Policies

Policy Overview

Effective January 2013

A key aspect of the lab is extensive one-on-one training with experienced PhD-level staff. After extensive training that covers operational procedures and safety training, it is possible for all users, from undergrads, graduate students, and postdocs, to REU summer students and external users of all levels, to operate instruments by themselves. Qualified users are given 24/7 access to the instruments. MPML staff may also provide direct service on an as-needed basis.

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Access

MRSEC Shared Facilities are open-access and available 24/7. All resources are made accessible to both academic and industrial users. Approved training must be completed before independent use is granted.

Training

All users who intend to operate an instrument independently are required to receive training. Users must learn approved procedures for the safe, appropriate, and efficient operation of instrumentation. Typically, one-on-one training is conducted only by a Manager. In special cases, a Manager may appoint senior users to train new users. These arrangements must be made in advance and the Manager should be notified when training is complete. After satisfactory completion of training, users will be given permission to use the instrument independently and granted access to the online scheduling system for reservation of time slots. For users with pilot or limited duration projects, Managers will assist with operation and training may not be required.

Equipment Use

All users must strictly follow approved instrument operating procedures. Any deviations must be authorized by a Manager beforehand. Users must not attempt to repair, modify, service, or alter any hardware or software without Manager approval. Repair or replacement of a damaged instrument due to misuse, abuse, or unauthorized use will be billed to the user’s research group. At the end of a reservation period, users are responsible for properly shutting down an instrument, removing samples, turning off computers, returning accessories to storage areas, and leaving the workspace clean and orderly.

Supplies

Users are responsible for bringing their own consumable supplies. The Shared Facilities does not provide consumables such as chemicals, solvents, syringes, gloves, aluminum foil, microscope slides, or SEM sample mounts.

Recharges

Some instruments carry recharge costs intended to cover service contracts, repair and replacement, or other ongoing instrument support costs. The current recharge fee schedule is online at Access & Rates.

Instrument Logbooks

Most instruments have logbooks for recording actual usage. All users must sign into the logbook when beginning to use an instrument and out of the logbook when their work is finished. These logbooks allow users to report any errors or problems with an instrument so that Managers can take appropriate actions to address them. The logbooks provide the basis for recharge calculations and essential compiled usage statistics that are reported back to the NSF.

Lab Keys

Keys to instrument rooms are made available to users who have successfully completed training. A cash deposit is required to ensure the eventual return of keys. Deposits will be refunded when keys are returned. Most rooms are separately keyed and a user may request up to 10 keys. For each of the first two keys, a $20 cash deposit is required. A third key requires another $10 cash deposit. The maximum deposit is capped at $50, so more keys up to a maximum of 10 do not require additional deposits.

Online Reservation
The Shared Facilities use an online scheduler located at Scheduler to reserve and coordinate instrument usage. All users must create a reservation before using an instrument. Reservations can be made up to 7 days in advance. Users should try to plan their work to fill the reserved time as closely as possible. Overbooking periods of time longer than necessary blocks access for other users. Users that consistently overbook will be warned and may face revocation of access or other penalties. Similarly, users should cancel or modify upcoming reservations if they do not plan to use an instrument for as long as originally reserved. In an emergency situation, users may use an instrument if it is open and unreserved and an email is sent to inform a Manager.

Grace Period

Users are given a grace period of 30 minutes to start working. If a user is late by more than 30 minutes, the remaining time will be made available to any other users.

No-show Penalties

If a user reserves a time slot but does not show up, other users are blocked from using the instrument. Users must honor all advance reservations and arrive on time and ready to work. If a user cancels a reservation before its start time, no penalty will be incurred. In the event a user does not show up a penalty charge may be incurred equal to half the reserved time. If a user cancels the reservation after the reserved time starts, a penalty charge may be incurred equal to 50% of the difference between the start time and cancellation time. Cancellation made after half of the reserved time slot has elapsed will be considered a full no-show. Penalties may be reduced or avoided by notifying a Manager of any issues via email in a timely manner.

Emergencies

In an emergency situation such as Fire, Flood, Explosion, Chemical Spill, or other, users must follow standard University procedures and immediately issue a report to the University Police (Dial 123 on any phone). Managers and GCIS building manager must then be notified by phone or email with the following contact information.

Data

All users are responsible for their own data. Users should take their data with them at the end of each experiment. No guarantees are made that local copies of the data will remain on instrument computers. For data transfer, users must copy their data to a CD or use provided campus online storage services (https://uchicago.app.box.com/). No USB Flash drives are permitted.

Acknowledgement of Support

MRSEC appreciates your continued support. Please include the following acknowledgement when presenting and/or publishing results made possible with the assistance of MRSEC Shared Facilities: "We acknowledge the MRSEC Shared User Facilities at the University of Chicago (NSF DMR-1420709)"