

University and Faculties Health and Safety Teams  
Research Integrity and Governance Office

## Guidance for research involving face-to-face participation during Covid-19 restrictions v1

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### 1 Introduction

This document will be sent to all personnel involved in face-to-face research with study participants. It must be read and declared by all researchers involved in the study, any related documents appropriately reviewed updated with approvals granted as necessary and before any participant research (re)commences during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19 illness is spread by droplets in the air breathed out by infected people that are then breathed in by other people or that are transferred onto surfaces subsequently touched by others. These rules have been developed to ensure safe working in University research studies involving face-to-face participation.

The health and safety of all our people is the priority. All personnel conducting participation studies on campus must confirm they have received, read and understand the Code of Practice for working on campus under Covid-19 restrictions and must attend a local induction before they can proceed with their studies.

Persistent and deliberate failure to adhere to these rules may result in disciplinary action, the suspension of the trial and the removal of access to their Faculty's buildings.

### 2 General considerations

1. Where possible, conduct the research remotely. Only have face-to-face interactions where the research cannot be done remotely. This is likely to be a change to the research protocol in which case it will require Ethics approval.
2. A [General health and safety risk assessment](#) must be performed to detail the necessary controls to enable the face-to-face research to be conducted. This may have already been completed, in which case, an additional section must be added to detail the controls. Alternative methods of working may be required to adhere to social distancing 2 metres separation as far as practical will need to be considered, e.g. relocating the task to a larger space with reference to how many people are in the room. Alternatively adhering to "1 metre plus" requirements through use of "mitigations" e.g. use of a clear screen between individuals, keeping the duration close contact is required as short as possible and hygiene measures.
3. If physical contact is required where the researcher touches a participant, e.g. applying a sensor, manipulating limbs, taking physical measurements, the researcher must wear disposable gloves.

4. Face coverings may be considered as an additional measure to assist reducing the risk of Covid-19 transmission for each study to provide reassurance for both researchers and participants and the University recommend they are worn to help reduce the risk of transmission. However, other more robust measures must also be implemented. If they are deemed necessary due to the inability to maintain social distancing for longer durations, they must be provided to the wearers as part of the research. Note face coverings are distinct from surgical masks and respiratory protective equipment and are not classified as Personal Protective Equipment, see Section 3.4 for more information.
5. The risk assessment will only need to be reviewed by the Faculties' Health and Safety teams if there is a High residual risk.  
At time of writing gym type activities with high physical exertion are likely to be assessed as having a High residual risk.
6. Note, any costs arising from provision of protective measures must be met by the research budget, this may require re-costing to check the study is still feasible within existing budgets if significant amendments are required.
7. When someone has symptoms of a Covid-19 infection they are likely to be more contagious.
  - a. Do not come onto campus or go to the study site if you feel unwell and have any Covid-19 symptoms, specifically a fever or sore throat or experience loss of taste or smell. You must self-isolate for 14 days or longer if the symptoms persist. If possible, arrange for a Covid-19 virus test and only come onto campus when the test results are known and show it is not a Covid-19 infection.
  - b. If you are diagnosed with Covid-19, self-isolate for the required period and then only return to campus when any resultant fever has subsided and you feel recovered enough. A cough may develop as a result of the infection but you can still return if your fever has subsided.
  - c. If you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace, stay at home for the stipulated self-isolation period.

The face-to-face appointment will need to be deferred in any of the above circumstances.
8. If a participant starts to experience Covid-like symptoms, they should inform the researcher and should leave the campus or study site immediately.
9. If a researcher starts to experience Covid-like symptoms, they should inform their manager by email or telephone and leave the campus or study site immediately.
10. If return visits at several timepoints are part of the study the impact of a participant being unable to attend a face-to-face appointment must be assessed. If timing is crucial it may be an option to ask the participant to self-isolate to reduce their risk of acquiring a Covid-19.

