**Starting/ Restarting Off-campus Research and Research-related activities:**

**Researcher Checklist (C19) (Version 4\_September 2021)**

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| --- | --- |
| **Study title:** |  |
| **Researcher:** |  |
| **Location of research:** |  |

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way research and research-related activities (including knowledge exchange and public engagement) are undertaken. The global nature of COVID-19 means that the restrictions and opportunities for in-person and off-campus research varies in different countries. Researchers must consult and adhere to the local public health guidance.

The University continues to follow Scottish Government advice as applies to the sector and the procedures for undertaking research and knowledge exchange with human participants will continue to reflect these principles. Any research, including in person research activities with human participants, must be in harmony with the respective stages of the [Scottish Government Route Map](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-framework-decision-making-scotlands-route-map-through-out-crisis/), Scottish Government [Coronavirus (COVID-19) Protection Levels](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-protection-levels/), and [Scottish Government Guidance for Universitie](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-universities-colleges-and-student-accommodation-providers/)s or similar national Public Health guidelines in other countries.

In Scotland, as we move beyond Level 0, in-person research and fieldwork has become more viable. Nevertheless, caution is still required and researchers are encouraged to continue to consider carefully whether the research outcomes can be met satisfactorily through alternative digital methods. If no viable or equivalent method to in-person research and/or fieldwork is available, or there is another justifiable reason[[1]](#footnote-1) to use these methods, then researchers must demonstrate that they are taking all reasonable steps to protect participants, researchers and other facility users by (as a minimum) adhering to baseline mitigation measures. This Off-Campus Research Researcher Checklist (C-19) (V4) has been updated to provide a mechanism whereby researchers can demonstrate engagement in these reasonable steps. By completing the checklist, researchers can identify, document and mitigate risks to safety of participants (where applicable) and researchers. This does **not replace, but supplements** other approval processes including the TRA1-C19 ([link](https://www.ed.ac.uk/staff/business-travel/travel-safety/risk-assessments-travel-plan)), Study and Work Away risk assessment for research students ([link](https://www.ed.ac.uk/global/go-abroad/travel-updates-and-guidance/risk-assessment)), and working abroad for staff ([link](https://www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/working-abroad/guidance-for-managers/approval-process)) prior to the research starting/re-starting.

In CAHSS this is a **mandatory supplementary form** to be included with the ethics application form/amendment for review by Research Ethics Committees (this may be uploaded with PIS and consent forms for online forms). Please note that completion of this form should not replace full answers to the ethics application form. Other Colleges please check local requirements.

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| **PART A: Study Viability** | **Yes** | **No** | **N/A** | **Provide brief detail** |
| Funder has assessed and agreed to restart (if applicable) |  |  |  |  |
| Alternative digital approaches to this research have been considered, but these have been judged unviable to satisfactorily achieve the research outcomes, or there is a justifiable reason to use in-person and/or fieldwork methods. |  |  |  |  |
| All members of the research team, and any other involved staff are willing and able to participate in the research |  |  |  |  |
| The researchers have considered a ‘Plan B’ for the proposed research in the event of an increase in restrictions that will make ‘Plan A’ unviable. |  |  |  |  |
| Proposed location, start date and duration of research activity |  | | | |

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| **PART B: Safety** | **Yes** | **No** | **N/A** | **Provide brief detail** |
| The COVID related safety risks inherent in undertaking the trip/activity do not **substantially exceed** the background risk level to which the individual researcher is likely to be exposed to were they to remain in their study or work base. |  |  |  |  |
| If the research activity involves spending time in a third party building (e.g., library/ archive/ café), then the managers of that space have appropriate COVID-19 mitigation procedures in place. |  |  |  |  |
| Researchers have been strongly encouraged to be vaccinated, where available (please follow [link](https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/covid-19/staff/pay-employment-policies/vaccination) to further guidance) |  |  |  |  |
| Researchers have been strongly encouraged to take a lateral flow test within 24-hours prior to meeting research participants, and meet participants only if they have not experienced COVID-19-related symptoms, and are not required to self-isolate due to close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual.  Researchers in other countries should take all available steps to ensure they do not have COVID-19 prior to engaging in the research activity (e.g., no COVID-19-related symptoms, no close contact with infected individual, negative test result) |  |  |  |  |

