

## Q&As from Return to Research Webinars – May 26 & 27

*The following Q&As are based ONLY on the webinar discussions; some verbatim, others expanded to include further detail. For questions not answered during the webinar because of time constraints, we have answered below. But, please, continue to visit our [COVID-19 Return to Research FAQs](#) for updates.*

Q: When can we expect to hear back about permission to start Phase 1 research?

A: Approvals for permission to start Phase I will be provided starting the end of the week (May 29). Your staff should be preparing to implement your back to work plan, but refrain from returning to campus until approval is given.

Q: Do all researchers, regardless of Faculty, need to receive a formal notification from the system?

A: Yes. Formal approval will come through the system for everyone who is returning to campus. Work that can be completely remotely from home does not require approval.

Q: How long is phase one is expected to be?

A: McMaster's entry into Phase 2 will be dependent on an assessment of the success of Phase 1, and on further directives from Public Health and the Province. Remote working remains the preferred method but managed, staggered laboratory/office access will be allowed for faculty, PhDs and graduate students (with physical/social distancing, hygiene practices, and (re)established maximum occupancies).

Q: Can you expand on details needed for outlining the plan. We are hearing we should provide floor plans, and other details but word limit is 500?

A: Please review these documents for information on submitting your plan:

<https://research.mcmaster.ca/on-campus-research/>

<https://research.mcmaster.ca/phased-increase-of-fieldwork-activity/>

Additional detail can be posted on another site such as MacDrive, with a link inserted in the plan.

Q: Are there any special instructions or suggestions for best practices regarding field work?

A: Special instructions for fieldwork can be found here: <https://research.mcmaster.ca/phased-increase-of-fieldwork-activity/> and here: <https://hr.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2020/05/Fieldwork-Research-Guidelines-COVID-19-FINAL.pdf>

Q: Would you expect that PI's should be on site/close to site to monitor workers, or work off site as much as possible?

A: Phase 1 allows for a limited number of research personnel to access campus for research that cannot be undertaken in a remote manner. This phase does not signal a return of researchers to campus for any other reason. PIs should be aware of the [hierarchy of hazard control](#) and ensure their lab is safe for their researchers teams, but if your research does not require you to be on campus, please continue to work remotely.

Q: Does Phase 1 include trained undergraduate students?

A: There will be no training done in this Phase. If undergraduates are fully trained, have experience in your lab and have been approved under your Research Activity Plan, they are able to return.

Q: Volunteers are sometimes quite trained - having worked in the lab for a few summers. If they are trained, can volunteers be in the lab? Or just employees?

A: Phase 1 allows a limited number of approved research personnel to access campus for research that cannot be done remotely. Research teams should be limited to McMaster faculty and trained graduate and undergraduate students.

Q: Do we have a plan to prevent asymptomatic COVID-19 persons from entering a building?

A: You cannot prevent an asymptomatic individual from entering a space because you have no means of knowing if they are infected. Symptomatic COVID-19 individuals should stay in hospital or at home. Employees should complete the [Research Staff Checklist](#), which includes a link to Ontario's COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool, for every day they are in the lab or in the field.

Q: Will masks be required on campus outside lab & research space? Particularly within buildings in corridors?

A: No. Medical masks are only required if physical distancing can't be achieved through other means or if there is a hazard present due to the nature of the work that requires the use of a mask. Cloth face coverings are not considered PPE. Masks are not a substitute for physical distancing. Individuals as their choice may wear non-medical masks (cloth face coverings) to protect others. A reminder that if you are not feeling well you should not be in the workplace. Please see the Provide PPE section of the [Hierarchy](#). Corridors and stairwells will have signage to guide you through the buildings in areas to which research has been approved. They will remind researchers about physical distancing and how to navigate when using washrooms and elevators.  
<https://hr.mcmaster.ca/optional-non-medical-masks-and-facing-coverings/>

Q: Where can we get masks?

