**Procedures for a Research Ramp-Down**



[**RESEARCH COMPLIANCE & SAFETY COMMITTEE**](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/preparedness/campus-life-during-covid-19/research-compliance-and-safety/)

The goal of this committee is to harness content-specific expertise and establish a plan for in-person research ramp-up at Teachers College with different phases that permit occupancy to be scaled depending on the scenario, personnel, and study site. Each phase should be adaptable as appropriate for the circumstances pertaining to specific research groups and risk levels.



The suspension of all research activities on the Teachers College (TC) campus in March of 2020 was an emergency action in response to the looming COVID-19 pandemic. Although this action was taken in the best interests of health and safety for our TC Community, the urgency of the Research Ramp-Down at that time meant that labs and research groups had to abandon their work environments and materials in earnest.

We all hope to avoid any repetition of the events of March 2020. However, it is important to remain aware that a research ramp-down may be required for other emergencies in the future.

This document provides an outline of likely considerations and tasks for any research group on campus, in the event of a research ramp-down. We strongly encourage researchers to work with their staff and department in advance of any such action, to determine policies, procedures and best practices for ramping-down research should this become necessary. **Please adapt this template to meet your needs.**

**Research Ramp-Down Checklist**

| **PREPARING** | Completed? | Notes  (indicate “not applicable,” if appropriate) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Identify all non-critical activities to be ramped-down, curtailed, suspended or delayed in the event of an emergency. |  |  |
| Designate personnel able to safely perform essential activities. |  |  |
| Ensure that individuals who perform critical tasks are adequately trained. |  |  |
| Establish a contact list including public safety offices. |  |  |
| Cross‐train research staff so they are equipped in the event of an emergency to maintain critical equipment or operations. |  |  |
| Establish a hygiene policy for equipment, office space, and other lab-related activities. |  |  |
| Purchase additional software licenses and hardware as needed for remote operations. [Consult with TC IT for support and training](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/tcit/). |  |  |
| Other recommendations from the [Job Safety Assessment](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/preparedness/campus-life-during-covid-19/research-compliance-and-safety/policies--procedures/job-safety-assessment--risk-analysis/) (for research lab and spaces). |  |  |
| Other recommendations from individual research leads. |  |  |

| **COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY** | Completed? | Notes  (indicate “not applicable,” if appropriate) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Create a contact list including all lab personnel, principal investigator, (if applicable) lab [Research Safety Monitor](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/media/administration/preparedness/Research-Lab-or-Center-Safety-Monitor-Agreement-Final.pdf) (and second, if applicable), department administrators and supports, [College EHS](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/environmentalhealth/) and [HR offices](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/human-resources/), [Public Safety](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/publicsafety/), etc. |  |  |
| Ensure that the contact list is posted somewhere accessible both locally and remotely accessible by all members of the research group (e.g., on research lab door and TC Google docs). |  |  |
| Test your phone tree or email group to facilitate emergency communication among researchers and staff. |  |  |
| Identify computing resources required to work remotely. |  |  |
| Engage IT support team members and determine any special steps required to make remote work available and secure. |  |  |
| Follow the [Institutional Review Board’s Data Security Plan](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/institutional-review-board/how-to-submit/guides--resources/data-sharing-requests--encryption/) (available through MyTC/Mentor IRB/Documentation) |  |  |
| Back up and secure critical data. |  |  |

| **RESEARCH AND MATERIALS** | Completed? | Notes  (indicate “not applicable,” if appropriate) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [Terminate unattended research operations](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/institutional-review-board/how-to-submit/terminating-a-protocol/), especially those involving in-person study activities. |  |  |
| Consolidate storage of valuable items within storage units that have backup systems. |  |  |
| [Store all existing data securely](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/institutional-review-board/how-to-submit/guides--resources/submitting-a-protocol-for-existing-data/) in locked offices, locked drawers, or other secure location. |  |  |
| Establish a plan to support specialized equipment such as electroencephalogram (EEG) devices or muscle functional magnetic resonance imaging (MfMRI). |  |  |
| Ensure that all items, files, physical data sets are labeled appropriately. |  |  |
| Do not order any new research materials unless needed for minimal critical functions. |  |  |
| Cancel orders for non-essential research materials if not yet shipped. |  |  |
| Contact the mail office to notify them of any expected incoming shipments and let them know where these should be delivered if personnel are unavailable. |  |  |
| Secure biological samples, chemicals, or any hazardous materials in long-term storage. Contact [TC’s Environmental Health and Safety Office](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/environmentalhealth/) (EHS) if you need guidance. |  |  |

| **EQUIPMENT** | Completed? | Notes  (indicate “not applicable,” if appropriate) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Check that the refrigerator, freezer, and other doors are tightly closed. |  |  |
| Turn off appliances, computers, specialized equipment and other equipment. Unplug all equipment, if possible. |  |  |
| Elevate equipment, materials and supplies, off of the floor to protect against flooding from broken pipes. |  |  |
| Inspect all equipment requiring uninterrupted power for electricity. Communicate with the Facilities Office supplied through an Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) and by emergency power (emergency generator). |  |  |
| Shut down and unplug sensitive electric equipment. |  |  |

| **SECURITY** | Completed? | Notes  (indicate “not applicable,” if appropriate) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Lock all entrances to the lab. Ensure key personnel who will support critical functions have appropriate access. |  |  |
| Ensure windows are closed. |  |  |
| Secure lab notebooks and other data. |  |  |
| Take laptops home. |  |  |
| Communicate with the Information Technology on how to best secure electronic devices for remote work. |  |  |

| **SPACE HYGIENE MEASURES** | Completed? | Notes  (indicate “not applicable,” if appropriate) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Clean and disinfect areas of the research space per [EHS guidelines](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/environmentalhealth/) following [Job Safety Assessment (JSA)](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/preparedness/campus-life-during-covid-19/research-compliance-and-safety/policies--procedures/job-safety-assessment--risk-analysis/). |  |  |
| Wash any dishes, containers, or other items that should be stored and put them away when dry. |  |  |
| Discard any unwanted, non-hazardous chemicals down the drain. If there is any question about whether a chemical is non-hazardous, [contact EHS](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/environmentalhealth/). |  |  |
| Request waste pickup from [Office of Facilities Management](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/facilities/), as needed. |  |  |
| Other recommendations from the [Job Safety Assessment](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/preparedness/campus-life-during-covid-19/research-compliance-and-safety/policies--procedures/job-safety-assessment--risk-analysis/) (for research lab and spaces). |  |  |
| Other recommendations from individual research leads. |  |  |

**Important abbreviations and contacts mentioned in this document:**

* [ESH – Environmental Health and Safety](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/environmentalhealth/)
* [HR – Human Resources](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/human-resources/)
* [JSA – Job Safety Assessment](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/preparedness/campus-life-during-covid-19/research-compliance-and-safety/policies--procedures/job-safety-assessment--risk-analysis/)
* [IRB – Institutional Review Board](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/institutional-review-board/)
* [Office of Public Safety](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/publicsafety/)
* [TCIT – Teachers College Information Technology](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/tcit/)

**Please contact** [**IRB@tc.edu**](mailto:IRB@tc.edu) **with questions about a safe research ramp-down.**