Teaching Labs Re-Opening Guidance

August 2, 2020

The purpose of this document is to create guidance which builds upon existing Institute protocols surrounding re-opening of laboratory spaces, and which addresses the specific issues related to Covid 19 which might exist in a teaching lab setting. Teaching labs will adhere to the same guidelines as the rest of MIT regarding people permitted per sq. feet, health attestation and face coverings. Teaching labs are encouraged to write up a detailed best practices guidance including cleaning/disinfecting protocols for their specific lab course. More restrictive measures can be adopted if the specific conditions require. EHS and DLC EHS Coordinators are available to assist. Students and staff should be informed that if they have any concerns, they can report anonymously to MIT's Ethics Point (anonymous 3rd party hotline) or the MIT Ombuds office.

Teaching-lab-specific topics include:

- **Teaching Assistants (TA)**
  The TA adds an additional layer of personal interaction to a laboratory space, and provides a level of direct supervision to help in the implementation of safety and distancing protocols. TAs must be given clear instruction/training on new roles and expectations placed upon them:
  - A TA should be present any time students are in a teaching lab, however steps can be taken to reduce/eliminate close interaction:
    - Q/A sessions before and after the lab via email or Zoom when possible,
    - Strict adherence to 6-foot separation rule, even when answering student questions (no huddling over a microscope together),
    - Repeated questions should be grouped and answers should be given to the class as a whole when possible, and
    - Digital, recorded instruction wherever possible.
  - TAs should be expected to remind students about MIT's COVID-related research protocols, including use of masks and distancing; correcting behaviors on the spot when necessary.
  - TA and student roles in decontamination should be clearly defined.
  - Contact EHS if you would like to discuss the use of enhanced PPE or respiratory protection.

Teaching Labs Re-Opening Guidance

August 2, 2020

- **Dedicated (not shared) Workspace, Equipment, tools & Supplies**
  Every effort should be made to assign dedicated hoods, benches, tools, equipment and supplies to individual students in order to minimize interpersonal interactions and reduce foot traffic through the laboratory.

- **Shared Equipment, Tools and Facilities**
  Multiple students working on the same procedures with the same equipment means that teaching laboratories typically require a greater level of sharing of equipment and resources than research laboratories.
  - Effort should be made to avoid sharing of equipment and tools wherever possible. Sharing of computers should also be avoided; students should rely on their personal laptops instead of shared devices.
  - Shared equipment should be identified, with documented processes in place for decontamination including the type of disinfectant used, the frequency of disinfection, and responsible parties. At a minimum, MIT requires shared equipment and tools be disinfected before and after each use. All equipment should be disinfected before and after each use as this assures cleaning at every use
  - This consideration applies to equipment (glove boxes, biological safety cabinets) as well as tools (hand tools and bench tools) and lab facilities such as sinks and gas/vacuum valves.
  - Signage should be employed at shared equipment locations which reminds users of traffic flow, operational procedures, and decontamination practices (including type of disinfectant, application method, frequency and responsible parties) for that piece of equipment.

- **Shared Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):**
  MIT COVID PPE guidance discourages the sharing of PPE wherever possible. Students in teaching labs are often provided lab coats and other PPE upon arrival.
  - Teaching laboratory procedures should clearly indicate how PPE, especially lab coats, that is provided to students is assigned, collected and disinfected to ensure that there is no sharing of contaminated items. Consider use of disposable PPE where possible.
  - The sharing/distribution of safety glasses is strongly discouraged; each student should have his or her own pair.
  - Where shared gloves are necessary (ex. autoclave / cryogen gloves), disposable gloves should be worn beneath the re-usable one.

Teaching Labs Re-Opening Guidance

August 2, 2020

- **Use of Human Material**
  The use of primary human material in a teaching laboratory presents additional infection risks. Please refer to Primary Human Material Guidance from MIT for working safely with human materials.

- **Social Interactions, Collaborations, and Group Sessions**
  Teaching lab operations often include group learning activities as well as spaces where students can collaborate and socialize.
  - Group collaboration areas should be eliminated where possible, with alternate digital platforms available to facilitate academic interaction and collaboration.
  - Congregation should be eliminated in common areas outside of the lab space.
  - In person group huddles and activities, including trainings and orientations, should not be done. They can be conducted on-line/Zoom.
  - If cellphones are used to communicate in teaching labs, disinfection practices should be established (ex. disinfectant wipes).

  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" document.

- **Entrance and Exit Procedures:**
  - Situations where students are assembled in a group awaiting access to the laboratory should be eliminated:
    - Consider staggered arrival times,
    - Assign entrance points and exit points to prevent path crossing.
    - Provide for immediate entrance to the lab space with no waiting.
  - Encourage students to minimize the personal items they bring to the lab.
  - Large (5-gallon for example) zip-top bags can be used to store personal items while in the lab, and to store lab coats between lab sessions.
  - Consider staggered exit times and locations to prevent a bottleneck on the way out of the lab space.
  - Guidance for routine exiting and re-entering the lab, for example for restroom visits or other reasons, should be clearly defined to students.

Contact EHS at environment@mit.edu / 617-452-3477 if you have questions, or for assistance with setting up your lab space.