



Physical Distancing Guidelines For On Campus Research

As outlined in the GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 PROTECTION FOR ON-CAMPUS RESEARCH, principal investigators and other supervisors bringing their research teams, staff, or authorized personnel into their research spaces must have in-place for their assigned research spaces a physical distancing plan (also called a social distancing plan) to fulfill a public health need to reduce the risk COVID-19 exposure.

A physical distancing plan must be based on what is reasonably achievable to implement in a research area, whether it is a lab, office, studio, or other support space, including spaces shared with other research groups. There are recognized guidelines such as the 6-foot distancing or the 150 square foot per person or reduce normal occupancy by 50%. However, given the size and complexity of research spaces, the variety of research tasks, and the number of people needed to be present to conduct essential research, principal investigators and area supervisors are responsible for identifying and documenting in their plan what is reasonable for their specific research site and identifying a maximum number of research personnel allowed in that area at any given time.

This set point will be reviewed and only approved if it meets the recognized standard of care known as As Low As Reasonably Achievable (ALARA). There are several strategies available to minimize the time spent on campus; coordinate research tasks to keep personnel separated in a research environment; or use other controls such as shields or separation barriers. The mandatory wearing of face coverings is part of a strategic plan, but that will not be enough unless the plan can identify that the above concerns are adequately addressed. The following are general examples to help formulate a set point for the maximum number of personnel in a research area:

Physical Distance Planning Based on Room Size

Table with 4 columns: Research Location, Size of Area (gross square footage), Research Tasks, and Maximum Allowable Personnel. It contains three rows detailing different research environments and their corresponding personnel limits.



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|--------------|------|---|--------------|
| Office space | <200 | Private office or designated shared office | 1 |
| Office space | >200 | Mostly stationary, limited shared equipment | 1 per 100 sf |

Additional Guidelines

Include, but not limited to:

- Practice physical distancing at all times, including during work, breaks and in vehicles.
- Plan for research staff and students to work remotely when possible.
- Stagger work schedules, breaks, and lunch times to reduce the number of people in the room.
- Hold meetings electronically rather than in person.
- Identify locations where workers are forced to stand together and adjust practices to allow for physical distancing.
- Encourage employees to avoid large gatherings and practice physical distancing during non-work hours.
- Create specific instructions for deliveries to your worksites.
- Establish a drop-off location and all the procedures to be used at the drop-off point.
- Create signage to easily identify drop-off points. Include contact information on the signs to assist with questions leading up to delivery and upon arrival.
- Create procedures to disinfect deliveries, such as wiping down boxes and delivered items.
- The use of a physical barriers, such as a partition, to reduce the spread of COVID-19 is an engineering control that may be applicable for use in your research location. Installing physical barriers requires a review by EH&S and facilities services. Before physical barriers will be considered, the PI must demonstrate that physical distancing is not possible in the space. For more information on physical barrier installation, contact the [EH&S Office](#).