

Yale Office for Postdoctoral Affairs

Resuming Research at Yale FAQ

June 11, 2020

The following frequently asked questions and their answers provide an update to trainees about resuming research at Yale during Phase 1 of reactivation. They provide links to area-specific guidance and will be updated as necessary.

Accessibility

How can the university make sure labs are accessible to all trainees, including those with disabilities?

PIs are expected to develop a plan that meets guidelines for physical distancing, PPE use and de-densification of labs, ideally in consultation with lab members. Schedules should take the needs of individual trainees into consideration. For example, a trainee who relies on shuttle transportation will not be scheduled for time in the lab when shuttles are not running.

Contact tracing

What happens if there is a COVID case in our department/building/floor/lab? Will we be notified? How?

A member of the Employee Health Department will notify the relevant supervisor, primary investigator, or department chair and provide further instructions and assistance. Any close contacts of an employee or trainee who tests positive will be contacted directly by Employee Health.

These contacts will be identified by the university-wide Yale Contact Tracing Team, led by Linda Niccolai, Professor of Epidemiology, not by individual departments. This experienced team has been doing this work since the start of the epidemic following state and CDC guidance.

Environmental Health and Safety staff will also be notified and will advise on any need for decontamination or enhanced cleaning of the laboratory space.

Deciding not to return

How can trainees report if they are being coerced into returning to the lab and what will the university do to protect trainees from retaliation if they decide not to return to the lab in Phase 1?

Returning to labs for trainees is voluntary. Any trainee who, because of the pandemic, does not wish to work on campus will not be expected to come to campus and will not be required to provide justification for that decision.

The decision whether to return should be made in discussion with faculty advisors about the plans for both the lab and common spaces nearby.

If you have any concerns, you can bring a complaint to a faculty member (Chair, Safety Officer), Dean's Designee, or the Office for Postdoctoral Affairs.

For anonymous reporting, use the Yale hotline at 877-360-9253 or your.yale.edu/hotline, available 24/7. All complaints will be handled with the goal of protecting trainees from retaliation.

Financial support

If I cannot return to the lab, will I continue to be paid?

The goal is to gradually make it possible for everyone to return to their lab. So far, our major funders have been flexible about the need to continue paying people from grants during the shutdown of non-essential research. The university will work with funders to continue this policy as long as access to labs is limited.

Masks

What kind of masks will be provided? How many? How long will Yale supply them?

3-ply, water-resistant (surgical) face masks are currently recommended for those working in laboratory settings. Cloth face coverings or surgical masks are appropriate in non-laboratory settings. Yale will supply face masks as long as they are required.

If you have a question regarding the right PPE, you can contact EHS for PPE hazard evaluation, and EHS will provide you with what you need.

EHS has two detailed fact sheets with more information:

- Face coverings: <https://ehs.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/face-masks-coverings.pdf>
- Researcher face masks, etc. <https://ehs.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/face-coverings.pdf>

Parking

Are Yale parking lots still open and free?

Yale parking lots are open and free through July 10th.

Phases

What are the criteria used by public health experts at Yale to determine if we are ready to move into Phase 2, or backward into Phase 0?

Yale will enter the second phase of campus reactivation if the risk of COVID-19 transmission continues to decline in the coming months, and there is an expansion of testing capability within our area.

To move forward into Phase 2, our analysis would indicate continuing decreases in community-based transmission through numbers of new COVID-positive cases. Cases are identified through Yale Pilot testing or regional testing.

If a broad resurgence in viral transmission occurs, Yale could return to stay-at-home measures from Phase 0. This would likely be mandated through an Executive Order from the Governor. If local outbreaks of the virus arise, Yale would return to Phase 0 working protocols for specific laboratories or facilities, or for the broader non-essential workforce as needed. These measures would stay in place for at least 14 days until the extent of potential transmission could be assessed.

The trend in hospital admissions for COVID is currently the leading indicator of the state of transmission. As testing becomes more available and widespread in the State, other indicators may emerge.

