Standard Operating Procedure for CDME Research Activities During COVID-19 Pandemic

Before coming onto UNCW campus to conduct laboratory work or before any field work
If you have been given CDME priority to resume laboratory or field work to you must complete a self-assessment of your health status and of your risk of being an asymptomatic carrier of the COVID-19 virus. If the answer to any of the following questions is YES then you should not come on to campus and must not resume laboratory research or fieldwork until the appropriate amount of time has passed. You must notify the Research Office (covid19research@uncw.edu; 910.622.7608) must be notified and your health provider contacted for further guidance (UNCW Health Center is also available 910.962.0587 or coronavirus@uncw.edu).

- Have you travelled from out of NC in the last 14 days?
- Do you have any COVID-19 emergency warning signs¹ including trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or to stay awake, bluish lips or face?
- Does anyone in your shared living space or anyone with whom you have had recent contact traveled from outside of NC or have a fever, cough, difficulty breathing, or otherwise feeling unwell?
- Has anyone in your shared living space or anyone with whom you have had recent contact been diagnosed with COVID-19?
- Have you attended events, private gatherings, or been in public spaces in the last 14 days where social distancing of 6 ft was not enforced?

The self-assessment for laboratory work will be continuous, i.e. it should be conducted each day you intend to work.

Risk assessment of your work space
Consider the environment you will be working in.

- Will you be potentially be in a confined space where social distancing cannot be adhered to?
- Are the necessary PPE items e.g. ample gloves, paper towels, 70% alcohol or disinfectant available in your workspace?
- Have all measures been taken to ensure work areas, equipment, and/or scheduling allow for occupants to work at least 6 ft apart (approximately 150 to 200 sq. ft. required per person)?
- Have you obtained approval to use shared core facilities/instruments?

If the answer is ‘NO’ or ‘I Don’t Know’ to any of the above then discuss with your supervisor before coming to the laboratory.

Once approved for work in the laboratory or field
Our guiding principle for developing a Standard Operating Procedure for research activities during the COVID-19 pandemic is that we have a duty of care for each other and our community. Therefore, the adoption of stringent protocols that allow us to adhere to social distancing and avoid potential spread of the disease in our workplace is required. Notwithstanding careful self-assessments and SOP measures, we must assume that ANYONE operating in our space/building/lab could be an apparently healthy but asymptomatic carrier of this highly contagious virus. Everyone must adopt these principles and adhere to the SOP below, because we wish to continue critical research as far as practicable. To behave otherwise poses an unnecessary risk to vulnerable individuals and could result in far more restrictive measures. It is possible that even these SOP measures will

¹ This list is not all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you. Call 911 or call ahead to your local emergency facility: Notify the operator that you are seeking care for someone who has or may have COVID-19.
be superseded by stricter rules regarding in-person work in laboratory and field sites. A signed SOP-Research-Activities-COVID-19 form is required BEFORE work can proceed.

**SOP for working in laboratory spaces during COVID-19 Pandemic**

Having ascertained that you are approved for laboratory work, are healthy, and your workspace has cleared the risk assessment above, the following SOP will be used:

- Enter building using disabled auto open doors (elbow contact) if possible
- Wash hands thoroughly as per best practices (20 sec, hot water and soap, towel dry) on entering the building/lab and immediately don disposable nitrile gloves and wear them at all times (assume any touched surface could be contaminated). Wearing gloves will also help with inadvertent touching of face etc.
- Wear cloth face covering or approved PPE facemasks.
- Frequently sanitize surfaces, countertops and equipment with appropriate wipes or solutions being used with >70% alcohol, mild bleach or other recommended product appropriate for the equipment etc.
- Sanitize all door handles before use
- Decontaminate before and after use; nothing can be ‘too clean’!
- Strict social distancing rules will apply (occupants will remain greater than 6 ft apart at all times) and workstations will be assigned or arranged at least 6 ft apart
- No conversations or chatting in close proximity
- Be especially mindful of shared rooms e.g. tissue culture, bathroom etc., freezer room etc. where others might be coming and going (and may not be adhering to the SOP)
- Avoid entering small shared rooms when others are using (e.g. wait for someone to get samples from a freezer and leaves the room before you enter)
- Do not bring food to the labs or eat in the labs/offices
- Do not use water fountains
- Minimize time in the lab; plan for efficient use of time and leave as soon as you are finished. Do your data entry, analysis and other dry tasks at home.
- If use of core facilities/instruments is required, your work must be coordinated with the person responsible prior to start of work/analysis
- Be aware that equipment deemed as high-contact risk may not be available for your research
- Use a shared calendar, group electronic communication etc. to schedule time in shared lab environments to limit occupancy in the space and to insure adherence to effective social distancing. For example, to maintain the 6 ft distance a person will need approximately 150 sq. ft., so the occupancy in a 600 sq. ft laboratory should not exceed 4 people.
- A daily log of laboratory activity will be recorded (e.g. log name; date; work area/room number(s); time in; time out).
- On leaving the laboratory, sanitize gloved hands, go to bathroom remove gloves and dispose, wash hands with soap and water, towel dry and leave building (via disabled auto doors if possible) immediately. Wash your hands and take all advised precautions on arriving home.
- Supervisors will check activities in their areas of responsibility and be responsible for maintaining daily log (as above, shared excel spreadsheet is an easy option).
- All lab users have an obligation to immediately (on the spot) correct deviations from these SOPs by their peers, and report incidents to the Research Office (covid19research@uncw.edu; 910.622.7608) as soon as possible. It is important that we help each other adopt best practices as quickly as possible. We are all human, and make mistakes, but we cannot allow non-compliance.
- Any person not adhering to this SOP will have their research approval and access to UNCW buildings revoked.
Additional SOP for field work

- Field work will be postponed/curtailed as much as possible.
- If field work is approved, then an SOP for that specific site/process must be approved by the Research Office (covid19research@uncw.edu; 910.622.7608) before work can continue.
- All participants will travel to the field site in convoy but in separate vehicles. Field work often requires transport, and it is not possible to maintain social distancing in a vehicle.
- Maintain physical distancing (greater than 6 ft) at all times during field operations. Wear PPE, including cloth face covering or approved PPE facemasks.
- Use disinfecting wipes/spray etc. before and after using all tools/instruments etc.
- Wash hands before starting filed work, upon return from the field, after unloading and stowing field materials, and as additional opportunities occur.
- Log your name, location, time work started and ended with your supervisor.

What to do if you feel ill while working

If you begin to feel ill while at work in the research laboratory or in the field, take the following steps

- If it is an emergency or life-threatening situation, call 911 and seek emergency aid immediately.
- If it is not an emergency
  - Quickly find a safe stopping point for your work.
  - Re-apply the daily self-assessment and follow the necessary prescribed actions. This includes notifying the Research Office (covid19research@uncw.edu; 910.622.7608) and contacting your health provider for further guidance (UNCW Health Center is also available 910.962.0587 or coronavirus@uncw.edu).
  - Notify your supervisor, and then go home (or to lodging if in the field).

These SOPs will remain in effect until superseded by additional guidance or requirements from UNCW, UNC, or external authority.

I have read and understood the self-assessment and standard operating procedures for laboratory and field work at UNCW during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Signed by Researcher:

______________________________  ___________________________  ________________
Name                         Signature                        Date

Signed by Associate Provost for Research and Innovation:

______________________________  ___________________________  ________________
Name                         Signature                        Date