


NTNU	<b>Guideline for conducting laboratory courses during the Corona pandemic</b>	<b>Faculty of Natural Sciences</b>		
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HMS		Date	15.01.2021	ePhorte 2020/16067
		Replaces	New	Approved by Dean

### **Target group for the guideline**

- Employees and assistants with tasks related to planning and conducting laboratory courses.
- Students attending laboratory courses.

For laboratory courses and skills training taking place at NTNU area at St. Olav's hospital Campus Øya, the [MH faculty's guidelines](#) (in Norwegian) applies. For blood sample testing at the hospital in Ålesund, follow the guidelines of HF Midt-Norge.

### **Background and purpose**

In many of its courses, NV Faculty has mandatory laboratory courses that support theory and provide necessary skill training. For all activity at NTNU during the Corona pandemic, there is a [general requirement that a minimum distance of 1 meter should be kept to others](#). In some cases, it is difficult to comply with the 1-meter rule. The purpose of the guideline is to provide guidelines for how [infection control](#) and [registration/contact tracking](#) requirements can be safeguarded when carrying out laboratory courses under the Corona pandemic. [Corona guidelines at NTNU](#) are the basis for this guideline.

### **Definition of cohorts**

In this context, we use the following definitions:

Cohort: Students from one study program (as far as possible) and employees who conduct a laboratory activity in a teaching laboratory at the same time.

Mini-cohort: A group of students (maximum 6 people) working at a distance less than 1 meter. A cohort can consist of several mini-cohorts. As a general rule, employees shall not be part of a mini-cohort.

### **Planning and carrying out laboratory activity**

- All activity should be scheduled with a group size adapted to the 1-meter rule. In practice, it means that it will often be necessary to reduce the group size compared to a normal situation.
- The cohort shall be constant in the course throughout the semester.
- Special measures must be taken to ensure that students maintain the 1-meter rule at the start and end of the activities. In other situations that may result in a queue, such as collecting chemicals or weighing, measures must be taken to maintain the 1-meter rule.
- In lab courses where it is not possible to comply with the 1-meter rule, mini-cohorts must be established. These should be as small as possible and a maximum of 6 students. If mini-cohorts are needed in several courses in the same semester within a study program, the composition of the mini-cohorts should be kept as constant as possible between the courses.
- In all situations where it is not possible to keep minimum 1-meter distance, a face mask must be used. Face masks must be of approved type. See [NTNU guideline regarding the use of face masks](#) and information about [correct use of face masks](#) from [Norwegian Institute of Public Health](#). Face masks for use on campus can be ordered from [Custodial services](#).
- Due to strict rules with regard to [staying at home in case of respiratory symptoms](#), one must expect increased absence. In a normal situation, absences are handled in different ways, including that students are entering other lab groups/cohorts to catch up. **This must be avoided** in the current situation.
- Students missing out lab exercises can be solved in two ways:
  - 1) The course manager [changes the requirement for carrying out mandatory activity](#). For example, this may involve that the requirement changes from 8 out of 8 to 6 out of 8 exercises or that report is written with delivered results. This solution is recommended where it is professionally acceptable because the repetition of laboratory exercises will be demanding.

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- 2) Repetition of exercises: Only applicable if the completion of a lab exercise is essential for the learning outcome. If the repetition of tasks is required, it may be pertinent to arrange exercises with students from different groups/cohorts. This must be considered specifically in relation to infection control.
- All students with respiratory symptoms should be sent home immediately.
  - Employees (permanent, duty, hired and laboratory assistants) can teach multiple cohorts on the condition that infection control measures that minimize the risk of an employee transmitting infection between cohorts are in place. As a general rule, employees shall not be included in mini-cohorts. If this is necessary, special infection control measures must be considered

### **Risk groups**


Based on the current definition of [risk groups](#) for COVID-19, very few under the age of 50 are considered to have increased risk. Students applying for exemption based on health reasons, may be asked to submit a medical certificate. Alternative learning methods should be considered for such students. [Sigurd Madsen](#) in the faculty administration can be contacted for facilitation.