Security

Why am I seeing increased police presence on campus? And why do we have to wear badges displayed? Are we being profiled?

Yale is not participating in any form of profiling of its community. You may be seeing more security around campus especially near the Medical School. In the early morning of April 28th, a stabbing incident occurred at Congress Avenue and Cedar Street at approximately 12:00 AM. The victim, who was not a member of the Yale community, was involved in an altercation with another man and was stabbed and killed. This raised concerns among our community about safety at the Medical School in particular.

Anticipating that many would be working shifts extending into the early morning hours, several Department chairs asked for enhanced police presence to provide security to those traveling back and forth between buildings, public transport, and cars. Yale Police and Security agreed to provide enhanced presence. They ask that all individuals identify themselves as Yale employees by wearing their Yale ID badges on their outermost clothing as much as possible.

Shuttles

Will shuttles be running during Phase 1?

Shuttles are running but at reduced (25%) occupancy levels. Although we generally encourage public transportation, for the next few months, you may want to walk, bike, or drive to avoid public transportation and the Yale shuttle if you can. If you do take public transportation or the Yale shuttle, please follow social distancing rules and wear a mask or face-covering.

Further, temporary changes to existing shuttle routes may be required. You can access the latest schedules and information here [<https://your.yale.edu/work-yale/campus-services/parking-and-transit/shuttle>]

Symptom Monitoring

Why is there no symptom monitoring upon entering research buildings?

By rule, as mandated by the State of CT, everyone who is coming onto campus is required to symptom monitor every day and report the results to their supervisor. The results of symptom monitoring should be logged by your supervisor (e.g. the laboratory PI or designee).

We are relying upon you to use the Daily Health Check self-monitoring system (with authentication) to track any symptoms before coming to work on campus. If you observe any COVID symptoms per the CDC guidelines, call your health care provider and stay home.

Posters have been placed at entrances and above time clocks reminding faculty, staff, and trainees of the need for daily health checks, the list of COVID-related symptoms, and to return home and call their health care provider if any symptoms arise.

Why does it seem each department handles reopening safety procedures and public health policies differently?

During **Phase 1** campus access must be *absolutely essential* for the research activity to be carried out on campus, with strict public health precautions. If the work can be done remotely (from home), it *must* continue to be performed from home.

There is a wide range of research conducted at different locations across campus, including traditional bench-style laboratory work, instrumentation design and construction, studies with Yale's extensive collections, and research in Yale's botanical garden. Each of these has its own particular conditions and methodologies to be addressed.

With the help of Yale's public health community and with guidance from the State of Connecticut, Yale issued uniform guidance for phased reopening. This includes de-densification strategies (physical distancing, shift work), use of PPE, symptom monitoring and specific guidance for trainees.

Yale faculty, departments and schools must submit safety plans reflecting Yale's guidance while addressing the physical research space and methodologies specific to each. These safety plans are vetted by departments (or department COVID-19 safety committees convened for this purpose), the appropriate Deans, and the Provost's office with input from the public health community and experts in Environmental Health and Safety.

Safety plans for shared spaces should be communicated and coordinated between the relevant departments or created by the school which administers them.

Testing

How often should people working on campus be tested for COVID infection? Is there sufficient capacity to test everyone returning to campus? Why is testing voluntary instead of required?

Throughout the pandemic, testing has been available for symptomatic individuals through Yale Health and other health care providers. Public Health guidance for testing asymptomatic individuals is still evolving.

On June 1, Yale launched a pilot to offer entry testing for asymptomatic individuals on campus or returning to campus. On completion of this pilot testing program, we plan to offer testing to others returning to campus over the course of the summer, including returning graduate and professional students.

Will overall COVID testing results for people on campus be made public on a regular basis?

We anticipate that summaries of overall test results will be shared periodically. Voluntarily tested populations may not fully represent the campus community, so results will need to be interpreted cautiously.

Other questions

Is there a central place I can ask questions?

You can call the COVID Resource Line at 203-432-6604 (toll-free at 866-924-9253), available 8 am–5 pm, 7 days a week, about any personal concerns or questions.