Return to Essential and Critical Research:
Recommendations for COVID-19 Prevention in Research Facilities

This document is intended to guide Principal investigators (PIs) at Binghamton University as they submit plans to resume their research activities. Prevention of the spread of COVID-19 between individuals requires appropriate social distancing as well as engineering and environmental controls. Implementing these measures for researchers as they return to their laboratories is an essential safety measure. The safety of research personnel and their compliance with the measures outlined below are the responsibility of the PI.

MINIMIZE THE CHANCE FOR EXPOSURE
Measures should be implemented before the researcher’s arrival, upon arrival, and throughout the duration of the researcher’s visit to minimize the potential for exposure to COVID-19. Due to pre-symptomatic shedding of the virus, it is safest to apply universal precautions to all interactions and assume that all personnel may be infected and able to transmit the virus.

1. Voluntary return to research by personnel:
   No research personnel should be required to return to the laboratory if concerned about potential exposure to the virus. Choosing not to return to the research lab should be permitted without risk of consequences. PIs should anticipate this possibility and develop contingency plans.

2. Supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE):
   If a PI’s research requires the use of PPE, such as disposable gloves, face masks, goggles/face shields, or gowns, they should ensure adequate supplies are available before re-opening their lab.

3. Face Coverings:
   Everyone entering the research facility must wear a face covering. Use of surgical masks is not acceptable for this purpose. Surgical masks should be reserved for use by healthcare workers. The covering may be removed behind closed doors in private spaces, but if two or more people are in the same air space, coverings shall be worn.

   Because cloth face coverings can become saturated with respiratory secretions, care should be taken to prevent self-contamination. They should be changed if they become soiled, damp, or hard to breathe through, and should be laundered daily or when soiled.
   

   Hand hygiene should be performed immediately before and after any contact with the cloth face covering. Access to a sink and soap is essential. Hand sanitizer is a less effective alternative.

   All research personnel shall receive training on donning and doffing of PPE worn in the laboratory facility. Use of online educational videos is acceptable for this purpose. It is the responsibility of the PI to ensure compliance and retain documentation that the training has been completed.
4. Gloves:
Use of disposable gloves to minimize transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus between researchers should be considered when researchers are sharing equipment during the same shift. Hand hygiene should be performed before donning gloves and after doffing them.

5. Minimize time in common areas:
Research personnel should not linger longer than is necessary in the public spaces of the research facility.

    Principal Investigators are encouraged to stagger work shifts for their researchers to maximize social distancing.

6. Minimize face-to-face activities:
Meetings should occur via teleconferencing even when personnel are in the same building.

7. Maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times.

8. For research scholarly and creative activities approved through the Binghamton University Return to Research process, the density stipulation for all approved spaces is 1 person per 200 square feet. Any request for an exception to this stipulation will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

MANAGE EXPOSURES
1. Any researcher who tests positive for COVID-19, or who has an exposure to COVID-19, must notify their PI immediately and seek appropriate medical care from their medical provider.

2. For the purpose of managing the health of the campus community, the PI shall notify Dr. Richard Moose, medical director of the Decker Student Health Services Center, if any of their researchers are diagnosed with COVID-19, or are exposed to someone with COVID-19. Moose may be reached at rmoose@binghamton.edu or by telephone at 607-777-2221.

3. A process shall be in place to identify individuals, and the time these individuals have entered and left a research space. This record is essential to facilitate contact tracing. This will include the University’s badge access system as well as an individual lab recording.

MANAGE FACILITY ACCESS
1. Require ill personnel to remain at home:
Any researcher who develops symptoms of COVID-19* shall not report to the laboratory facility and must inform the PI of their illness. Any researcher who becomes ill while at the facility shall shut down their work to a safe level then IMMEDIATELY go home, report their illness to their PI, and contact their primary care provider.
* The symptoms of COVID-19 can be found at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/

2. Screen all researchers for fever and COVID-19 symptoms:
All researchers must screen for fever by thermometer (100 degrees or more) and symptoms of COVID-19 before entering or coming to campus. PIs should develop a method to document this step. Researchers with fever or any of the symptoms described above shall remain at home, report their illness to their PI, and contact their primary care provider.
EMPLOY ENGINEERING CONTROLS

1. Physical barriers:
   When feasible, researchers should work in separate air spaces. If this is not possible, physical barriers, such as partitions, may be employed.

2. Improve air exchanges:
   Attempt should be made to increase the number of air exchanges per hour for all air spaces in which researchers are working. When it is feasible and is not detrimental to the research activities taking place, lab managers and/or building administrators should work with physical facilities to increase the number of air exchanges per hour for all air spaces in which their researchers are working.

EMPLOY ENVIRONMENTAL INFECTION CONTROLS

1. Daily cleaning and disinfection:
   The PI must arrange a daily cleaning schedule for the laboratory. At a minimum, this shall occur daily. Physical Facilities shall be contacted and an agreement made with regard to what items and areas of the laboratory the research staff are responsible for cleaning and disinfecting, and which items and surfaces for which the Physical Facilities staff are responsible.

2. Cleaning of “high-touch” surfaces
   Surfaces and equipment that are frequently touched during the course of a normal research day shall be cleaned and disinfected several times per day by the researcher/PI.
   * For guidance on the Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities refer to

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