

US Academic Research Fleet COVID-19 Return to operations FAQs

Vessel Scheduling

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How are the cruise priorities assigned?

I am not comfortable proceeding with a cruise in 2020 and would like to reschedule. How do I proceed?

For cruises currently scheduled for 2021, will the existing queue simply be pushed back in the same order, or will things be reshuffled according to other factors, including the location of ships/equipment?

If the ship ops can handle such a request, can we ask for more days of ship time to offset smaller scientific crews?

For cruise plans which require UNOLS shared use assets within the fleet, e.g. UNOLS radiation laboratories, will those be more restricted due to the shared-use nature?

Mitigation and Response

Is there a process for the PI to assess the risk for their cruise?

Are there any updates on the social distancing requirements on getting onboard UNOLS vessels after July 1 or will there be any expected in the future?

How does the fleet define a high-risk individuals. What do I do when I have a high-risk participant in my science party?

What coverage there is for medevac (and coverage of costs for vessel diversion due to a medevac)?

Will testing be implemented throughout the fleet and if so, how?

Can you speak to other pre-cruise and on-board mitigation policies? Such as monitoring participants temperatures, making masks mandatory, quarantines, etc.

How are the costs for quarantines in port before cruises to be covered?

We would like to better understand what sort of Telepresence might be available to help us reduce the size of our science party. Where can we find out more information? How do we proceed?

Vessel Scheduling

What are the guidelines and timetable for getting the fleet back to work?

The timetable to return to operations is about July 1, with some exceptions (cruises leaving earlier if the risk is deemed low)

The UNOLS Guidelines are here: <https://www.unols.org/news/ships-news/updated-coronavirus-covid-19-considerations-scientists-and-operators>. Additionally, each operator is creating their own policies and procedures specific to their operations. Please contact the operator.

How are the cruise priorities assigned?

The 2020 cruises are divided into 3 categories as follows:

Priority 1: *This is reserved for cruises that have instrumentation/equipment in the water that must be recovered (e.g. OBS recovery cruises, instrument failure) and long-term time-series work.*

Priority 2: *Cruises that have a true scientific need to go or that have timeline constraints. Short term ongoing series of cruises (i.e. cruise 2 of 3), if going in 2020 could ease the burdens of an ancillary facility for 2021, permitting, foreign collaborations, etc.*

Priority 3: *A cruise that can be deferred until 2021 or later with little issue. This could be new projects or work that the PI has stated but can wait or must wait due to various reasons (e.g. personnel availability, equipment, instrumentation, etc)*

All attempts will be made to schedule 2020 Priority 2 and 3 cruises in 2021. There will be some difficulties due to the inability to work out of foreign ports or conflicts with some key resources (e.g. JASON). Contact the operator to understand the priority of your cruise, the parameters of your cruise and how it might be rescheduled.

I am not comfortable proceeding with a cruise in 2020 and would like to reschedule. How do I proceed?

Contact the operator on whose ship your cruise is scheduled to discuss the issues and the options for rescheduling. The operator will work directly with the PI, the NSF/IPS Program Director and the NSF Science Program Director to figure out a path forward.

For cruises currently scheduled for 2021, will the existing queue simply be pushed back in the same order, or will things be reshuffled according to other factors, including the location of ships/equipment?

Unfortunately, cruises need to be re-shuffled based on priority and how the equipment and gear are available. Many cruises are dependent on seasonal variations, and can't just slide into the schedules.

If the ship ops can handle such a request, can we ask for more days of ship time to offset smaller scientific crews?

If the schedules can handle this, days can be added to NSF cruises to offset smaller scientific crews. For other agencies, please contact the agency Program Manager directly.

For cruise plans which require UNOLS shared use assets within the fleet, e.g. UNOLS radiation laboratories, will those be more restricted due to the shared-use nature?

Generally speaking, this should not be an issue but each request will be assessed individually as to the level of risk.

Mitigation and Response

Is there a process for the PI to assess the risk for their cruise?

The UNOLS guidance document outlines many relevant risks - <https://www.unols.org/news/ships-news/updated-coronavirus-covid-19-considerations-scientists-and-operators>. Additionally, each

operator has their own risk assessment document for their institution/vessel. Both the Operator and the PI must perform risk assessment specific to their participants and operations. These assessments will be assessed together to understand the total risk for the cruise. The PI and Operator will a joint decision on whether to proceed on the cruise. At any time the PI or the operator can decide that the cruise should not proceed.

Are there any updates on the social distancing requirements on getting onboard UNOLS vessels after July 1 or will there be any expected in the future?

Although social distancing can be tough on a ship, some actions (masks, handwashing, etc) will help prevent the spread of the virus. UNOLS has provided general guidance here:

https://www.unols.org/sites/default/files/COVID19_ConsiderationsForConductingSeagoingScience_Vers.1.8_1Jun20.pdf which encourage single state rooms, closing down self-service mess area, asking for 14 day quarantine, trying to limit contractors onboard, reducing size of science party so that only the minimum number of people to get job done

Additionally, each operator has their plan specific to their operations. Contact the operator directly to view their plan.

How does the fleet define a high-risk individuals. What do I do when I have a high-risk participant in my science party?

The CDC guidelines should be used to evaluate high-risk individuals:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fneed-extra-precautions%2Fpeople-at-higher-risk.html

The UNOLS Guidance highly discourages high risk individuals from participating but each operator has their own policy. Please contact the operator to understand their policies. The UNOLS vessels are not supplied with medical personnel or any advance medical equipment (e.g. ventilators). Please think seriously before sending a high-risk individual to sea.

What coverage there is for medevac (and coverage of costs for vessel diversion due to a medevac)?

If risk assessment and mitigation are done well, it is hoped that there will not be diversions/medevacs. But, in the case that the virus gets onboard, the coverage for the medevac will depend on the location of the cruise. Speak with the operator about your specific cruise to understand The hope is to not get theThis will depend on where the ruiVentilators are not available on the ships.

Will testing be implemented throughout the fleet and if so, how?

Testing is highly recommended in addition to self-isolation. The funding agencies, UNOLS and the operators are looking at ways to help secure testing, either by contracting out the test with a university-lab, Discovery Health or a local private lab. Talk to the operator to understand that ship's policies and how tests are being implemented.

Can you speak to other pre-cruise and on-board mitigation policies? Such as monitoring participants temperatures, making masks mandatory, quarantines, etc.

The UNOLS guidelines (<https://www.unols.org/news/ships-news/updated-coronavirus-covid-19-considerations-scientists-and-operators>) outlines pre-cruise mitigation policies. Additionally, the

operator will have their own policies which take into consideration state and institutional requirements. Generally speaking temperatures, masks, quarantines are all part of our plans. Contact the operator for details.

How are the costs for quarantines in port before cruises to be covered?

The costs for quarantine for NSF cruises will be charged to the operator. NSF IPS will work with NSF OCE Science sections to recoup the cost for the science parties. For cruises funded by other agencies, contact the operator.

We would like to better understand what sort of Telepresence might be available to help us reduce the size of our science party. Where can we find out more information? How do we proceed?

The vessels will try to accommodate requests for data to/from the ship or other forms of telepresence. Advance planning is required. Please contact Brandi Murphy (brandi@unols.org) to discuss your needs.