**GUIDE FOR STAFF & STUDENTS ENGAGED IN RESEARCH**

The vast majority of Edinburgh Napier’s externally and internally funded research projects, which were wholly reliant on access to the University’s research labs, were postponed as a direct result of the Scottish Government measures to restrict the spread of COVID-19.

*\* For the purposes of this guidance, the term research includes all research and consultancy activity needing access to the University’s research labs.*

**Restarting research activities**

The University is now planning a gradual return of research activities to our campuses.

Restarting research activities is a complex exercise that requires a pragmatic approach. Research projects where on-campus lab access is deemed to be essential by the school will be prioritised and will restart in a phased manner. All other non-lab based research activities will commence in a phased restart in Phases 3 and 4, in line with latest Scottish Government advice.

Whilst our aim is to restart as much of our research activity as possible, preserving a safe working environment and ensuring a fair approach to prioritising research activities remains our priority. At the core of our decision making is the health and safety of our staff and students.

We must also coordinate the priorities of restarting research with the priorities for space utilisation for teaching or other essential non-academic activities.

**Principles relating to phased approach to restarting research**

Below in section 2, we outline the principles that specifically relate to the phased approach to restarting research on our campuses safely.

A set of overarching principles has been developed by the University to ensure that a consistent approach to restarting research on campus is achieved across the University. These set of principles will be applied locally by Schools alongside specific guidance on the steps to be taken by each school for recommencing lab-based research. We will update this information as new Scottish Government social distancing measures emerge.

We require researchers to use these principles to think about how they would restart their research activities safely.

In planning the University’s phased restart of research activity, we will follow individual research funder guidance and the Scottish Government’s route map for easing the lockdown. According to this route map:

* On-campus University laboratory research and research activities that require access to campus-based facilities or other resources (e.g. archives) will restart in Phase 2, subject to social distancing;
* All other research and University activities will commence in a phased restart in Phases 3 and 4, in line with public health measures.

1. **Overarching principles**
2. Remote working will remain the default option for those who are able to do so.
3. The health, safety & wellbeing of students and staff is very much the priority. All researchers and staff should not be on-campus if they have COVID-19 symptoms and they must adhere to the enhanced safety procedure within each lab and acknowledge their responsibilities to do this.
4. All staff and researchers will adhere to government mandated health & safety / social distancing policies whilst in the laboratory areas. These policies may adapt over time.
5. All staff and students should be cognisant of any additional health and safety recommendations, including PPE.
6. Staff and students should not feel obliged to return to campus if they feel it would be unsafe to do so, are self-isolating, in the vulnerable category etc.
7. All researchers should ensure that a work plan has been drafted and agreed with their supervisor prior to any work being undertaken in the lab.
8. In the case of research students, all supervisors should commit to identifying any training needs the student may have in order to enable the work to be carried out.
9. All researchers and supervisors will ensure that lab activities have been risk assessed prior to work commencing.
10. Room risk assessments will be reviewed and amended, as appropriate, by the relevant staff member(s) in each area.
11. All individuals entering research laboratories must adhere to the specific flow systems designed for each room, following a shared collegial approach. This could mean an altered flow of people in certain areas.
12. Booking systems will be established for rooms and equipment to ensure maximum occupancy guidelines are adhered to and transparency for all.
13. **Intended Actions**
14. Technical staff, with the help of the Health & Safety Adviser, will review risk assessments for each room and make amendments where required.
15. The School Research Degrees Leader will liaise with research students to identify availability of rooms and equipment.
16. **Proposed steps for recommencing lab-based research**

On the basis that:

* Research Students would require permission to restart their research. In the first instance, students should discuss their needs with their Director of Studies. If the Director of Studies agrees that access to labs or specialised equipment is essential for the student to progress their studies, they should seek permission from the School Research Degrees Leader. The School Research Degrees Leaders will then discuss appropriate access and timing with the School Head of Research.
* School Heads of Research should seek clarification and guidance on when labs are safe to reopen from the School Health & Safety Advisor and Head Technician (or equivalent).

1. University to issue guidance on safe distancing and PPE measures being put in place.
2. Property & Facilities to give clearance on when School Health & Safety Advisors and Head Technicians can go back on campus to put additional risk assessments in place (following University guidance above).
3. Each School to perform additional lab risk assessments;
4. Individual School lab measures are put in place;
5. Communication sent to School research community by School Head of Research outlining process to restart;
6. PIs and Directors of Studies seek permission from their School Research Degrees Leader to start their lab-based research and agree to follow additional local Health & Safety guidance (that will be implemented);
7. School Research Degrees Leaders will consult with School Heads of Research and must maintain oversight of the use of campus by students in their school.
8. Limited research starts on a phased return;
9. Local room booking implemented for the foreseeable future until the University ‘Resource Booker’ system is implemented later in the year;
10. Any conflict between research project time in labs will be prioritised and resolved by Heads of Research in the school;
11. Any conflict between lab time for Teaching & Learning and Research will be resolved by Deans.