

Chemistry Department Pandemic FAQ

This document is intended as guidance for the Chemistry Department to manage response to COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the Department's Working During COVID-19 Pandemic. In no way should this be construed as tacit permission to ramp-up research. The Department will follow the guidance from the Office of Research, Deans office and campus leadership.

1. What Personal Protective Equipment is required?

Basic PPE and minimum laboratory requirements have not changed. Minimum laboratory attire: long pants (covered legs) and closed toe/closed heel shoes (covered feet) are required to enter a laboratory or technical area where hazardous chemicals are used or stored. Basic PPE is a lab coat, gloves and safety eyewear. This basic PPE will continue to be provided by the PI.

Graduate students who TA have safety goggles of their own, as required in teaching, if they wish to use them. The storeroom has goggles available, if need be.

2. What about face coverings?

The Yolo County Public Health Officer has issued an order requiring people to wear a face covering while in public and in areas where there might be significant public contact or contact with people who may be ill (details [here](#)). You should wear a face covering in public areas of the building (corridors, elevators and elevator lobbies, restrooms, storeroom, receiving, etc.), in the core facilities (X-Ray, NMR, Keck, 3480 Annex, Bio-Commons) or where social distancing is difficult due to space configuration. Social distancing when sharing an elevator may not be possible. It is advised that you wait for the elevator to be empty or take the stairs.

“Examples of [Face Coverings](#) include a scarf or bandana; a neck gaiter; a homemade covering made from a t-shirt, sweatshirt, or towel, held on with rubber bands or otherwise; or a mask, which need not be medical-grade. A Face Covering may be factory-made or may be handmade and improvised from ordinary household materials. The Face Covering should be comfortable, enabling the wearer to breathe comfortably through the nose and avoid adjustments that require touching the face.”

3. What about N95 respirators or surgical masks?

Medical grade masks are in short supply and need to be reserved for health care providers and first responders. N95 respirators are also in short supply and require adherence to the [Cal/OSHA respiratory protection regulations](#). These regulations require a medical examination, training, and fit-testing of the respirator which are cumbersome under normal circumstances are ill-advised at the moment.

4. Will the Department be providing face coverings?

There are no plans for the campus or the Department to provide face coverings.

5. How do I get a clean lab coat?

Laundry service continues but at a reduced level and by request. Continue to put dirty lab coats in the hamper in the dry ice room and let Debbie know if you have lab coats that need laundering. She'll make arrangements for pick up. Laundered lab coats are typically returned within a week.

6. How do I clean and disinfect my work areas? Will Custodial staff clean lab spaces?

Custodial staff have increased their cleaning frequency of common areas – bathrooms and public areas – but are not entering labs except to empty trash.

Making sure you're using a compatible cleaner, wipe down common use areas (balances, equipment, counters, etc.) before and after use. Commercial cleaners (quaternary ammonium-based, like 409), dilute household bleach (1:4 bleach:water is sufficient), 70% alcohol (ethanol or isopropanol) have been found to be effective against coronavirus. UC San Diego provides a nice summary [here](#).

Shared equipment/facilities – fume hoods, biosafety cabinets, glove boxes should be wiped down before and after use with a compatible cleaner.

Workers should wear a clean glove to access common equipment such as ice machines and autoclaves, which are difficult to keep clean. Remove the glove when you return to your clean work area and wash your hands.

7. What about core facilities (NMR, X-Ray, Keck, Annex 3480, Bio-Commons)?

Necessary core facilities will be operational to support only the ongoing research activities during the current phase. Users will need to abide by the individual core facility SOP for use and occupancy limits will be in place to ensure social distancing. All use must be scheduled – no walk-up instrument use will be permitted.

As in #6, above, users should wipe down areas before and after use. Core facility supervisors should also clean common areas routinely.

8. Can I work alone?

You may not work alone with the following materials: Dispensing, manipulating or quenching Pyrophoric Materials are prohibited while alone in the laboratory. Using Acutely Toxic Gases are prohibited while alone in the laboratory. Your lab's `Working Alone SOP may have other restrictions. Working with HF is one example.

In general, it's best practice to not work alone with hazardous materials or activities. Discuss with your PI and lab group ways to be able to implement social distancing and still be in contact with help. Regular check-ins, livestream or keeping a zoom video chat open may be options. Update your Working Alone SOP accordingly.

9. How do I achieve social distancing when I share a fume hood, biosafety cabinet (BSC), glove box, or lab bench area?

Scheduling work time so you can work alone in the fume hood, BSC or bench area will be important. Making sure your shared work space is cleaned – including glass sashes or windows, and glove box gloves - before you use the area and cleaned after you're done with your work is critical. Good communication between lab members and the PI is essential for congenial and effective work in this unprecedented and stressful situation.

