

Principles and Guidance for the Limited Resumption of Human Participant and/or Field SRC Activity

Table of Contents

<u>Overview</u>	3
<u>Phased-In Approach to Mitigate Risk</u>	3
<u>Considerations Regarding the Limited Resumption of Human Participant SRC Activity</u>	5
<u>Process to Request Approval for the Resumption of Human Participant SRC Activity</u>	6
<i><u>Virtual or Online Human Participant SRC Activity</u></i>	6
<i><u>Human Participant SRC Activity Where 2-metre Physical Distancing Can Be Maintained</u></i>	7
<i><u>Human Participant SRC Activity Where 2-metre Physical Distancing Is Not Possible</u></i>	7
<u>Roles and Responsibilities: Approval Process for the Resumption of Human Participant SRC Activity</u>	8
<i><u>Overview of Responsibilities</u></i>	8
<u>Recommended Procedures</u>	9
<i><u>Prior to Interaction with Study Participants</u></i>	9
<i><u>Restrictions</u></i>	9
<i><u>Informed Consent</u></i>	10
<i><u>Screening</u></i>	10
<i><u>Preparing Study Participants for the Visit</u></i>	11
<i><u>During the Visit</u></i>	12
<i><u>Best Practices</u></i>	12
<i><u>Sample Collection, Handling and Processing</u></i>	13
<i><u>Best Practices When 2-metre Physical Distancing Cannot Be Maintained</u></i>	13
<i><u>Researcher and Human Participant Controls</u></i>	13
<i><u>After the Study Visit</u></i>	14
<i><u>Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations</u></i>	14
<i><u>Additional Cleaning Considerations</u></i>	15
<u>Recommended Procedures for Safely Resuming Field SRC Activities</u>	15
1. <i><u>Prior to Field SRC Activity</u></i>	15
2. <i><u>Travelling to the Field Location</u></i>	16
3. <i><u>During Field Research</u></i>	17
<u>Appendix</u>	18
<u>FAQs</u>	19

Overview

Ryerson University's resumption of SRC activities follows a cautious, coordinated, phased-in process that is first and foremost guided by a commitment to the safety and security of our faculty, students, staff, research participants, and research infrastructure and facilities.

Ryerson abides by public health directives and takes into advisement provincial reopening guidelines. Under all circumstances, if someone is experiencing symptoms associated with cold/flu or COVID-19, they should not come to campus and/or access SRC spaces.

Pursuant to public health directives, Ryerson faculty and personnel should continue SRC activities remotely if at all possible. Off-campus SRC activity should continue as long as there is negligible or little impact on the efficiency or quality of SRC activities and/or outcomes, and no sacrifice or compromise to ethical standards or confidentiality.

Effective Monday, October 18, all individuals (including human-participants) participating in in-person SRC activities either on or off-campus must be fully vaccinated or have received an approved exemption from the university in accordance with [Ryerson University's current vaccination protocols](#).

Faculty members and other supervisors should consider equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and equal access in their planning for on-site SRC activity resumption. Students or employees should not be required to work on campus if those individuals have concerns about their safety or are experiencing other COVID-19-related barriers.

All human participant research to be carried out on campus, in Ryerson-leased spaces or in the field, must be approved by the relevant Chair/Director, Dean, the Research Ethics Board (REB) and the Vice-President, Research and Innovation (VPRI), and must conform to any rules and regulations of building management in leased spaces (which may be at a different stage of their reopening process). SRC activity taking place within Indigenous, northern or rural communities, which may have different health protocols and needs, requires confirmation of approval from the community to continue the SRC activity. Approvals may be modified or rescinded at any time in response to directives from public health authorities or local situations. Faculty members should be prepared to quickly shut down their SRC facilities and activities to comply with these directives should they arise.

Phased-In Approach to Mitigate Risk

Ryerson will employ a prioritized, phased-in approach to resuming human participant SRC activities.

During this **Limited Resumption of Human Participant SRC Activity** phase, we are restricting capacity and density of normal operating personnel to maintain safe physical distancing standards. We are ramping up activities in an incremental manner to maintain and troubleshoot processes in the face of practical realities and in coordination with other units within the university. Therefore, the Limited Resumption of Human Participant SRC Activity phase will focus on priority SRC activities where:

1. There are adequate personnel (students, staff) available to safely, and in compliance with public health directives, conduct the human participant SRC activity.

2. They are COVID-19-related SRC activities or they are REB-approved studies for which there is a demonstrated need to sustain human participant SRC activities, such as any of the following criteria:
 - Prevention of material and data loss (e.g., longitudinal studies).
 - Human participant SRC activities that cannot be effectively, efficiently and compliantly accomplished virtually and when there is a demonstrated impact to student or project timelines. Examples of time-sensitive SRC activities include students' thesis-related research (particularly when a defence is impending), student or postdoctoral fellow publication revisions, sponsored projects (industry, philanthropic, or non-Tri-Council grants with tight milestones or deliverables and no possibility for extension), projects using time-sensitive materials or models, or projects/studies that are time-sensitive or seasonally dependent.