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| Research participants will be advised via the Participant Information Sheet that they (or a representative) should contact the researcher prior to meeting if they have experienced any COVID-19 related symptoms, or are required to self-isolate due to close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual. The researcher should ‘check in’ with the participant 24 hours prior to meeting to confirm. |  |  |  |  |
| During the research interactions, risk of exposure to COVID-19 for participants and researchers will be mitigated in line with the most up to date Scottish Government guidance (i.e., good ventilation, good hand hygiene and surface cleaning, keep a safe distance, and continued requirement for face coverings in indoor public places) (or as per local guidance – please provide details and links). We encourage researchers to use the Protect Scotland app (see [link](https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/covid-19/health-safety-travel/management-of-covid-19-cases#uoe_featurebox_e95e5fd59e4c17e069a10ee92e9d6a041)). |  |  |  |  |
| Will this research specifically aim to recruit participants in a group deemed at higher risk of severe illness from Covid-19 (see [link](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-general-advice))? If “Yes”, please detail why this research is required, and any additional ethical and safety safeguards that will be in place to provide enhanced protection for these participants. |  |  |  |  |
| If the research is undertaken in an indoor space, then the researcher should confirm if the managers of that space will collect details for the purpose of [NHS Test and Protect](https://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/test-and-protect) (or local equivalent). If there is no requirement by the managers of that space to collect such information, then the researcher should request and store the participant’s name and contact details for 21 days after the research interaction for the purpose of Test and Protect. If the researcher subsequently tests positive for COVID-19 then they will be able to provide information regarding the research interaction to contact tracers. This information is in addition to the data collected as part of the research study, and should be stored separately from the research data (local arrangements TBC). The participant should be informed of this requirement in the PIS (see below). |  |  |  |  |
| The researcher will follow [standard staff procedures](https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/covid-19/health-safety-travel/covid-19-reporting) for the reporting of any COVID-related symptoms. This includes the reporting of [both self-isolation and a positive test for COVID](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=sAafLmkWiUWHiRCgaTTcYS3X-U6He45ItZmgGtwObS9UMFNPQUVNWTlNUjYzVU5HRTBGWElYSTI4WSQlQCN0PWcu).  As per standard protocols, staff members will be contacted by Health and Safety in the event of reporting a positive test. Researchers will be expected to provide Health and Safety with details of research activities undertaken. |  |  |  |  |
| The researcher will ensure the participant has the researcher’s contact details, which can be shared with NHS Test and Protect (or local equivalent) if the participant experiences any COVID-related symptoms following the interaction. |  |  |  |  |
| The researcher will monitor the local COVID-19 related guidance, and adjust or suspend the research in line with these requirements. If the guidance is unclear, then researchers should discuss the changing guidance with colleagues (including, if appropriate, Health and Safety) and document the decision making. This may require further adjustments to risk assessments and insurance approvals, and updating the School given the fluidity of the situation. |  |  |  |  |
| Have updates been made to the study protocol/other study documents (including Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms) to incorporate additional risk and safety measures required? (see Appendix 1 below for suggested text) |  |  |  |  |

CI/PI Signature (*delete as appropriate)*: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Useful resources to support decision making:**

Support for [Early Career Researchers](https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/EdinburghResearchOffice/SitePages/Support-for-early-career-researchers.aspx) on ERO website

Support for Research during Covid Hub ([SERCH](https://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/research-ke/serch-research-hub))

**Appendix 1: Additional standardised text to be added to PIS and Consent Forms for COVID-19 ethical amendment/ new ethics application for research projects involving interaction with human participants**

N.B. this is suggested text, and language may be modified to suit the participant population. This information should be read in conjunction with the relevant Research Checklist C19.