### **Infection control measures**

- For all activity in laboratories, the NTNU Corona guidelines apply:
  - [Physical attendance on Campus](#)
  - [Infection control, Infection control for students](#) and [Infection control - lecturers responsibilities](#)
  - [Work in laboratories and workshops](#)
  - [Suspected or confirmed COVID-19](#)
- All students must use **personal** laboratory coats, **personal** laboratory shoes and **personal** safety glasses if this protective equipment is required. Between activities in the laboratory, these must be stored in a closed bag. If storage lockers are shared with other students, this sharing must take place within the mini-cohort. In situations where personal protective equipment does not provide adequate protection and shared protective equipment must be used, procedures for sanitizing of the equipment must be established.
- **Routines must be developed for each laboratory/course for cleaning of workplaces and shared equipment.**

### **Tracking of contacts and measures in case of suspected or confirmed infection**

- The municipality infection control office is responsible for tracking of contacts related to COVID infection. The units at NTNU are responsible for providing the information necessary for effective tracking of contacts, see [contact tracking procedures](#).
- Participation in teaching shall be registered in NTNU [Check-in](#), see Infection Control - [lecturers responsibilities](#).
- In addition, the departments shall prepare **overviews of the students who are included in the different mini-cohorts**. This information should be digital and quickly accessible.
- If the course participant or employee gets [acute respiratory symptoms](#) or the infection control office defines someone as a close contact to an infected person, the person concerned should leave Campus, see [Actions to take if Covid-19 is strongly suspected](#).
- In case of detected Covid-19 infection, the infection control office will take contact, see [Actions to take if Covid-19 is confirmed](#).

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### ***Documentation of students' knowledge of the rules that apply***

Before the students are allowed into the laboratories, they must submit a self-declaration on Blackboard that they have done the following:

- Taken the mandatory [infection control course for students](#) at NTNU
- Reviewed the present guideline and the NTNU Corona guidelines (linked [above](#)).

## **APPENDIX: GUIDANCE FOR ORGANIZATION OF COHORTS AND MINI-COHORTS**

### ***Practical implementation of division into cohorts and mini-cohorts***

The guideline for laboratory courses states that if students have to work more closely than 1 meter apart, they should be divided into mini-cohorts.

#### **How to do it:**

- The departments identify the courses where mini-cohorts are required. Information concerning these courses is made available on shared digital platform for the coordination of mini-cohorts. The faculty creates a Teams for NV, and the departments report who should have access to this platform (e.g. the department's student advisers, lab-course managers, course managers, program managers, class coordinators).
- The study program management/class coordinator is responsible for ensuring coordination between those responsible for lab courses with mini-cohorts in the same semester within their study program.
- Coordination between courses with mini-cohort lab groups takes place on a common digital platform for mini-cohorts where those who directly work on planning lab groups at the departments participate.

Guiding principles are that:

- As far as possible, students from different study programs should not be in the same cohort or mini-cohort.
- Cohorts and mini-cohorts are organized by alphabetical order or otherwise appropriate to ensure the maximum possible accordance between cohorts in different courses (e.g. groups established through "fadderordningen", "Teknostart" or similar at the start of study).
- These groups (cohorts and mini-cohorts) must be ready by January 25 for the spring semester 2021 (Guiding, dependent on the scheduled time for laboratory course start).

It is appropriate to involve several roles, such as:

- The program consultant has an overview of the course composition in the program. The program manager and student adviser cooperates to carry out the coordination of mini-cohorts within the study program.
- When organizing cohorts in a course at a department, involvement of the departments student adviser and/or engineer is appropriate.
- The class coordinator should specifically look at workload per week for the first-year course, and it may be natural that this work is done together with the program consultant and program manager.

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