

RETURN TO RESEARCH PLAN OF OPERATION – REVISION MARCH 19, 2021

Objectives:

- Our number one concern is for the safety and well-being of everyone in the department of chemistry.
- These guidelines should assure safe research operations in the Chemistry Building in the time of the corona virus.
- We acknowledge that the State has relaxed its guidelines compared to those issued last summer (we are currently in [Phase 2.1](#)) and broad vaccination efforts are underway, the coronavirus epidemic is still a real threat to our well-being. We are still ways off normal operations.
- We will adjust these guidelines as the pandemic situation demands or allows.
- General risk assessment principles that have guided chemistry in the past also inform this document: (1) Identification of hazards (2) Determination who is at risk of being harmed. (3) Evaluation and prioritization of the threats (4) Implementation of controls (engineering, policies, PPE, etc.) (5) Review and monitoring.
- Protocols work best only when all comply.
- Oversight/compliance/enforcement of the policies: Compliance is similar to responsibilities for other compliance requirements – it starts with the PI, rolls to the Head, rolls to the OVPR.
- These guidelines should be superseded by more stringent University, State, and federal rules if there is a conflict in guidance.

Reopening Resources, including links to the COVID Dashboard, etc.:

<https://reopen.uconn.edu>

OVPR's COVID Guidance Page:

<https://ovpr.uconn.edu/covid-19-guidance-for-the-uconn-research-community-2/>

CLAS Coronavirus (COVID-19) Updates:

<https://clas.uconn.edu/coronavirus/>

RETURN TO RESEARCH PLAN OF OPERATION GUIDELINES

General:

- Participation in research **does not need** approval from the OVPR.
- Entry into, and all activities within, the chemistry building are contingent upon having adequate supply of PPE and disinfectants for the building and personnel, pursuant of the [State of Connecticut's guidelines](#).
- **If you feel sick, stay home and** report it to the appropriate supervisor (your PI, department head, etc.). If you were diagnosed with COVID-19, report it to the appropriate supervisor.
- Anyone who can work remotely should do so. For instance, computational researchers should continue to work remotely, and office work should be done off-site. Similarly, activities such as literature searching, data analysis, and the like should be done remotely.
- [As per State Guidance](#), meetings may be hosted indoors in person with no more than 50% capacity, provided with social distancing (> 6ft) and face masks.
- We suggest no more than 2 people in any faculty office, 2 people in A201, 3 in A202 (and similarly small rooms), 6 in A304 15 in A203. T309 has a mandatory limit of 6 people.
- Even though the CDC allows now face-to-face meetings without face masks among those that are vaccinated, unmasked face-to-face meetings in Chemistry are not yet allowed until more people (students, in particular) have received their vaccinations – and for whom we still serve as models. Remember that it also takes some time for full immunity to develop after the vaccination.
- If you can hold meetings electronically, continue to do so.
- Using the QR codes, you will need to scan in when you enter the building and when you exit the building. The QR code links to the UConn location log (<https://locationlog.uconn.edu>). This website can also be accessed [directly](#) and you type in the Building/room manually. This application feeds directly into the University's contact tracing database. All users can download a complete record of their location data from the app at any time. Note for Staff: The application will not be used for time reporting purposes.
- Other UConn personnel with approved access to, for instance, the NMR facility, stockroom, or the departmental cleanrooms A301/302 (e.g., graduate students from chemistry research groups located at IMS) must also obey all building guidelines, including signing in and out of the building, and following all procedures for the facility.
- Visitors, such as service personnel and technical/vendor representatives, will be allowed in chemistry labs as long as PPE and physical distancing procedures of the University, OVPR, and Department are followed and they log in/out.
- All non-essential visitors continued to be barred from entering the Chemistry building.
- Post signage on all occupied labs: <https://ovpr.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2557/2020/05/covid-sign.pdf>

Physical Spaces:

- All personnel should enter through the most convenient door and allow a safe distance with others who may be using the door at the same time. Personnel will be required to sign in and sign out of the building (see above).

