

Guidelines on Access to Laboratories by Non-laboratory Personnel

Introduction

Section 3.3 of the HSNO Exempt Laboratory manual details requirements for access to laboratories by non-laboratory visitors. This document provides more detailed guidance on authorising and managing access to laboratories by major groups of visitors.

From time to time it may be necessary for personnel who are not Authorised Laboratory Users to enter or work in laboratory areas, e.g. Property Services personnel, contractors, other visitors.

In such circumstances, it is important that appropriate control measures (at a minimum, some form of health and safety induction) are implemented to protect the health and safety of visitors and to ensure that visitors do not compromise the health and safety of laboratory users or breach laboratory compliance requirements.

Several major groups of Permitted Visitors have been identified;

1. Property Services personnel
2. Laboratory cleaners
3. External contractors
4. Arranged school visits/hands-on science
5. Summer students/work placements
6. Visiting staff or post-graduate students (from other institutions or departments)
7. Health and Safety personnel, Hazardous Substance Response Team members
8. Campus Watch
9. Enforcement agents (e.g. MPI inspectors, Work Safe New Zealand)
10. Emergency Services

The following sections provide guidelines on the induction and training process for each of these groups.

Note on children in laboratories: Children under the age of 16 years are not permitted in laboratories unless on a specifically arranged visit for educational purposes that is authorised by the Departmental Laboratory Manager (DLM). Where such visits are to take place a risk assessment should be carried out and documented procedures implemented to minimise any risks to children, teachers/parent helpers or laboratory personnel. Further guidance on such visits is provided under 'Arranged School Visits/Hands-on Science'.

1. Property Services personnel

Property Services personnel who need to enter laboratories as part of their duties are required to complete laboratory health and safety training every 2 years (carried out by the Health, Safety and Compliance Office).

Property Services personnel must contact the appropriate DLM and Sector Manager (where applicable), prior to commencing any work in a laboratory or that is likely to affect a laboratory (e.g. by causing loss of services such as electricity, ventilation or water). Advance notification of any work should be made a minimum of 2 days before carrying out any actual work (for minor work only), except by agreement with the DLM/Sector Manager. Note that work likely to have a significant impact will require greater advance warning. A list of DLMs and Sector Managers is maintained on the Health and Safety Website.

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/humanresources/health-and-safety/hazards/laboratory-safety/index.html>

The laboratory health and safety advisor can also be contacted for advice on the appropriate departmental contact(s).

Where Property Services personnel need to carry out regular planned maintenance work likely to have low impact in laboratory areas (e.g. routine inspections/checks) they may negotiate approval with the DLM/Sector Manager to carry such work without advance approval.

Some circumstances (e.g. flooding) may dictate that Property Services personnel need to enter laboratory areas urgently (and without prior notification of the designated building contact). However, in such instances it is likely that Property Services personnel will either be called in by department personnel (in which case the department will already be aware) or by Campus Watch (in which case, Campus Watch is responsible for notifying any designated after-hours contacts provided by the department concerned).

Where the nature or the location of the work presents a high risk to department or Property Services personnel then a specific safety plan may be required. Examples include;

- Any work inside a bulk chemical store ('Hazardous Substance Location' or 'DG store')
- Major work being carried out in a laboratory which will remain in use while the work is carried out.

Note that if any work requires hazardous chemicals or other hazardous materials or equipment to be moved out of the way, these items must be moved by laboratory personnel or specialist contractors, not by Property Services personnel.

2. Laboratory Cleaners

Laboratory cleaners within the University of Otago provide contracted services and are managed by the Custodial Services Manager. The contract documents include specifications for laboratory cleaning procedures that meet the requirements of the University of Otago Containment and Quarantine Manual for Containment and Transitional Facilities for Microorganisms and Uncleared Biologicals, as well as this compliance manual.