10. Who gets to come back first?

The Office of Research has identified [4 phases](#) of ramping up research. We are currently in **Phase 1** – shelter in place, only approved critical research activities may occur.

Phase 1x allows PIs to designate 2 people per 24 hour period to work in the building. Not only does this make social distancing easier, it also reduces the total load of people in and out of the building and allows good exchange of supplied air in work spaces. Normal business hours of 8:00AM to 8:00PM should be adhered to.

No shift work is permitted. For example, PIs may not have 6 people total, split over 3 shifts of 2 people each, in a 24 hour period. If no one is coming in for a day, PIs may not “give away” their 2 spots to another PI. If only one person shows up for their scheduled day, 3 people can't be sent in the next day.

All data analysis, processing, and anything else that can happen at home, still happens at home.

Work in the same lab space must permit social distancing and have at least 250 square feet per person. No use of shared office spaces, break rooms, or the grad student lounge is permitted. Single occupancy labs can be <250 sq. ft.

PIs will discuss who has priority to return to work among group members. Those who might have priority could be students and postdocs close to completing their degree/term of appointment. Research that is critical to meet thesis requirements for a final defense in the upcoming term, or requirements before a graduating student can start a new position that has already been accepted could also have priority. The goal is to minimize the total number of people coming into the building as much as possible, while allowing time-sensitive work to proceed.

Don't start any new, long term experiments, which may have to be abandoned if we have to return to Phase 1.

Phase 2 - Time sensitive research activities could ramp up to (at most) 33% occupancy. Adhering to the social distancing protocol will be critical and scheduling shift work might be needed.

33% of your research group or two researchers (see Phase 1X definition), whichever is greater. Specifically:

Group size*	Phase 2 workforce maximum
7 and under	2
8-10	3
11-13	4
14-16	5

*total number of graduate students, postdoctoral researchers and staff scientists. Undergraduate students DO NOT count toward the base that is used to calculate the workforce maximum. However, they may be included in your workforce maximum for a particular shift. Shifts with only undergraduate researchers are permitted only by an exception that is applied for and approved by the ChemRRT.

As with Phase 1X, your workforce maximum is non-transferable, non-cumulative, etc. In addition, a minimum of 250 Square Feet is required for each researcher.

B) Up to TWO shifts are permitted per 24 hour period, and work should generally take place between 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM with exceptions made for longer experiments that require later (or earlier) check ins. It is recommended that 1 hour between the two shifts be allotted to ensure that there is no overlap between the two groups of people working or even entering/exiting the building. If possible, shifts should involve groups of people who remain constant, a practice known as “platooning,” which minimizes the net potential person-to-person contact. This practice is most important in groups that have large, high occupancy labs and less of a factor in groups that are spread out over multiple, smaller spaces.

C) All Phase 2 researchers will use a department-level contact tracing google form. This information will be accessible ONLY to the chair and CAO, and only accessed for the purposes of informing researchers of possible contact with an infected person. You should still maintain a google sheet for scheduling purposes so researchers can keep careful track as to when they are able to enter the lab

11. Will undergraduates be allowed to return to research?

With permission of the PI, undergraduates could return to work. They would count in the 33% occupancy in Phase 2. Undergraduates, however, should NEVER work alone and not work after hours. PIs would need to put in place systems to properly supervise undergraduates.

Under Phase 1x, undergraduates returning to work will be permitted on an ad hoc basis, in consultation with department leadership.

12. What if someone gets sick in the building? Who covers their medical care?

Medical care would be covered as it would be in any other medical situation. Employees (those who receive a UC Davis paycheck) would access their healthcare provider through

their insurance. Students/researchers (who don't receive a UC Davis paycheck) would access their healthcare through the student medical insurance program.

Two links from Safety Services may be helpful: [Reporting Positive Tests for COVID-19](#) and a [Message From Medical Directors](#).

13. What do we need to do if there's a case of COVID-19 in the building? (*Information taken from the [Safety Services Coronavirus Resources webpage](#)*)

MANDATORY - Based on your own positive test result or the test result of someone with whom you share a residence, please email reportcovid@ucdavis.edu so campus can take appropriate action.

If you are concerned that someone you know has COVID-19 or has been exposed to it (whether on or off campus), email reportcovid@ucdavis.edu so campus can take appropriate action.

If you have had indirect or tertiary contact (i.e., contact with someone who came into contact with an infected person), we are following CDC guidelines which consider this a low-risk scenario, not requiring any restrictions or self-isolation. We understand this can feel very scary and encourage managers and supervisors to help employees become informed and take precautions.

The [COVID-19 Reporting Process](#) is also described at the Safety Services link above. Based on the review of the circumstances, campus will recommend to the department appropriate action to be taken. It may be we don't need to do anything, it may be a recommendation to return to Phase 1 or it may be something in between.