Human participant SRC activity will fall into one of three categories. Researchers wishing to restart SRC activity with human participants should first determine what type of SRC activity they will be conducting:

1. Virtual participation,
2. SRC activity respecting 2-metre physical distancing, or
3. SRC activity where 2-metre physical distancing is not possible.

The restart approval process and the procedural controls that will need to be followed will depend upon the type of SRC activity being conducted.

[Ontario's public health guidance](#) strongly recommends that persons 70 years of age and older, those who are immunocompromised, and those who have chronic medical conditions stay home and avoid all but essential outings in public places. It is especially important for research involving vulnerable populations to move to virtual participation. In the absence of a strong clinical imperative, in-person research with vulnerable populations is not allowed at this time.

[Travel for university-sanctioned activities](#) remains suspended, but it may be reasonable for REB-approved, in-person research to resume off campus if, in addition to these guidelines for in-person research with human participants:

- The field SRC activities can be conducted safely while complying with physical distancing and hygiene protocols as required by Toronto Public Health, the Province of Ontario or relevant provincial governments, Indigenous communities, and the Government of Canada. The following should be considered:
 - Transportation plan (location will be a key factor in deliberations).
 - Accommodation/lodging plan.
 - Accommodations and food preparation if the research is to occur at a field station.
 - The requirements of some protocols to ensure the safety of multiple people working together, or the safety considerations of potentially working alone.
 - The possibility of injury in the field.
- The field SRC activities are time-sensitive in nature or part of a longitudinal study.
- Travel is within Canada and not to vulnerable, isolated or remote communities, without the express formal consent of an appropriate authority within these communities.
- There is a mitigation plan to return safely from the field if any member of the research team becomes ill or injured.

- Approvals as required are in place, as with normal [field SRC activities](#).

Future phases of the resumption of SRC activities will be communicated as they are developed and as operational and public health circumstances permit.

Considerations Regarding the Limited Resumption of Human Participant SRC Activity

Serious consideration needs to be given to the current public health emergency related to COVID-19 when contemplating a return to in-person human participant SRC activity. Faculty members and supervisors are responsible for developing plans for the resumption of human participant SRC activity that demonstrate how risk is mitigated and ensure compliance with the federal guidelines on ethical conduct of research with human participants. The guidelines below provide details of process considerations for human participant SRC activity and steps that can be taken to reduce COVID-19-related risks.

These guidelines build on [previously issued guidelines](#), and the overall guiding principles remain the same. Additional considerations are outlined given the unique aspects of human participant SRC activity (e.g., setting time boundaries, seeking participant consent for the possibility of needing to break confidentiality for the purpose of contact tracing, additional personal protective equipment (PPE) for continuous close contact interactions, and consideration of risk to study participants, in particular those from high-risk groups).

Individuals participating in in-person SRC activities either on or off-campus must be fully vaccinated or have received an approved exemption from the university in accordance with [Ryerson University's current vaccination protocols](#).

When feasible, modifications should be made to eliminate in-person interactions and conduct the SRC activity virtually (e.g., conduct interviews or focus groups using video conferencing or phone calls, online surveys, etc.). REB protocols, amendments and other amendments to ongoing projects/studies should clearly outline all strategies being implemented to eliminate or reduce face-to-face interactions such as:

- Is it possible for some or all study visits to be completed via telephone or virtually? For example, is it possible to screen and to confirm an individual's consent prior to their coming into the lab? If the consent process will happen in person, consider a contactless method (i.e., not having to use pen and paper) by which to obtain consent, such as sending the form electronically and having the individual use their personal device.
- If participants are required to complete forms or questionnaires, can these be distributed and completed ahead of time? If they have to be completed in person, can they be completed electronically, ideally with the participant using their personal device, to minimize the use of paper and pens? If contactless methods can't be employed, develop procedures that mandate hand sanitizer be used before and after touching common devices.
- Is it possible for some study visits or visit activities to be completed at a local facility that the participant will already be attending (e.g., clinic, lab, service or imaging centre)? For example, can the procedures occur in the context of needed care and/or through interaction with only the care or service providers the participant would already be seeing regardless of their participation in the SRC activity?

- Is it possible to consider monitoring experiments and other SRC-related activities using (non-recording) cameras, if possible, to create additional physical separation?

Before the resumption of any human participant SRC activity, each principal investigator should develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) specific to their own activities. These SOPs should include operations, equipment, procedures, the type and location of the SRC activity, as well as the risk of exposure due to geographical location, facility types (e.g., on campus, hospitals, clinics, schools, community, home), and other COVID-19 considerations. The [Safe Human Participant / Field SRC Plan Form](#) can help to guide the development of these SOPs, which will follow the same guidelines for general lab reopening and contain additional information, such as:

- Study procedures that may prevent safe distancing or require modified use of PPE by participants. For example, if there is a need to take oxygen measurements for energetics, this will preclude a participant from wearing a surgical face mask. Document safety precautions and procedures that can be put in place to mitigate risk of infection for participants or research team members.
- Consideration of the study population and whether the SRC activity's aims/questions could be sufficiently addressed without recruiting those at greatest risk of COVID-19 infection. It is recognized that some studies/projects require working with specific populations.
- Consideration of what adjustments can be made to procedures and locations when study participants may not be able to wear masks. Consideration should be given to not only mitigate risk for study team members interacting with the participant at the SRC activity space, but also for the entire time that the participant will be on campus.
- A plan for cleaning and disinfecting spaces, including determining what additional supplies may be needed, such as PPE, cleaning supplies and waste management.

