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Brock Research Activities During Stages of Pandemic and Recovery

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On 15 June 2020, Brock University released the [Plan for Expanded Access to Research Facilities and Sites During Pandemic](#). This document and the accompanying guidance information extend from that earlier plan to provide guidance for a broad range of research activities on- and off-campus at each of Brock's [Stages for Pandemic Response and Recovery](#). See **Table 1** below for details regarding the Brock activities that are expected to be authorized at each stage of the pandemic and recovery. This expanded plan builds from the same set of guiding principles and confirms the same research priority timelines that were introduced in June. Consistent with the process implemented in June, researchers seeking access to research facilities and sites on- or off-campus will apply through their Associate Dean Research as described [below](#).

Access Request Process

1. Researchers read and understand the guidance documents from Brock University Health, Safety, and Wellness:
 - a. [Reopening Shared Research Lab Spaces in COVID-19 Pandemic Conditions: General Guidance](#)
 - b. (if relevant) [Health, Safety, and Wellness Guidance for In-Person Research with Human Participants under COVID-19 Pandemic Conditions](#)
2. Researchers complete COVID-19 safety training on Sakai (for [employees](#) or [students](#) as relevant), as well as any applicable required department-specific training.
3. Faculty researchers submit the following access request documents to their Associate Dean Research to request authorization for research activities for themselves and any supervisees:
 - a. the [Research Facility Access and Prioritization Request Form](#)
 - b. the [Researcher COVID-19 Mitigation Strategy](#)
 - c. the [Research with Human Participants Risk Checklist](#) (if relevant)
4. Student researchers will be directed to confirm that they are willing to undertake research in pandemic conditions.
5. If the Associate Dean determines that the proposed research activity is consistent with the pandemic conditions and endorses the request, it will be forwarded to the Academic Safety Committee and Health, Safety, and Wellness for detailed review of the identified risk-mitigation plans.
6. Faculty researchers will be notified by Health, Safety, and Wellness when research activity has been authorized according to an accepted risk-mitigation plan.
7. If relevant, faculty researchers provide the approved access request documents and notification of authorization to relevant regulatory bodies, including
 - a. [Animal Care Services](#) for research involving animals
 - b. [Research Ethics Office](#) for research involving humans
8. Researchers will be scheduled for access to on-campus spaces (if relevant) once they have confirmed with the Associate Dean Research that authorization and regulatory clearance are in place. See the [Coordinating Shared Access](#) section below.

Authorization for access to any research facility or site may be reversed based on University, government, or public health direction. Attend to University communications to know when Brock moves between the identified [Stages for Pandemic Response and Recovery](#). If at any point, the University moves toward a more restrictive stage for which **Table 1** no longer includes an activity that have been authorized at a later stage, then the activity must stop until further authorization is secured. Consult your Associate Dean Research if you are uncertain.

Researcher Responsibilities

- Researchers must complete the relevant online training modules (see Sakai for [employees](#) or [students](#)).
- Researchers must respect prioritization and scheduling decisions to accommodate collective needs.
- Researchers must sign in and out as they enter and leave the lab to confirm dates, times, and completion of sanitization routines. Follow the [Reopening Shared Research Lab Spaces in COVID-19 Pandemic Conditions: General Guidance](#) to reduce contact with shared surfaces.
- Researchers must observe public health guidance by maintaining, whenever possible, at least 2 metres from anyone other than household members. Until further notice, 18 m² per person is used as a guideline to support this physical distancing in research laboratories or other enclosed spaces. Amendments to this occupancy limit may be possible in Brock 4 or Brock 5 (see **Table 1** below).
- Researchers must limit the number of individuals in a shared research space to the maximum gathering size established by provincial and public health guidance.
- Researchers need to be prepared for a sudden closure based on University, government, or public health direction.
- Any situation that alters the health and safety of personnel or changes the circumstances around which authorization for access was granted must be reported in a timely manner to the Associate Dean Research.

Considerations for Student Researchers

The University is committed to supporting students to complete degree requirements in timely fashion. Students will be prioritized at each stage of the research expansion, subject to the following considerations:

- Students must *not* be compelled to conduct research on campus or in the field. Personal life circumstances will influence each student's readiness to undertake on-site research. They must feel free to voluntarily return to campus or field research activities. Processes are in place for students to confirm their willingness to undertake research in pandemic conditions.
- No student research activity can occur without adequate training and supervision. These needs vary depending upon student level and the specific research activities. Requests for authorization for student research must include strategies to ensure these training and supervision requirements are met despite the steps necessary to reduce risks due to the coronavirus.
- The flexibility and creativity demonstrated in regard to new methods of course delivery and modifications around assessment of degree-level expectations are needed to ensure that student researchers are supported and can complete their research programs in a timely manner. At the same time, it is essential to respect that academic requirements remain in place and that academic integrity must be maintained.