- If possible, elevators should be avoided. If an elevator must be used, no more than two persons are allowed at any one time.
- Personnel should move through the building in a manner that allows adequate social distancing (>6 feet for any sustained periods).
- Obey maximum occupancy and usage regulations posted in all common areas (classrooms, conference rooms, grad lounge, staff lounge, faculty lounge, tutoring room, etc.). There should be no congregation or eating in the atrium.
- Lab occupancy: 50% occupancy of the regular density, only if all proper social distancing can be maintained.
- No undergraduates should be in the research wing. The only exception is for undergraduates engaged in formalized research activities. (For guidance on undergraduate researchers, see last page). Keep research wing doors to the atrium closed (but unlocked).
- No undergraduates are supposed to be in the faculty wing. There are no in-person office hours or visits. The study areas are closed. Keep the doors to the atrium closed (but unlocked).
- Undergraduate classes will be held in A120, A203, and the classrooms on the 1st to 3rd floors teaching wing and the 4th floor teaching (analytical, physical) labs.
- All seats in the A120 and A203 that can be occupied during class are labelled with a sticker on their underside (visible when folded up). Leave all other seats empty.
- All classrooms were equipped with only the maximum allowable number of chairs.
- Benches were distributed in the hallways of the teaching wing to facilitate an orderly waiting for classes to begin in socially distant manner.
- No indoor eating in any of the public spaces. Eat outdoors or in private offices (including student desk spaces), only.
- Graduate Lounge and Learning Center are reserved for first year graduate students only. No kitchen use.
- A201 and A202 can be reserved for use (online PhD defenses, etc.). You can make reservations (mail to chemdept@uconn.edu) but faculty with access to the key locker – that itself is not locked – in the mail room need to provide the access (and assure the room is locked afterwards); the key chain tag is labelled 'seminar rooms' (or something to this effect)
- Personnel should be cognizant of all touch points and disinfect/wash their hands frequently. There will be hand sanitizer located throughout the building; consider carrying a disinfecting wipe when walking throughout the building).
- Restroom use: Maximum occupancy of multi-user restrooms is two. Restroom touch points should be disinfected before and after each use. It is suggested that researchers in labs near the atrium use restrooms behind the elevators on their floor in the teaching wing and those at the far end use restrooms at the end of the research wing. All restrooms will be cleaned twice a day by janitorial staff.
- Lab/office trash will be emptied daily. All touch surfaces external to the labs, such as door handles, bathroom countertops, tables, etc., will be cleaned twice daily by custodial staff.

Updated Guidance for Fall 2020 Lab Research (edited for brevity, for the full list, see: <https://uconn.edu/public-notification/coronavirus/covid-19-research/>)

- Labs should maintain a process to know when personnel are working in the labs or research areas. Acceptable methods include key card access. Note: Since our research labs (including MS and NMR facilities) are all equipped with ID/key card locks, this will be sufficient! Do not prop the doors open, etc., you must make sure you swiped in before entering a lab – even when the door is open!!!.
- Approval from the OVPR for “Resuming Research Activity” will no longer be required for conducting research at any UConn campus.
- Labs and research programs must continue to develop and maintain a written Lab Research COVID-19 Safety Plan, but submission and approval of Research Safety Plans to the OVPR will no longer be required. Research Safety Plans may be amended as necessary. If a plan is amended, all personnel must be retrained on the amended plan and training must be documented.
- Departments and administrative offices are required to perform a detailed risk assessment, set site-specific prevention protocols, and to have the resulting safety plan approved by their leadership (this document).
- Research personnel must continue to be trained on the plan and documentation of the training must be maintained.
- Research personnel must continue to complete EH&S online COVID-19 Research Safety Training. Documentation of completion must be retained as part of Research Safety Plan documentation.
- Research Safety Plans should continue to address federal and state guidelines and requirements. Research safety plans for individual labs may vary within the constraints of the Departmental and University wide and campus specific COVID-19 requirements.
- Research Safety Plans must allow for distancing of at least six feet, with the goal of maintaining an overall personnel density of 50% or less of the pre-COVID occupancy/density. If this is not possible then the Safety Plan must justify why and specify what measures will be put in place to minimize the potential of exposure.
- ***Labs and research programs should continue to have and refine plans to immediately halt or ramp down research activities, if required.***

Personnel:

- Personnel who are uncomfortable with the exposure of working on site during the current COVID-19 pandemic should not be pressured to do so. Where there is a difference of opinion, concerns should be discussed with the department head, the graduate school, or the university ombuds (jim.wohl@uconn.edu).
- PIs should organize regular communication/check-in to ensure that all lab members are adequately supported.
- If students must use equipment in labs other than their own lab, they are required to obtain approval from both their major advisor and the corresponding PI. They should then coordinate with the students in that lab to ensure the occupancy rate is not higher than permitted. They should also follow the safety plan of that lab.
- All personnel must observe the UConn Working Alone policy (<https://content.research.uconn.edu/pdf/uch/rcs/ehs/policy-workingalone2017.pdf>).

