

Brown University

Resuming Field Research Principles and Procedures: Stage 2

July 6, 2020

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I. INTRODUCTION

Definition: Field research, as governed by this document, is research that is conducted by Brown-employed personnel (students, staff, faculty, post-docs) that takes place outside of a laboratory facility. It does not include research conducted by employees of organizations to whom Brown subcontracts research activities; these activities are fully under the purview of that organization. It does not apply to research conducted by Brown personnel at laboratory facilities not owned by Brown (e.g. National Labs); Brown personnel are expected to secure travel approval from Brown and then follow the workplace safety guidelines of the facility.

As in the [recent guidance](#) regarding the resumption of on-campus laboratory research, Brown University's first priority is the health and safety of every member of the Brown community, and that priority has guided and will continue to guide all of the University's decisions and response to COVID-19. As the state of Rhode Island progresses through the phases of Governor Gina Raimondo's Reopening Rhode Island plan, and as other locations in which we do our

research similarly loosen restrictions on activities, the University can begin to consider the resumption of research activities in locations away from campus. This document lays out the process and considerations for the resumption of field research in a manner fully consistent with the best and current public health guidance, and the University's [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Policy](#).

These Principles and Procedures apply to Stage 2 of resuming research at Brown University. Changes from Stage 1 include new guidance about community-based human subjects research in RI, sharing vehicles for commuting to field sites, updated guidance on brief exceptions to social distancing, and the inclusion of undergraduate students in field research. We continue to lay out plans for the resumption of field research following local (to the research site) health and safety guidelines. During Stage 2, researchers continue to be permitted to conduct local (in RI or within commuting distance) non-human-subjects field research. Researchers continue to be permitted to restart or continue field research outside of the RI area that conforms to local public health guidelines **and** that does not require prohibited travel of Brown personnel. In Stage 2, researchers may also resume some local field research that involves human subjects.

During Stage 2, human subjects research that can be done remotely without negatively impacting the scientific goals of the research should continue to be done remotely. Researchers may resume local off-site human subjects research within RI (or within commuting distance). Details about protecting human subjects while resuming off-site human subjects research in international locations and on-site human subjects research in Brown facilities is available [here](#).

These guidelines were developed by a committee of faculty and administrators, and involved consultation with faculty and administrators in multiple units on campus.

Field/International Research Committee Members

Jeffrey Bailey - Pathology and Laboratory
Medicine; Covid Research Task Force
Keri Godin – Office of Research Integrity
Stephen McGarvey - School of Public Health
Nicole Picard - Office of General Counsel
Jill Pipher - Office of the Vice President for
Research

Leah VanWey - School of Professional
Studies, Institute at Brown for
Environment and Society, Sociology
Michael Worden - Neuroscience, Chair of
Brown IRB

II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Overarching Goal: To protect the health and safety of the Brown community, while increasing research activity in a staged approach.

The procedures specific to field research are based on the set of seven principles laid out in the [Resuming Research guidance](#) previously issued for lab-based research. We have reproduced

these here with a description on how they apply to field research; please see the original document for more detailed descriptions.

Principle #1: *Follow the relevant local, state, and national public health authority directives.*

- **Field Research:** Field research in Rhode Island or the region should follow the guidelines for the current phase in "[Reopening RI: Charting the Course](#)", which outlines a phased approach to reopening businesses and community interactions in Rhode Island. All of the phases involve significant social distancing, facial covering requirements and limitations on the size of gatherings. Field research in other regions should be governed by public health directives in place in that region and country.

Principle #2: *The resumption of research will be carried out in full compliance with the [Brown University COVID-19 Workplace Safety Policy](#) and any other University policies that govern the return to campus.*

- **Field Research:** All Brown personnel involved in field research must abide by the workplace safety policy even when working off-site. Field research involving the travel of Brown personnel to field sites is also governed by current [restrictions on travel](#).

Principle #3: *Protect the health and safety of the research workforce and the health and safety of human research subjects.*

- **Field Research:** Principal Investigators will submit a plan for the resumption of field research describing how they will protect the health and safety of research personnel. The process for submission of plans is described below in Resuming Work Procedures. Submitted plans will be reviewed by a Research Continuity Field Research Subcommittee (membership listed in Appendix), by EHS, by OVPR, and then by the Provost. Guidance regarding procedures and approvals for the protection of human subjects (as opposed to research personnel) is covered by guidance on the HRPP webpage regarding plans and attestations needed for that research.
- **Flexibility:** During the staged resumption of research, all reasonable accommodations and flexible work arrangements should be made consistent with University policies, including the Alternative Work Assignment Policy (AWA Policy) and the Americans with Disabilities Act Policy (ADA Policy). To the extent possible, PIs should work with researchers on suggesting alternative work assignments per the AWA Policy given current home situations (lack of childcare or eldercare, a high risk household member). Researchers with underlying medical conditions should contact UHR to request an accommodation under the ADA Policy.

