

Return to workplace guidelines
Center for Desert Agriculture
June, 2020

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1. Introduction

This document provides guidelines to all faculty, staff, employees, and students in CDA who will return to the workplace after lab hibernation and remote working. The aim is to facilitate business continuity in a controlled and efficient manner while ensuring safety and wellbeing for all. To prevent the spread of COVID-19 at workplace, a set of five simple recommendations by the HSE department at KAUST are:

1. Wash your hands
2. Use physical distancing
3. Cover coughs and sneezes
4. Use a face covering
5. Report illness



**Wash
your hands**



**Use physical
distancing**



**Use a
face covering**



**Cover coughs
and sneezes**



Report illness

To minimize interaction with other people and reduce the risk of exposure, all work that does not require access to campus, should be completed from home. The “Keep KAUST Safe” campaign provides detailed information and resources on the above subjects are located at <https://www.kaust.edu.sa/keepKAUSTsafe>.

2. Who is allowed on campus:

After the CDA lab reopening on 28th of June, 2020 faculty, staff, postdocs, research scientists and PTSAs can access the office and lab space (50% occupancy) as determined by center management. Students will be the last to get access after an official announcement from the center management.

All work that does not require physical presence on campus should preferably be done from home. Those who do not feel comfortable to come to lab can continue to work from home. People in vulnerable groups can come in to work, but their attendance is voluntary. You should not come to work if you feel unwell and should immediately report your status KAUST health.

Laboratories and office areas that fail to adhere to the measures outlined in this document will be subject to suspension of operations and loss of access to the laboratory/office spaces.

3. Occupancy Guidelines

KAUST is following the physical distancing guidelines set by the WHO that have been found very effective against transmission of COVID-19. In phase 2 of reopening, the occupancy of office area and lab should not exceed 50% of the total capacity.

3.1. Office area occupancy

- Physical distancing (the distance of 2 meters) must be applied as a general rule for offices. People should avoid sitting face to face without face covering and at a distance less than 2 meters.
- Workstations, chair handles etc. will be disinfected by the housekeeping at the beginning and end of work shifts.
- Face covering must be worn all the time except when sitting alone in the whole office area or while eating/ drinking.
- It is strongly encouraged that computer-based work should be performed remotely.
- Remote working tools (i.e. zoom, skype, etc.) should be used to avoid in-person meetings wherever possible.
- If in-person meetings are essential, limit the number of people to maintain recommended physical distancing of 2 meters.
- Maximum occupancy of the common break areas have been marked by campus support.
- A maximum of two (2) people are permitted inside an elevator at any given time. Both people should stand in opposite corners – diagonally from each other - of the elevator to maximize physical distance.

3.2. Wet lab occupancy

- Working hours will be Sunday till Thursday 8:00 am till 5:00 pm in area 4 and 6:00 am till 10:00 pm in area 6 (Morning shift 6:00 am – 1:45 pm, Afternoon shift 2:15 pm – 10:00 pm).
- Lab doors will be designated as **Entry Only** or **Exit Only**.
- Hand sanitizer must be applied before touching door handles.
- Physical distancing of 2 meters must be followed with no occupancy of front facing benches.
- Occupancy of labs will be based on the general guideline of considering at least 10 meter square area per person.
- Occupancy of lab benches will follow a 2 meter distancing guideline. Work benches have been marked in both areas to identify work space.
- Each occupant should only use assigned work areas and try to stay in their assigned space as much as possible.

