Research Reactivation for Departments

Departmental Chairs/Institute Directors should develop a COVID-19 Phase 1 research reactivation safety plan, similar to what we have requested individual Principle Investigators to prepare, but from a departmental perspective. Your proposal for such a plan should consider the need for administrative staff (coordinated with your business offices), departmental shared spaces such as meeting rooms, common rooms, bathrooms as applicable, shared equipment spaces and other core facilities. Plans for small break rooms shared by only a few investigators should be articulated by those investigators in their individual plans, but please help them coordinate their responses. Please include plans for large break rooms/kitchen areas used by the broader department. If your space is contiguous, interdigitated, or shared with other departments, please work with your colleagues to plan for compliant and appropriate use of these spaces.

You may wish to coordinate with or consult about your plans with facilities or EHS. The facilities building superintendent can be found here. The EHS safety advisor for your building can be found here.

Please share your departmental plan with your dean by May 29th, prior to when any faculty, staff and trainees come back onto campus for ‘Phase 1’.

Steps to consider in preparing your departmental safety plans:

- Form a committee to help develop the department’s safety plan, and coordinate the individual plans from PIs/labs across the department.
- Have every PI/lab identify a Laboratory COVID-19 Safety Officer for their laboratory. Use the Laboratory Safety Officers as a conduit for communication and coordination of pandemic safety issues in your department.
- Identify an overall Department COVID-19 Safety Officer. The Department Safety Officer will be responsible for safety compliance in your department and may field requests for information and potentially adjudicate concerns or complaints about faculty/trainees/staff who are non-compliant with safety guidelines.
- Recognize the unique challenge trainees currently face. Include them in your planning whenever possible. Disseminate the ‘Trainee Accommodations Guidance’ to both faculty and trainees. Consider developing a departmental system, via the chair, DGS, or a committee, to support trainees and address their questions and concerns about research reactivation early and often.
- Identify the spaces that need departmental oversight and should be included in your safety plan.
  - Departmentally administered core facilities
  - Shared equipment rooms
  - Common seminar and meeting rooms
  - Bathrooms if applicable
- Identify departmental staff (administrative, core research, support staff, etc.) that should be included in your safety plan.
- Coordinate with your faculty those spaces that may be specific to just a few labs (e.g. local lunch/break rooms). Make sure your faculty are including these local spaces in their lab safety plans.
• Coordinate with your faculty shift schedules, if this should become a common de-densification approach for your department. If large blocks of labs choose to work in common shifts, coordinate with your facilities building superintendent.

• Identify the need to and obtain supplies for common areas, including disinfectant wipes, PPE (for departmental staff), hand sanitizer, etc. separate from personal PPE required for laboratory researchers.

*The following questions are similar to those asked of PIs for individual labs. Please modify to capture your spaces. Under each category, please address:*

• Steps necessary to reopen
• De-densification strategy
  o This may include keeping certain spaces closed (‘off limits’) during Phase 1
• Surface disinfection
• Contact tracing
  o This may include maintaining a log of employees over time to support contact tracing
  o It may also include daily symptom self-reporting.

Administrative Support

• Do you require administrative support on campus? Please note that access must be absolutely essential for the research activity to be carried out on campus. Accordingly, if you indicate ‘yes,’ your justification will need to be compelling.
• What steps are necessary to reopen on-campus administrative support for your department?
• What is the de-densification strategy for administrative support areas?
• What surface disinfection strategy is being implemented for administrative support areas?
• What symptom monitoring and on campus attendance monitoring strategy (for contact tracing, if it becomes necessary) is being implemented for administrative staff?

Shared Research Equipment, Research Support Areas and Cores

This applies to department resources, such as autoclaves, equipment rooms, microscope rooms and other department-specific core facilities. Cores that serve a user group that extends outside your department should complete a separate Integrator application for each core facility. A unique approach may be required for each resource.

