COVID-19 SAFETY PLAN
for off-campus human participant research

This plan is to be used by Principal Investigators (PIs) and Lab Directors/Managers to ensure protocols are in place to minimize the risk of COVID-19 while conducting research with human participants in locations that are not a University of Waterloo campus (i.e., off-campus). This plan is to be used while conducting research in spaces that are not on a University of Waterloo campus.

Off campus research applies to studies conducted in locations other than one of the University of Waterloo campuses. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- Public spaces (parks, streets, town squares),
- Private indoor and outdoor settings (homes, properties, offices, businesses),
- Spaces under the jurisdiction or authority of an organization or entity (e.g., schools, community centers, other post-secondary institutions, government offices, etc.),
- Health facilities and clinics under the authority of a health authority, hospital, health region, or
- Lands and facilities under the authority of an Indigenous nation(s) or controlled access community (e.g., Mennonite community).

This plan is needed when University of Waterloo faculty, staff, or students are collecting data themselves and not when a third party is conducting the research or collecting data on their behalf.

- If a third party contractor is hired to perform time-limited research work outside of Canada, where research funding is used for payment, PIs are to utilize the contract template developed by Procurement in collaboration with Human Resources and Legal Services: contact Luke Kuzio.

Name of Principal Investigator (PI): _____

Department: _____

Off-campus location(s): _____

Research Ethics Application Number(s): _____

Roles and responsibilities

A. Supervisors/Principal Investigators

- Obtain permission from the community, business, or organization to conduct the research at their location.
- Understand what is needed to meet the COVID-19 protocols for the region/province, community, business, or organization that you will be visiting and communicate these requirements to all participating researchers.
- Review all travel requirements with your Department and obtain Departmental approval. All travel must meet the current public health guidelines. Travel outside of the Canada requires completion of an international travel safety plan and registration of the travel with Waterloo International's Safety Abroad.
- Meet with research group members before any travel to the region/province, community, and or organization.
    - Orientation must cover:
        - all items within this plan,
        - COVID-19 protocols in place at the study site (i.e., at the community, business, or organization),
        - COVID-19 informed consent discussions, and
        - study procedures outlined in the research ethics application.
- Ensure research group members review the COVID-19 Health and Safety Guide and the University's vaccination policy.
- Enforce all criteria within this plan, and the COVID-19 Health and Safety Guide, as well as the research ethics application procedures including COVID-19 informed consent discussions.
- As new research team members join the team, orient them to the plan and ensure they acknowledge and sign the plan.
- Establish a protocol to maintain physical distancing and shared use of space/rooms and equipment.
- Ensure sufficient supplies are available to maintain hand hygiene, PPE, and surface decontamination requirements.
- If working alone is required, ensure a Working Alone Plan has been developed and communicated to research group members.
- Review fieldwork requirements and submit a Fieldwork Risk Management Form to your Department Chair for approval, if required.

B. Research team members

Follow all guidance in:

- this safety plan, including the COVID-19 Health and Safety Guide, Working Alone Plan,
- University's vaccination policy, and

- protocols in the research ethics application.

Health Protocols

A. Self-assessment screening

- Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and do not travel or be involved in the study session(s) when ill.
  - Use a daily self-assessment tool appropriate for the location (e.g., use https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/ for locations in Ontario).
  - The Campus Check-in can be used for daily self-assessments when on-campus.
- Ensure study participants conduct a self-assessment prior to arrival (day of study visit) and follow the protocols put in place by the community, business, or organization for self-assessment of employees or visitors to their location.

B. Illness and absence reporting

- Do not allow a member of your team or a study participant to take part in research activities if exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms.
- Review and follow the University's Health Protocols.

C. Hand hygiene

- Hand hygiene should be performed regularly throughout the day.
- Communicate these requirements to study participants.
- Be sure to follow the Hand Hygiene guidelines.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

A. Masking

- Physical distancing is to be implemented whenever possible and everyone (researchers and participants) must wear an ASTM Level 2 medical mask.
- There should be limited situations when a study participant is exempt from wearing a mask or needs to remove their mask.
  - These may include:
    - people who are unable to wear a mask due to a medical condition or disability,
    - children under the age of 2,
    - when communicating with a person who is hearing impaired and the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication,
    - exercise studies to insert/remove a mouthpiece, or
    - facial recognition studies.
- Should a child not tolerate wearing a mask (fidgeting and constant touching), the researcher is to wear a N95 mask and protective eyewear when within 2 metres of the child.

- Fit testing is required for anyone who will be wearing a N95 mask.
- Contact the Safety Office for fit testing training/instructions.

B. Other protective equipment

- Protective eyewear (in addition to a mask) is required when a person is not wearing a face covering and is not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.
- PPE requirements when taking biological fluids – In addition to the masking requirements, researchers should wear lab coat/scrubs or disposable gown, gloves, and eye protection (wrap around safety glasses).

Adjust the study space and activities

- When appropriate, ensure research team members are aware of arrangements for the:
  - room (or other location) that will be used by the research team when working with study participants at the off-campus location, and
  - private space to confirm the COVID-19 screening was completed and to carry out, if needed, the study pre-screening questionnaire.
- Discuss with research team members the recommended safety measures if travel, accommodations, and meals are required, including how research team members will be separated, if needed.

