

Guidance for Conducting Research Safely during COVID-19 Pandemic

August 27, 2021

Research Promotion Department

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, please follow the guidelines below when conducting research:

General Guidelines (BCP Alert Level 3)

Entry to labs permitted only to the below research staff (graduate students/researchers granted entry in special circumstances). Lab personnel should be on different shifts to enter whenever possible.

- 1) Those working on a long-run experiment which would suffer a tremendous loss with research work if suspended.
- 2) Those responsible to terminate or suspend operations of ongoing experiments.
- 3) Those who enter labs temporarily for supplying research materials or maintaining computer servers e.g. animal caring, filling up liquid nitrogen, refrigerator maintenance etc.

(See the BCP of Hokkaido University [here.](#))

Research Safety Action Plan

(1) Adherence to basic precautionary measures

A full commitment to the “Basic Precautionary Actions” described in the “Hokkaido University Business Continuity Plan During Coronavirus Outbreak: Response Plan at Alert Level 3” is required.

(Excerpts below. See the full text [here.](#))

- Make sure you practice physical [social] distancing, face mask wearing, cough etiquette and hand hygiene including thorough hand washing.
- Avoid high-risk settings with 3Cs (Closed spaces, Crowded places and Close-contact settings), and ensure adequate ventilation inside buildings.
- Keep an eye on your general health and any signs of cold. If you have one such as high temperature, do not go to work or classes.
- We encourage the use of COVID-19 Contact App (COCOA), a smartphone app available in Japanese, Chinese and English. An increase in the number of downloads is thought to help prevent infection spread in Japan.

(2) Safety precautions in laboratory and other research facilities

Follow safety rules and guidelines such as the [“Guidelines for preventing the spread of](#)

[infection and research continuity \(revised\)](#)" (in Japanese) by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and adhere to the following:

○ Avoid 3 Cs (Closed spaces, Crowded places and Close-contact settings)

- Maintain a distance of 2 meters whenever possible (or at least 1 meter) between each person present in the lab including students, researchers, and research staff to ensure a safe working environment.
- Remote working and rotation of schedules are encouraged to avoid close contact in labs or research facilities.
- For meetings, video conferencing is strongly encouraged when data security measures are in place. Data analysis and other work that can be done remotely should be done at home.

○ Disinfection of common areas, etc.

- Disinfect 'high-touch surfaces' that are handled frequently by numerous people such as display screens of lab equipment, light switches, doorknobs in labs. If possible, minimize contact with high-touch surfaces by keeping doors open, etc.
- Wearing a face mask and gloves is mandatory in labs and research facilities where multiple people must work at the same time. The use of face shields, acrylic boards, and transparent vinyl curtains, etc. to create barriers is also recommended.

○ Adherence to safety measures

- A faculty member must be present when an experiment is conducted in lab or a facility is in use. As a precaution, safety measures should be taken such as informing at the start and end of a facility use, keeping a record of them, and confirming ways to contact in case of emergency, etc.
- It is strongly recommended to keep a log to record names, entry and exit times for labs and research facilities.

○ Other

- A research that involves animal experiments, genetically modified organisms (including microbes, plants and animals), pathogenic microorganisms, and radioactive substances must be conducted in strict compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.