

## Guidance for Western Research During Safe Start Western Level 3 Status

*Last revised: 4-27-2021*

As of March 22, 2021, the State of Washington is in Phase 3 for Healthy Washington: Roadmap to Recovery, in accordance with the state's [Healthy Washington plan](#) (pdf) and Western's [Operational Guide](#) (pdf). Safe Start Western Level 3 allows for an increased number of campus visitors and for gradually resuming some on-campus gatherings – including functional meetings, work groups, and informal social gatherings – so long as current limitations and requirements are met. Most types of in-person research are allowed under Level 3 subject to certain requirements though remote options continue to be encouraged wherever possible. Remember, it is still the case that no one can be pressured to carry out on-site research if they are concerned about their safety, the safety of others, or if they have home-care obligations. Your HR representative can help you with any difficult situations in that regard.

**Laboratory work.** Units must have an approved [Department Reopening Plan](#) (pdf). Plans should be kept up-to-date, as should lists of personnel authorized to work on-premises.

**Field work.** All fieldwork should conform to current [WWU fieldwork guidelines](#) (pdf).

**Research and Conference Travel.** Official university-related domestic travel, both in-state and out-of-state, is limited to essential travel. Essential travel is travel deemed necessary for business, academic, or research continuity purposes. There are certain situations where exceptions can be made, i.e. to support research activities and conference travel (if CDC guidance allows it). Exceptions must be approved by a VP or Provost (or their delegates). Western is following CDC guidance on travel; please check the [CDC Travel Guidance website](#) for the most up-to-date advice.

**Human Subjects Research.** All research should be assessed against the revised criteria below. The revision is based on improvements in understanding about how to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection. All research involving in-person interaction with participants, whether new or ongoing, must meet the basic infection control requirements described below as well as other University requirements covering all on-premises work, including having an approved reopening plan that covers any on-premises study activities:

- **Essential in-person interactions.** The only allowed in-person interactions are those that cannot be adequately accomplished through a remote method such as a phone call, video conference, email, etc.
- **Face coverings.** Study team members and participants must wear face coverings throughout all procedures, unless a mask is incompatible with the procedure. Study team members who are not able to wear a face covering should not interact with participants. The use of surgical, medical/procedure, or N95 masks, instead of cloth coverings is strongly recommended during participant interactions.
- **COVID-19 screening.** All study staff and participants should be screened for COVID-19 just prior to each research visit. This means: (1) attestation that symptoms have not been experienced recently or currently and (2) they are not under self-isolation for COVID-19, self-quarantine for COVID-19 exposure, or have pending testing for the SARS-CoV-2 virus that was obtained for non-study reasons. Some studies may also choose to conduct SARS-CoV-2 testing just prior to a study

visit but this is not required. Temperature measurement is not considered an adequate screening method. Just prior to means upon arrival or in the preceding 24 hours.

- Participant age. Participants over the age of 85 years should be enrolled only if their in-person participation is connected with a clinical care visit OR is essential for the purposes of the study.
- Research reviewed by a non-WWU IRB. When the external IRB is a WA State non-commercial IRB (e.g., Fred Hutch, Seattle Children's) follow the requirements and policies of that IRB as to which research can resume and under what conditions. For all other external IRBs involving a U.S. location, only research allowed by WWU may resume or begin.
- International research. For international research locations where a local IRB has provided review, the research may proceed if it is allowed by the local IRB. For international studies covered by WWU's IRB, permission from our IRB is still required.

**Fully vaccinated researchers.** All personnel must continue to follow the guidance in the University's COVID-19 Prevention Plan, including wearing a face covering and maintaining a 6-foot distance from other people, even after getting vaccinated. When you are in a private residence or in public (i.e., not at work), after getting vaccinated you can follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People](#).

**Gatherings.** Virtual meetings and small gatherings are still strongly encouraged. However, in-person work including those for research purposes may occur under the following conditions (all must be met):

- Total attendees are within occupancy limitations consistent with [WWU Gathering Guidance](#).
- Employees who are currently teleworking are not required to come to work in person, including for meetings, unless it is required to support critical unit operations; if you have in-person research-related meetings, a remote option must be provided.