Cleaning contractors are required to view the Laboratory Cleaning Health and Safety DVD and to complete a short questionnaire to demonstrate competency. This process is managed by Property Services as the contract owner. All authorized cleaning contractors are issued with photo identification cards that must be worn while on site. If a cleaner does not have identification or a swipe card to access a building or laboratory, do not allow the individual into any University buildings or laboratories and report the incident to Campus Watch.

If you are not satisfied with the cleaning or have any concerns, please contact the Manager, Custodial Services, Property Services.

3. Other External Contractors

Contractors are managed through the University of Otago Compliant Contractors Policy and Procedures. Property Services manage the assessment, approval and induction of building related contractors, while all other contractors (i.e. engaged by departments) are managed through the Health, Safety and Compliance Office.

Where Property Services engages contractors to carry out work in a department they are required to follow the same notification procedures as Property Services personnel, i.e. they must contact the designated departmental contact before commencing any work.

If a department engages a contractor then the department is responsible for ensuring the contractor is either an existing Approved Contractor, or that the contractor completes the approval process prior to commencing work. For advice on whether a specific contractor is approved or on the approval process please contact Nevan Trotter in the Health, Safety and Compliance Office.

As part of the contractor approval process, the contractor will be given a general health and safety induction covering University of Otago health and safety procedures, and will be required to submit their plan for managing any hazards to themselves and department personnel. However, departments engaging contractors should also provide those contractors with an induction specific to the area they will be working in, e.g. fire evacuation procedures, first aid provision, location of toilets, tearooms etc.

Note that Approved Contractors are issued with University photo ID cards and are required to display these at all times.

4. Arranged School Visits/Hands-on Science

Visits by school children (including those under 16 years of age) to laboratories are permitted under the following circumstances;

- The DLM must be notified and approve of any proposed visit.
- Groups of children must be supervised at all times, with a minimum of one Authorised User present for every 10 visitors.

For brief visits that do not involve lab work, visiting groups may sign in to departmental log books with a group name (e.g. school name) providing the school has previously provided a separate list of student and teacher/parent helper names to the department. Details of the lab(s) and person(s) to be visited must be recorded in the log book.

For extended (>1hour and up to 1 week) visits (typically involving lab work) students and teachers should receive a basic induction appropriate to the laboratory and nature of the activities they will be carrying out, e.g.

- Fire evacuation procedures.
- Requirements for appropriate footwear, laboratory coats and eye protection.
- No food or drink (including water) to be consumed or taken into laboratory.
- Long hair to be tied back.
- Washing of hands before leaving the laboratory.

5. Summer students/work placements

Undergraduate and high-school students (aged 16 years and over) may work in laboratories as 'summer students' or on some other form of work experience/placement. Students working in laboratories (other than on a supervised visit, as described in the previous section) should be trained and documented as Authorised Laboratory Users. However, it is recommended that departments consider restricting the access of such students to laboratories within specified 'normal working hours', or require a minimum level of supervision, in recognition that such students are inexperienced and require a greater level of supervision.

6. Visiting staff or post-graduate students (from other departments or institutions)

Staff or post-graduate students visiting from other departments or institutions (e.g. visiting scientists from New Zealand or overseas) who will **not be** carrying out lab work but who will be visiting research laboratories, must sign in (and sign out on exit) via the departmental log book, specifying the laboratory and person to be visited and who is responsible for their supervision. Such visitors should be supervised at all times in laboratory areas.

Visiting staff or post-graduate students who will be carrying out lab-work in research laboratories should be trained and documented as Authorized Laboratory Users. Note that even if visiting staff or students are carrying out non-lab based work they will still need to receive a basic health and safety induction (e.g. covering fire evacuation and emergency procedures, first aid provision, accident/incident reporting).