## 2.1 Participants' underlying health

1. Consideration of the health of the participants, especially those from clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable groups, is crucial. The risk assessment may include consideration of the potential increased risks to their health arising from:
  - a. their travel to and from the research location;
  - b. the number of people they may interact with whilst on campus or at the hosted research location and;
  - c. interaction with the researcher.

## 2.2 Design of experiment

1. The experimental design may need adjusting to ensure social distancing. Consider tasks that may require the researcher and participant to be in closer proximity and how this could be reduced or minimised. Consider changing the study scheduling visits, e.g. to minimise the number of visits and/or number of participants attending.
2. If face coverings are worn by the participant or researcher, will that affect the outcome of the study? The impact on communications may need to be considered particularly those with hearing impediments or where facial recognition is required. Alternatives that may be considered are face coverings with a clear panel or use of a clear screen between participant(s) and researcher.
3. If there are several participants involved in the study on the same day, can they be separated from one another, e.g. staggered arrival times, sitting apart whilst waiting for their involvement, one-way systems so they reduce the likelihood of passing one another.
4. Where extended visits by participants or residential studies are considered, particular care should be given to the timing and implementation of study procedures to meet the requirements of this document. Risk mitigation and contingency plans should be clear about how to deal with potential infections which may arise in staff and/or participants during an extended visit.

## 2.3 On the day screening, contact records and Test and Trace

To help ensure the safety of everyone involved, checks should be made on the day of participant involvement to confirm they are not showing Covid-19 symptoms. At the point of making the appointment the participants must be informed that if they have symptoms they should not attend (see Section 2 point 7).

1. Options for confirmation include:
  - a. The use of on the day health questionnaires or a statement signed and dated by the participant to confirm they are not showing signs of Covid-19 infection.
  - b. Measurement of the temperature of the participants, but this is not mandatory.These checks may be conducted in a separate “green room” away from other participants and should be in place for all visits.
2. A record must be kept securely to identify those involved in the research for the purposes of Test and Trace if a participant or researcher does develop a Covid-19 infection in the 14 days after the face-to-face participation. It is not a requirement for the study to contact participants directly but this record must be offered to NHS Test and Trace if required. This information comes under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements and must be kept accordingly with the participants informed of its purpose and their consent obtained.

## 3 Participation on campus

For research conducted on campus, there will be additional considerations and measures required to ensure participant safety.

### 3.1 Location of research facility

The participants may be unfamiliar with campus and how it is being operated with Covid-19 restrictions in place. They may need additional information to ensure they adhere to campus requirements.

In addition, the location where the research is conducted may need to be changed due to a building not being operational at the time or because it cannot safely be conducted whilst also meeting social distancing requirements.

1. Advise participants of the best route to the building from public transport and/or car parking. Where possible, advise them of routes that avoid enclosed spaces or high footfall areas.
2. If participants are arriving by taxi or are being dropped off by car, provide details of the best drop-off point for accessing the building.
3. Where possible and practical, the research location should be near to the building's entrance/exit so participants are more readily able to leave the building without getting lost or risking going the wrong way down a one-way system.
4. An escort should be provided to ensure the participants do not get lost or go the wrong way through the building, this is particularly important for buildings with one-way systems.

### 3.2 Time on campus

There are busier times on campus when there may be larger numbers of University personnel present and a corresponding perception of increased risk of exposure to Covid-19 virus.

1. Try to have appointments when the participant arrives and leaves at less busy periods to avoid lectures or practical classes starting or finishing and around lunchtime.

### 3.3 Personal hygiene

Personal hygiene is a key part of the "mitigations" for working at "1 metre plus" and reducing the risk of virus transmission.