Individuals with concerns about their workplace and/or behaviors inconsistent with or in violation of the [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Policy](#) and/or this guidance should report those concerns to a supervisor, UHR, or other University official. Graduate students should first contact their department Director of Graduate Studies and also Associate Dean of Student Support Services Maria Suarez in the Graduate School, if appropriate. Staff can consult with their department or center Human Resources Partner. Postdoctoral Research Associates and Fellows should contact:

- Biomed, [Audra Van Wart](#) in the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies;
- School of Public Health, [Nancy Barnett](#) in Faculty Affairs; and
- All others, [Joel Reville](#) in the Dean of the Faculty office.

Principle #4: *Protect the careers of early stage researchers.*

- **Field Research:** The committee paid particular attention to the needs of graduate students and other early stage researchers in the development of these procedures.

Principle #5: *Implement a fair and transparent process for resuming research.*

- **Resuming Work Procedure Overview:** Please see Resuming Work Procedures for detailed instructions. In brief, individual PIs or researchers must create a safety plan for their field research. These plans will be reviewed by Department Chairs or research Center Directors or Directors of Graduate Study and the Research Continuity Field Research Subcommittee. They will then be reviewed by Environmental Health and Safety, and the Office of the Vice President for Research for conformity with social distancing and other safety requirements, who will make a recommendation to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration who will have final approval of each plan.

Principle #6: *Ensure as rapid a resumption as the public health conditions, applicable public directives, and University policies permit.*

Principle #7: *Ensure that viral spread is isolated with minimal impact.*

- **Field Research:** Brown personnel coming “back to work” must commit to self-screening and behaviors that reduce and break the spread of COVID-19. Field researchers are subject to these expectations, and resumption plans should include activity-specific elements such as: required face coverings, disinfecting areas and equipment before and after use, social distancing, including multiple passengers (one per row of seats) per vehicle traveling to field site, and no social gatherings or celebratory events. Stage 2 permits research team meetings in Brown buildings; these should be included in the submission of plans through the [lab research](#) or return to campus (if no associated lab work) processes. Further detail regarding these measures and the responsibilities of all community members can be found in the [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Policy](#).

III. RESUMING WORK PROCEDURES

These procedures apply to resuming (or adjusting plans for) field research in Stage 2 of Brown’s resuming research plan. Plans for future stages will be communicated in advance of moving to the next stage.

The goal of these guidelines is to resume all field research that meets government and University guidelines and is consistent with COVID-19 necessitated precautions and restrictions. These procedures support the health and safety of Brown personnel engaged in field research.

Guidance regarding procedures and approvals for the protection of human subjects (as opposed to research personnel) is covered by guidance on the HRPP webpage regarding plans and attestations needed for that research.

Local Field Research (RI/Southern New England)

Local field research may resume after PIs have an approved resuming work plan (described below) that meets all Brown and RI public health guidance.

As noted above, the University has issued the [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Policy](#), and all approved research programs and activities must fully comply with that policy. Additional guidelines for resuming local field research are as follows:

- During Stage 2, human subjects research conducted in community settings in RI or other sites within commuting distance may resume, provided groups are less than or equal to 15 people, investigators have permission of the facility, and investigators conform to the requirements of the facility pertaining to use of masks and social distancing.
- Surveys conducted outdoors in the community are permissible with appropriate masks and social distancing.
- Plan for social distancing in travel to research sites. In Stage 2, research staff are permitted to travel with one person per row of seats in a vehicle, with passengers alternating sides of the car for maximum distancing. All staff in a vehicle must wear a face covering while in the vehicle.
- Plan for remote (phone, email) contact of any person from whom permission or assistance is needed to enter a research site.
- Follow appropriate virus-mitigation protocols including appropriate holding times or disinfection for research materials shipped from field sites to Brown facilities.
- As much as possible, maintain stable teams to minimize the size of the networks of research personnel.
- Avoid field research requiring extended close contact. Unavoidable proximity of less than 6 feet for required research activities should be limited to less than 15 minutes and all personnel must wear face coverings. Brown does not require or encourage researchers to work closer than 6 feet for periods of longer than 15 minutes

Non-Local Field Research

All field research is governed by Brown's COVID-related [travel restrictions](#) and national and local travel restrictions. PIs may start or continue non-local essential field research during Stage 2 if they: (1) Submit a plan as described in these guidelines and then (2) Obtain University approval from the Global Travel Risk Advisory Committee for travel to the research site. Or if research personnel are already on site. During the current Stage, the University is reviewing and potentially approving essential travel for faculty, staff, postdocs, and graduate students. No undergraduate travel is permitted. PIs must prepare resuming work plans (described below) that cover health and safety protections for Brown personnel, including graduate students,

staff, and faculty. Research must be performed in accordance with the state, local, and other applicable requirements and guidelines in place for the area where the research occurs. After research approval, the Global Travel Risk Advisory Committee will review travel plans for appropriate risk mitigation measures.