In some cases, there may be a standing arrangement whereby staff or students from another department are permitted to visit a specific laboratory area to use an item of low risk equipment (e.g. digital camera, spectrometer). This is acceptable, providing the DLMs of both departments involved are aware of this and that there are procedures in place to ensure that such visitors -

- Have an appropriate level of knowledge and training for the area to be visited and the tasks to be performed.
- Receive a basic induction appropriate to the area to be visited (e.g. location of nearest fire alarm and phone, emergency contacts, fire evacuation procedures, location of any relevant safety equipment such as eye-wash facilities).

7. Health, Safety and Compliance Personnel, Hazardous Substance Response Team

Wherever possible, Health, Safety and Compliance personnel should notify the DLM prior visiting or inspecting any laboratory and during the visit should be accompanied by the DLM or the Laboratory Supervisor. In addition inspection persons should not touch or interfere with items in the laboratory without permission of the DLM or laboratory supervisor (with the exception that inspection person may open cupboards, cabinets, fridges and freezers to examine contents).

However, Health and Safety Office personnel, together with members of the Hazardous Substance Response Team may enter laboratory areas without notification and unaccompanied in the following exceptional circumstances;

- 1) It is not possible or practical to notify or be accompanied by the DLM or laboratory supervisor, and;
- 2) There is an urgent need to enter the laboratory, such as to;
 - Secure the scene of a serious incident or assist emergency services
 - Accompany an Enforcement Agent who is exercising their right to inspect.
 - Clean up or assess a spill or other uncontrolled release of a hazardous substance.
 - Inspect any laboratory where there is evidence (e.g. reported to the Health and Safety Office) that there is a significant and immediate threat to the health and safety of laboratory or other personnel as a result of activities taking place in that laboratory.

8. Campus Watch

Campus Watch personnel may need to enter laboratories under some circumstances and to accommodate this possibility they complete laboratory health and safety training every 2 years (carried out by the Health, Safety and Compliance Office).

Campus Watch personnel should avoid entering laboratories unless it is necessary to perform their duties. Wherever it is practical, Campus Watch personnel should contact the laboratory supervisor or DLM prior to entering any laboratory. However, some circumstances (e.g. emergencies, security breaches) may dictate that Campus Watch personnel will be required to enter a laboratory area without prior notification.

9. Enforcement Agents (e.g. HSNO, Department of Labour, MAF Biosecurity)

There are a number of agencies with enforcement responsibilities and powers over aspects of laboratory work conducted at the University of Otago. Enforcement agents have powers of inspection in relation to their areas of jurisdiction and it is an offence to obstruct an enforcement agent from carrying out their duties.

Wherever possible, enforcement agents inspecting laboratory or related areas (e.g. bulk chemical stores) should be accompanied by someone with knowledge of the area and of the aspect of laboratory work being inspected. It is also advisable for the Health, Safety and Compliance Office to be notified in order that they can provide additional assistance.

The major enforcement agencies likely to be encountered, their areas of jurisdiction and the department personnel that any queries from these agencies should be directed to, are listed in the table below.

Agency	Area of Jurisdiction	Contact person(s) for queries
Work Safe New Zealand	Health and Safety in Employment, Hazardous Substances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DLM • Laboratory Health and Safety Advisor*
Ministry for Primary Industries	New Organisms (including Genetically Modified Organisms), Imported Risk Goods/Uncleared Biologicals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector Manager • Biological Compliance Officer*
Office of Radiation Safety	Radiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radiation Safety Officer • Radiation Licensee • Radiation Safety Advisor*

*These contact persons can be contacted through the Health, Safety and Compliance Office.

10. Emergency Services

Emergency services have the right of access to buildings in the event of an emergency and there are specific provisions in the Health and Safety in Employment Act to allow this. However, where possible it is useful to have a knowledgeable staff member who can advise and support emergency services in relation to any hazards that may be present. In some cases, Emergency Services may request information on the identity and quantities of hazardous substances present in laboratories or buildings (e.g. in the event of a fire or suspected poisoning) and departments would be expected to provide an inventory if required.