PPE and Hygiene:

- All personnel entering the chemistry building will be required to wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth when entering the building.
- Masks must conform to [CDC guidelines](#), if not more stringent. See, e.g., the [OVPR video](#) for recommendations on rotation and storage of face masks used while in the building.
- Laboratory PPE will be required at all times while working in the laboratories; personnel must have their own and not share their PPE with other personnel. Such examples are, but not limited to, face shields, safety glasses and goggles, lab coats, masks, etc.
- Hand-washing should be conducted on a personal schedule and as needed in compliance with recommendations by the [CDC](#).
- Personnel will be responsible for disinfecting workspaces/equipment before and after each use with supplied disinfectants in accordance with the OVPR-approved lab safety plan for each given lab.
- Individual PIs will be responsible for guidance on the use of gloves for researchers in their laboratories. No gloves are allowed outside of laboratories; disinfectant will be available in common areas throughout the chemistry building.
- Disinfecting and hand sanitizer solutions and PPE will be available in the stockroom. Quantities available as posted there. Some, but not all, PPE will be provided by the Department; the costs for traditional lab PPE will remain the responsibility of the PIs.

Compliance:

- Failure to comply with guidelines issued by the State, University, or Department may, at the Discretion of the Head, result in appropriate actions, up to a dismissal of the offender from the building or even a shutdown of the entire laboratory until Phase 4 of University reopening. University regulations and Chemistry rules will take precedence over any individual lab guidelines, where appropriate.
- Personnel should not enter any University building if they feel unwell. Personnel and supervisors must follow guidelines issued by UConn HR regarding illness, suspected illness, suspected contact of COVID+ person and reporting found here: <https://uconn.edu/public-notification/coronavirus/covid-19-human-resources/>
- Building Manager Tyler Cardinal (tyler.cardinal@uconn.edu or 860-486-3695) will monitor occupancy within the building and report obvious breaches to the Department Head.
- PIs are charged with monitoring activity on the floor where their labs are located. They will also report any infractions to the Department Head.
- If you observe any violations of the safety rules, please email Tyler Cardinal or Professor Jing Zhao, chair of the safety committee (jing.zhao@uconn.edu) with details of the incident.
- You may also report the incident (anonymously, or not) online on [this form](#).
- If, for whatever reason, you cannot adhere to the rules, communicate your issues to your supervisor/PI and get clarification what can be done before deviating on your own.

Main (Front) Office:

- Main office is closed. No in-person service. Signs with guidance are posted on the front office door.

- Main office doors are to remain locked; access for faculty and staff approved to return to the building, only.
- Staff are available for virtual appointments; please email chemdept@uconn.edu or a staff member directly to make arrangements and someone will respond with an appointment time and follow-up instructions.
- All entrance is through the atrium; no entrance/exit through the outreach lab.
- Social distancing guidelines must be maintained (face masks, keep your physical distance, etc.).
- No gloves allowed in the main office. Use hand sanitizer provided at entrance.
- The main office kitchen is off limits; plates, plasticware, etc. are no longer available.
- Copier/scanner/fax etc. use restricted to faculty and staff only. User must wipe down the equipment touch points before and after each use with the disinfectant provided.
- No use of student computers.
- Paychecks
 - No physical pickup of paychecks.
 - Payroll is currently mailing paychecks to the employees address in CORE; system will remain in place. Everyone can see direct deposit in the payroll system; to change the mailing address, use: ess.uconn.edu
- Mail
 - Retrieval of mail should be done from the outside of the office.
 - Staff and Postdocs will be assigned a box on the Grad Students mailbox side.
 - Mail will be distributed by undergraduate workers several times a week (Ashley will continue to supervise the students – the undergraduate workers are familiar with the operations of the main office).
 - If you must enter the mail room, knock on the door before entering to ensure no one else is in the room.
 - Personal packages should not be mailed to the Department of Chemistry.
- Supplies
 - Only faculty and staff may retrieve supplies, including copy paper from the closets. Please let the staff know if we are running low in supplies (chemdept@uconn.edu).
 - Parking validation book, projectors, laptops, laser pointers, etc. will remain in the closet in the main office opposite the kitchenette; self-service by faculty/staff only.
- Any other requests: E-mail chemdept@uconn.edu.

Stockroom:

- Ordering supplies, etc. through Sam Post will continue as usual.
- Consult with Sam before ordering perishable material.
- No walk-in service; use the service window:
 - Bulk solvent and gas cylinder purchases will be by appointment only (sam.post@uconn.edu) to ensure that a limit of two people will be in the Main Stockroom at any given time. All entering the Main Stockroom must wear masks and practice social distancing.