1. Participants and researchers must adhere to rigorous handwashing and use of alcohol hand gels.
2. Advise the participant to apply alcohol hand gel when entering the building.
3. Inform the participant where the nearest hand washing facilities and toilets are when they arrive.
4. Inform the participants of the local toilet usage practices (queuing to use, washing hands before and after use, use of paper towels or air driers to dry hands, use of all stalls or alternate urinals, standing back from each other if waiting to wash/dry hands).
5. It is preferable for the participant to provide their own food and drink for longer stays on campus. If this is not possible or practical or is a requirement of the study, stringent hygiene measures must be put in place to ensure hygiene, e.g. individually pre-packaged meals and drinks provided for each individual and no buffet selection.
6. If shared equipment is being used, consider how this can be cleaned, disinfected and made safe for subsequent participants.
7. Face coverings are strongly recommended, particularly when social distancing cannot be maintained.

### 3.4 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE may be identified as one of the control measures in the risk assessment for the study.

1. PPE may be required for the purposes of protecting the wearer from the materials being handled during the study, for hygiene purposes (e.g. gloves when touching participants) and for infection control in clinical settings.
2. PPE is not recommended as a primary control for Covid-19 infection and other controls must be implemented. There are a small number of exceptions where PPE may be worn in healthcare and care home settings or with clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable participants.

## 4 Participation off campus (hosted research)

For research being conducted off campus at another organisation additional considerations must be included in the risk assessment. Such hosted research includes other research organisations and universities, clinical settings, care homes and schools.

### 4.1 Covid-19 measures at host site

Host sites are required to have their own measures for managing the risks of Covid-19 transmission which the researcher must request to see before confirming the study will proceed. If a host site is unable to provide this information, the risk assessment must state this and control measures must, as a minimum, meet the University's requirements for social distancing and other mitigations.

1. The host site's measures for protecting against Covid-19 must be reviewed and compared with measures included in this document for on campus research and are also detailed in the Faculties' Code of Practice for working under Covid-19 restrictions [Guidance Document](#).
2. Where the host site requires additional measures, these must be incorporated into the study and the researcher must adhere to them whilst on the host site.
3. If the measures are lower than the comparable requirements for working on campus, the researcher must adhere to the additional University requirements whilst on the host site. Note in some circumstances, the host site may assess closer contact of the type envisaged for University research as having lower risk and therefore requiring less controls in part to conserve resources, e.g. healthcare settings reserving FFP2 face masks. However, researchers must still adhere to University requirements, or if this is not possible or may be awkward for the researcher to adhere to, the researcher must gain approval for the risk assessment from Head of Department before starting the study.
4. The Faculties Health and Safety Managers/Advisors and University Biological Safety Officer may be contacted for assistance in making this assessment (see Appendix 1 for contact details).
5. If PPE is identified as required by the host site then by law they must provide that PPE to the researcher and participants. The researcher may have the discretion to provide suitable equivalents from their own funds but this must be discussed with the host site.
6. If PPE is not identified at the host site but the University identifies there is a requirement (principally in healthcare environments) the researcher must source the appropriate equipment.

## 4.2 Researchers' travel

The researcher will likely need to travel to the host site and the risk assessment must include a review of how they will travel and the risks arising to them.

1. Consider the mode of transport and when the journeys are to be made to the host site. Public transport may be busier in peak times so should be avoided where possible at these times. The researcher must wear a face covering on public transport (mandatory national requirement) so may need to source face coverings.
2. If driving to the host site a hire car may be used or the researcher must extend their private car insurance to cover business travel and use their own vehicle. Check with the host site if parking is available on site and the costs.
3. If travelling with colleagues in the same vehicle, additional controls are required including keeping window open and sitting as far apart as possible, e.g. driver and rear passenger seat on the opposite side. If colleagues are travelling together they should be kept together as a team for the study.
4. Confirm with the host site the route from public transport or parking to the building. Avoid enclosed spaces if possible.

## 4.3 Location of research facility

1. The considerations for Participation on Campus (Section 3.1) should be included in discussions with the host site when study arrangements are being made.

