

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE  
FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IN UNIVERSITI MALAYA DURING  
PPN PHASE 1**

1. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides guidance to all laboratory personnel, including researchers, research assistants, post-doctoral fellows, lab staff and postgraduate research students, working in UM clinical and research laboratories.
2. This SOP aims to ensure the appropriate COVID-19 health and safety considerations for the protection of all users and members of the UM.
3. This guidance supplements the UM Safety Handbook & UM Policy and Procedure on Lab Biosafety and Biosecurity which is downloadable at <https://umresearch.um.edu.my/oshe-umresearch>
4. Research and lab activities that are allowed during PPN Phase 1:
  - a. All research activities that require access to research facility and laboratory equipment that take place in the UM clinical and research laboratories (based on available lab space for physical distancing of at least 2 meters and not more than 20% capacity).
  - b. Equipment maintenance and service from external parties (must obtain prior approval from Deputy Vice Chancellor of Development).
5. Research and lab activities that are NOT allowed during PPN Phase 1:
  - a. All form of field work<sup>1</sup> inside and outside of UM campus involving physical activities are not allowed.
  - b. Physical laboratory and research meeting.
  - c. All form of physical gatherings (e.g. lunch, tea break, celebration)
6. Working hours in the laboratories permitted:
  - a. For those who are working in the laboratories involving "wet" laboratory work (e.g. performing chemistry reactions and work-up, biological analysis, tissue culture,

---

<sup>1</sup> Fieldwork is defined as any practical work conducted by a researcher outside of office or laboratory in the natural environment. Fieldwork includes sampling, interview, face-to-face survey, focus groups, industrial engagement, data collection, observation. Additional definitions of fieldwork may be defined by respective PTJs where necessary.

microscopy and etc): allowed to be in the laboratory from 9am - 4pm. Proper physical distancing (at least 2m) in the laboratories MUST be addressed.

- b. For those who are conducting analysis work that require access to laboratory instruments and equipment to collect data: allowed to be in the lab from 9am - 4pm. If the equipment is not required but work is purely on analyses of the data already gathered, they have to **Work From Home**.
  - c. For those who are doing computational or compute-intensive work that requiring access to facilities to set up: allowed up to 4 hours. However, remote access for computing work is strongly encouraged.
  - d. For those who are doing writing such as writing thesis, reports, paper: **Work From Home**.
  - e. For those who are conducting qualitative research such as interview, survey and focus group discussion: **Work From Home**.
7. Responsibility of laboratory head/ principal investigator (PI)/ supervisor:
- a. Ensure that the laboratory personnel are spaced **at least 2 meters** from each other while working in the lab (based on the lab space available for each lab) and **not more than 20%** of the laboratory personnel are allowed to work at one time; practice rotation schedule.
  - b. Ensure that the laboratory or office are well ventilated. When possible, open windows to allow for air exchange.
  - c. Strongly advice laboratory head/ principal investigator (PI)/ supervisor to prepare soap for hand washing and alcohol-based hand sanitizer in the laboratory.
  - d. Perform site- and activity-specific risk assessments to determine the most appropriate safety measures to implement for particular circumstances:
    - i. Determine the number of people that the laboratory space can safely accommodate while maintaining physical distancing of at least 2 meters.
    - ii. Assess the flow of personnel traffic. Where possible, design one-way paths for lab personnel to walk through the laboratory space.
    - iii. Assess and set procedures for cleaning and sanitizing commonly shared equipment and areas to ensure clean surfaces and equipment for all users.
    - iv. Review emergency communication and operational plans, including how to protect staff at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
  - e. Identify laboratory tasks and activities that can be performed with reduced or no face-to-face interactions, or be performed from home.

- f. Enforced a body temperature monitoring system for lab users. Restrict lab user with a body temperature above 37.5°C from entering the lab.
- g. Enforce proper documentation including attendance record.
- h. Monitor the health condition of all lab personnel. Should any lab personnel show any symptoms of illness, instruct the lab personnel to return home immediately. If highly suspected of COVID-19 infection, the lab personnel should seek medical assistant for a COVID-19 test.
- i. Ensure that all lab personnel understand and adhere to all the relevant SOPs and lab guidelines for research activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- j. Laboratory head/ principal investigator (PI)/ supervisor should be prepared for the eventuality that individuals in their group may test positive for COVID-19. Laboratory spaces and offices used by an individual found to be COVID-19-positive will be closed, disinfected, and prepared for re-occupancy. Lab members and close contacts are required to self-isolate at home according to the Guidelines by the Ministry of Health. Laboratory head/ principal investigator (PI)/ supervisor must assist OSHE in the tracing activities.

8. Responsibility of lab personnel:

- a. **All lab personnel MUST perform self-screening and monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms on a daily basis.** If a lab personnel is feeling ill or suspected of being in contact with positive patients, they **MUST NOT** enter the university campus. Inform their laboratory head/ PI/ supervisor immediately.
- b. Before entering Labs:
  - i. **Fill in the Health Declaration Form via UM Touch before entering UM campus.** Make sure you answer each question in the Health Declaration Form carefully and **honestly**.
  - ii. Before entering the lab or building, log in via MySejahtera or UM Touch and scan body temperature. Those with a body temperature above 37.5°C are not allowed to enter the lab. He/she **MUST** return home immediately and inform their laboratory head/ PI/ supervisor of this incidence.
  - iii. Record daily attendance to lab.
- c. Working in the Labs:
  - i. Face mask must be worn **all the times** in the laboratory and office. It is strongly encouraged to practice double layer masks as recommended by the Ministry of Health Malaysia.