**Participant Information Sheet**

***Risks of participation (COVID-19) (insert after other section on risks of participation)***

We have taken specific steps to minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19 during the study by adhering to the most up to date Scottish Government [guidance](https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/) (or local equivalent – add detail) These measures include good hand hygiene and surface cleaning, good ventilation, keeping a safe distance, and continued requirement for face coverings in indoor public places. Further, you will only interact with researchers *who in the last 24 hours have had a recent negative lateral flow test* (edit as appropriate), have not experienced COVID-19-related symptoms, and are not required to self-isolate due to close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual.

However, even with these control measures, there remains some additional risk of exposure to COVID-19 from participating in this study, but we do not assess that this risk is higher than engaging in other day-to-day activities.

***Understanding your risk from exposure to COVID-19***

It is not possible to eliminate all risk of exposure to COVID-19, and so it is important for you to understand and consider your own personal risk in the unlikely event of exposure.

You may be more likely to be at high-risk from infection if you have previously been advised to shield from the virus, if you have certain health conditions (including heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease, diabetes, or neurological disease), or if you are taking immunosuppressant medication or steroids. The risks of serious consequences from COVID-19 are also known to increase on average with age. To understand more about potential risk factors, please visit [this NHS webpage](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-general-advice).

***Making an informed choice***

It is important that you make an informed choice whether or not to take part in this research, considering your potential risk from the virus, and the measures in place to reduce the risk of exposure. It is important that you feel that you have all of the information required regarding these risks, and can consider that in light of your personal circumstances (e.g. health, caring responsibilities). You should have had a chance to reflect on these risks, and discuss them with a researcher (researchers to determine if required), prior to agreeing to participate in the study.

***Storing contact details (on campus)***

If the research requires you to be a visitor in our University Buildings, then for the purpose of [NHS Test and Protect](https://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/test-and-protect) we will request your name and contact details and store these for 21 days after the research interaction. If during this 21 day period, the researcher(s) has a positive COVID-19 test then your contact details will be shared with NHS contact tracers who will then decide if they will contact you. These details will not be used for any other purpose or passed to any other third parties. The period of 21 days will ensure full cover of the typical incubation period and additional time during which people may be infectious, to allow for testing and contact tracing. This information is in addition to the data collected as part of the research study, will be stored separately from the research data (researcher add in local arrangements), shared with NHS Test and Protect if requested, and the legal basis for collecting these data is substantial public interest. Further details of the University’s Data Protection policies and contacts for the Data Protection Officer can be found at: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/data-protection/notice>.

***Storing contact details (off campus)***

If the research requires you to be in contact with the research team in an indoor space out with our University campus, then you may be required to provide your name and contact details to the managers of that space. If there is no requirement by the managers of that space to provide such information, then for the purpose of [NHS Test and Protect](https://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/test-and-protect) (or local equivalent) we will request and store your name and contact details for 21 days after the research interaction. If during this 21 day period, the researcher(s) has a positive COVID-19 test then, if requested, your contact details will be shared with NHS contact tracers, who may then contact you directly. The period of 21 days will ensure full cover of the typical incubation period and additional time during which people may be infectious. This information relating to your name and contact details is in addition to the data collected as part of the research study, will be stored separately from the research data (researcher add in local arrangements), shared with NHS Test and Protect if requested, and the legal basis for collecting these data is substantial public interest.

***What if I am unwell prior to the research interaction?***

If you feel unwell, experience COVID-19 related symptoms, have a positive lateral flow or PCR test, or have been required to self-isolated due to contact with a COVID-19 positive individual, then please contact the researcher (Name and telephone), and we will postpone or cancel the research interaction.

***What if I become unwell after the research interaction?***

If you experience COVID-19 related symptoms, and/or have a positive COVID-19 test following the research interaction, please follow the Scottish Government guidance (or local equivalent).

**Consent Form**

**Consent statement (COVID-19) – *additional***

I am aware that participating in this study at the current time may carry risks in relation to potential exposure to COVID-19, and I understand the steps that have been taken in relation to minimising the risks of exposure and transmission.

I have not experienced any COVID-19 related symptoms, or been in contact with a known COVID-19 positive individual in the 14 days prior to this research interaction.

1. There may be a range of justifiable reasons but these reasons must always be considered in the context of the risk to benefits ratio, and avoiding substantially increasing the background risk level. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)