## 4.4 Personal hygiene

1. Researchers must adhere to the host site's requirements for personal hygiene at all times when on site.
2. See also the considerations for Participation on Campus (Section 0)

# 5 Participation off campus (non-hosted research)

Non-hosted research may be conducted in public spaces or outdoors where social distancing measures and limits to interactions with people outside "support" or "household bubbles" can be applied. At the time of writing, it is generally not possible to conduct non-hosted research at participant's homes. Exceptions may be granted for specific studies, primarily related to Covid-19 healthcare where visits to the homes of participants are less than 15 minutes and distances of less than 2 metres are kept necessarily brief.

If conducted in public spaces consider the location carefully and ensure social distancing measures can be implemented before the study proceeds.

If conducted outdoors, consider the likely weather conditions when making any arrangements and be prepared to curtail meetings with participants if necessary.

## 6 Research abroad

All international travel is prohibited until 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020 and this section will be updated accordingly after this date.

At time of writing, after 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020, research abroad may entail quarantine periods on return to the UK and potentially at the destination country. Travellers returning from [exempted countries and territories](#) will not need to quarantine on return. Travel from all other destinations or travelling through other countries will require quarantine on return. As such it is not recommended to travel to non-exempt countries and to carefully assess the travel itinerary.

In all cases, if the research does proceed abroad, a travel risk assessment must be conducted with particular reference to the medical responses in the host's country. The University's Travel provider and Insurer must be contacted in advance of any research being organised.

## 7 Collection of human tissue

Human samples may be collected by researchers according to the Ethics reviews of individual studies.

Collection of samples from Covid-19 patients must be risk assessed separately and the University Biological Officer consulted for advice.

Additional control measures will be required for collection from participants not showing Covid-19 symptoms due to the close proximity necessary for sample collection. These must be documented in the risk assessment and may include:

1. Increased personal hygiene: frequent washing of hands as required for infection control purposes.
2. Wearing of gloves with suitable protection against virus ingress by the researcher when collecting samples.
3. Wearing of surgical masks by the researcher and participant, unless saliva or throat swabs are being collected where only the researcher will be able to wear a mask.
4. A face visor and/or eye protection may be worn if collecting saliva or throat swabs to provide additional protection from exhaled or coughed droplets.

### 7.1 Laboratory requirements

Consult the University's guidance for handling human tissue samples in laboratories. Other than saliva or throat samples, no additional laboratory controls will be necessary beyond those required for handling human tissue with consideration to the potential for presence of blood born viruses. Saliva or throat samples will need to be handled to control aerosol generation.

## Appendix 1. (Re-)Commencement process summary

For a study to start running, all researchers involved in a study must:

1. Read this document & declare they have (*each researcher on the study must do this*)
2. Have a local induction (*each researcher on the study must do this*)
3. Write a [General Health and Safety risk assessment](#) (note, this risk assessment could be more generic to cover several studies, e.g. “running lab X in COVID-19 circumstances”).  
Risk assessment sign off is the same process as normal:
  - Low/medium risk – sign off by line manager/supervisor/Head of Department.
  - High risk – sign off by head of Faculty and/or Faculty H&S Officer.Risk Assessments MUST have approval before submitting an ethical amendment form.
4. Apply to Research Integrity and Governance Office (RIGO), [RIGO@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:RIGO@surrey.ac.uk), with this new risk assessment as an Ethic amendment form [\[INSERT LINK\]](#) to the ongoing study.

## Appendix 2. Health and Safety contacts

Faculty	Email
Health and Medical Sciences	<a href="mailto:FHMSHealthandSafety@surrey.ac.uk">FHMSHealthandSafety@surrey.ac.uk</a>
Engineering and Physical Sciences	<a href="mailto:FEPSSafety@surrey.ac.uk">FEPSSafety@surrey.ac.uk</a>
Arts and Social Sciences	<a href="mailto:a.guggilam@surrey.ac.uk">a.guggilam@surrey.ac.uk</a>
University Biological Safety Officer	<a href="mailto:chris.bradley@surrey.ac.uk">chris.bradley@surrey.ac.uk</a>