



In-Person Lab Training Guidance During COVID Restrictions

Guidelines to supplement lab-specific training/use protocols

This document was crafted with guidance from the [MIT EHS Teaching Lab Re-Opening Guide](#). Additional information on conducting work under close conditions can be found in the [MIT Campus Guidance When Working on the Same Project or Sharing the Same Equipment or Tools](#).

The purpose of this document is to create guidance which builds on existing Institute protocols for in-person lab **training** of new members (UROPs, 1st Years and new Postdocs) as well as current lab members on new equipment and procedures. It addresses specific issues related to COVID-19 that dictate how to safely carry out in-person lab training. ChemE labs are encouraged to write up detailed best practices guidance including cleaning/disinfecting protocols for their specific lab. More restrictive measures can be adopted if specific conditions require. ChemE EHS reps and the ChemE DMC are available to assist. Safety concerns may be reported to the department [anonymously](#).

Institute-Wide Mandated COVID-19 Protocols

First, all Institute-wide mandated protocols must be followed at all times:

- ❖ **Distance:** A minimum of 6 feet of distance when working in a stationary setting
- ❖ **Density:** 125 square feet of space per person in labs and student offices
- ❖ **Masks:** Masks covering nose and mouth at all times
- ❖ **Gloves:** Disposable gloves in lab at all times
- ❖ **Glasses:** Safety glasses in lab at all times

Qualified Personnel “Q Personnel” (Anyone doing the training)

Qualified Personnel (EHS reps, TAs, UROP supervisors and, less formally, anyone doing the training) add an additional layer of personal interaction to a laboratory space and provide a level of direct supervision to help in the implementation of safety and distancing protocols. Q Personnel must be given clear instruction/training on new roles and expectations placed upon them:

- Q Personnel should be present any time UROPs are in a research lab. Steps can be taken to reduce/eliminate close interaction:
 - Q/A sessions before and after the lab training via email or ZOOM when possible.
 - Strict adherence to the 6-foot separation rule, even when answering questions (no huddling over instruments together)
 - Digital real-time or recorded instruction should be used whenever possible.
- Q Personnel should remind students about MIT’s COVID-related research protocols, including use of masks, distancing and density, correcting behaviors on the spot when necessary.
- Q Personnel and student roles in cleaning/sanitizing should be clearly defined.
- Contact ChemE EHS if you wish to discuss the use of enhanced PPE or respiratory protection.

Scheduled (not shared) Workspace, Equipment, Tools & Supplies

Every effort should be made to schedule hoods, benches, tools, equipment and supplies to individual researchers in order to minimize interpersonal interactions and reduce foot traffic through the laboratory.

Shared Equipment, Tools and Facilities: Wipe In/Wipe Out!

Training multiple researchers on the same procedures with the same equipment requires a greater level of scheduling and resources.

- Effort should be made to avoid sharing equipment and tools whenever possible. Sharing computers should be avoided: students should rely on their personal laptops instead of shared devices. Gloves must be worn at all times when using computers connected to instruments.
- At a minimum, shared equipment and tools should be disinfected before and after each use. This includes glove boxes and biological safety cabinets as well as hand tools and bench tools and lab facilities like sinks and gas/vacuum valves.
- Signage may be employed at shared equipment locations to remind users of traffic flow, operational procedures, and decontamination practices (including type of disinfectant, application method, frequency, and responsible parties).

Shared Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

MIT [COVID PPE guidance](#) discourages sharing PPE wherever possible.

- If possible, researchers should be assigned lab coats.
- Each researcher should have his or her own pair of safety glasses. If they must be shared, they should be disinfected with wipes before and after use.
- Where shared gloves are necessary (autoclave, glove box, cryogen gloves), disposable gloves should be worn beneath the shared gloves.
- Large zip-top bags can be used to label and store PPE.

Social Interactions, Collaborations, and Group Sessions

Training sessions often include group activities as well as spaces to interact.

- Group collaboration activities and areas should be eliminated and replaced with digital platforms or smaller, distanced groups in a rotation.
- If cell phones are used to communicate in training sessions, disinfection practices should be established (e.g. disinfectant wipes).
- Congregation should be eliminated in common areas outside of the lab.

Entrance and Exit Procedures

- Situations where students are assembled in a group awaiting access to the lab should be avoided.
 - Stagger arrivals.
 - Provide immediate entrance to the lab and assign distanced observation spots.
- Encourage students to minimize the personal items they bring to the lab.

Questions?

Questions can be directed to the ChemE DMC cheme-DMC@mit.edu or MIT EHS environment@mit.edu.