Human Participant Research

Research involving human participants should be conducted online where possible. Where in-person interaction is required, researchers are expected to use appropriate measures to reduce the risk of virus transmission, including physical distancing and non-medical facial coverings. Where physical distancing is not possible, other suitable procedures such as the use of personal protective equipment, enhanced sanitation protocols, and physical barriers such as plexiglass dividers are required. Minimize time together whenever possible, including completing remotely any tasks possible (e.g., reviewing consent materials, completing questionnaires, etc.). Consult [Health](#),

[Safety, and Wellness Guidance for In-Person Research with Human Participants under COVID-19 Pandemic Conditions](#) for recommendations and to assist with the completion of the [Researcher COVID-19 Mitigation Strategy](#) and the [Research with Human Participants Risk Checklist](#).

Research Ethics Board clearance must include assessment of the risks to participants based upon the risk-mitigation strategies implemented with respect to current pandemic conditions. Therefore, researchers must submit the approved access request documents along with any applications for clearance or requests for modification to the Research Ethics Board.

Every in-person research interaction with human participants requires the University to document contact tracing information. Participants (and caregivers, if required) must complete an online COVID-19 risk acknowledgement form each time they meet together on- or off-campus. Researchers, participants, and caregivers (if present) must also complete the [Brock University self-screen survey](#) each day prior to in-person interaction on- or off-campus.

Coordinating Shared Access to Research Facilities and Sites

Many researchers work in shared laboratories or use shared equipment that necessitates consideration for rotational schedules to accommodate the collective needs. Each shared campus research space should designate an individual (e.g., lab coordinator, principal investigator) to establish and monitor usage schedules with due consideration for the identified principles, priorities, and risk-mitigation strategies. A one-hour gap must be scheduled between individuals occupying research space to allow individuals to arrive and depart without crossing paths and to allow the air in the space to be exchanged through existing systems.

Campus access is normally scheduled 8 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday to Friday (except holidays). During later stages of pandemic recovery (Brock 3 and 4, see **Table 1** below), weekend access for researchers may be granted for research spaces with large numbers of shared users. Consult with your Associate Dean Research to see if your situation may warrant weekend access. Please note that the extension to weekend hours does not include holidays (e.g., access could be granted for September 5 and 6, 2020, but not for Monday, September 7).

Working From Campus Offices

The [June 15 research expansion](#) included provisions for some researchers to secure access to work individually in their campus offices on research tasks. This process has now changed. Faculty members wishing to obtain access to their individual offices now require submission of the [Campus Access Request Form](#) to their Dean. Faculty, staff, or graduate students who just need to pick up or drop off something in their office (less than one hour per visit) can do so by checking in and out at a designated access point.

Table 1. Chart of Brock Research Activities Across the Stages of Pandemic and Recovery

	Brock 1 Most Restrictive	Brock 2 Limited Activity	Brock 3 Moderate Activity	Brock 4 Higher Capacity	Brock 5 Post Pandemic
General Description for Research Operational Unit	Essential only	Time-sensitive research only	Time-sensitive research only, including some in-person human research	Increased research activity	Few restrictions
Research Priority Timelines	<p>Research Priority Timeline 1</p> <p>Specific projects related to COVID-19;</p> <p>Research activities that are part of essential clinical care;</p> <p>Research that could not be suspended without significant risk to persons, animal welfare, infrastructure, or crucial data;</p> <p>Life science and other field research in local sites (not involving human participants) that does not involve site activity by students (qua students) or access to research facilities (beyond one-time equipment pick-up); and</p>	<p>Research Priority Timeline 2</p> <p>Time-sensitive life science and other field research in local sites (not involving human participants), including those activities that necessitate (a) laboratory/research facility access to protect data samples collected in the field and (b) the engagement of students to support degree progress;</p> <p>Research that, if paused, would negatively impact the ability of a student to complete program requirements and requires minimal</p>	<p>Research Priority Timeline 3</p> <p>Research that is needed to address degree progress milestones, critical career stages, or grant applications; and</p> <p>Field research in Canadian sites beyond the Niagara Region, subject to site permissions, location-specific public health guidance, risk-mitigation strategies, and any travel restrictions.</p>	<p>Research Priority Timeline 3 continued</p> <p>Continued focus on research that is needed to address degree progress milestones, critical career stages, or grant applications; and</p> <p>Field research in international locations, subject to site permissions, location-specific public health guidance, risk-mitigation strategies, and any travel restrictions</p>	<p>Research Priority Timeline 4</p> <p>Faculty researchers presenting new and early-stage projects or experimental directions;</p> <p>Analytical testing services involving campus access by partner organizations that have not been deemed essential under provincial orders;</p> <p>Research can be scheduled on-site even if it could be undertaken remotely; and</p> <p>Routine access to campus offices or laboratories without need for specialized equipment.</p>