- Lab users must wear **disposable surgical masks** before entering the lab and keep them on while working inside the lab.
- Masks should be removed and discarded if soiled or contaminated and at the end of each work shift.
- People having difficulty working while wearing a face mask and safety glasses due to fogging, will be provided with face shields on demand.
- In situations where physical distancing cannot be achieved or maintained, face coverings are required with a minimum of 1 meter physical distance e.g., working with common equipment or working in a common room like a plant growth room, equipment room etc.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is to be worn by all persons working in the laboratory.
- A maximum occupancy sign will be displayed outside lab doors and outside each common space.
- Adherence to the maximum capacity guidelines in common areas will be everyone's responsibility.
- Booking sheets will be pasted outside common equipment rooms and pathogen labs.
- Working simultaneously in the same laminar flow hood / biosafety cabinet or fume hood is strictly prohibited.
- All surfaces must be disinfected with 70% ethanol or 10% bleach solution before leaving the lab.
- All common equipment must be disinfected with 70% Ethanol before and after use.
- For disinfection of microscope eye pieces, disinfectant wipes will be available next to the microscopes. Users will be responsible for disinfecting before and after use.

Following are the maximum occupancies guidelines for common lab spaces

Area 4	30 people / 1000 meter sq.
Area 6	30 people / 1000 meter sq.
Plant growth rooms	2 people
Microscopy rooms	1 person
RNA room area 6	1 person
Mammalian cell culture room	1 person
Autoclave rooms	1 person
Pathogen lab	2 people
Microbiology lab	2 people
Incubator rooms	1 person
PCR room , area 4	1 person
Radioisotope room area 6	1 person
Equipment room area 6	3 people
Electrophoresis room area 6	3 people
Equipment rooms 1 and 2, area 6	2 people
Gel benches area 4	1 person

4. Disinfection

- Wash hands before and after lab or office work is conducted.
- Surfaces of office workstations should be cleaned and disinfected frequently with 70% ethanol or 70% isopropanol by occupants.
- Use 70% ethanol to clean lab benches at the beginning and end of the day.
- Hand sanitizers will be available at lab entrances and should be applied before touching the door keypads and opening the door.
- A supply of liquid soap and paper towels can be found by all sinks inside the lab.
- Before leaving the lab, lab coats should be removed and hands washed with soap and water before touching the door handles.
- Do not touch handles with gloves on.
- Lab door handles and keypads will be disinfected frequently by housekeeping.
- Laboratory benches and work areas (including biosafety cabinets) should continue to be disinfected with 70% ethanol by the end users before and after use. Allow for at least one minute of contact time on the surface.
- As an alternative to commercial disinfectants, the following solutions are also effective:
i) 70% ethanol or 70% isopropanol; ii) household bleach diluted 50-fold with water.
Allow for at least one minute of contact time on the surface.
- All common lab equipment must be decontaminated with 70% Ethanol before and after use. Disinfectant wipes will be available next to microscopes for users.

5. Responsibilities

The Center Director, Principal Investigators and Lab manager are responsible for ensuring that all staff, researchers and students are aware of the health risks, hazards and hazard control measures and that everyone is aware of the guidelines set by HSE and follow these guidelines. It is each individual's responsibility to comply with these directions and guidelines and play their part in their own and others' health, safety and wellbeing.

6. Emergency measures

Everyone should have completed the Emergency and Incident preparedness training. People inside the lab and office areas should be aware of the location of First Aid kits, Chemical and Biological spill kits, and numbers to dial in case of an emergency. For any emergency dial 911 from the landline phone or dial 012-808-0911 from a mobile phone.

Note: Any of the above mentioned guideline is subject to change in accordance with changing WHO guidelines and KC3 decisions. Any change will be communicated on a central level to ensure health, safety and wellbeing for all.

7. Useful links

COVID -19 guidelines

<https://hse.kaust.edu.sa/Services/Pages/covid-19.aspx>

Return to normal workplace with phases of reopening

<https://hse.kaust.edu.sa/Services/Pages/HRguidelines.aspx>

Work layout guidelines by HSE

https://hse.kaust.edu.sa/Services/Pages/covid-19_researchers2.aspx

Considerations for researchers

https://hse.kaust.edu.sa/Services/Pages/covid-19_researchers.aspx

Pandemics; slowing the spread course

<https://kaust.bioraft.com/raft/training/courses>

