

Appendix 2: GUIDELINES FOR PROCEDURES (e.g., TRAINING) WHEN IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO PHYSICALLY DISTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

(Note: In this document, research personnel = students, post-docs, RAs, staff, technicians, etc. for research, but not faculty)

Background

Many research projects in laboratories require close, hands-on training of new research personnel, especially undergraduate students, where physical distancing is not possible. During Phase 1 of UBC's research resumption, the Faculty of Science Guiding Principles stated that only research personnel who were already fully trained can undertake research in a laboratory. In Stage 2, more undergraduate students as well as other new trainees (e.g., graduate students, post-docs) will work in research labs. As well, in practical undergraduate labs that are able to run, there may be interactions between teaching assistants, lab managers, and students where physical distancing is not possible. This document sets out the guidelines for work and training that requires close interactions (< 2 m physical distancing) in the Faculty of Science.

Scope

These guidelines impact all research personnel who are working in labs and undergraduate students carrying out laboratory experiments in the Faculty of Science on campus at UBC during COVID.

Purpose

This work instruction covers the mandatory use of Personal Protective Equipment when the required job duties prevent individuals from practicing physical distancing (i.e. individuals working together are unable to maintain a 2 metre distance). These may be necessary as part of hands-on training of research personnel and must be approved by the research supervisor (PI).

Safety Precautions

- Avoid working, socializing, or taking breaks within a 2 metre radius of any other person at all times, unless approved.
- Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds using soap and water.
- Avoid touching your eyes/nose/mouth with unwashed hands.
- When you sneeze or cough, cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or the crease of your elbow and then wash your hands.
- Any employee or investigator team member not feeling well or experiencing signs of illness will stay at home and self-isolate as directed by the Provincial Health Officer and/or a physician.

Procedure

While physical distancing is one of the primary measures to prevent viral transmission, there may be laboratory situations where maintaining a full 2 m of physical distance is not feasible. When 2 research personnel (or a PI + research personnel) need to work in close proximity where physical distancing is not possible, the overarching objective of keeping exposure to individuals outside of your household as low as reasonably achievable remains by organizing tasks and work environments to minimize the duration spent in close proximity.

In addition to standard controls, it is recommended that the researchers wear something that will cover their mouth and eyes (e.g., a face shield and/or goggles). The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has recommended wearing non-medical masks*** or face coverings when it is not possible to consistently maintain a two-metre physical distance from others.

**** Note that not all face shields provide the same level of transmission reduction. Also, the face shield must be clearly labeled as a COVID-19 control so it is not mistaken for a PPE face shield.***

*****The researchers must be trained in the proper SOP for the use and disposal of disposable, non-medical masks. For further information, see:***

<https://srs.ubc.ca/covid-19/health-safety-covid-19/working-safely/personal-protective-equipment/>

******Please note that since nonmedical masks are not constructed to an approved certification standard, they must not be assumed to provide a known level of protection – and must not be treated as a better option than hand washing and social distancing.***

Where procedures require Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) independent of COVID-19 prevention measures, the required PPE must be donned prior to commencing the task. Where that procedural PPE supplants conflicts with the recommendation of masks above, the procedural PPE should take precedence. For instance, if the task requires the use of an N95 respirator please follow the work instructions associated with that procedure or task.

It is also recommended that individuals wear lab coats and gloves unless other PPE have determined to be more appropriate.

Doffing of the PPE at the end of the task should be in the order as follows:

- 1) Remove gloves
- 2) Wash hands with soap and water for 20-30 seconds (or 90 seconds if working with pathogens)
- 3) Remove face shield or goggles
- 4) Remove face mask by the straps
- 5) Repeat hand washing

Reusing PPE

The day to day reuse of face masks is not encouraged. The mask can be reused for the day only. If a mask has become moist or soiled throughout the day, it should be changed out for a new one. If it is not needed continuously throughout the work day, store it in a paper bag labelled with your name in between uses. Ensure that the inside of the mask is not touched with unwashed hands when placing or removing the mask from the bag. Dispose of the mask and the bag at the end of the day.

The day to day reuse of goggles and face shields is encouraged. The goggles and face shields should be wiped down (visor, lens, strap, headband) with disinfectant (e.g., 80% ethanol) before and after each use.

Approval and Revision History

This guideline will be reviewed annually, or when the requirement for physical distancing in the workplace is changed.