Undergraduate Students

Undergraduate Students will be allowed to conduct independent field research or to participate in field research as part of a PI's research team during Stage 2 of Brown's resumption of research. Please note that travel is still prohibited for all undergraduate students through August 14, 2021. As noted in Principle 4 above, priority will be given to graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and early career faculty in circumstances where involving undergraduate researchers may violate state or local public health guidelines (e.g., if PI has limited space in a vehicle or at a field site).

Requirements for All Research

IV. PROCESS TO REQUEST RESUMING FIELD RESEARCH

Step One: Faculty PIs (for multi-person research teams) or individual researchers (faculty, staff or graduate students) must submit a written resuming field research work plan. Resources and links to submission materials are on the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) [Resuming Research Web Page](#).

- 1-2 page narrative description of the research work to be performed and justification for resuming work. These materials will be shared with your chair, DGS (for graduate student research), the field research subcommittees, OVPR, and the Provost and EVP for Facilities and Administration. The description and justification must include the following sections. The file must be named DEPARTMENT/CENTER_PI LAST NAME_JUSTIFICATION_FIELD:
 - Description of the research to be done
 - Location(s) of field research
 - Justification for resuming work
 - List of personnel who will work on the field research
 - Name of faculty advisor (for graduate students), and statement that they have reviewed the plan before submission
 - Safety Plan
 - IF RESEARCH IS IN RHODE ISLAND OR WITHIN COMMUTING DISTANCE:
 - Description of the social distancing plan for your field research. This should be consistent with the [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Policy](#) for local field research. For non-local field research, please provide a link to local public health guidance along with your plan.
 - Safety plan for any personnel who will work alone
 - Contact Tracing plan (log, shared google sheet, etc.)
 - IF RESEARCH IS OUTSIDE OF RHODE ISLAND OR COMMUTING DISTANCE

- Web link to local public health guidance
 - List of local partners developing the safety plan for Brown personnel
 - Attestation that a workplace safety plan is in place, and (if applicable) that PI has reviewed the plan with all Brown personnel involved
- Any additional information related to safety for the field research

Step Two: Approvals prior to Field Research review.

- Submit your Justification to your Department Chairs or Center Directors (for faculty and post-doc plans) or your Director of Graduate Study (for graduate student plans) for review of the plans in their areas to ensure coordination and consistency across research groups. Chairs/Center Directors or DGS's shall notify you with an email that your plan is approved, or if it needs adjustments. Create a PDF of the approval email (In Gmail: Open the email, select the printer icon. In the pop up window select "Save as PDF"; Click "Save". Select a location to save the email and name it DEPARTMENT/CENTER_APPLICANT_LAST_NAME_APPROVAL. Click "Save").

Step Three: Upload your approved justification and approval email via [Google Form](#). The Field Research Continuity Subcommittee (see Appendix A for membership) will review the plans and will notify OVPR via resuming_research@brown.edu when a batch of plans is ready for review.

Step Four: Plans will be reviewed by the Office of the Vice President for Research, and Environmental Health and Safety for conformity with social distancing and other safety requirements. The Vice President for Research will present recommendations to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration, who will have final approval of each plan.

If a plan is approved, OVPR will notify the appropriate chair or center director, DGS and researcher. Researchers approved to conduct field work will be required to sign the [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Policy Acknowledgement Form](#) and complete required training in Workday associated with the Policy.

OVPR will maintain copies of all approved research resuming work plans.

Step Five (if applicable): For plans requiring approval for travel of faculty or staff, please submit to Brown's GTRAC your approved research plan and a PDF of the approval email along with your travel safety plan. Details on the process are [here](#). Both domestic and international travel must be approved by GTRAC prior to purchase of tickets or travel.

V. DEADLINES

Plans will be reviewed in batches with approximately a 10 business day turnaround time.
Deadlines for Google Form submissions are:

- Noon (12:00 pm) Friday, July 10
- Noon (12:00 pm) Friday, July 24
- Noon (12:00 pm) Friday, August 7
- Noon (12:00 pm) Friday, August 21

Appendix A

Research Continuity Field Research Subcommittee

Leah VanWey (Sociology, IBES), Chair

Timothy Herbert (DEEPS)

David Lindstrom (Sociology)

Nicole Picard (OGC)

Stephen Porder (EEB, IBES)

Jacklyn Hughto (SPH)