GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATES DOING WORK IN RESEARCH FACILITIES & SPACES AT MU

As the campus reopens for classes for the 2020 Fall Semester, undergraduates and their faculty mentors need to be aware of additional protocols and requirements for students working in research facilities and areas.

All undergraduates doing work in research facilities are required to complete the Return to Work form on eCompliance and receive formal approval before working on campus. This includes students registered for research credit; students receiving a salary, stipend or research scholarship; and students who are volunteering.

Research areas and facilities are defined as laboratories (including core facilities), research work rooms, creative spaces, interview rooms, and other facilities where faculty mentored scholarship occurs.

Oftentimes research space is in a confined area where social distancing is not possible. We want to make sure undergraduates are aware of the precautions faculty mentors and directors of the department or center have put into place to keep faculty, staff and students safe. Additionally, students may need to visit common/core research facilities and interact with other researchers outside of their own team and need to know the protocols. Some research areas have capacity limitations, and the director needs to know how many people are approved to work to ensure that the density of personnel doesn’t exceed the maximum capacity at any given time. Department chairs, building coordinators, and research center directors need to know who is working in their research areas for critical communication with students, staff and faculty.

STEPS TO RETURN

STEP 1: Undergraduates should first contact their faculty mentor to determine if the research space will be able to accommodate their presence while maintaining proper population density. Students should then discuss social distancing policies and safety procedures specific to their research area. Undergraduates should be aware that some research areas are operating on a shift system where team members are assigned to certain days and times so as not to exceed capacity of the space. All students should be integrated into the specific mentor-derived research plan for those specific research areas; the plan must be approved by department chairs/center directors. Please take into consideration additional safety concerns when discussing the ability to work “after hours”.

STEP 2: When an undergraduate has been verbally approved by their faculty mentor to work in a designated research space, the student will need to complete the Request to Return to On-Site Work Form found on eCompliance (https://ecompliance.missouri.edu/login) which will then be officially approved by the faculty mentor and either the department chair or center director as appropriate. Please keep in mind additional information and approvals may be needed if the student works in multiple locations (i.e., a wet lab and a satellite greenhouse). Students may use their MU email and password to gain access to the on-line form. We encourage undergraduates to complete the form with the guidance of their faculty mentor or supervisor.

STEP 3: When the student receives an email from MU RESEARCH eCompliance indicating on-site work authorization has been approved, that email should be forwarded to their faculty mentor and the student may then begin working in the approved space, following the work schedule agreed upon by their mentor. Students may continue to conduct research-related tasks from home while approval is being processed.

STEP 4: Additionally, students who are student employees must complete the employee training (https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/hr/working-through-covid-19). Students who are receiving funding through the university payroll system are considered employees. Volunteers or students who are receiving a stipend through financial aid do not need to complete this module. Students who may have other (non-research) jobs on campus will still need to complete employee training.

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Students should read and follow all guidelines outlined in MU Research and Creative Activities Restart Plan which can be found at https://research.missouri.edu/about/research-restart.php. Guidelines include maintaining a 6 foot distance and wearing a mask when moving from location to location and in common research areas. It is especially important to remember social distancing protocol and sanitation when entering and using research facilities utilized by multiple research teams.

While there may be times a student needs to enter a research area not affiliated with their own research team, it should only be for research purposes or use of resources. Gathering for social interaction with peers or other researchers is not encouraged. Additionally, only students and staff authorized to be in research spaces should enter those spaces. Friends and family members are not permitted to visit research areas.

Students who have permission to work in research areas are expected to follow clearly articulated and outlined protocol to keep themselves and others in their research team safe. Additionally, social distancing behavior outside of the research space is just as important to maintaining the safety of others as it is inside the research space. Undergraduates are encouraged not to put themselves in situations where they may be exposed to COVID-19.

Undergraduates are encouraged to meet with faculty mentors using Zoom, rather than in person. Additionally students who need to visit with a faculty instructor or TA who has their office inside a research area (e.g., one needs to walk through a research lab to get to an office) should only seek out the faculty member or TA after making an appointment and confirming that they will be able to meet at least 6 feet apart. There are offices where this is not possible and alternate arrangements should be made. Students waiting to see a faculty member or TA should not congregate in hallways or laboratories, unless specific space has been designated for this purpose. In general, most individual meetings will take place by Zoom this semester. “Dropping-in” in person unannounced for faculty office hours is not encouraged.

All Mizzou students are expected to take proactive steps including social distancing, hand hygiene, use of face coverings, monitoring their personal health and staying home if they are feeling unwell to protect the safety of our entire community.

It is important to maintain at least a 6 foot distance in classrooms, corridors, laboratories, studios, recreation areas, common spaces, elevators, stairwells and social settings. Face coverings need to be worn at all times when there is the chance of encountering someone, which includes all common areas and when walking through hallways. Frequent sustained (20 seconds) hand washing with soap or hand sanitizer will minimize the risk of picking up the virus from a surface and transferring it to your face.