A: The Campus Store has developed an online catalogue with frequently purchased items from the Scientific Stores. These products are now available to view online, with stock being updated in real-time. Please visit <https://campusstore.mcmaster.ca/stores/> to view the online catalogue. PPE items will also be available to purchase in-person through the [Scientific Stores](#), located in HSC 1G1. PPE is not a replacement for the other controls and physical distancing and good hygiene practices remain the goal for working during this phase. Consult with [Environmental and Occupational Health Support Services](#) (EOHHS) or the [FHS Safety Office](#) if you have determined that PPE is required after having evaluated the other hazard control measures. McMaster personnel undertaking research at any of our partner hospitals or at MIP are to follow the directives of that institution Please see: <https://hr.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2020/05/Research-Lab-Guidelines-COVID-19-FINAL.pdf>

Masks are the only universally applied piece of PPE required on **St. Joe's hospital sites**, and masks are available. Upon entry, all individuals are provided with 2 per day for ordinary usage. Should additional masks be required within clinics, they are available there. Should additional PPE be required, it is supplied at the department level.

Q: A lot of graduate students have card access to core facilities. Will they have open access to the buildings? Will signage be the only thing preventing them from entering a lab space?

A: Card access is granted by supervisors. Graduate students provided with access to labs or buildings will only occur with the permission of the Department. If you are unsure what access your students have been provided, you can email [axiomrep@mcmaster.ca](mailto:axiomrep@mcmaster.ca)

Q: Can you include how students are to eat while on campus: for example, where to store their lunch, how to access their lunch, where to eat their lunch?

A: Many of our lounges will be closed during Phase 1. People can eat outdoors or in common areas but will need to respect social distancing guidelines. Availability of food on campus will be very limited. Food and drink as well as personal attire (coats etc.) should not be stored in labs, therefore, limited access to office areas will be allowed for the storage of these items. People should be encouraged to bring their lunch in a lunch box to store at their desk. Similarly, if one can eat and physically separate at your desk, you may eat there. Large lounges may be open with limited seated area. Outside spaces should be utilized as well as going home for lunch. Kitchenettes should be closed.

Q: What about passing individuals in spaces given the definition of close contact vs social distancing?

A: Corridors and stairwells should only be 2-way if they are wider than 6 feet. People are asked to social distance even in corridors and stairs.

Q: Is there any specific recommendation on the number of potential individuals in a laboratory space at one time or is it best to simply focus on minimizing the number of people while following appropriate physical distancing, etc?

A: You should have minimum people in the lab at the same time and set up and stagger shifts to enable physical distancing. If the research needs more than one person please look at how space and equipment is arranged. Contact [EOHSS](#) or [FHSSO](#) if you would like some guidance on setup inquiries. [Guidance documents](#) describe reorganizing lab equipment, scheduling people to reduce numbers, assigning work spaces, etc. to ensure physical distancing and limit contact between people.

Q: Will there be hours where students will not be able to enter the hospital (eg evenings)

A: At St. Joseph's, there are no specific hours restrictions related to COVID. Just like any on-campus activity, the working alone policies remain in full force and effect. For further information, please read Returning to Research at St. Joe's found [here](#).

Q: Can you comment on approvals for labs that share common spaces.

A: As common spaces vary, researchers in these labs should work together to determine the best approach for their particular space that still respects social distancing.

Q: Where can we purchase cleaning and disinfectant supplies, particularly ethanol

A: Cleaning supplies and disinfectants can be purchased at the Scientific Stores.

Q: What about cleaning in HSC labs? will this be increased. Are the cleaning frequencies, stocking of labs with wipes/sprays, fresh air ventilation, etc. expected to be applied to labs at MUMC as well?

A: For information about cleaning at HHS sites, please refer to the Keeping Our Hospitals Clean dropdown at: <https://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/covid19/staff-physician/safety/>

Q: With central air conditioning on, how can we prevent virus potentially spreading from a room to another room?

A: The virus is not airborne and is not carried through the ventilation.

Q: How about the ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems?

A: Most labs are 100% fresh air and people should not be working in offices. Facility Services is also looking to increase air exchanges in buildings and add HEPA filters to the systems. Different buildings off campus may have different requirements. You can reach out to Facility Services for more information.

Q: There are many washrooms for one-person-usage in buildings. There is very small space inside these washrooms. How can we clean up such washrooms after they are used? The virus may be left in such small space even after one-time usage.

A: Washrooms will be cleaned x2 per day. Handwashing will continue to be essential to prevent spread

Q: If we have specialized equipment due for preventative maintenance or repair...is service technician access possible?