- Hours will remain the same, 10 am – 12 pm and 1 pm – 3 pm, Mon through Fri. Customers will not be permitted into the Main Stockroom (unless they have made an appointment). Instead, they must wait at the window for supplies and archived chemicals. A shopping list may be provided in advance via e-mail to Sam, if desired.
- When at the window, all must wear masks and practice social distancing. Customers must also bring their own pen to sign documents.
- Shipments arriving for specific research groups may be picked up via the window. Small package deliveries can also be made at the window. Customers should yield to delivery personnel. Main Stockroom doors will be opened for larger package/pallet deliveries.

Contacting Tyler Cardinal:

- No walk-in visits to Tyler's office/shop.
- To make an appointment with Tyler, email tyler.cardinal@uconn.edu or call (860) 486-3695.

Guidelines for Service-Based Laboratories/Facilities:

NMR Facility:

- Only one user per instrument at any time may be present in the NMR lab, room R002.
- Users may not enter the lab during scheduled maintenance/service times; Vitaliy may also preempt your scheduled time and/or close the NMR lab for maintenance.
- Do not enter the lab if another person is still using the instrument you have booked. Wait at a safe distance until they exit.
- No gloves allowed. Approved masks must be worn at all times.
- Scheduling:
 - Sessions must always be scheduled via the Faces Scheduling System. There must be a gap of 10 min between sessions reserved by different users.
 - Up to 4 appointments per user per day can be reserved. The maximum time per appointment during prime time (8:00 am – 7:00 pm) is 10 minutes; however, consecutive appointments are allowed. Longer sessions may be scheduled after 7:00 pm, as usual (with 10 min gaps between users), with the understanding that consideration must be given to the needs of other NMR users.
 - More detailed or longer experiments that may need to be conducted during prime time (8:00 am – 7:00 pm), need to be scheduled through Vitaliy Gorbatyuk (vitaliy.gorbatyuk@uconn.edu).
 - **NOTE:** Because the 10 min gap between sessions will take up valuable instrument time, it is essential that you sign up *only* for the time that you need and that you *remove* scheduled sessions that you later realize you do not need.
 - Any meetings with Vitaliy must be scheduled by email.
- Data collection procedure: steps while in NMR lab (after a user enters the lab):
 - Put your NMR tube(s) in the rack.
 - Clean your hands with hand sanitizer.

Let your hands dry!!!

- Before logging into the instrument, gently treat/spray the keyboard, mouse and desk area with disinfectant spray.
- Proceed with setting up the NMR experiment(s) as usual.
- After you have logged off (and not before then), gently mist the keyboard, mouse and desk area again with disinfectant spray and wipe the handrail on the step-ladder. DO NOT DISINFECT THE SPINNER.
- On your way out clean your hands with the provided sanitizer again.
- The NMR lab is for data collection only. Data analysis should be done remotely.

MS Facility:

- Submitted samples
 - Submitted samples should be dropped off on the table outside the rear office door within the laboratory. An e-mail should be sent before submission (inquiry) and then again once the sample is dropped off.
 - If a sample requires refrigeration, an alternate drop-off method will be established in the response to the inquiry e-mail.
- User collection of data:
 - Approved users will first need to log into a master schedule to reserve a block of time (for the lab), and then sign up to use a specific instrument, as normal.
 - Only three users (+Adam) are permitted into the facility at a given time.
 - Approved masks that cover both the nose and mouth need to be worn at all times within the laboratory.
 - Users are expected to use the provided hand sanitizer (located near entrance) every time they enter and exit the laboratory.
 - Users are expected to use the provided disinfectant spray/wipes to gently clean workspace touch points (door handles, keyboard, mouse, bench around instrument, cart surface, etc.) before and after usage.
 - To protect the instruments and samples from contamination, gloves should be worn in the laboratory. If the gloves become contaminated, please change them. When removing gloves, please invert and roll one within the other to avoid touching the used surface with your hands.

Please note: The mass spectrometry laboratory may limit users to certain days of the week. Further information will be provided if this scheduling becomes necessary.

Teaching Laboratory Services (TLS)

- Closed for walk-in customers but operational, preparing online lab materials
- E-mail Eric Krantz at eric.krantz@uconn.edu if you need any help from TLS.

Machine Shop:

- *No walk-in service. Hours of operation will be posted and the following procedures must be followed:*

- *Making appointments with Dan Daleb (daniel.daleb@uconn.edu) via e-mail and/or discussing longer projects via electronic means is required.*
- *All entering the Machine Shop must wear masks and practice social distancing.*

Surface Facility:

- Use of the surface laboratory should be scheduled electronically. Contact Steve Suib (steven.suib@uconn.edu) for details.
 - Samples should be left outside the facility on a desk for analysis by approved operators.
 - Only one operator will be allowed in the surface lab at any one time.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCHERS

(Edited from a message from Jeffrey S. Shoulson, Vice Provost for Academic Operations, 7/31/20)

Subject: Guidance for Fall Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity

Dear Colleagues,

We are writing today with guidance about undergraduate research and ..., including associated undergraduate research and independent study courses. As in all of our reopening plans, we seek to prioritize the safety of our campus community, limit gatherings and density on campus wherever possible, and support the agency of our faculty, staff, and students in making choices about the degree to which they will be engaged in on-campus activities.

