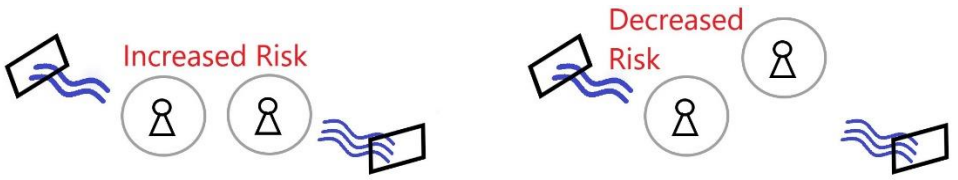
Intent: The intent of this document is to suggest how to manage the requirement for physical distancing in small and narrow areas. These recommendations may be helpful in laboratories, group offices and shared spaces. Examples are provided, but recommendations are not exhaustive and may not be the best solution for every location.

Practicable and easy physical distancing norms help to keep our labs and workplaces safe and limit the potential for future restrictions and closures.

Physical Distancing Requirements:
At the time of writing, the Provincial Health Office recommends a 2-meter distance between all people who do not live in the same household. In labs or shared offices, this may be difficult due to common equipment and narrow pathways and entries. Risk of contact in these areas can be reduced by:

- **Assigning Work Areas:** Where possible, assign individual areas of lab bench and equipment to specific lab users. Where two work areas are closer than 2 meters, assign work in these areas at different times to prevent accidental contact points.
    - **Air Flow Patterns**: Our labs are ventilated at higher rates than most buildings which has the theoretical potential to keep particles aloft for more than 2 meters. Identify the air flow pattern in your lab by looking for where it enters (diffusers and doorways) and where it leaves (grates, grills and fume hoods). Avoid placing 2-meter buffer zones in the direct paths between where air enters and leaves the labs. Instead, stagger these buffer zones side-to-side to reduce the risk. Contact HSE if you need assistance.



- **Identify Your Narrow Pinch Points:** A common laboratory design on campus is a narrow hallway leading to an open work area. It is difficult for occupants to adhere to distancing in these types of environments, so identify them and reduce time in these spaces by:
    - **Moving Equipment and Materials:** Ask lab users to take materials from these areas back to their assigned workspace, where possible. If equipment is too large or specialized to be moved this way, consider permanently moving them out of the common pathways. When a piece of equipment or resource cannot be moved or needs to be used in a fume hood or other special enclosure, use traffic patterns to compensate.
    - **Develop Traffic Patterns:** Develop a one-way traffic flow to reduce contact. Where a one way pattern is impossible, develop a stop / yield system to ensure all lab users know how to proceed. Sign these areas for clarity.
      Exiting an area should take precedence over entering to ensure that emergency egress is always maintained.

- **Cleaning Protocols:** For common areas, shared spaces and equipment, provide users with easy to use materials. Enforce cleaning before and after use of common equipment and materials.
    - **Choose Effective Cleaners:** Ensure that cleaners used in the lab are effective against COVID-19 and any microorganisms used in the space. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) maintains a list of disinfectants effective against COVID-19.[1]
    - **Contact Time is Important:** In order for disinfectants to be effective, objects and surfaces must be wet with disinfectant for the time indicated. Contact times range from 30 seconds to more than 20 minutes depending on the agent used. For consumer products, contact time will be part of the instructions. For commercial products, the manufacturer's instructions or technical information will provide instructions that cover the contact time.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Assign PPE (lab coats, glasses, goggles, etc.) to specific users or institute cleaning protocols between uses.
    - **Eyewear:** Wipe down goggles, glasses, shields and hard PPE with appropriate disinfectants between users. Check to ensure that your disinfectant will not damage these items by testing on a small area first.
    - **Lab Coats:** Store lab coats so they do not touch. If lab coats must be shared, launder or autoclave them in between users.
    - **Storage and Removal:** As always, remove lab PPE at the door and never wear lab PPE in the hallways. This is especially important in the COVID era, as some individuals are choosing to wear PPE in public spaces.
    - **Respirators:** Lab workers who need to wear respirators (N95, P100, ½ face) to protect them from laboratory hazards should continue to do so. As a reminder, any person wearing a respirator should be fit tested to that model at least once per year.[2]
    - **PPE for COVID:** HSE has published recommendations on PPE related to COVID-19[3]. If you required further guidance, please contact our office at hse.ok@ubc.ca. The use of additional PPE, beyond what would normally be used prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, is not recommended for workers, except those who are performing related research or who are providing care/treatment/support for those who are exhibiting symptoms.
- **Hand Hygiene:** Hand hygiene in your lab is likely already commonplace. However, use this opportunity and our infection control resources to re-inforce this essential skill[4].

[1] Public Health Agency of Canada. Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers (COVID-19): List of disinfectants with evidence for use against COVID-19. https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html

[2] UBC Okanagan. Health Safety & Environment. Respiratory Protection. https://hse.ok.ubc.ca/health/resppro/

[3] UBC Okanagan COVID-19 Guidance. Personal Protective Equipment. https://hse.ok.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/72/2020/05/UBCO-COVID-19-Guidance-PPE.pdf

[4] UBC Okanagan. Health Safety & Environment. COVID-19 Infection Control. https://hse.ok.ubc.ca/covid19infectioncontrol/

- **If physical distancing is not possible for work:** First, consider whether or not the task is truly essential. As the questions:
    - Can the task be delayed?
    - Can it be done safely in another way?
    - Can the number of workers involved be reduced?

Close Proximity Requirements: It is expected that any work where there is a physical distancing limitation would be brief and rare, however despite recommendations, some tasks may still require working in close proximity to others, for example for safety. In those cases barriers, face shields or other non-medical masks must be used to help control risk. If any such controls are being applied, employees must be educated and trained on the use and limitations of the control. Contact HSE if you need assistance.