**Research Core Facility Ramp up Guidelines**

As Drexel University begins to ramp up research, increased use of research core facilities will be needed. These guidelines for reopening research core facilities provides minimum standards and a framework for reopening. The Facilities will be open for limited use under CDC guidelines and best practices in social distancing. Please see separate guidance for ULAR.

**OVERALL OBJECTIVE**

The goal of this guidance is to minimize risk that results from the resumption of research activities. To do this, we must limit physical contact and proximity among people, this will be achieved by limiting the total person density at the University.

Each core facility will have specific considerations and prerequisites for reopening. Timelines for reopening of each core facility will be determined by the core facility directors in coordination with any relevant oversight committees.

Core facilities will need to review expected usage as research is ramped up. Facilities will need to follow these guidelines and thus may need to adjust workstation locations, limit the number of people in the facility, change cleaning schedules, etc. All staff and prospective users must maintain open communications and reporting of concerns, including protocol breaches and illnesses.

**General:**

Prospective users must be approved to return to research. Faculty members from each lab group will be required to develop a ramp-up plan using the “REQUEST FOR RETURN TO RESEARCH” Form as required in the University Research Ramp-Up Guidance.

Prospective users must already be approved for Essential Personnel Status and provide a copy of the Essential Personnel letter or approved “Return to Research Form" with the request for usage.

Prospective users must be previously trained and experienced with the instruments. All users will be approved the facility director/manager. Training of new users or in-person assistance is not available at this time.

**Scheduling use of instruments:**

All work must be scheduled in advance using the facility’s scheduling system, such as iLab. Walk-in users are not permitted.

**Facility Access:**

Only those individuals allowed access by their department to the research building will be allowed to enter the facilities. Access to the core facilities is available pending approval by the core facility director/manager. Only trained, fully independent operators who had 24-hour access prior to the COVID-19 shutdown will be granted access at this time.

**PPE requirements:**

Face masks are required for entry. Masks must be worn at all times while inside the core facilities in accordance with the COVID-19 Prevention Strategy: Research Work Controls from Drexel Environmental Health and Safety. Each instrument or lab space in the core facility will have special procedures for PPE use. These will be outlined in Instrument-Specific Protocols (ISP) provided by the facility. Gloves should be worn while in the facility as specified in the Instrument Specific Protocol. Frequent hand washing is strongly encouraged.

**Social distancing:**

Only 1 person at a time is allowed to work on an instrument. Accompanying persons, collaborators, or observers are prohibited. Remote options such as Zoom or FaceTime should be used for observation and collaboration.

Total occupancy of core facility will be limited based on space and floor plan. In general, occupancy should be limited to 1 person per 250 continuous square feet. In rooms large enough to accommodate more than 1 user, social distancing measures must be strictly followed. Core Facilities may designate some areas as STAFF ONLY.

In order to ensure lab safety best practices while limiting the number of users in the core facilities, **a virtual buddy system required**. Please maintain an active Zoom meeting (or other audio-visual communication method) with a designated lab buddy on a device (cell phone, tablet or laptop) for the duration of your experimental work. Core facility staff are willing to serve as your virtual lab buddy or help you find a virtual lab buddy with advance notice.

**Cleaning and disinfection requirements:**

Instruments and touched surfaces must be cleaned and disinfected before and after use. Wear gloves while cleaning and disinfecting. Cleaning supplies will be available at each instrument. Please wipe down all touched surfaces with the provided alcohol solution (70% isopropyl or ethyl alcohol). Please see COVID-19 Prevention Strategy: Research Work Controls from Drexel Environmental Health and Safety for more information about cleaning and disinfecting surfaces.

**Hand’s on Training:**

Regrettably, to maintain adequate social distancing, we cannot offer training to new users or in-person assistance at this time. As result, hand’s on training of personnel will not be scheduled for now. Users can arrange assistance over Zoom or telephone, however, this may not be adequate enough to approve for usage. Users who need critical work completed should seek collaborations with trained users in your research areas. Core facility staff can assist in developing those collaborations. Limited service work may be performed by core facility staff by request and pending approval by the core facility director/manager.

**Core Facility Internal Operations:**

In preparation for easing of restrictions, core facility staff must prepare the lab spaces and instrumentation for each facility. Preparations may include all or some of the following items and be completed.

* Staff strictly adhere to a workforce rotation calendar. The calendar should be published in a way that all staff and administration can access it.
* Each instrument needs to be assessed for reopening. Building and utilizing a restart checklist is strongly recommended.
* Each instrument needs to be restarted and fully tested.
* Each facility must establish a communication plan
* If external service support needs are required for an instrument restart, that should be arranged in advance and in accordance with usage demand and the workforce rotation.
* Instruments requiring service or repair should receive service during this period if possible.
* Each instrument and instrument area will be assessed to determine likely high-touch areas. High touch areas will be compiled into a checklist and posted near the instrument. Very high-touch areas should be individually labeled to assist with proper disinfection.
* Staff will prepare Instrument Specific Protocols that outline any special cleaning, PPE use or modifications to standard operations of the instruments.
* Supplies for cleaning and handwashing must be inventoried and stocked.

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