Engaging with research mentors and others on the research team is an important part of the research experience and socialization as a scholar. However, while social distancing policies are in place, face to face meetings are difficult. Undergraduates are encouraged to utilize Zoom meetings, email, phone conversations and other forms of social media and technology to stay connected with their research mentor and colleagues. Students should attend regular research team meetings and set up weekly meetings with their faculty mentor or supervisor. Students are encouraged to set up their own regular meeting time with research peers to support each other’s progress, share tips, and maintain social connections and networking. Research teams or smaller groups may wish to set up a weekly Zoom coffee break or lunch to take the place of daily casual conversations that are no longer possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND REMINDERS FOR UNDERGRADUATES AND THEIR FACULTY MENTORS
Q: I filled out an eCompliance form this summer and got approval. Do I need to reapply for approval?
A: No, unless you are switching to a new faculty mentor and/or work site. If you are an employee, you must now complete employee training.

Q: I have been hired to do routine tasks for a research group and will be working in a research area (i.e., watering plants, coding data on a lab computer). It is not my OWN research. Do I still need to complete an eCompliance form?
A: Yes.

Q: My research involves sitting at a computer outside of my faculty mentor’s office. I don’t work in a chemistry lab! Do I need to complete an eCompliance form?
A: Yes. The space you work in is considered to be research space and falls under the responsibility of your faculty mentor or a research center. The Return to On-Site Work Form is not just for students that work in science laboratories.

Q: I am able to conduct my research virtually and only need to use the library to do my project. Do I need to complete an eCompliance form?
A: No. If you are not doing work in a designated research space, you do not need approval. If you have questions, please talk with your faculty mentor.

Q: I have completed the student COVID training on Canvas. Must I also complete the employee COVID training (Return to Campus, https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/hr/working-through-covid-19)?
A: Yes, if you are in the payroll system at the University.

Q: How is the eCompliance Form different than Employee Training (Return to Campus)?
A: The eCompliance Form is specific to your situation, includes your faculty mentor or supervisor in planning safety protocol, and provides a method for the University to know who is working in research areas. The Employee Training is the standard requirement for any student or staff member who earning a salary from the University.

Q: I am trying to find a research team to join to START an undergraduate research experience. Do I need to fill out an eCompliance form before visiting with a potential mentor and touring the lab in person?
A: No. However, you must make an appointment with the faculty mentor ahead of time and follow all safety guidelines. Once a faculty mentor has agreed to take you on as a student you must complete the eCompliance form before beginning in-person.

Q: A faculty member has encouraged me to shadow a graduate student for two weeks before committing to a research project and to her mentorship. Must I fill out an eCompliance form and get approval first?
A: Yes. Sustained presence in a research space needs to be documented for building density regulations, tracking, and general safety assurances.

Q: My faculty mentor is willing to approve me to work in the research space; however, for personal reasons I don’t feel comfortable doing so. What are my options?
A: Undergraduates are not required to work in research sites if they believe their own health is at risk. In some cases students may be able to work out arrangements for...
alternate research and scholarly projects that may be completed at home. However, some projects will require in-person work and if the student is unable to work in the research space, the salary, scholarship, stipend and/or academic credit may be withdrawn. Students are encouraged to explore options with their faculty mentor, research program coordinator, academic advisor, or director of undergraduate studies for their major. Students seeking additional advice may make an appointment with the Office of Undergraduate Research staff through MU Connect. https://undergradresearch.missouri.edu/contact-us/

Q: I collect my data/conduct my research off campus. Will I be allowed to do so?
A: Please talk with your faculty mentor about issues involved in conducting work off campus, especially if it is at a non-University site.

Q: I need to drive to get to my research site. Are there special recommendations I must follow?
A: Yes, you should drive yourself, or if that is not possible, wear a face covering in a shared vehicle and sit far apart.

Q: My graduate student who is training me has suggested we meet off campus at a coffee shop to review my data face to face. Is this ok?
A: Meetings with research team members should occur by Zoom or maintaining a 6 foot, masked social distancing protocol. Meeting off campus to avoid university safety recommendations is not encouraged. As an MU student you have the right to decline this type of meeting and offer to meet by Zoom instead.

Q: I notice other research team members are not practicing safe behavior. What should I do?
A: If you are not comfortable reminding them, you should speak with your faculty mentor who can address this situation. Persistent concerns can be brought to the attention of the department chair/center director or reported on the “Health and Safety Concern” form https://missouri.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8CILtMj47kCiR8x

Q: I noticed that a research personnel from another lab are crowding a common space that I need to use and I don’t feel safe entering that area to do my work. What can I do?
A: Talk with your mentor first so that they can talk with the department chair/center director. If you wish to report this beyond your mentor, you can make a report on the “Health and Safety Concern” form https://missouri.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8CILtMj47kCiR8x

Q: I need to present my research project in a public setting to complete my capstone project. What are my options?
A: The Undergraduate Research & Creative Achievements Forum has gone virtual. In partnership with the MU Digital Library, students may share their abstract, poster, and short video presentation. A Fall Forum will begin December 9, 2020 and a Spring Forum will be held in April. Abstracts and artist statements are typically due a month before the event. Contact ugr@missouri.edu with questions. You can visit the virtual Forum website to check out the Spring 2020 and Summer 2020 projects: https://dl.mospace.umsystem.edu/mu/islandora/object/mu%3A422777

Q: I have additional questions about undergraduate research at MU. Who can I contact?
A: ugr@missouri.edu The website is undergradresearch.missouri.edu