

## UVM Research Community:

As part of our effort to provide greater flexibility to our researchers in responding to COVID-19 epidemic, the UVM Strong Research and Graduate Education Working Group has developed a set of research activity levels. Because research activities are already monitored closely for safety, research offers a controlled environment where activity levels can be raised or lowered outside of other activities on campus. In addition, all active research projects are currently operating under COVID-19 safety plans that have been reviewed and approved by College, Office of Research, and Lab Safety/Risk Management personnel.

The purpose of this schematic is to allow the research community to modulate its activities and adjust to changes in COVID-19 conditions while continuing to operate safely and continuing to protect important research assets. In the table below we present 5 levels of research activities—gradations that reflect pre-COVID-19 risk levels to the sorts of extreme COVID-19 risk levels we faced early in the pandemic. As potential COVID-19 risk increase, an increasing number of research activities are curtailed. The goal is to allow continued safe operation and the ability to increase or decrease activity without resorting to the complete shutdown of activities witnessed earlier this year.

These metrics will be operationalized as follows:

1. Working with a range of campus-, national- and state-level data from campus and Vermont State health officials, each Friday the VPR and a team of experts will decide whether to alter the research-relevant activity level or leave it the same. Notification of this decision will be posted on the UVM return to campus page, the OVPR webpage, faculty/PI listserves, and to deans and directors.
2. Lab/project directors will be responsible for adjusting activities to match the announced level.
3. Research activity restrictions apply to all UVM locations. Facilities outside the greater Burlington Area may petition through their director/dean for individual consideration.

In considering this system, it is important to note that:

- None of these determinations will over-write State of Vermont decisions on permissible activities.
- Allowed travel must still conform to the Addendum Travel Restrictions adopted by the Board of Trustees for Fall 2020, and must continue to use the PeopleSoft travel permission process described in that Addendum.
- In addition, none of these levels supersede approved lab/research safety plans or any research compliance requirements. These activity levels are intended as general activity guidelines that crosscut a very wide range of actual activities and projects. Individual approved lab safety plans take precedent over any implied permission in the table.

**Guidelines for conducting research during COVID-19 pandemic**

<b>Research Activity Level</b>	<b>Laboratory Staffing/ Activities</b>	<b>Fieldwork<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Allowable Fieldwork related travel</b>	<b>Allowable Overnight Fieldwork Accommodation</b>	<b>Face-to-face direct contact research with human subjects<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Undergrad Participation</b>	<b>Research Building Access<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>In-person Lab Meetings</b>
<b>Research 5</b>	Essential <sup>4</sup> workers/ activities only: faculty/staff; approved post-docs, approved grad students	None, except by essential <sup>4</sup> designation obtained from Dean’s Office and OVPR	None, except by essential <sup>4</sup> designation obtained from Dean’s Office and OVPR	None, except by essential <sup>4</sup> designation obtained from Dean’s Office and OVPR	Essential <sup>4</sup> clinical research projects; remote data collection can continue.	No Undergraduate Research Assistants	Approved Essential workers only	No in-person meetings
<b>Research 4</b>	Wet lab activities by faculty/staff, post-docs, grad students, medical students only	Activities absolutely required to protect the integrity of existing data sets or to protect valuable field equipment	Only local, in-state travel. Minimal field crews who can travel in separate vehicles or vehicles (boats) where adequate physical distancing is possible.	Only if team members can isolate in separate accommodations or are domestic co-residents.	In clinical setting, PPE protocols must align with institutional requirements; Socially distant, non-contact in-person can continue; no more than one researcher & one participant per interaction/room; where remote data collection is possible, it should be used	No Undergraduate Research Assistants	Building occupants only; no UVM or external visitors	No in-person meetings

<sup>1</sup> Denotes outdoor activity. Related indoor lab activity is determined by the Laboratory Staffing column.

<sup>2</sup> This column applies to face-to-face human subjects/clinical research. As was the case during the March/April 2020 shutdown, remote activities can continue at all levels. Please note that all human subjects research must have prior approval by the UVM IRB; protocols must account for COVID-19 risk assessments and prevention activities appropriate to the respective protocol.

<sup>3</sup> Practicality may vary by building.

<sup>4</sup> Determinations of “core objectives” and “Essential Activities/Personnel” will follow March 2020 guidelines and procedures. Research-related activities on COVID-19, clinical research where possible harm to participants may result from a suspension of research activity and work necessary to maintain critical research infrastructure (including both vulnerable equipment and critical research assets) will be considered essential. Designation of Essential Activity/Personnel is determined by the respective Dean’s Office in consultation with the Office of the Vice President of Research. Under these conditions, PPE protocols must align with institutional requirements for high transmission risk clinical settings.

Research Activity Level	Laboratory Staffing/ Activities	Fieldwork	Allowable Fieldwork related travel	Allowable Overnight Fieldwork Accommodation	Face-to-face direct contact research with human subjects	Undergrad Participation	Research Building Access	In-person Lab Meetings
Research 3	Wet and dry lab activities by faculty/ staff, grad/post-doc, medical students, approved undergrads only	Activities restricted to fulfilling core <sup>4</sup> project objectives	Only in-state travel. Participation restricted to minimal field crews who can travel in separate vehicles or vehicles (boats) where adequate physical distancing is possible	Only if team members can isolate in separate accommodations or are part of an existing "family unit."	In clinical setting, PPE protocols must align with institutional requirements; Incidental or low risk physical contact only; where remote data collection is possible, it should be used. Face-to-face with groups is limited to 3 participants and the researcher and only where social distancing is possible.	Approved, project "critical" UVM undergraduate student assistants; no non-UVM students or volunteers. No UVM students prevented from attending class/activities due to possible COVID exposure <sup>5</sup>	No building transit / pass through, UVM-based colleagues with prior approval	Per approved laboratory plans
Research 2	Wet and dry lab activities by faculty/ staff, grad/post-doc, medical students, approved undergrads only	No COVID-19 related conditions or approvals	Unrestricted travel to Vermont ACCD <sup>6</sup> "green counties" where reasonable physical distancing is possible and facial masks used in transit. Only with permission for out of state activity	Only if team members can maintain reasonable physical distancing and masking when together.	Allowed with masking (both researcher and participant) and general social distancing; IRB approved physical contact is allowed; where remote data collection is possible, it should be used. Face-to-face interaction is limited to 6 participants and the researcher and only where social distancing is possible.	Approved UVM and non-UVM undergraduate student assistants and volunteers	UVM-based colleagues, external visitors with prior approval/ training/ waiver	Per approved laboratory plans
Research 1	No COVID-19 related conditions or approvals	No COVID-19 related conditions or approvals	No COVID-19 related conditions or approvals	No COVID-19 related conditions or approvals	No COVID-19 related conditions or approvals	No COVID-19 related conditions or approvals	No COVID-19 related conditions or approvals	No COVID-19 related conditions or approvals

<sup>5</sup> Per UVM testing and contact tracing guidelines.

<sup>6</sup> See map at: <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/restart/cross-state-travel>