

9/15/2020

Dear Western Washington University human subjects researchers,

In March, following State and University guidance, Western put in place temporary restrictions on the performance of face-to-face human subjects research. This email provides updated guidance to researchers on requirements for resuming face-to-face research.

To resume face-to-face human subjects research your department will need to have an approved [Department Research Reopening Plan](#) that addresses the research activities to be conducted, whether on- or off-campus. If your department does not already have an approved plan it will need to develop one. If your department does have a plan but it does not address the kind of research you need to perform, an amendment can be submitted by the plan coordinator through the ReADY portal for review and approval. Note that the review and approval of Department Reopening Plans is separate from the IRB approval process and does not involve the Compliance team in RSP. Once your department has an approved plan you may resume IRB approved face-to-face human subjects research in accordance with the safety measures and other elements of the plan.

Please bear in mind that if you plan to conduct face-to-face human research, Western is still in operating level 2, as defined by Incident Management and confirmed by University leadership (see the [Safe Start webpage](#)). This means that only employees who have a need to come to campus may do so, and that need must be documented in some way—whether through an approved departmental reopening plan or approval to be included on the critical employee list (for faculty who need to come to campus regularly), or through the submission of an on-campus visit form (if the visits are rare or irregular). IRB approval does not, in itself, constitute approval to conduct face-to-face research as long as Western continues to operate under COVID-19 restrictions.

If you made temporary revisions to an active study in response to COVID-19, you may revert back to your originally approved procedures once your Department Research Reopening Plan is approved. Alternatively, if you choose to permanently incorporate any of those temporary changes, we ask that you submit a [Modification Form](#) to request a permanent change to your research by the end of fall quarter.

For questions regarding human subjects approvals or reversing temporary revisions, please contact compliance@wwu.edu.

Sincerely,
The Office of Research & Sponsored Programs