Process to Request Approval for the Resumption of Human Participant SRC Activity

The process to request approval varies depending on the nature of the SRC activity. Ryerson Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) has developed a [risk assessment template](#) that can assist you in developing your safety plans.

If you have questions about which process to follow or which documents to complete, please contact Research Ethics who will assist in determining which approval process to follow. Your Chair/Director and Associate Dean, Research are also useful resources who can help determine the appropriate approval pathway and to address potential concerns prior to submitting your Safe Human Participant SRC Plan.

Virtual or Online Human Participant SRC Activity

- For new human participant studies that can be conducted virtually or online, follow the [online ethics process](#) for seeking REB approval of your study.
- For studies that already have REB approval, please follow the [REB amendment process](#) to revise your data collection protocol to allow for virtual data collection, if this was not part of the original REB-approved plan.

- Once REB approval has been obtained, you may begin virtual human participant SRC activity.

Human Participant SRC Activity Where 2-metre Physical Distancing Can Be Maintained

There are four levels of approval: (1) Chair/Director, (2) Dean (or designate), (3) REB, and (4) final approval by the Vice-President, Research and Innovation (VPRI). You will be notified of final approval by the Office of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation (OVPRI).

1. Complete the [Safe Human Participant / Field SRC Plan Form](#) and obtain Chair/Director approval. Once the Chair/Director gives their approval, they will send the Form to your Dean (or their designate) for approval. These approvals are conditional upon REB approval.
2. Once Chair and Dean approvals have been obtained, attach the Safe Human Participant / Field SRC Plan Form to your ethics protocol(s) and submit via the [Online Ethics Portal](#) for REB review and approval.
3. Faculty must also submit either a [Request for Limited Return to On-Campus SRC Activity Google form](#) if their human participant SRC activity is to take place on Ryerson's campus, or a [Request for Limited Return to Off-Campus / Field SRC Activity Google form](#) if their human participant SRC activity is to take place outside of Ryerson's campus*.
4. Once REB has approved the protocol, please submit the [Safe Human Participant / Field SRC Plan Form](#) and your REB approval letter to VPRI for final approval.
5. You will be notified of final approval by the Office of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation (OVPRI).
6. Begin Human Participant SRC Activity following the safety plan and developed SOPs.

Human Participant SRC Activity Where 2-metre Physical Distancing Is Not Possible

There are five levels of approval: (1) Chair/Director, (2) Dean (or designate), (3) EHS, (4) REB, and (5) final approval by the VPRI. You will be notified of final approval by the OVPRI.

1. Complete the [Safe Human Participant / Field SRC Plan Form](#) and obtain Chair/Director approval. Once the Chair/Director gives their approval, they will send the Form to your Dean (or their designate) for approval. These approvals are conditional upon Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) and REB approval.
2. Once Chair and Dean approvals have been received, they will send the Form to EHS. EHS will review it with a particular focus on the hierarchy of controls and safety protocols proposed.
3. Once EHS has approved it, they will return the Form to you. You should then attach the Safe Human Participant / Field SRC Plan Form to your ethics protocol(s) and submit via the [Online Ethics Portal](#) for REB review and approval.
4. Faculty must also submit either a [Request for Limited Return to On-Campus SRC Activity Google form](#) if their human participant SRC activity is to take place on Ryerson's campus, or a [Request for Limited Return to Off-Campus / Field SRC Activity Google form](#) if their human participant SRC activity is to take place outside of Ryerson's campus*.
5. Once REB has approved the protocol, please submit the [Safe Human Participant / Field SRC Plan Form](#) and your REB approval letter submit it to the OVPRI for final approval.

6. You will be notified of final approval by the OVPRI.
7. Begin Human Participant SRC Activity following the safety plan and developed SOPs.

* If travel is required for either of the above, you must complete the additional travel-related SOP sections on the [Safe Human Participant / Field SRC Plan Form](#). Please see the section **Recommended Procedures for Safely Resuming Field SRC Activities**.

Note: If your human participant SRC activity is taking place at an off-campus location and is subject to that location's REB process, complete that REB process first and then follow the process outlined above. If REB approval from a different institution is required and sought, the review of your request at Ryerson will be expedited.

Roles and Responsibilities: Approval Process for the Resumption of Human Participant SRC Activity

Overview of Responsibilities

Chair/Director

- As appropriate, consult with the PI prior to submitting a Safe SRC Plan to determine the likelihood of approval, appropriate approval pathway, or to pre-emptively troubleshoot issues or concerns with the proposed plan.
- Review the [Safe Human Participant / Field SRC Plan Form](#), particularly focusing on their prior knowledge of the proposed SRC activities as well as local knowledge of the proposed SRC space and other local building occupants or constraints.
- If approved, send to the Dean or their designate.
- If not approved, provide comments to the PI.