• Steps necessary to reopen
  o Apply for campus access of staff through EHS Integrator.
  o Assure safety training and review safety protocols with staff.
  o Based on anticipated use (with feedback from departmental users), identify necessary staffing levels for cores.
  o Post safety notices and reminders.
• De-densification plan
  o Consider keeping unnecessary facilities closed through Phase 1.
  o Consider traffic to and from facility.
Example Strategies for Re-Opening Steps

Please indicate what steps you will take in advance of allowing personnel to resume use of core facilities and equipment and all research-related activities in your departmental space. Please note: All building safety systems will be inspected and verified as operational. To ensure proper resumption of research activities, a departmental staff member should review and submit to you the Lab Ramp Up checklist (https://ehs.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/lab-ramp-up-checklist.pdf) for support facilities with equipment.

[Sample text: In preparation for opening, all work surfaces will be cleared to facilitate frequent disinfection. To the extent possible we will remove from the bench surface: glassware, small equipment, supplies, chemicals, etc. Logs for shared use spaces will be implemented. Spaces that do not allow for physical distancing will be available for individual use only or closed altogether. Common areas, including meeting rooms, will either be closed or seating densities will be reduced.]

Surface Disinfection Plan

Please indicate your plan for surface disinfection above and beyond the cleaning activities provided by Yale Facilities. Any variations to this in the areas below, should be noted there.

[Sample text: A staff member will be assigned equipment and surfaces for disinfection at the beginning, mid-point, and end of their respective shifts. The staff member will clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, faucets, and sinks. Equipment will be disinfected before and after use by individual users. Notices will be placed in prominent areas reminding users about surface and equipment disinfection requirements. Violations of these surface disinfection plans should be reported to the departmental COVID-19 Safety Officer.]

Meeting or Seminar Rooms

- Steps necessary to reopen
  - To promote physical distancing, remove and store extra chairs, or simply stack them in a corner with a zip tie.
  - Post COVID-19 safety signs reminding faculty/trainees/staff that meetings should be virtual during Phase 2.

- De-densification plan – up to and including spaces being closed through Phase 1
  - Consider assigning meeting or seminar rooms to particular labs or small groups of labs, to facilitate physical distancing and optimize the utility of these spaces. Meeting or
seminar rooms should not be used for group meetings, but can be used as single-user ‘break rooms’, for instance.
  o Securely lock rooms that can’t be used with sound physical distancing practices.
• Surface disinfection
  o Provide supply of disinfectant and wipes/towels for common areas.
  o Notify users to disinfect surfaces before and after use. Use signage to help in this process.
• Contact tracing
  o Limit use of meeting and seminar rooms, which will help enforce physical distancing measures and make future contact tracing more tractable.
  o Consider asking faculty, trainees and staff to note their daily use of common rooms, to facilitate contact tracing.

Common rooms (including lobbies, study spaces, kitchens, lounges, etc.)
• See above for meeting and seminar rooms, alter where necessary for lobbies, study spaces, kitchens and lounges, etc.
• Describe steps necessary to reopen
• Formulate a de-densification plan – up to and including spaces being closed through Phase 1
• Address surface disinfection – note variations from the above.
• Consider contact tracing

Health & Symptom Monitoring Plan
• Every lab/PI should identify a Laboratory COVID-19 Safety Officer for their laboratory, which could be the PI. Use the laboratory Safety Officers as a conduit for communication and coordination of pandemic safety issues in your department.
• Identify an overall Department COVID-19 Safety Officer. The Department Safety Officer will be responsible for safety compliance in your department and may field requests for information and potentially adjudicate concerns or complaints about faculty/trainees/staff who are non-compliant with safety guidelines.
• Formulate a departmental communication plan if a department member who has been on campus is tested as COVID-19 positive.
• Remember - Each PI is responsible for maintaining a contact tracing log for their trainees and staff.
• Each department chair is responsible for the symptom monitoring plan and contact tracing (attendance) log for departmental staff and departmental core facilities.

Rapid Ramp-Down Plan
• Please provide a plan for rapid ramp-down of department space-specific activities should the need to do so arise. This could be a simple recapitulation of the plan put into place in transitioning to ‘critical research only’ status in March of 2020.