- ii. Ensure physical distancing (>2 meters) while working in the laboratory and office. If required, reduce and limit physical interaction between lab personnel. If physically distancing is not possible within the lab under normal operations, work should be scheduled (by rotation) to accommodate this practice.
- iii. Shared infrastructure that is located either in a researcher's lab or common space must also abide by the physical distancing rules and must be sanitized after each use.
- iv. Increase the regularity of cleaning and disinfecting shared lab/office surfaces and equipment, including benches, desks, chairs, keyboards, phones, etc. and high-touch surfaces to at least daily.
- v. Regular PPE necessary for the lab environment (e.g. gloves, mask, etc.) should be provided as usual by the PI/ supervisor. PPE that is shared such as laser safety eyewear and heat insulated glove must be disinfected after each use.
- vi. Do not share lab coats.
- vii. Wash hands frequently with water and soap for 20 seconds or sanitize hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol when soap and water are not available.

9. Reporting of COVID-19 positive/close contact case in UM:

- a. In the event of staff/student has been reported positive for COVID-19 or close contact to positive cases, the reporting and tracing initiatives need to be carried out and this is under the responsibility of Principal Investigator/Supervisor/Lab Head.
- b. Principal Investigator/Supervisor/Lab Head needs to identify the reported case's close contacts within UM and locations in campus visited by the reported case according to the assessment listed in the UM COVID-19 Reporting Procedure.
- c. All the information need to be filled in the UM COVID-19 Tracing Form and the Principal Investigator/Supervisor/Lab Head needs to make sure the information provided is as accurate as possible before being sent to OSHE at [covid19\\_oshe@um.edu.my](mailto:covid19_oshe@um.edu.my) and UM Health Clinic (for students) at [drzuraidah@um.edu.my](mailto:drzuraidah@um.edu.my) and a copy to the building manager.
- d. UM COVID-19 Reporting Procedure and UM COVID-19 Tracing Form are downloadable at <https://umresearch.um.edu.my/oshe-umresearch> via UM staff portal at PTj Info > Bahagian Keselamatan & Kesihatan Pekerjaan dan Alam Sekitar (OSHE) > COVID-19
- e. Principal Investigator/Supervisor/Lab Head also needs to:

- i. Ensure staff/students/visitors/contractors who have been confirmed positive for COVID-19 or close contact to positive cases are absent from work/entering campus.
- ii. Inform OSHE of the results of the swab test conducted by close contact.
- iii. Lock down the locations that need to be disinfected. Be present and supervise when disinfection work is carried out and it is recommended to lock down the disinfected space for at least 24 hours before re-operation.

10. All lab personnel are advised to read and understand the SOP for research activities in Universiti Malaya during the PPN Phase 1 before entering the laboratory. Those who are caught breaking the SOP will face disciplinary action.

**Resources:**

Prosedur Operasi Standard (SOP) Langkah Kawalan dan Pencegahan Penularan Covid-19 di Universiti Malaya (Semasa dan Pasca Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan Bersyarat) (2020), OSHE UM. <https://umresearch.um.edu.my/Forms/Research%20Guidelines%20%26%20Policies/OCCUPATIONAL%20SAFETY%2C%20HEALTH%20%26%20ENVIRONMENT/SOP%20LANGKAH%20KAWALAN%20DAN%20PENEGAHAN%20PENULARAN%20COVID-19%20DI%20UM%20V2.pdf>

Prosedur Pelaporan Kes Positif Dan Kontak Rapat Covid-19 Bagi Staf/ Kontraktor/ Pelawat/ Pelajar Universiti Malaya, OSHE UM.

[https://umresearch.um.edu.my/Forms/Research%20Guidelines%20%26%20Policies/OCCUPATIONAL%20SAFETY%2C%20HEALTH%20%26%20ENVIRONMENT/PROSEDUR%20PELAPORAN%20KES%20POSITIF%20DAN%20KONTAK%20RAPAT%20STAF\\_PELAJAR\\_EditByNHA%20\(1\).docx](https://umresearch.um.edu.my/Forms/Research%20Guidelines%20%26%20Policies/OCCUPATIONAL%20SAFETY%2C%20HEALTH%20%26%20ENVIRONMENT/PROSEDUR%20PELAPORAN%20KES%20POSITIF%20DAN%20KONTAK%20RAPAT%20STAF_PELAJAR_EditByNHA%20(1).docx)

COVID-19 Management Guidelines in Malaysia No.5 / 2020 (Latest Update on 16 JULAI 2021), Ministry of Health Malaysia. <http://covid-19.moh.gov.my/garis-panduan/garis-panduan-kkm>

Pelan Pemulihan Negara (PPN) – SOP Fasa 1 (Tarikh kemas kini 6 Julai 2021), Majlis Keselamatan Negara. <https://www.mkn.gov.my/web/ms/pelan-pemulihan-negara-fasa-1/>

Prepared by the office of DVC (Research & Innovation)  
On 19 July 2021