

# RESEARCH CONTINUITY

*Current as of July 6, 2020*

The university will maintain its commitment to research, scholarship and creative activities (hereafter “research”), and support graduate student and postdoctoral trainees while following public health and safety precautions. This goal will be met by gradually increasing research activities outside the home with oversight from departmental Chairs, Associate Deans, and Deans as well as the university level Research Related Activities Review Committee.

Research activities are varied and take place on campus, at other facilities, and in the field. Research activities involve all categories of Mason-affiliated individuals (faculty, staff, students, affiliates). The university considered these complexities when developing a staged return plan, appropriate review of these plans, and safety precautions to be put in place.

Mason has developed a [Research Continuity and Safety Plan](#) that describes the types of research activities that are permitted to return to campus during stage 1 and 2. This plan is currently being updated for stage 3 and 4 return.

This plan requires each principal investigator (PI) who wishes for their research team to commence work outside the home to complete a [Request to Resume Research in University Facilities or in Field or Clinical Settings](#). This request form requires specific details including who will be returning, where they are returning, and the project(s) they are restarting. It also requires planning for ramp-down should that need to occur. Each request is reviewed by the PI’s Department Chair, Associate Dean for Research, Environmental Health & Safety, Dean, and during stage 1 and 2 the Research Review Committee. All researchers returning to work outside of their home are required to take training, follow safety precautions including physical distancing and wearing face coverings, report any issues that arise, and request and receive permission for additional activities prior to commencing those activities.

Stage 1, critical research only, began on March 21, 2020 and was in effect until June 10, 2020. Stage 2-3, time sensitive research, began on June 11, 2020 and will remain in effect until stage 4 begins on August 1, 2020 at which time additional research, including in-person human subjects research, will be permitted. Stage 5 is aligned with the university’s full reopening and anticipates additional in-person human subjects research to be permitted.

The *Research Continuity and Safety Plan* is contingent upon the availability of training, signage and personal protective equipment. Additionally, the plan requires review by a number of individuals. If these individuals become ill or are unable to review plans, the return to research might be delayed. Noncompliance with requirements of this plan will be addressed by the Dean who signed off on the specific request.

In March, Mason developed a [website](#) as an information hub for research continuity. This website hosts the *Research Continuity and Safety Plan*, the request form as well as FAQs and is available online to the entire university community and linked from the main university website.

The requirements of the *Research Continuity and Safety Plan* have been communicated verbally and in e-mail to Deans and their staff as well as to all faculty. All researchers returning to campus are required to become familiar with the *Research Continuity and Safety Plan* and also take the university provided [Safe Return to Campus Training](#).