	Time-sensitive analytical testing services provided to partner organizations deemed essential under provincial orders	on-site work/time to complete; Research that is at a critical stage or close to an endpoint; and Highly unique research circumstances			
Field Research	Field research in local sites (not involving human participants)	Field research in local sites (not involving human participants)	Field research in Canadian sites subject to location-specific regulations and public health guidance	Field research in international sites subject to location-specific regulations, public health guidance, and Global Affairs travel advisories	Field research in international sites subject to location-specific regulations, public health guidance, and Global Affairs travel advisories
Human Research	Research involving existing data sets that can be accessed off-campus Online or telephone data collection	Most in-person research with human participants remains suspended. Subject to appropriate risk-mitigation strategies, exceptions are available for research that (a) falls under Research Priority Timeline 1 or (b) occurs off campus with members of a single household or social circle	In-person research involving interaction, observation, or moderate intervention with human participants can be authorized, subject to appropriate risk-mitigation strategies (see Health, Safety, and Wellness Guidance for In-Person Research with Human Participants under COVID-19 Pandemic Conditions)	In-person research involving high intervention with human participants can be authorized, subject to appropriate risk-mitigation strategies (see Health, Safety, and Wellness Guidance for In-Person Research with Human Participants under COVID-19 Pandemic Conditions)	In-person research involving human participants, including studies where aerosol generation or contact with respiratory droplets is anticipated can be authorized, subject to appropriate risk-mitigation strategies (see Health, Safety, and Wellness Guidance for In-Person Research with Human Participants under

					COVID-19 Pandemic Conditions
Animal Research	Research that cannot be suspended without significant risk to animal welfare or crucial resources	Acute studies only	Short-term studies (typically up to 6 weeks)	Moderate duration studies (typically up to 12 weeks) that could conclude early if required	Full range of animal-based studies
Research Training and Supervision	Online or telephone training	Online or telephone training; Continuation of on-site training by Brock personnel if required to sustain degree progress	On-site training by Brock personnel can be authorized subject to appropriate risk mitigation	On-site training by Brock personnel can be authorized subject to appropriate risk mitigation	On-site training by non-Brock personnel can be authorized subject to appropriate risk mitigation
Occupancy in shared University research spaces	Occupancy is restricted to one individual at a time except: a. Procedures that require more than one person for safe performance may be performed with appropriate personal protective equipment while restricted to the greatest extent possible in frequency and prolongation.	As per Brock 1	Spaces in Cairns can accommodate multiple occupancy calculated at a minimum of 18 m ² per person. Occupancy in other University spaces is restricted to one individual at a time whenever possible. Activities requiring multiple people require appropriate personal protective equipment and must be restricted to the greatest extent possible in frequency and prolongation.	Extend the density of research activity in shared spaces subject to appropriate risk-mitigation strategies	Extend the density of research activity in shared spaces subject to appropriate risk-mitigation strategies

	b. Larger spaces within the Cairns Family Health and Bioscience Research Complex can accommodate multiple occupancy calculated at a minimum of 18 m ² per person.				
Campus access times	Access as required for activities authorized under Research Priority Timeline 1	Access scheduled 8 a.m.-8 p.m. M-F (except holidays), unless extenuating circumstances demand access at other times	Access is normally scheduled 8 a.m.-8 p.m. M-F (except holidays). Weekend access for researchers (not human participants) may be granted for research spaces with large numbers of shared users	Access is normally scheduled 8 a.m.-8 p.m. M-F (except holidays). Weekend access may be granted for research spaces with large numbers of shared users. Access for human participants dependent upon custodial resources	Access as required for authorized research activities
Research Travel (using research funds only)	Local travel only; no overnight stays	Local travel only; no overnight stays	Domestic travel only	International travel as permitted by Global Affairs travel advisories	International travel as permitted by Global Affairs travel advisories

NOTE: The stages are cumulative, such that an activity that can be authorized at one stage can be authorized at subsequent stages.