COVID Guidelines for research staff

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Adherence to Government and Institutional Directives: All applicable local, provincial, and federal public health directives, guidelines as well as direction from uOttawa, will be diligently followed in planning the return of research activities.

Safety: The health and wellbeing of our uOttawa Faculty of Science community is a priority above all other considerations as we continue academic operations. This includes incorporating newly accepted norms of hygiene, physical distancing and use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in all research labs, common rooms, and public spaces to prevent the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Contingency Plans: The following protocols can be modified to respond quickly to any changes in the provincial health directives. Such as building closures, further physical distancing and capacity limits in lab space and a switch back to working from home. Please check in regularly with current University of Ottawa and Faculty of Science News for regular updates. https://www.uottawa.ca/coronavirus/en.

The Proposal:

This proposal describes the process and guidelines for academic activities at the Faculty of Science during the omicron wave.

Below is a set of guidelines and rules to properly inform research staff of the expectations and protocols in place for their protection.

Mandatory PPE:

In keeping with the current Provincial directives, all students are to wear facemasks in all public and shared areas. Facemasks may be cloth or medical grade disposable masks (preferred). Gloves are not permissible in any public spaces in line with the Faculties glove policy in our science buildings. Lab-coats are not permissible in public spaces to prevent bringing contaminants from the research labs into public spaces. If students need to eat/drink, we encourage students to do so outside if the weather and/or situation permits. However, if a student must eat or drink, they must do so while two meters away from one another and are not to be socializing at the time. Mask will be put on immediately afterward.

Note: If two-meter distance cannot be maintained a facemask must be worn even when outside

When to Self Isolate:

- As per Public Health authorities, you must, regardless if you display symptoms or test negative, self-isolate for 5 days if fully vaccinated, 10 days if not vaccinated or partially vaccinated if:
  - You live with or provided care for a person who has tested positive or shows symptoms of COVID
- If you have travelled anywhere outside of Canada you must quarantine for the recommended period dictated by Government of Canada before coming on campus
- If you have COVID symptoms, even if symptoms seem to pass, it is recommended that you self-isolate immediately for five days or until you are 24 hours without symptoms (48 hours for gastrointestinal symptoms) (whichever is longer)
Use the uOttawa Self-Check assessment as this will assist with contact tracing purposes. [https://cst.uottawa.ca/en/csa](https://cst.uottawa.ca/en/csa)

**Symptoms include:**
- Fever and/or chills; OR
- Cough; OR
- Shortness of breath; OR
- Decrease or loss of taste or smell; OR
- Two or more of:
  - runny nose/nasal congestion
  - headache
  - extreme fatigue
  - sore throat
  - muscle aches/joint pain
  - gastrointestinal symptoms (i.e., vomiting or diarrhea)

**If symptoms do not include any of the above,** you are less likely to have COVID-19 infection and you must self-isolate until symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if you have gastrointestinal symptoms).

- If you are fully vaccinated and had a high-risk contact with a person who has tested positive OR has COVID symptoms you are expected to self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days and where a mask at all times on campus.

**Note:** High risk contact is considered being within two meters of a person for a prolonged period (>15 minutes) or had multiple close encounters with that person.

**What to do if you need to self-isolate:**
- If you do a self-assessment and suspect the possibility of having covid you must self-isolate for five days. You may return on campus if you have been symptom free for 24 hours or 48 hours for gastrointestinal symptoms.
- Inform your lab supervisor that you are self-isolating/being tested (whichever applies) and will be unable to go on campus.
- Use the uOttawa Self-Check assessment to find out when you may return to campus [https://cst.uottawa.ca/en/csa](https://cst.uottawa.ca/en/csa)
- Given the lack of available PCR tests, it may not be possible to provide a positive or negative test. If you are unable to receive a test (either rapid antigen or PCR) you must assume that you are positive and should self-isolate for the recommended time (dependent on the symptoms shown above).

**Note:** Building access is subject to changes dependent on the latest provincial regulations in place (IE: Provincial lockdown in place). A message to this effect will be sent out should this situation arise.

**Physical distancing measures that apply to specific areas:**

**Lunch and break areas:**
- Staff should stagger their break times.
- Signage will indicate the maximum number of people in areas for coffee/lunch with appropriately spaced chairs and tables.
- Chairs/tables will be clearly marked and reconfiguring lounges and table/chairs is not permitted.
• It is recommended that kitchenette areas, shared refrigerators, microwaves, kettles etc. should not be used. Lunches/snacks that are brought on-site must not require refrigeration or heating. The use of cooler packs is to be encouraged.
• If deemed necessary, additional space that meets physical distancing requirements will be identified and advertised for lunches/breaks.
• As usual - Food and Drinks are not allowed in any laboratories.

Hallways and Stairs:
- In many areas of the buildings there will be new traffic flow measures that will be clearly marked including:
  o One-way entrances and exits
  o One-way hallways
  o Stairways designated solely for up or down traffic.

Elevators:
- The use of elevators will be restricted to members of our community with mobility issues and for those transporting equipment and carts.
- Elevators will have new maximum capacity limits and those using elevators must maintain 2m physical distancing. (1-2 people)

Labs:
- Capacity in labs has been reduced to 50% to allow for two-meter separation between students
- Surgical masks and goggles/face-shield are to be always worn by students in shared
- Individual workspaces should ensure physical distancing is adhered to. Please keep in mind:
  o 1 researcher per bay or fumehood with the exception of benches longer than 2m
  o Benches are not 2m wide, hence staff sitting face-to-face across from each other is not permitted
  o Utilization of bench spaces directly beside each other is not permitted unless the space is greater than 2m.
  o Assigned bench space should not be near heavily used common equipment or heavily used corridors in open concept labs.
  o In open concept labs where bays are shared between labs, the PIs must coordinate the use of bays.

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to:
- Establish a daily schedule that prioritizes projects and the needs of trainees to complete degrees in a timely manner.
- When spaces within labs do not have the area (m²) to allow for more than 1 researcher, it is the responsibility of the PIs to establish a schedule for the room that ensures physical distancing and equitable access
- For shared equipment rooms between supervisors (e.g., microscope rooms), the PIs must establish a schedule that ensures physical distancing and equitable access to equipment.

Monitoring & Compliance:
To ensure the safety of our uOttawa community and their families, all COVID-19 guidelines are there so that all members of the uOttawa community have a safe work and learning environment. Anyone can report any real or perceived non-compliance.
Any person not following these protocols will be reminded to do so and may be asked to leave in cases of non-compliance.