Dean/Designate

- As appropriate, consult with the PI prior to submitting a Safe SRC Plan to determine the likelihood of approval, appropriate approval pathway, or to pre-emptively troubleshoot issues or concerns with the proposed plan.
- Review the [Safe Human Participant / Field SRC Plan Form](#) considering faculty-level priorities as well as building-level space and density constraints.
- If approved, if 2-metre physical distancing can be maintained, send approved form to PI.
- If approved and physical distancing cannot be maintained, send to EHS.
- If not approved, provide comments to the PI.

EHS (if required)

- As appropriate, consult with the PI prior to submitting a Safe SRC Plan to determine safety and mitigation options for their proposed SRC activities.
- Review requests where 2-metre physical distancing cannot be maintained to ensure appropriate safety measures are in place.
- If approved, send the approved form to the PI.
- If not approved, provide comments to the PI.

Research Ethics/REB

- Consult with and help guide the PI in determining the appropriate approval process depending on the nature of the SRC activity.
- The PI attaches the [Safe Human Participant / Field SRC Plan Form](#) to their ethics protocol(s) and submits it to the REB via the [Online Ethics Portal](#) for REB review and approval.
- Review to ensure that what is proposed abides by Ryerson policies and by the [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans \(TCPS 2018\)](#).
- If approved, the PI submits the [Safe Human Participant / Field SRC Plan Form](#) and the REB approval letter to the OVPRI for final approval.
- If not approved, the REB provides comments to the PI.

VPRI

- Ensure that the process follows and aligns with the guidelines, criteria and overarching institutional coordination.
- If approved, provide approval to the PI.
- If not approved, provide comments to the PI.

Recommended Procedures

Community safety must be balanced with the immediate benefits and long-term value of the human participant SRC activities. Participant and staff safety are always the top priority.

Due to the rapidly changing nature of the situation, recommended procedures and policies may change after the implementation of this guidance. In the event of major changes to the recommendations, investigators will be notified of the changes, and a response that they are being complied with will be required within 48 hours.

Update the REB regarding any changes that occur via an amendment. Also, if there are any adverse or unanticipated events that occur during the course of your SRC activity (e.g., contact tracing is required, breach of privacy, reported illness of SRC staff or participants, community concerns, etc.) through the course of your SRC activity, update the REB within 48 hours by submitting an [adverse events report](#).

Prior to Interaction with Study Participants

Ensure that all study participants participating in the study are fully vaccinated or have received an approved exemption from the university in accordance with [Ryerson University's current vaccination protocols](#).

Restrictions

- **Restrict study visits to essential individuals.**
 - Study visits should be restricted to only those individuals who are essential. This would include the study participant and legal guardians, legally authorized representatives, family members, friends, or others (e.g., translators and interpreters) who must be present with the participant for health care, research-related decisions, or to provide support to the individual.
- **Limit the number of people present in an area at any given time.**

- Create a schedule for study team members and use separate rooms for study visits.
- Ensure that circulation paths are clearly identified to maintain 2-metre physical distancing.
- Minimize the use of waiting rooms and, if a waiting space is used, ensure physical distancing provisions are in place.
- It may be helpful to have a disinfection area outside the study space where participants and team members can wash their hands, obtain PPE (if required) and leave their outside belongings.
- Consider whether it is possible to move study procedures to conference rooms or classrooms that have greater airflow and greater feasibility of maintaining physical distance. For example, computers could be transported on carts to alternative testing spaces.
- Only those individuals who are essential to complete the study procedures should be present: study personnel, study participants and, if necessary, those who may be there to assist the study participant.
- Consider using video conversations with individuals in different rooms/locations when possible to limit face-to-face interactions.
- Consider approaches to train personnel on study procedures virtually, if possible. If this is not possible, researchers who require training on specific study procedures may only be present at study visits when training is required for them to perform their job. If this happens, the study team needs to be conscious of room occupancy and to maintain a safe environment for all.
- **Use a schedule to ensure sufficient time between visits.**
 - Plan for sufficient time between visits of different participants to ensure proper sanitation of any materials or equipment as well as sufficient turnover of air where the study visit is being performed. Groups sharing spaces for human participant research should have a schedule to enable this to be coordinated across groups and studies. Proper cleaning should occur after each visit.

Informed Consent

Consent forms need to be amended to include acknowledgement of the possibility that a participant could come into contact with someone with COVID-19 during their research pathway and to allow for contact tracing. Specifically, consent forms need to be amended with the following statements:

- This study involves in-person interactions that require direct contact where 2-metre physical distancing may not be possible. Your travel to the study location may also involve increased exposure to other people.
- Because of these factors, there is some risk that you may be exposed to the COVID-19 virus during study participation. Researchers will take precautions in accordance with provincial, federal, Ryerson University and other public health guidelines to minimize the risk of transmission of COVID-19. We are required by the Public Health Unit to retain on file your email address or phone number to share with them for contact tracing purposes in the unlikely event that you come into contact with someone with COVID-19 during your research activities. This information will be stored separately from any other data collected in this study and will be deleted/destroyed after 30 days.

