

RETURN TO RESEARCH PLAN OF OPERATION – REVISION JULY 2, 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 (Coronavirus Portal) and broad vaccination efforts are underway. Nonetheless, the coronavirus epidemic is still a real threat to our well-being.
- We will adjust these guidelines as the pandemic situation and the University guidelines allow.
- 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- These guidelines should be superseded by more stringent University, State, and federal rules if there is a conflict in guidance.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:

<http://covid.uconn.edu/>

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.
- **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 is encouraged to 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.
- Meetings may be hosted indoors in person. Please refer to the **PPE and Hygiene** section below for masking policy.
- The COVID-induced occupancy limits are lifted.
- If you want to hold meetings electronically, you may continue to do so. Remember, all in a meeting have to feel comfortable to be in the room with all others.
- 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.
- Approved visitors ([visitor access guideline](#)), such as service personnel and technical/vendor representatives, will be allowed in chemistry labs as long as PPE and masking procedures of the University are followed and they log in/out the UConn Location Log or, just keep track of the visitor's coming in/out and rooms used on paper. The importance of this is only that any contact tracing could be done should the visitor turn out to be infected, or anyone else overlapping with the tech.
- All non-essential visitors continue to be barred from entering the Chemistry building.

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.
- If an elevator must be used, be mindful of posted occupancy limits.
- There should be no eating in the atrium.
- Lab occupancy restrictions are lifted.

- 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).
- Undergraduates in the faculty wing by appointment only. The study areas are closed. Keep the doors to the atrium closed (but unlocked).
- 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. 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.
- Restroom use: 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 University guidelines and requirements.
- Research Safety Plans do not need to impose limits on occupancy or movement in the lab.
- ***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 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, and in common areas including but not limited to atrium, corridor and stairways, elevators, bathrooms, main office, shared facility labs, and stockroom.

- **Masks should be worn inside the chemistry building with the following (exceptions):**
 - Individuals working alone in an enclosed space (an office, research lab, or area with a door or with dividers that are 5 feet tall or higher).
 - Meetings in enclosed offices where all attendees are fully vaccinated and can sit 6 feet apart.
 - Groups working in an enclosed space (such as an office or research laboratory) where all individuals are fully vaccinated and can work 6 feet apart.
- 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](#).
- 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 adherence to protocol in 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. Staff is to return mid-August, though still expect some access restrictions to be in place. Stay tuned.
 - 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.
- No entrance/exit through the outreach lab.
- Mask must be worn.
- 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.
- 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.
 - 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, 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).
 - 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!!!

- Proceed with setting up the NMR experiment(s) as usual.
- 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.

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:

Please refer to <https://hr.uconn.edu/covid-19-hr-fags/> for guidance.