Guidelines for Undergraduate Classroom/Lab Use During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Purpose

The guidelines outlined in this document will assist in the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) related to **Undergraduate Classroom/Lab Use** and will help to ensure the appropriate COVID-19 health and safety considerations for the protection of all members of the McMaster community.

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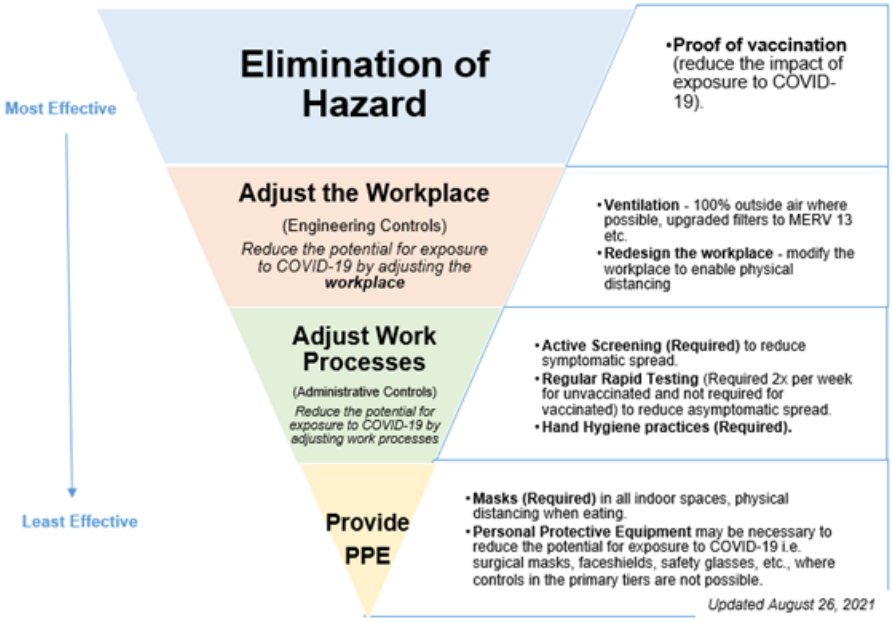
For more information, contact Environmental and Occupational Health Support Services (EOHSS)
Updated as of September 2, 2021

Hierarchy of Hazard Control

Hazard mitigation should always focus on implementing control measures to eliminate or reduce risk. For this purpose, the hierarchy of controls must be considered. This hierarchy can be applied to any hazard in the workplace including COVID-19. A brief overview of this concept is highlighted below.



Screening and Tracking

All individuals must complete screening using the MacCheck digital tool within 1 hour before arriving on campus. If an individual is feeling unwell in any way they are to stop work, inform their team and supervisor immediately, and complete the Government of Ontario COVID-19 self-assessment tool. The results of this tool will determine next steps for that person.

Adjust the Workplace (Engineering Controls)

Includes designs or modifications to classrooms, workstations, systems, or processes that reduce the source of exposure.

- Room occupancy levels should be monitored. Each department should reduce their lab and classroom occupancy to the suggested occupancy numbers provided by the University.
- Physical Distancing is required in all indoor areas except indoor instructional spaces (i.e., indoor instructional areas such as classrooms; laboratories; libraries; in-person experiential learning, etc.).

Adjust Work Processes (Administrative Controls)

Controls that alter the way the work is done, including timing of work, policies and procedures, and work practices such as standards operating procedures (including training, housekeeping, and equipment maintenance, and personal hygiene practices).

Consider communication via campus video monitors, Avenue to Learn, emails and Twitter feeds to students reminding them to physical distance and not to congregate in confined areas outside of classrooms or laboratories should be circulated regularly.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)/Face Coverings

Please refer to the Guidelines/Protocols for Face Coverings and Masks During COVID-19 Pandemic for information on face covering protocols while on campus.

