**CAHSS Guidance for Research Related Activities involving Human Participants or Human Observation during Covid**

**T**his document aims to support researchers and Schools during Covid as they consider some of the issues around restarting essential research related activities, in particular for research activity involving other humans. While we anticipate it will not be possible to restart the majority of such activity for some time, given current restrictions, the guidance should help in determining the conditions under which such research might be justified and feasible, and will help guide decisions as and when restrictions are lifted in coming months.

The University continues to follow Scottish Government advice as applies to the sector and the possibilities and pace of change for undertaking research and knowledge exchange with human participants will continue to reflect these principles. Any research, including face to face 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/), 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.

At present research related activities are expected to continue to be undertaken using digital methods whenever possible. CAHSS CRO has developed this guidance for reference when digital methods are not possible, and researchers need to seek authorisation for essential research and knowledge exchange activities involving human participants. However for the foreseeable future such research methods may only be considered in exceptional cases.

Some considerations in the guidance may become less relevant depending on the status of Public Health priorities. Any funder specific advice should continue to be referenced by researchers and authorisers in the context of decision making for any externally funded research

**Definitions for the Purposes of Restarting Research Guidance**

The guidance considerations are relevant to all research related activities - including knowledge exchange activities - that take place both within the UK and overseas, and by students and staff and third parties who we have associated with the delivery of our research in these locations.

On campus research is considered to include any activity taking place within any space within University of Edinburgh buildings.

Off campus research includes research activities undertaken in locations outside of University Buildings

The same definitions for on campus and off campus research apply to researchers based overseas.

Travel for research purposes is considered to be a journey away from the campus or the usual office or study base and can be of any distance or duration.

**Revisiting or Securing Ethical Opinion**

Any researcher who proposes to restart research involving humans and/or travel for research purposes will need to follow the primary authorisation pathway set out by their local School research office or graduate school for research ethical review and amendment as well as any other linked authorisation routes that may be in place in terms of health and safety. Mandatory forms have been developed to enable authorisation for off campus research and mandatory School protocols will also be in place to govern authorisation of any on campus research. Appendix 1 describes in more detail the ethical considerations that would apply to the restarting of any research related activity, including knowledge exchange and impact.

**Health and Safety Responsibilities and Duty of Care**

Researchers will need to understand School processes that connect ethical review to current health and safety considerations. Prior to the pandemic, decisions on the safety of undertaking research may have been informed by travel and field work risk assessments, or local risk assessments for specialised spaces. However, there are now mandatory risk assessments and local protocols to follow in respect of any research involving travel and humans and/or use of University premises and these are described more fully in Appendix 2.

**Additional Research Protocols for Research Teams**

The current context has introduced a range of heightened considerations for researchers that will complicate the implementation protocols for any study. We have described some of these considerations in Appendix 3 in order to support researchers through some of the additional steps.

**Impact of Restarting Research on Collaborations, Third Parties and Resource Poor Settings**

Collaborative projects may experience particular challenges in restarting research in the current context and the responsibilities for duty of care may be more complicated. Further information is included in Appendix 4 in relation to considerations for third parties and resource-poor settings.