



Returning to our work stations: Stages II-IV

As we continue our staggered approach to reopening the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, these subsequent stages are meant to ensure the health and safety of its employees and clients.

This document outlines the next three stages, culminating in having all our employees back to their duty stations at a date to be determined.

This plan has been created and updated in keeping with guidance from the Arkansas Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the UA Board of Trustees, along with guidance from administrators across the Division of Agriculture.

COVID-19 and its effects have evolved rapidly and our understanding of the behavior of this virus also changes rapidly. The Division's plans will be adjusted according to directives and recommendations from ADH, CDC, or any directives issued by the Arkansas governor. This plan can change with updated directives and recommendations from ADH, CDC or the Arkansas governor. The plan also takes into account individuals who require reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Administration will continually assess the situation and this plan, and its stages, and may take action to adjust the plan to fit the circumstances.

With every stage of this return-to-the-office plan, we want employees to be mindful of their health and that of their co-workers.

STAGE I

[Stage I](#) began May 21, 2020.

STAGE II

Employees

Stage II began June 22, 2020. In Stage II, supervisors may require certain employees to return to the office. These employees would be in addition to those employees already designated as required in Stage I. Employees can also voluntarily return to the office, upon approval, during this stage. All employees must continue to follow the [self-assessment](#) before returning to the office.

Employees who are required to return to work during this stage and who are considered [vulnerable](#) by the CDC, can contact the Office of Inclusion, Access and Compliance for further guidance if they have concerns.

Office staffing will be staggered or scheduled in shifts, as needed, and to comply with social distancing recommendations and prevent community spread by reducing the number of employees concentrated in office spaces.

Work Related Travel

No international travel. Interstate travel is upon approval of the vice president, senior associate vice presidents, or associate vice presidents. Faculty and staff may conduct in-state work-related travel. Follow CDC and ADH guidance on whether self-quarantine is required.

Supervisors

In addition to those employees who have already returned as required, supervisors may bring other employees into the office as they deem necessary and/or those that volunteer, using staggered starts or rotating shifts to ensure social distancing. Supervisors must notify facilities management when buildings will be occupied to ensure proper cleaning and disinfecting of common areas.

Workspaces

The same sanitizing, social distancing and face mask requirements set out in Stage I will continue to be valid.

Clients/Visitors

The visitor policy set out in Stage I will be valid for Stage II as well. Small-group gatherings of 10 or fewer will be allowed without requiring prior approval, provided there is adequate space to ensure social distancing. Masks will be worn.

Administration

Administration will continue to assess the situation and determine whether the organization can progress to the next stage or should regress to the previous stage.

Research Activities

For research activities, essential, critical and time sensitive research activities can be conducted in Stage II. Stage II research for on-campus faculty members corresponds to Level 3 of the campus [Research Continuity](#) plan.

- a. Definitions:
 - i. Essential Research Activity: *Essential research activities include basic animal and plant care, maintenance of cell lines, and maintenance of equipment or building infrastructure that could not be shut down during a restriction on research.*
 - ii. Critical Research Activity: *Critical research activities are identified and prioritized at the Unit level, to be those activities with the greatest time and research productivity constraints. These can include but are not limited to, seasonal data collection such as field and agricultural work, experiments close to completion, or projects whose continued restriction or deferral would lead to catastrophic delay or loss of research results and subsequent success.*
 - iii. Time Sensitive Research Activity: *Time sensitive research activities are defined at the Unit level, to be those activities with elevated, but not critical, time and research productivity constraints. These can include activities for graduate students and postdoctoral associates close to completing their degree/term of appointment and research for completion of grants with nearing end dates.*
- b. For PIs with laboratories on the Fayetteville campus, specific guidance from campus administration should be incorporated into the Unit's risk assessment

plan including the development of a research plan identifying tasks and key personnel, detailing specific tasks, and establishing a work schedule for key personnel.

c. **Key Preventative Measures for Laboratory Work (Same as Stage I):**

Maintain a 6-foot distance from other personnel when possible.

- Consider working in shifts to minimize personnel contact while ensuring lab/personal safety.
- Wearing a mask is mandatory if more than one individual is present in the lab. Avoid touching your face.
- Frequent and thorough hand washing is mandatory.
- Maintain the buddy system with the above caveats for lab work that involves potentially hazardous materials, equipment, or conditions.

d. **Laboratory Cleaning and Disinfection (same as Stage I):**

- Laboratories should be disinfected daily if in use.
- Any area that is soiled or dirty should be cleaned with detergent and water before disinfection.
- Use appropriate disinfectant on high-contact surfaces (doorknobs, light switches, tables, chairs, pens, computer keyboards, remotes, equipment lids, doors, on/off switches, knobs, handles, sinks, benchtops/counters, desks and cabinets).
- Consideration should be given to using plastic wrap on sensitive surfaces to disinfect. Plastic should be discarded after each use.
- Ensure all areas are covered thoroughly with the disinfecting solution and remain wet throughout the necessary contact time (follow manufacturer recommendation). Allow items to air dry before use.
- All sanitizing material should be disposed of once disinfection is complete and the individual performing the sanitation should wash their hands.
- For PIs conducting critical research requiring off-site travel, continue to follow the [Best Practices for Field Research](#).

