appropriate job modifications or disability accommodations cannot be provided (or if an individual

is unable to return to campus for other reasons, such as travel restrictions), the following are possible mitigations:

- 1) Identify remote work that could be undertaken in support of the project, with the same source of support,
- 2) Change the individual's support to a different funding source, with a commensurate shift of effort,
- 3) Explore options for paid time off, a voluntary time reduction, or a leave of absence (staff),
- 4) For graduate students, consider shifting from a research stipend to a teaching position, if available.

While there may be certain individuals for whom on-campus work is an integral part of the job they do, it is inappropriate for PIs or supervisors to apply pressure for on-campus laboratory work that exceeds occupancy limits during phased ramp-up or that requires an on-campus presence beyond the minimum needed to accomplish hands-on tasks. It is also inappropriate for a PI to pressure researchers to be on campus when their responsibilities can be fully accomplished remotely. Individuals who are concerned about potential violations of this policy are encouraged to contact the offices identified above, or make use of [Harvard's anonymous reporting hotline](#).

Return to On-Campus Work FAQs for Employees

https://hr.harvard.edu/files/humanresources/files/covid_return_to_campus_-_employee_faqs.pdf

Faculty Affairs Contact Information:

FAS/SEAS

<https://facultyresources.fas.harvard.edu/fas-office-faculty-affairs>

HMS/HSDM

<https://fa.hms.harvard.edu/People>

HSPH

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/faculty-affairs/faculty-affairs-staff/>