A: Yes, contractors are able to be on campus. There are specific guidelines within Facilities, and contractors need to have their own Covid19 policies for the safety of their employees. We would suggest this work be coordinated so that we can ensure lab personnel remain safe. There is a protocol from Facilities for contractors for maintenance which should be reviewed for this purpose.

Q: In rare cases when people need to work closer than 2M apart - they can wear full PPE. Is that acceptable?

A: Yes, that is acceptable however please consult with [Environmental and Occupational Health Support Services](#) (EOHHS) or the [FHS Safety Office](#) if you have determined that PPE is required after having evaluated the other hazard control measures. Detail on obtaining PPE, if needed, can be found at [Scientific Stores](#).

Q: Are there special procedures for entering the MUMC building via the bridges from MDCL/LSB?

A: Information on the MDCL and HHS building is pending a meeting next week. Information will be provided at that time

Q: Where will the entrance to labs in MDCL be? And where will entrance to labs in MUMC be? Will there be thermal screening at the entrances?

A: Discussions on the MDCL site are underway with HHS. MDCL and MUMC will potentially be considered one building, with MDCL requiring screening and MUMC protocols for wearing of masks

Q: Will the Mayberry Histology facility be open to drop off FFPE specimens for processing to make slides?

A: Yes. Histology is open.

Q: How can labs in HSC access autoclaving/glasswashing facility in MDCL?

A: Anyone needing access to equipment in MDCL should contact Gerry Wright and/or Carl Richards depending upon where the equipment is located. Access to MDCL will be arranged accordingly.

Q: In MUMC it is almost impossible to use the stairwells because the doors from the stairwells to exit at each floor are locked. Is there any way to make these unlocked so we can use the stairwells?

A: Stairwells 85 and 88 are open in MUMC

Q: What is the coordination between MIP and MARC?

A: MIP will work with each of the MARC tenants as they develop their plan. MIP representatives have been speaking with MARC administrators to help with the social distancing requirements in labs.

Q: How will the management of elevator que-up be managed?

A: There will be signage at each elevator on campus for information

Q: As an incoming graduate student, how should I prepare for the Fall semester?

A: It is best to speak with your Supervisor who will be able to provide specific instructions related to research activity.

#### **CAF**

- CAF plans are different from the main lab work plans. Online form for research plans should include all experiments.
- You do not need to include information on CAF in the return to work plan but there is a check box for those expecting to need support from the facility, which should be contacted directly.
- CAF will have online booking for every room.
- Facilities will have masks at entrances
- As services will be very limited, the PI is required to do all monitoring, procedures and record keeping
- Each core facility in FHS, including CAF, will have rules of engagement to ensure personal protection. All users will be expected to follow the rules related to the core facilities they plan to use.

#### **St. Joseph's Healthcare:**

- Q: Will there be hours where students will not be able to enter the hospital (eg evenings)
- A: At St. Joseph's, there are no specific hours restrictions related to COVID. Just like any on-campus activity, the working alone policies remain in full force and effect. For further information, please see read Returning to Research at St. Joe's found [here](#).
- Returning to Research at St. Joe's information can be found [here](#).
- More to come from Katie
- For those wishing updates on St. Joe's Hospital directives: All COVID-19 updates from St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton can be found here: <https://www.stjoes.ca/coronavirus>

- Masks are the only universally applied piece of PPE required on St. Joe's hospital sites, and masks are available. Upon entry, all individuals are provided with 2 per day for ordinary usage. Should additional masks be required within clinics, they are available there. Should additional PPE be required, it is supplied at the department level.
- Researcher Opt-In to SJHH COVID-19 Emails (incl. Virtual Town Hall invitations)
- St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton sends regular email updates via staff email (@stjoes.ca / @stjosham.on.ca).
- Researchers who work at St. Joe's, but are employed directly by McMaster University, and who only have access to an @mcmaster.ca email may use this form to opt-in to receiving SJHH email updates. This will include Town Hall invitation emails and the COVID-19 email updates from SJHH leadership.  
research.stjoes.ca/mailings

**Hamilton Health Sciences:**

- For details on Hamilton Health Sciences approach to staff screening and PPE, along with the current number of COVID-19 positive patients at our sites, please see our website: <https://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/covid19>
- For information about cleaning at HHS sites, please refer to the **Keeping Our Hospitals Clean** dropdown at: <https://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/covid19/staff-physician/safety/>