Screening

- **Study Team**

All study team members who will be present in the lab space and/or who may come in contact with study participants should [self-screen](#) prior to coming to the lab each day.

- **Study Participants**

Study participants should be contacted and screened on the day before the visit and immediately upon arrival using the [Ontario Ministry of Health Patient Screening Guidance](#) or the [City of Toronto Screening Tool](#). Any participants who do not feel well will have their visit cancelled or rescheduled.

If the participant is unable to be reached the day before, the visit screening should be attempted the morning of the study visit in addition to the required screening immediately upon arrival. Participants must be symptom free to participate in “in-person” SRC activity.

Preparing Study Participants for the Visit

- **Communicate with participants.**

Research teams should communicate to participants before their study visit, and depending on the level of information to be shared, consider developing a simple informational sheet that can be provided to all participants, outlining the following:

- Vaccination requirements and documentation.
- How the study team is making the environment as safe as possible when participants come in for their visit and what to expect. Describe any special procedures for participants (e.g., parking, building access/which entry to use or location change).
- Instruct participants to bring water and a snack, if applicable.
- Advise participants that they should follow [public health guidelines](#) for safe practices when leaving their home.
- Inform participants of transportation options. It is recommended that a risk-based approach be used when considering the best method of transportation. Consider whether the participants can safely walk to the lab or other SRC data collection location, or if they have their own transportation. If this is possible, consider checking if the SRC data collection location can offer free parking. Next, consider a ridesharing company or taxi and whether the fee will be reimbursed. Public transportation is strongly discouraged. Participants can be provided additional information by having them visit [Ryerson’s plan your commute](#) web page.

- **Adapt cultural practices.**

If cultural practices such as smudging are a part of the in-person protocols for your SRC activity, work with the community to adapt the practice to allow participants to take appropriate precautions while engaging in cultural practices.

- **Prepare the study visit area.**

- Clean and disinfect the study lab/visit space. This may include tables, chairs, door handles, equipment such as VR headsets, wearable systems, and other non-disposable equipment or items used during the study visit. See section 3.4 Cleaning and Disinfecting found near the end of the document.
- Space used for study visits should be cleaned and disinfected daily in between each participant study visit and after all visits are completed for the day.

- Designate experiment/data collection areas and areas for guardians/other visitors and their belongings.
- Prepare the space before the participant arrives (e.g., propping open doors, calibrating all equipment, etc.).
- Have PPE available for study participants, including face masks and hand sanitizer.
- In spaces where physical distancing cannot be maintained through the strategies outlined above, and if researchers determine additional engineering controls such as the installation of plexiglass is required, please contact the Facilities Management and Development (FMD) Help Desk by email at fixit@ryerson.ca or call 416-970-5091. FMD will work with departments on an assessment and installation strategy and will prioritize public-facing spaces first.
- **Training.**
 - All essential personnel should [review proper PPE use](#) prior to interaction with participants and have completed all university training modules related to returning to restarting SRC activity with human participants.

During the Visit

Study visits will be planned in such a way as to emphasize participant, staff and trainee safety and make sure that all participants feel comfortable. An early part of the communication with participants should give them an overview of policies and practices, and give them the opportunity to ask questions so that they feel comfortable coming on-site.

Study-specific activities may require specific customizations to this plan, but the following principles will govern in-person human participant SRC activity:

- Maintain appropriate physical distancing whenever possible.
- Maintain the highest standard of cleanliness, including regularly disinfecting high-touch surfaces, cleaning exam/procedure/study rooms between each participant, and good hand hygiene.
- Use appropriate PPE and follow screening procedures.

Best Practices

- Designate an entrance and route of travel to limit participant access in buildings. Hallways and lobbies should be blocked off whenever possible and practical. If possible, designate a bathroom for participant use.
- Keep a [daily record](#) (preferably in electronic format) of who is in the space and the time that they are there for contact tracing purposes.
- Study staff should be prepared when meeting the study participant by wearing PPE and having all materials, equipment, and other items ready for the study visit. Study staff should wash or sanitize their hands just before the study visit begins, and throughout the study visit (i.e., both before and after making contact with a study participant or piece of equipment or surfaces in vicinity of the participant).
- Screen all study participants and family members, caretakers, legal representatives, etc. before they enter the lab/building.
- Provide all study participants with PPE to wear during the visit in accordance with university guidelines.

- If and when possible, study staff should maintain 2-metre physical distancing from the participant. It is encouraged to use a plexiglass barrier to separate study staff and the participant when possible. When possible, and if participants are able, advise them to announce their movements in the space to avoid accidental breaching of the 2-metre distance.
- If study protocol prevents safe distancing, additional PPE measures should be taken (e.g., a face mask, and/or a face shield or goggles). Ensure that PPE is being used by all for the duration of the study visit. Also consider if it is possible to have the study team member and participant face in opposite directions.
- Disinfect rooms between each participant. Regularly disinfect additional high-touch surfaces, including door handles and light switches.
- Staff who need to take a break to eat or drink should do so at least 2 metres away from others. They should notify in advance all other individuals present in the testing location to ensure adequate distancing during the break.

