

Dear All,

On 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021, the University's Business Continuity Planning group approved a 'research roadmap' for postgraduate research following the government's review of restrictions and accompanying roadmap out of lockdown.

This 'research roadmap' provides guidance with regard to permitted activities, eligible participants, and permissible participant numbers. The guidelines are mapped against key dates/timelines and accompanying guidance regarding social contact, travel, and activities which are set out in the government roadmap. The 'research roadmap' also provides overarching principles that apply at all times.

It is important to note that all steps and recommendations are subject to the necessary conditions being met that allow the government to proceed with their proposed roadmap. The recommendations are therefore subject to change dependent on any updates and revisions to the government guidance.

The approved 'research roadmap' timeline, context, and guidelines are as follows:

**8<sup>th</sup> March 2021.** The government guidance is that practical higher education courses can return for face-to-face teaching. Broader recommendations around social contact and travel are that contact must be limited to outdoor exercise/recreation with a maximum of one other person, and people are required to stay at home and minimise travel.

**Research Guidance:** Where research projects form part of a practical course or research degree then the recommendation is that face-to-face research projects be able to take place subject to certain conditions being satisfied (see end of document for overarching general conditions).

- If the research project can be undertaken outdoors, then this should be done. For any proposed projects that are sought to be undertaken indoors (i.e., in a laboratory or other indoor practical space) then the proposed methods must be approved by the technical services team in line with risk assessment procedures.
- Only one-to-one research is permitted (i.e., researcher and participant).
- For research taking place on campus at St Mary's then only St Mary's students or staff who are legally allowed to be on campus as part of their course (or for work) can be participants (i.e., no external visitors permitted to come on to campus for the purpose of taking part in research or no St Mary's students who are not permitted to be on campus).
- Research proposing methods that require indoor non-masked activity must complete a bespoke risk-assessment (through dialogue with technical services team) and be authorised by the university's business continuity planning group before commencing.

**29<sup>th</sup> March 2021 and 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021.** For both of these dates, government guidance for education is the same as at 8<sup>th</sup> March. On both of these dates, broader recommendations around social contact are that up to 6 people can meet outdoors. On 29<sup>th</sup> March, guidance around travel is that people must stay at home and minimise travel, and on 12<sup>th</sup> April domestic overnight stays are permitted for same households only.

**Research Guidance:** As per 8<sup>th</sup> March, the recommendation is that if the research project can be undertaken outdoors then this should be done. For any proposed projects that are sought to be

undertaken indoors (i.e., in a laboratory or other indoor practical space) then the proposed methods must be approved by the technical services team in line with risk assessment procedures.

- For research taking place outdoors, methods involving up to 6 participants can be employed (which conform to physical distancing guidelines).
- For research taking place indoors, only one-to-one research (i.e., researcher and participant) is permitted (as per 8<sup>th</sup> March).
- For research taking place on campus at St Mary's then only St Mary's students or staff who are legally allowed to be on campus as part of their course (or for work) can be participants (i.e., no external visitors permitted to come on to campus for the purpose of taking part in research or no St Mary's students who are not permitted to be on campus).
- Research proposing methods that require indoor non-masked activity must complete a bespoke risk-assessment (through dialogue with technical services team) and be authorised by the university's business continuity planning group before commencing.

**17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.** Government guidance for education is the same as at 8<sup>th</sup> March. Broader recommendations around social contact are that, subject to conforming to physical distancing guidelines, up to 30 people can meet outdoors and up to 6 people can meet indoors. Broader recommendations around travel are that domestic overnight stays and international travel are permitted.

**Research Guidance:** Indoor and outdoor research projects are permitted. It is no longer a requirement that projects should be undertaken outdoors if it possible to do so.

- For research taking place outdoors, methods involving up to 30 participants can be employed (which conform to physical distancing guidelines).
- For research taking place indoors, up to six people can participate in the research activity (subject to conforming to physical distancing guidelines and room capacities).
- Participants external to St Mary's (i.e., non-St Mary's students) can participate in research projects.

**21<sup>st</sup> June 2021.** Government guidance for education is the same as at 8<sup>th</sup> March. Broader recommendations around social contact are that no legal limits will apply with regard to numbers of people gathering or physical distancing measures both indoors and outdoors. Broader recommendations around travel are that domestic overnight stays and international travel are permitted (as per 17<sup>th</sup> May).

**Research Guidance:** Subject to ethical approvals and sign-off of project approval forms then all research projects will be permitted.

#### **General Overarching Conditions for Research at 8<sup>th</sup> March, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 17<sup>th</sup> May.**

- Student and supervisor must liaise with the technical services team to ensure that the proposed methods are feasible and that necessary and sufficient control measures can be put in place. A protocol specific risk assessment (PSRA) form must be completed for the proposed methods (if one does not already exist) that details the COVID-specific adjustments and controls that will be put in place.

- Recommended physical distancing guidelines (2m+) must be followed unless other mitigations, such as face coverings are employed.
- Where methods require some physical contact between researcher and participant (e.g., attaching reflective markers) then appropriate PPE must be worn in accordance with the Risk Assessment.
- Researcher and participants are asked to take two lateral flow tests before research testing and demonstrate negative test results.
- Prospective participants must be provided with the protocol specific risks and control measures in place in advance of the date of any research testing to ensure they are able to make a fully informed and non-pressured decision as to whether to participate in the research or not.
- All participants must complete the St Mary's Covid-19 declaration form (available via the university's research pages).
- For research taking place off-site then the student must provide a copy of that organisation's Covid-19 safety protocol, undertake an appropriate Risk assessment, and demonstrate how their methods are conforming to these. Written agreement must be provided from an appropriate representative that the organisation agrees to them conducting research on their premises.
- Ethical approval must be granted before any research activity takes place.



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Provost

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