- **Training.** All undergraduates who will be involved in research and/or enrolled in experiential learning credit (e.g., internship, undergraduate research, thesis, independent study) must complete the online COVID-19 safety training. There are two options for completing the online training and either training is acceptable: “Returning to Research Training Course” OR “Returning to Campus Training Course.” **Students only need to complete one of the trainings even if they are engaged in multiple research or experiential learning opportunities.** Students must provide email confirmation that they have completed the training to their research mentor/supervisor/faculty advisor. As always, research mentors/supervisors are responsible for ensuring their undergraduate researchers have completed the EHS, human subjects, and/or animal use training relevant to the research in which they are involved.
- **Safety Plans.** Undergraduates involved in laboratory and/or human subjects research should review, sign, and follow their mentor’s OVPR-approved COVID-19 Safety Plan. The responsible faculty member/principal investigator is responsible for ensuring undergraduates’ compliance with all facets of the approved Safety Plan.
- **Remote as Default.** Wherever possible, research (including research with associated course credit or student employment) and related activities should be completed remotely in furtherance of the goal of limiting gatherings and density. This includes activities such as lab/research group meetings and 1:1 meetings. **Consider remote activity the default** and reserve in-person/in-lab/in-studio time for activities that can only be accomplished with the equipment and materials in those spaces.
- **Course Modality.** If a student is enrolled in course credits based on their involvement in research, independent study, or creative activity this fall, ensure that the course’s modality accurately reflects the modality of the student’s planned involvement. Modality changes to these courses should be made promptly so students’ enrollment reflects how all their fall courses will be delivered.

Faculty are encouraged to contact the Office of the Vice President for Research (ovpr@uconn.edu) or the Office of Undergraduate Research (our@uconn.edu) with any questions.

Response to COVID+ Cases:

If you came in contact with a confirmed COVID+ person, you will be allowed back to the lab if:

- a. You isolated immediately after realizing that you were potentially exposed
- b. And you completed 14 days of quarantine at home, which were symptom-free without any pharmaceutical help

Alternatively, you will be allowed back to the lab if:

- a. You isolated immediately after realizing that you came in contact with a confirmed COVID+ person;
- b. And you initiated quarantine at home during which you remained symptom-free without any pharmaceutical help;
- c. And you scheduled a test after at least 5 days from last exposure, which came back negative. If you test too early, there may not be enough virus to be detected.

If you tested positive without any symptom, you will be allowed back to the lab if:

- a. You isolated immediately after taking the test that revealed your positivity;
- b. And you completed 14 days of quarantine at home, which were symptom-free without any pharmaceutical help. In this case, health officials will contact you regularly.

Alternatively, you be allowed back to the lab if:

- a. You isolated immediately after taking the test that revealed your positivity;
- b. And you initiated quarantine at home during which you remained symptom-free without any pharmaceutical help.
- c. And you received an **antigen test (no PCR)**, which came back negative.

If you experienced symptoms, with or without getting tested, you be allowed back to the lab if:

- a. You isolated immediately after experiencing symptoms; as soon as you will contact your doctor/healthcare provider, you will be most likely asked to get tested;
- b. You overcame the symptoms while quarantining at home, and you were symptom-free without any pharmaceutical help for at least 5 days.

Alternatively, you will be allowed back to the lab if:

- a. You isolated immediately after experiencing symptoms; again, you will be most likely asked to confirm positivity with a test;
- b. And you overcame the symptoms while quarantining at home. You were symptom-free without any pharmaceutical help for at least 1 day;
- c. And you scheduled an **antigen test (no PCR)** after at least 1-day symptom-free, which came back negative.

You must isolate yourself immediately:

- a. If you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptom (chills, body aches, tiredness, sore throat, dry cough, loss of sense of smell, etc.)
- b. If you realized that you came in contact with a person who is showing the above symptoms, even if positivity was not yet confirmed;
- c. If you realize that you came in contact with a confirmed COVID+ person.

UConn Covid Website: <https://uconn.edu/public-notification/coronavirus/>

Surveillance test vs. Contact tracing test:

If you are asked to take a surveillance test by the HR, you may return to work immediately after the test. If you are being tested due to contact with a COVID+ person, please refer to the procedures above.