Sample Collection, Handling and Processing

Biological samples collected during study visits are always handled by qualified team members with the highest regard for safety. Samples will be collected by study technicians, nurses and/or physicians, as appropriate. They will be handled, processed, and/or shipped only by qualified team members.

Best Practices When 2-metre Physical Distancing Cannot Be Maintained

Restarting SRC activity where 2-metre physical distancing cannot be maintained requires thorough procedures to ensure the safety of both the participant and the researcher. What follows is by necessity quite detailed but it is not necessarily exhaustive in the attempt to anticipate issues arising for in-person research where physical distancing is unlikely to be possible. These best practices expand on the best practices listed above.

- Research with children will often necessitate careful attention to environmental controls. For example, if you use toys or other shared objects in your research, ensure that all are made of materials that can be cleaned and disinfected easily (e.g., avoid plush toys, porous materials, books). Carpets or floors where young children may sit or crawl should be covered with a cleanable (non-porous) mat that is disinfected or replaced after each use.
- Towels or other materials that may be required for use by participants (e.g., for an electroencephalogram/EEG) must be placed into a closed plastic bag until they are laundered prior to next use. Sinks used for hair washing must be disinfected after each use, along with any shared shampoo bottles (single-use supplies are preferred).

Researcher and Human Participant Controls

- As a first-priority, reorganization of spaces to respect a 2-metre distance between all members of the research team and all participants should be considered. If this is not possible, physical separation with barriers such as plexiglass or other partitions should be considered. Minimize the duration of live interaction as much as possible by prioritizing remote communication.
- Ensure that all research staff, students and participants are provided with necessary PPE and proper training as to its use (e.g., procedure masks and protective eyewear).
- For research that entails physical contact with participants, PPE (i.e., procedure single-use masks, protective eyewear or visors) is required. Single-use gloves should only be used for short periods when touching mucous membranes or adjacent surfaces (e.g., lips) of

participants. If gloves are required, hands must be washed immediately before donning and immediately after removal and safe disposal.

- Research staff should wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water or with alcohol hand sanitizer for at least 20 seconds before commencing work and when they have finished working with a piece of equipment. This includes when going from one room to another, when a touch-area changes, and the washroom. Research staff should keep a container of hand sanitizer with them for intermittent sanitization when soap and water are not available.
- Before putting on a mask (and after its removal), research staff should wash their hands according to the proper techniques noted above. The same is true for any PPE (e.g., gloves, safety glasses/visor). If gloves are required for the work, research staff should wear them only at the point of care and wash their hands immediately after removal. Research staff should be careful not to touch personal items (e.g., phone) while wearing gloves. If touching a personal item is necessary the personal item must be cleaned.
- Do not cross-contaminate surfaces and working areas – when you move from one area to another, wash your hands.
- Don gloves only when you begin close interaction with a participant if the interaction requires touching of mucous membranes or adjacent surfaces (as noted above) and discard them immediately after use. Hands must be washed after removing gloves.

After the Study Visit

- Clean and disinfect study lab/visit space and surfaces. This may include tables, chairs, equipment such as EEG machines, VR headsets, wearable systems, and other non-disposable equipment or items used during the study visit. See section 3.4 Cleaning and Disinfecting found near the end of the document.
- Space used for study visits should be cleaned and disinfected between each participant study visit and after all visits are completed for the day.
- Ensure that stock of PPE is replenished. This may include face masks, hand sanitizer, disposable wipes, etc.
- If a study team member or study participant has contracted COVID-19 following a study visit:
 - [Notify Ryerson's biosafety officer](#) at ehs@ryerson.ca or 416-979-5000, ext. 554212 as soon as you become aware. By doing so, you can help to minimize the spread of illness amongst the community.
 - If the case is deemed to be communicable, the biosafety officer will work under the direction of Toronto Public Health to implement their directives in preventing further spread of the disease.
 - Determine when others (study team members and study participants) may have been exposed. Collect information on persons who had contact with the ill individual during the time they had symptoms and 2 days prior to symptoms.
 - Follow any additional guidelines for cleaning and isolation based on the most up-to-date university guidelines and policies.
 - Submit an [adverse events report](#) to the REB within 48 hours if the researcher/study staff/participants have come into contact with anyone infected with COVID-19. The REB report should outline all direction received along with any/all mitigation strategies.

Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations

There are a number of guidelines to be aware of when performing routine and more frequent cleaning:

- Use disinfectant to clean common areas and high-touch surfaces (e.g., door knobs, sink handles, freezer doors, fume hood sashes, phones) more frequently, and use disposable cleaning materials such as paper towels.
- 10% bleach in water is an approved disinfectant.
- Although 70% ethanol is not recommended for all surfaces, it may be appropriate for electronics and other delicate surfaces.
- Not all products with the name “Lysol” or “Clorox” are necessarily effective against coronaviruses. Follow the [Public Health Agency of Canada’s guidelines for hard surface disinfectants](#) to be used for COVID-19.
- Never mix cleaning chemicals together, especially with bleach. Remember to properly label cleaning supplies and use and store them accordingly.