Equipment worn by individuals to reduce exposure to the hazard (gloves, masks, etc.).

It is important to remember that Engineering and Administrative Controls must always be considered prior to implementing personal protective equipment (PPE) to eliminate/reduce the risk. PPE only provides a barrier between the individual and the hazard and is dependent on the user to utilize it properly.

Individuals learning healthcare skills who are unable to practice physical distancing will wearing a medical mask and a face shield.

Face coverings do not replace the need for physical distancing. Face coverings are not considered personal protective equipment.

Procedural Guidelines

- Occupancy numbers and layouts for labs and classrooms provided by the University should be posted by the department to the entrance of each room.
- All employees and students involved in labs and classes on campus must complete the Back to Mac COVID-19 training. Registration for the training can be completed through Mosaic and the training presentation will be available on Avenue to Learn. The instructor may decide to document and include this requirement into their course syllabus document.

Outside the Labs and Classrooms

- Students should not be permitted to congregate in the hallways – physical distancing must be adhered to. Consider marking lineup queues for students to wait outside of the lab/classroom.
- Consideration should be given to using hall monitors to manage the flow of individuals into and out of labs and classrooms.

- Students leaving the lab/classroom will have priority and be able to exit first through hallways, all students should vacate the area prior to the others arriving.

Inside the Labs/Classrooms

- Signage should be posted by the department regarding maximum room capacities based on provided room layouts.
- Attendance within the lab or classroom must be managed by the lab supervisor or the instructor.
- Students in classrooms shall continue to wear face coverings during the lecture.
- Students in wet labs should remove personal face coverings while in the lab due to possible chemical contamination should the student touch the mask with gloved hands and proper PPE will be provided by the lab for the experiments performed.
- Students in non-wet labs shall continue to wear face coverings during the lab.
- Hand sanitizers should be available upon entrance to the classrooms. As the students enter the area, they should be reminded to sanitize their hands prior to taking their seats. Sinks are available for handwashing in all labs. Students should be reminded to wash their hands before commencing the lab.
- Facility Services will clean all identified classrooms daily.
- TA demonstrations may have to be performed multiple times with fewer students to prevent crowding. If possible, in wet labs, demonstrate through the glass partition of the fume hoods for one-on-one issues. Use multi-media wherever possible to avoid crowding when demonstrating.
- Where one-on-one training or help is required and physical distancing cannot be maintained, both individuals should be wearing proper PPE including medical masks and goggles or face shields.
- All experiments should be redesigned where possible to be independent labs
- Equipment/chemicals and other materials should be spaced out within the lab to allow students the maximum efficiency with minimum interaction – there should be no line ups permitted at balances etc. If possible, assign students to sets of chemicals and balances/equipment to avoid interaction.
- Barriers are only to be considered for workstations that cannot be appropriately spaced such as client/student facing areas. Barriers do not replace the need for face coverings. If after other considerations (spacing workstations, rotational schedules, etc.) barriers are necessary, submit a work order with Facility Services (or location-specific building services) for materials and installation.
- Students should be reminded to hand sanitize or wash their hands prior to leaving the lab/classroom. Measure must be in place to ensure that they do not gather at the sink.

Senior Thesis and Capstone Projects

Senior Thesis Projects in research labs and projects involving teams such as Capstone projects, should be assessed on a case by case basis and the necessary approvals must be met prior to commencing. All Supervisors must submit a plan for their proposed research to the Chairs and Capstone teams to their mentors. The plan must be reviewed/approved by the departmental Chairs before projects commence.

Theses that do not require close contact with others – literature research, theoretical modeling, etc., can continue as usual.

Resources

- Public Health Ontario COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool
- Public Health Agency of Canada Prevention and Risks
- Space Analysis & Re-Occupancy Planning Tool
- Facility Services teaching space layouts
- Government of Canada
- Public Health of Ontario
- Government of Ontario
- McMaster University COVID-19 Guidelines and Posters