

March 30, 2021

To: Deans, Chairs, Directors, Faculty, Researchers, Staff, Graduate Students
From: Scott Brandt, Vice Chancellor for Research
Re: Opening up offices and lab/studio spaces for research purposes | expanded research resumption protocol

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to announce that effective immediately, we are shifting from a *by-approval-only* process for the use of offices and labs/studios for research purposes to an *open-by-default* model for research purposes, with guidelines for how to continue to prioritize health and well-being in these spaces.

It has been one year since our on-site research activities had to be ramped down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you all for maintaining a healthy and safe environment while continuing your research activities despite the very challenging conditions.

As you are likely aware, we are finally beginning to make real headway against COVID-19: new infections are down locally, regionally, and nationally, increasing numbers of people are being vaccinated daily with more than 25% receiving at least one dose nationwide, and Santa Cruz County has recently moved down into the Red Tier and will be moving to Orange this week. These are promising trends. At this time, based in part on the outstanding compliance we have had to date we believe it is possible to further open up access to our research spaces.

This expansion of research operations represents a portion of the next phase of our overall resumption of on-site campus operations. Additional guidance from campus leadership on plans for expansion of other aspects of our campus operations will be forthcoming.

The guidelines below must be followed rigorously. The high level of compliance to date gives us confidence that this is the right action to take at this time. As always, while we hope the positive trends will continue, these guidelines are subject to change if conditions change.

These guidelines apply only to buildings that have been cleared for use. If you are not sure if yours has been cleared, please check with your Assistant Dean. (Assistant Deans, please coordinate with [OES—Emergency Management](#) to schedule building assessments as needed to get buildings cleared for use. Communication should be directed to worksite@ucsc.edu.)

See below for specific guidelines for each type of situation:

General Guidelines for UCSC Research Space Usage:

- Maintain 6 feet or more separation at all times except in passing

- To allow people to move around, we expect no more than about 1 person per 100 sq. ft. in all shared spaces, but exact densities will depend on how the space is used, layout of the space, equipment and furnishings in the space, etc.
- In determining occupancy, those responsible for each space should take a holistic perspective on how each space is utilized and specifically consider:
 1. Whether there are choke points where people will end up in close proximity for more than a brief moment in passing
 2. Whether there are activities taking place that will impact ability to maintain separation, e.g., use of instruments that are set up in close proximity to each other
- Training, partner activities, etc., may take place, however consideration of distancing requirements and duration of activities should be considered when plans are developed and if these activities cannot be performed while maintaining the required separation, a [Training Risk Mitigation Plan](#) must be prepared, approved and followed

Additionally, the [campus guidelines](#) everyone is already practicing remain in place and continue to be in effect while on campus for any purpose, including research. These include:

- Fill out the daily Qualtrics [Symptom Check Questionnaire](#) if you will be on site at any UCSC controlled facility
- Wear a face covering in public or in any shared space
- Maintain 6 feet of distance between yourself and others
- Avoid any gathering in groups
- Stay home if you are experiencing any symptoms
- Get tested for COVID-19 according to [campus guidance](#)
- Tell your supervisor if you feel sick
- Follow contact tracing directions, protocols and guidelines
- Wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer regularly
- Wipe down and sanitize shared equipment and high-touch surfaces and areas
- Adhere to maximum occupancy guidelines and (where they still exist) directional signs
- Ensure that you have taken the [COVID-19 online Training](#)

Note: The guidance outlined above applies even if you are partially or fully vaccinated

Single-occupancy offices

Single-occupancy offices may be used for research purposes in any building that has been cleared for use. Face coverings are not required while working alone inside the office with a closed door, but must be worn at all times while on university property outside of the office. If anyone else enters the office, it should be treated as a shared office (see below).

Shared offices, labs, studios and other research spaces

Shared offices, labs, studios, and other shared research spaces may be used solo or concurrently by two or more people for research purposes in any building that has been cleared for use, subject to the following additional constraints:

- Face coverings must be worn at all times, even when others are not present
- When others are present, 6 feet separation must be maintained at all times except in passing
- Occupancy should be limited to no more than about 1 person per 100 sq. ft., depending on how the space is used, layout of the space, equipment and furnishings in the space, etc.
- Shared equipment and high-touch surfaces and areas must be wiped down between users

Meetings

- Scheduled meetings should continue to be held virtually until further notice
- Small impromptu meetings may be held in non-public shared spaces (i.e., labs and studios) as long as all safety requirements are strictly maintained
- Outdoor meetings are permitted, with the same conditions
- At this time, no meetings or gatherings of any kind should be held in interior public spaces (e.g., lounges or conference rooms).

Building committees need no longer track the numbers of individuals working in each space, nor review lab utilization plans. However, we do ask that building committees share any special building-specific considerations with occupants.



No further approvals are needed to ramp up to this new level of activity. As always, the campus may require a change in the status of the ramp up/down process with very short notice based on campus, community, and county public health assessments.

For now, vaccination status cannot be used as a criterion for research facility access, staffing levels, or to change masking and physical distancing requirements. Do not ask anyone else whether they have been or intend to be vaccinated.

Thank you all again for your care in the well-being of our entire community. We are very pleased to bring you this good news and will keep you all updated as the situation progresses.