Additional Cleaning Considerations

Locations and equipment with a high frequency of handling and contact represent a higher probability of viral loading in the work area and should be considered as part of more frequent cleaning.

Common surfaces and equipment should be wiped down at the beginning of use and before the end of use on a given day, or before use by another individual.

Before returning to work, principal investigators and facility managers should identify high-touch locations and equipment specific to each space. Examples include:

- Benchtops
- Equipment handles, latches, controls and touchpads
- Drawer and cabinet handles
- Bin and water incubator lids
- Hand tools and other shared tools
- Faucet handles and sprayer grips
- Baskets, bins, trays, etc.
- Exteriors of shared chemical bottles and caps
- Chair backs and armrests
- Pens, whiteboard markers, recording devices, etc.

For additional information, please see Ryerson’s [General Cleaning Guidelines for Employees](#).

Recommended Procedures for Safely Resuming Field SRC Activities

The following section is to be used as a guideline for principal investigators and supervisors to prepare for and manage a return to field SRC activities as part of Ryerson University’s broader reopening protocol.

Additional measures have been included as a reminder to incorporate the general public health directives imposed on all workplaces by the federal and provincial public health agencies.

1. Prior to Field SRC Activity

- Individuals participating in in-person SRC activities off-campus must be fully vaccinated or have received an approved exemption from the university in accordance with [Ryerson University's current vaccination protocols](#).
- Under all circumstances, if someone is experiencing symptoms associated with cold/flu or COVID-19, they should not travel for SRC activities (local or otherwise).
- Update yourself and your team on the local conditions in the field location and stay abreast of any changes that might impact plans.
- Consider any additional risks that researchers may pose to communities, or that communities may pose to researchers.

2. Travelling to the Field Location

2.1 University-owned, personal, and rental vehicles

- Practice physical distancing. Consider limiting the number of passengers in the vehicle to only those necessary. If possible, limit vehicle capacity to 1 person per vehicle unless individuals are from the same residence. Use masks or face coverings when transporting others.
- Improve ventilation in the vehicle by opening the windows or setting the air ventilation/air conditioning on non-recirculation mode, if possible.
- Consider using alternative modes of transportation, including walking and biking.
- Where practicable, encourage hand hygiene by providing hand sanitizer.
- Be sure to build in the time at the start and end of each shift for cleaning the vehicle, including personal vehicles which have provided transportation for other individuals.
 - Wipe down high-touch surfaces (e.g., steering wheel, parking brake, gear shift, arm rests, etc.) before and after use with appropriate disinfectants for the type of surface.
- See section 3.4 Cleaning and Disinfecting for details on how to clean and disinfect surfaces and objects.

2.2 Public transit

- Stay up to date. Check with local transit authorities for the latest information on changes to services and procedures, especially if you might need additional assistance. Follow all requirements for the use of masks or face coverings.
- Avoid touching surfaces. Limit touching frequently touched surfaces such as kiosks, digital interfaces like touch screens and fingerprint scanners, ticket machines, turnstiles, handrails, restroom surfaces, elevator buttons, and benches as much as possible.
- If you must touch surfaces, as soon as you can, wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or rub your hands with sanitizer containing at minimum 60% alcohol.
- Use touchless payment and no-touch trash cans and doors when available. Exchange cash or credit cards by placing them in a receipt tray or on the counter rather than by hand, if possible.
- Practice physical distancing guidelines.
 - Consider traveling during non-peak hours when there are likely to be fewer people.
 - Avoid gathering in groups, and stay out of crowded spaces when possible, especially at transit stations and stops.
 - Consider skipping a row of seats between yourself and other riders, if possible.

- Enter and exit buses through rear entry doors, if possible.
- Look for physical distancing instructions or physical guides offered by transit authorities (e.g., floor decals or signs indicating where to stand or sit to remain at least 2 metres apart from others).
- Practice hand hygiene. After you leave the transit station or stop, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Upon arrival at your destination, as soon as possible, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

2.3 Rideshare, taxi

- Avoid touching surfaces frequently touched by passengers or drivers, such as the door frame and handles, windows, and other vehicle parts. In circumstances where such contact is unavoidable, use a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol as soon as possible afterwards.
- Avoid accepting offers of free water bottles and avoid touching magazines or other items that may be provided for free to passengers.
- Use touchless payment when available.
- Practice physical distancing. Limit the number of passengers in the vehicle to only those necessary. Avoid pooled rides or rides where multiple passengers are picked up who are not from the same household. Sit in the back seat in larger vehicles such as vans and buses so you can remain at least 2 metres away from the driver. Use masks or face coverings while riding with others.
- Improve ventilation. Ask the driver to improve the ventilation in the vehicle if possible by opening the windows or setting the air ventilation/air conditioning on non-recirculation mode.
- Practice hand hygiene. After leaving the vehicle, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. When you arrive at your destination, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol as soon as possible upon arrival.

