



## University of Pittsburgh COVID-19 Standards and Guidelines: Fieldwork and Research Travel

### I. Purpose

This document details the University of Pittsburgh's (University) rules for fieldwork and research travel. These Standards and Guidelines are applied to each of the University's COVID-19 operational postures (High Risk, Elevated Risk and Guarded Risk). More information on these operational postures and their gating criteria can be accessed at the following website: <https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/operational-postures>.

The Standards and Guidelines outlined below are subject to change as deemed necessary by the Senior Vice Chancellor for Research recommendation to the University's Senior Leadership Team and approval of the Chancellor. Communication about the University's current Standards and Guidelines will be announced and posted on the following website: <https://coronavirus.pitt.edu/>.

The University will always operate in compliance with federal, state and local health standards and restrictions, including [Pennsylvania Department of Health guidance](#). The University reserves the right to implement additional health standards and restrictions that reflect the needs of the University and the health, safety and well-being of its community.

### II. Scope

The Standards and Guidelines below apply to the entire University, including all University members and campuses.

### III. Definitions

- A. Fieldwork:** Fieldwork is research in social sciences, natural sciences or the humanities that is conducted away from the home institution of the scholar. Disciplines in which fieldwork may be a critical element of the scholar's work include, but are not limited to, anthropology, archeology, astronomy, ecology, epidemiology, geology, history, language studies, linguistics, literary studies, oceanography, psychology, sociology, social work and many areas of zoology or botany. Some fieldwork is in remote rural or wilderness locations, some is in U.S. or international urban areas (including work at libraries and archives), and some is remote work in national or international scientific facilities with health and safety guidelines comparable to those of the University of Pittsburgh.

- B. Home Campus:** The University campus at which a University Member is primarily assigned for work or study.
- C. Research personnel:** Research personnel are faculty, staff, undergraduate students, graduate students and postdoctoral trainees with permission to engage in fieldwork research activities within guidelines specified by the University and in consultation with their faculty supervisor/PI, institute director, division chief, department chair or appropriate designee, and dean or associate dean for research
- D. Research travel:** Research travel is travel off campus, whether local, regional, national or international, taken in connection with research being conducted at the University and may involve fieldwork or collaboration with other scholars, including trainees. Research travel does not include travel for the dissemination of research results at seminars or conferences, which is addressed in the [University's Safe Mobility Standards and Guidelines](#).

#### **IV. Fieldwork engagement guidelines**

Those who will undertake fieldwork must plan before their departure for COVID-related safety at off-campus locations. Individual researchers, faculty leaders or Principal Investigators (PIs) overseeing a group of researchers are required to develop a fieldwork protocol prior to starting the fieldwork. The protocol must define actions the field team will take should local conditions shift to a more restrictive posture. This protocol must be approved by dean, director, regional campus president or their designee and shared with all field research personnel. Individual fieldwork leaders are accountable for the compliance of their research team.

##### **A. Local Conditions Govern**

The safety of fieldwork depends heavily on local conditions where the fieldwork is taking place, and fieldwork outside the researcher's Home Campus county should only be initiated if local conditions correspond to what would be permitted in a Guarded Risk posture for at the individual's Home Campus. Cases where fieldwork is done in isolation (e.g., in a forest) can be considered regardless of local conditions on a case-by-case basis. Additional factors to consider:

- Housing and support of researchers in the field should follow applicable local standards or those equivalent to the relevant Home Campus, choosing whichever standards will provide best protection to researchers and subjects.
- In addition to using the University's [Daily COVID-19 Health Check app](#), field research personnel should maintain a personal log of daily entry times and exit times from off-campus locations and any close contacts (less than 6 feet for more than 15 minutes) that may be checked weekly by faculty supervisor/PI, institute director, division chief, department chair, dean or appropriate designee.
- Researchers must follow all applicable Health Standards and Guidelines, including the use of face coverings, personal protective equipment (PPE) and physical distance

appropriate to the work involved (interior, exterior, solitary, group). Researchers should follow any local requirements that exceed the University's requirements.

Local conditions, whether domestic or international, may change after travel is initiated. In the event of substantive changes in local conditions while traveling abroad, as identified by Global Operations Support in the University Center for International Studies (changes that would significantly increase the risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, to researchers or to a participant in experimental social and human science (ESHS) research), field protocols must be amended to reduce the risk or returned to an essential personnel and online/remote work mode within a three-day period (including weekends).

If local conditions attain the equivalent of the University's High Risk Posture, researchers, whether on domestic or international travel, must return to their Home Campus if advised to do so by the University of Pittsburgh (e.g. Pitt Travel Management or Global Operations Support).

## **B. Responsibilities of Researchers in the Field**

Investigators are expected to conduct the fieldwork with the fewest persons needed to complete the activity while assuring safety of all members of the research team. Time in the field should be limited to that needed for critical activities, and must take into consideration local, domestic and/or international restrictions at field sites.

It is the responsibility of the individual fieldwork leader overseeing the team (i.e., the faculty leader or PI) to remain in frequent communication with team members conducting fieldwork. This responsibility includes requiring team members to check in routinely even if the team members are in different locations.

Some fieldwork involves off campus ESHS, which requires special consideration for both researchers and participants because of the possible transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from a researcher to a participant and vice versa, so safety, ethics and building access/density considerations are needed for *both* groups.

If individuals become ill in the field they must seek immediate treatment and contact their faculty supervisor/PI, institute director, division chief, department chair or appropriate designee immediately. If COVID-19 is diagnosed or suspected when abroad, individuals should contact the ISOS Emergency Line for medical assistance and follow up with Pitt Global Operations Support as needed. Registration with International SOS is required for faculty, postdoctoral fellows, students and staff prior to departing for University-approved international travel. More information is available here: <https://globaloperations.pitt.edu/trip-registration/>

## **V. Related Authorities, Guidance and Resources**

[PittGlobal: Global Operations Support](#)  
[University Center for International Studies](#)  
[University's COVID-19 Standards and Guidelines: Safe Mobility](#)

## **VI. Contact Information and Public Accessibility**

This document is posted on the University of Pittsburgh COVID-19 Standards and Guidelines website and can be found at: <https://www.policy.pitt.edu/university-policies-and-procedures/covid-19-standards-and-guidelines>. For questions related to this document, please contact: [researchcovid@pitt.edu](mailto:researchcovid@pitt.edu).