



Provost Plan for Return to Academic Research Activities * (Updated 5/24/2021)

ETSU is lifting its emergency COVID-19 policy on face coverings that was put into place last year. In continued accordance with CDC guidelines, students, faculty, staff and visitors to the university who have been fully vaccinated (two weeks past their final vaccine dose) are not required to wear face coverings, and also are not required to observe physical distancing. As noted by the CDC, persons who have not been fully vaccinated should continue wearing face coverings and following physical distancing guidelines.

For laboratory-based research, all restrictions have been removed for vaccinated individuals. Unvaccinated individuals should still mask and practice social distancing. It is recommended that staff should wash hands or use a hand sanitizer at regular intervals. Faculty and staff should respect those who choose to continue to wear a mask, and also respect those who ask you to wear a mask in their presence whether you are vaccinated or not.

The conditions of re-engagement of human subject research requiring face-to-face interaction:

1. ETSU is lifting its emergency COVID-19 policy on face coverings that was put into place last year. In continued accordance with CDC guidelines, students, faculty, staff and visitors to the university who have been fully vaccinated (two weeks past their final vaccine dose) are not required to wear face coverings, and also are not required to observe physical distancing. As noted by the CDC, persons who have not been fully vaccinated should continue wearing face coverings and following physical distancing guidelines.
2. ETSU will allow in-person interactions with human research subjects with the approval from the Vice Provost for Research and Sponsored Programs.
3. Implement human research subject [pre-screening](#) regarding COVID-19 symptoms or exposure and only schedule in-person procedures with subjects that are presumed COVID-19 negative.
4. Investigators should provide research subjects with a copy of the [ETSU Safety Guidelines for Research](#) that describes safety precautions in place to protect the research community prior to obtaining consent.
5. PPE use is required only when the investigator and subject are not fully vaccinated or if required by the research site, e.g. clinical settings. Investigators should supply any research subject with a mask if requested.
6. Ensure hand sanitizer and/or hand washing facilities are readily available.
7. Establish disinfecting and sterilization protocols for any equipment or study materials to be used during research visits.
8. Social distancing (6 ft) should be observed during the interaction if the research subject and investigator are not fully vaccinated.
9. Schedule research visits such that appointments do not overlap with other research subjects and disinfect in between each appointment.
10. The VPR will review all new studies requiring in-person interactions submitted the IRB to assess the COVID-19 related safety issues and ensure compliance with these guidelines.
11. Please submit the [Request to Initiate or Resume Form](#) to the Vice Provost for Research (duncanw@etsu.edu) for permission to re-start your study.

Other issues to consider:

Student or faculty research projects requiring access to local schools, Ballad Health, or other external clinics may face additional restrictions, including a limit on the number of ETSU personnel allowed to enter the campus or clinic. The Department or College may need to prioritize projects that require such access.