STAGE III

Employees

Stage III does not represent a mandatory return to the office for all employees. **On April 12, 2021**, faculty and staff will return to their offices only if:

- 1) The supervisor determines the employee should return to work.
- 2) The employee's return is guided by a unit or building plan that has been reviewed and approved by a senior associate vice president or designee.
- 3) The employee has had the ability to be fully vaccinated (i.e. those provided the opportunity to be vaccinated and those fully vaccinated).

Employees who are expected by their supervisor to return, must comply at this time. If there is a need to continue to work remotely, the employee needs to contact the Office of Inclusion, Access and Compliance to determine if a reasonable accommodation can be made pursuant to the Americans With Disabilities Act. The request will be addressed through the normal accommodation process on a case-by-case basis.

All returning employees must continue to follow the [self-assessment](#) daily before reporting to the office. If you have any symptoms listed in the self-assessment, do not report to work.

Exposure to COVID-19 positive cases or positive COVID-19 cases need reported immediately [using this form](#).

Work-Related Travel

Faculty and staff may conduct in-state work-related travel. For employees who are not fully vaccinated, guidance from stage II limiting travel in vehicles to 2 employees with masks still applies. If only fully vaccinated people travel together, more than 2 employees can travel in the vehicle and masks are not required in the vehicle. Vehicle fresh air should be maximized (e.g. ventilation not be set on recirculation) in all cases. Fully vaccinated employees may travel with stakeholders at their own discretion.

Faculty and staff may also conduct out of state travel with Unit Head approval. This type of travel is subject to current ADH and CDC guidelines. Current CDC guidelines require non-vaccinated individuals to observe a 7-day quarantine upon return if a negative COVID test is taken 3-5 days upon return and a 10-day quarantine if no test is taken. Fully vaccinated individuals are not required to quarantine after travel.

All International work-related travel must be approved by the vice president, senior associate vice presidents, or associate vice presidents. No travel will be approved to destinations with a [travel advisory level](#) of 3 or 4 due to COVID-19. All CDC guidance needs to be followed (e.g., testing prior to travel, quarantine and testing upon return). As the CDC guidance evolve, requirements for international travel will change. Check the latest [CDC guidance](#).

Supervisors

Supervisors will determine which employees will be returning to their offices and work with their Unit Head to develop a stage III plan for the facility.

Supervisors should review available space to ensure social distancing for returning workers, including those with private/protected offices.

Supervisors may use or maintain staggered or rotating office schedules as needed. Masks are required at all times for employees who do not have private/protected offices, unless all the employees are fully vaccinated.

Workspaces

The same sanitizing, social distancing and face mask requirements set out in Stage I will continue to be valid. Masks are not required in private/protected offices, but are required in all building common areas. If fully vaccinated employees share a work space, masks are not required while at their work space. In-person meetings require all participants to wear a mask.

Meetings

Meetings and events are allowed with proper social distancing and masks. Meetings with more than 20 people onsite must have prior approval of the Sr. Associate VP.

Clients/Visitors

The visitor policy set out in Stage I will be valid for Stage III as well.

Masks are required for all Division of Agriculture events and locations. As a science-based organization, the Division of Agriculture is firm in maintaining the mask protocol on its properties and at its sponsored events.

Administration

Administration will continue to assess the situation and determine whether the organization can progress to the next stage or should regress to the previous stage.

Research Activities

All types of research activities may resume. Stage III research for on-campus faculty members corresponds to Level 3 of the campus [Research Continuity](#) plan.

For PIs with laboratories on the Fayetteville campus, specific guidance from campus administration needs to be followed if that guidance is more restrictive than that presented here.

Key Preventative Measures for Laboratory Work (New for Stage III):

- Consider working in shifts to minimize personnel contact while ensuring lab/personal safety.
- Wearing a mask is mandatory in the laboratory at all times.
- Masks are required in all public areas.
- Frequent and thorough hand washing is highly recommended.
- Maintain the buddy system with the above caveats for lab work that involves potentially hazardous materials, equipment, or condition.

Laboratory Cleaning and Disinfection (New for Stage III, recommendations on disinfection practices from Stage I still apply):

- Laboratories should be cleaned and disinfected as appropriate but no less than once a week.
- For PIs conducting critical research requiring off-site travel, continue to follow the [Best Practices for Field Research](#). This document will be revised to reflect practices.

STAGE IV

All employees will be expected to return to their work stations on **June 1, 2021**, unless you have been granted an ADA reasonable accommodation request or granted a formal telecommuting agreement with your department head and filed with the appropriate department (See [PMGS 17-02](#) or [PMGS 17-03](#)). The circumstances of the working conditions will be determined.

Resource Links:

[CDC](#)

[ADH](#)

[State Department](#)