

# **SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES FOR LABORATORIES**

Maintaining social distancing will be a requirement when returning to research. Principal Investigators (PI), laboratory managers and researchers are encouraged to practice the following social distancing measures in their laboratories and associated workspaces. It is understood that these measures are more challenging for laboratories due to the unique nature of their work environment. These guidelines are therefore meant to provide general guidance on achieving physical distancing measures in the laboratory. These examples are non-exhaustive, and we encourage you to share your best practices with your colleagues, departments and Environmental Health & Radiation Safety.

## **I. SPACE**

Achieving  
6 feet  
separation  
between  
researchers  
when possible.

1. Remove chairs or label chairs to prevent use to provide separation between researchers when they are at the workbench.
2. If the researchers are working on back-to-back benches (back facing each other), their physical distance could be less than the required 6 feet. In such cases, closing down the alternate workspace on each bench to create a staggered workspace across all lab benches to create a zig zag pattern will be necessary.
3. Place markers on the floor to identify 6 feet separation when queuing up the use of shared equipment, dispensing of chemicals in chemical fume hoods, disposing of waste, etc. These measures apply to non-lab areas as well.
4. Avoid performing non-lab activities such as computer or lab work in the lab if there are ongoing lab activities nearby. Safe distancing measures apply outside the lab as well.
5. Review any shared/common space restrictions (areas such as electron microscopy, service analytical labs, etc.)
  - Delays due to start up procedures
  - May have restricted schedules to accommodate social distancing

## II. TIME

Minimize contact time of researchers during experiments.

1. Ramp up lab activities gradually.
2. Implement stagger start and end times for work to minimize contact time and to avoid peak hours for travel.
3. Implement split team arrangements for laboratory usage, e.g. Team A and Team B work on alternate days or half-day shifts.
4. Implement a booking system with specific downtime/blocked period for the use of common equipment to prevent the physical encounter of the two persons e.g. 10 min interval before the next person can use the equipment. This also applies to for activities or equipment that are unable to be physically separated for operational reasons.
5. Postpone/limit non-essential activities.
6. Work that can be done remotely should be done remotely.

## III. EXPOSURE REDUCTION

Minimize cross-contamination

1. Wear masks and/or face coverings when possible.
2. Determine the maximum occupancy allowed for each satellite/core/common room/facility.
3. Assign work areas, such as desk or bench, to a specific researcher and each researcher should only use their assigned work area.
4. Ensure regular disinfection of high touch points where gloves are not used, e.g. door handles or sink faucet handles. Common equipment workstation should be disinfected before and after each use.
5. Staff should periodically wash hands, specifically:
  - Before and after lab work and before and after entering a lab.
  - Hand sanitizers should be placed in strategic locations throughout the lab.
6. Modification of work processes, e.g. assigning specific tasks to the same person to restrict people movement across laboratories such as confocal microscopy, cell culture, etc.
7. Do not come to work if you are unwell. Refer to University procedures.
8. Practice social distancing measures when not in the laboratory.
9. Restrict visitors to only essential visitors such as contractors and vendors.