A. Physical distancing and occupancy

- Maintain a 2-metre physical distancing, whenever possible.
- Occupancy is recommended to allow 2 metre distancing between persons within the space.
  - This can be controlled by:
    - posting an occupancy limit based on 2 metre distancing,
    - limit occupancy to only those involved in the study (researchers and study participants) and their guardian (if children) or support person, if needed, and.
    - avoid having other individuals in the study space (e.g., siblings or other family members that are not study participants).
- For activities in which 2 metre distancing cannot be maintained adhere to the PPE requirements.

B. Amend study activities

- Identify and discuss the study activities that will be amended and performed remotely (phone or virtually) as activities that can occur remotely should continue to be conducted remotely.

- Where possible, conduct the following study procedures ahead arrival (phone or virtually):
    - review of the COVID-19 information consent letter for off-campus studies,
    - review of the study information consent letter, and
    - pre-screening questionnaires to determine eligibility in the study.
- Activities that require a member of the research team to be in close proximity with the participant should be limited, whenever possible.
    - Ways to reduce close proximity may include:
        - demonstrating how to place the heart rate monitor on oneself while the participant remains at a 2-metre distance,
        - using videos or posters with instructions to walk the participant through how to place the sensors on their own body, or
        - use of plexiglass, breath shields, or similar barriers.
- Contact may be needed for certain limited close proximity activities.
    - This may include:
        - adjusting a heart rate monitor to ensure accuracy of the measurements,
        - helping a participant adjust a VR headset for comfort, or
        - spotting to ensure participant safety during exercise tasks.
- Studies with significant exertion, heavy breathing, or mask removal should be minimized, whenever possible.

C. Other considerations

- Ensure study participants are provided a secure and safe storage location of personal items, such as jackets, purses, wallets, or knapsacks through the provision of lockers, storage racks, or other designated storage spaces.
    - If needed, provide Rubber Maid bins in designated locations with disinfection before/after use.

Surface and equipment decontamination

- Follow the surface decontamination guidance under Cleaning Protocols in the Health and Safety Guide.
- More information on the disinfection of surfaces.

Safety plan acknowledgement

PI acknowledgement: *(be sure to check the boxes)*

- ☐ I will not allow for travel of research team members to the study location and the scheduling of study participants until I have reviewed the procedures in this safety plan AND the COVID-19 Health and Safety Guide with all research team members.
- ☐ I am responsible for the implementation of all procedures outlined in this safety plan AND the COVID-19 Health and Safety Guide to reduce the infection risk.
- ☐ I will share this plan and post in a shared location (e.g., MS teams site) for access by all research team members.
- ☐ I will orient new research team members to the plan as they join the team and ensure they acknowledge their responsibilities for the implementation of COVID-19 safety protocols by signing the plan.
- ☐ I will ensure a Working Alone Plan has been developed and communicated to research group members, if required.
- ☐ I will complete a Fieldwork Risk Management Form and submit to my Department Chair for approval, if required.
- ☐ I acknowledge that I have reviewed the following documentation provided on the research ethics website:
    - FAQ for resuming face-to-face/in-person research
    - Participant recruitment flowchart
    - Ethics application steps and instructions (new applications and amendments)
    - Research team instructions for conducting in-person research
- ☐ I acknowledge study team members found not following these directives may be subject to corrective action up to and including disciplinary measures and suspension of research ethics clearance for all studies.

PI/Supervisor Name	Signature	Date

Electronic acknowledgement is acceptable.

Research team member acknowledgement:

By printing and signing your name in the table below, you acknowledge you have:

- been oriented and/or trained on the procedures outlined in this safety plan,
- read the COVID-19 Health and Safety Guide, and
- been consulted and have no reservations with the safety precautions and processes that have been put in place to conduct research off-campus.

Name	Signature	Date

Add additional lines for signatures as needed. Electronic acknowledgement is acceptable.

By printing and signing your name below, you acknowledge you:

- have read the COVID-19 Health and Safety Guide,
- will put a monitoring program is in place to check in with PIs/Supervisors regularly to ensure the safety protocols in this plan are being followed, and
- acknowledge PIs/Supervisors and research team members found not following these directives may be subject to corrective action up to and including disciplinary measures and suspension of research ethics clearance for all studies.

Department Head Name	Signature	Date

Electronic acknowledgement is acceptable.

Safety plan checklist

- The following actions are to be completed prior to conducting research off-campus with study participants:
  - ✓ Obtain permission from the community, business, or organization to conduct research at their location and understand what is needed to meet the COVID-19 protocols for the region/province, community, business, or organization that you will be visiting.
  - ✓ Communicate study changes due to COVID-19 to all research team members including study participants (in the participant COVID-19 consent letter).
  - ✓ Meet with research group members before any travel to the region/province, community, and or organization to review this plan and the COVID-19 Health and Safety Guide.

- ✓ As new research team members join, orient them to the plan and ensure they acknowledge and sign the plan.
- ✓ Develop a Working Alone Plan and communicate this plan to research group members, if required
- ✓ Submit the Fieldwork Risk Management Form to your Department Chair for approval, if required.
- ✓ Prepare for a safe shutdown should the community, business, or organization require the research to pause.
- ✓ Complete a Working Alone assessment and implement this plan, if required.

- The following actions are to be conducted for study participants as part of this safety plan:
  - ✓ Ensure one-time use water bottles or water coolers with disposable paper cups are available for study participants, as needed.
  - ✓ Provide study participants with an ASTM Level 2 mask to wear.
  - ✓ Arrange for secure storage of participant information for contact tracing and use this information only for this purpose.
  - ✓ Ensure a space is available to conduct the COVID-19 screening, if needed, or study pre-screening in a manner that is as private as possible.