3. During Field Research

3.1 Physical distancing

- Maintain a minimum 2-metre physical distancing between co-workers not part of your household at all times, including during travel.
- Modify work practices and physical work spaces to maintain physical distancing.
- Stagger shifts to maintain physical distancing if necessary.
- Where physical distancing cannot be maintained, use masks or face coverings.

3.2 Personal hygiene practices

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds:
 - Before, during, and after preparing food.
 - Before eating food.
 - After touching commonly used surfaces (e.g., door handles, elevator buttons).
 - After using the toilet.
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste.
 - After touching garbage.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are unavailable.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or cough/sneeze into your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash. Wash your hands immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Have adequate hygiene supplies. Pack sanitizing wipes and hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol in case you are unable to wash your hands at your destination.
- When travelling, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, before you depart and upon arrival at your destination.
- Do not wear gloves when touching common surfaces like door knobs or light switches. It is highly recommended that you use paper towels or other disposable items when you need to touch these common surfaces, or to wash your hands after touching them.

3.3 Face coverings

- Face coverings are not a substitute for physical distancing and hand hygiene.
- Have a face covering with you at all times.
- Follow [Ryerson's Face Mask Policy](#).
- Best practices for face masks or coverings recommend wearing them:
 - In buildings.
 - In vehicles at all times, unless alone or with individuals from the same residence.
 - When working outdoors if unable to maintain 2-metre physical distancing.
- Face coverings should:
 - Cover the nose and mouth.
 - Fit snugly but comfortably against the face.
 - Be secured with ties or ear loops.
 - Include multiple layers of fabric.
 - Allow for breathing without restriction.
 - Be frequently laundered and machine dried.
- When removing face coverings:
 - Do not to touch the eyes, nose, or mouth.
 - Wash hands with soap and water or apply hand sanitizer after removing the face covering.

3.4 Cleaning and disinfecting

- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects frequently, at a minimum daily.
- Visibly soiled objects and surfaces should be cleaned with soap and water or appropriate cleaning materials before they are disinfected.
- Dispose of used cleaning materials and immediately wash hands.
- Follow the [Public Health Agency of Canada's guidelines for hard surface disinfectants](#) to be used for COVID-19.
- Never mix cleaning chemicals together, especially with bleach. Remember to properly label cleaning supplies and store them accordingly.

3.5 Shared equipment

- Whenever possible, tools and equipment should not be shared. Equipment should be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected before and after use.
- Individual PPE, field equipment and supplies should be marked and assigned to each research team member whenever possible. If equipment must be shared, it should be disinfected before and after it is used.
- If tools and equipment must be shared, see section 3.4 Cleaning and Disinfecting for details on how to clean and disinfect surfaces and objects.

3.6 Other considerations

- Researchers are strongly encouraged to bring their own drinking water (at least 2L/day).
- Researchers are also strongly encouraged to bring their own food from home rather than acquiring food off-site, since this significantly increases chances for exposure/infection and transmission to the rest of the team.
- Avoid communal food preparation.

Appendix

- Please contact a member of [Ryerson's purchasing team](#) if you require support to purchase [PPE supplies](#)
- Ryerson EHS [Risk Assessment Template](#)
- [Ryerson Field Safety Information](#)
- [Ryerson Remote Office Set Up Guidelines](#)
- [Ryerson Working Alone or in Isolation Information](#)
- [Proper Use of a Cloth Face Mask](#)

FAQs

We are working with populations in vulnerable circumstances, but our SRC activity requires in-person contact. Can we initiate/resume our projects/studies?

At the present time, in-person SRC activity that includes populations in vulnerable circumstances should continue to be conducted without in-person contact when possible.

Can SRC activity involving specific communities be initiated or resumed?

Principal investigators working with distinct communities/groups (e.g., Indigenous peoples, faith-based, etc.) should consult with the community in question. It is best practice to consult with the communities to determine whether they wish for you to continue with the SRC collaboration at this time and to ensure that you are following their health and safety practices. A letter or email of permission from an appropriately authorized individual within the community is required.

Can I conduct in-person focus groups?

If possible, focus groups should be conducted virtually, unless there is an absolute need for them to take place face to face. An in-person focus group would need to follow all public health directives, including the need to:

- Maintain appropriate physical distancing whenever possible.
- Maintain the highest standard of cleanliness, including regularly disinfecting high-touch surfaces and cleaning exam/procedure/study rooms between each participant.
- Practice good hand hygiene.
- Use appropriate PPE.
- Follow screening procedures.

Can I travel internationally to complete my SRC activity?

At this point in time, the university has suspended international travel for all university-sanctioned activities until the end of 2020. Ryerson urges faculty members to carefully consider any upcoming travel plans. When possible, consider cancelling your plans entirely, or postponing to a later date and delaying financial commitments. If you are considering international travel, note that [Global Affairs Canada](#) advises against non-essential travel outside of Canada. If you have specific questions about the resumption of international travel and risk management, please contact [Ryerson International](#).

Find [additional information on Limited Resumption of Human Participant SRC Activity](#).