Department of Biochemistry

COVID-19 Return to Onsite Working - Departmental Risk Assessment/Work Plan

1. DEPARTMENTAL DETAILS	
Head of Department:	**Professor Kevin Talbot**
Department:	**Nuffield Department of Clinical Neurosciences**
Date Completed:	
People Involved *(status/numbers):*	**Staff (57) Postgraduate students (27) Undergraduate students (5)**
Location of work *(Building/Lab/Rooms):*	**Lower ground floor, Biochemistry Phase 2**

Activity Summary:
Which of the following applies?

• Putting experiment or facility into safe state.	N/A
• Completing - or reaching key milestone in - long-running experiment where data would otherwise be lost or could not easily be reproduced.	N/A
• Maintenance of critical research infrastructure – (plants, animals, equipment)	N/A
• COVID-19 related work with potential for high, near-term impact	N/A
• COVID-19 related work with longer lead time to impact	N/A
None of the above (see below)	

Further details

Activity Summary (Types of activities expected & authorised to take place – brief description of the experiments and equipment used)

Animal Tissue Collection
Animals will be delivered from the BSB to the designated animal procedure room. Animals will be euthanized by a schedule one method and then various tissues collected for use in other experiments.

Molecular Biology
Techniques: DNA/RNA extraction, PCR and RT-PCR, Western blotting, Cloning (using bacteria to propagate vectors), Tissue sectioning, Immunohistochemistry, Flow cytometry.
Equipment: PCR machine(s), Gel tanks for electrophoresis and transfer, UV gel imager, cryostat for sectioning, balances, centrifuges, nanodrop, general laboratory equipment for liquid handling.

Tissue Culture
Techniques: Culture of immortalised cell lines, isolation and culture of animal tissue, bioluminescence recording of cells/tissues, microscopy of live cells/tissues, transfection of cells/tissue with plasmids/siRNA.
Equipment: Tissue culture hoods, incubators, microplate readers, confocal microscopes, centrifuges, general laboratory equipment for liquid handling.

Electrophysiology
Techniques: Multiunit activity recording of brain slice and retina explants

Equipment: Procedure room, dissection microscope, fluorescence microscope, Multi-electrode recording system, general laboratory equipment for liquid handling

Histology
Techniques: Tissue collection, immunohistochemistry, microscopy
Equipment: Cryostat, microtome, vibratome, microscopes, shaker, fume food, general laboratory equipment for liquid handling

General lab work –
Preparation for animal experiment including drug preparation, making recording device (including soldering), cleaning syringes.
Making LED light units, which involves soldering and using the workshop bench space in the main equipment room
Accessing tissue/blood samples.

Unpacking of laboratory equipment as part of group relocation

2. ESTATES SERVICES BUILDING CHECK	
Estates Services Building Checklist Completed:	Yes
Date Checklist Completed *(append copy):*	11/05/20
Have all actions in Checklist been addressed:	Yes

3. REDUCING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Access to the building

The initial aim of the RTOSW programme was to facilitate access to wet-lab space and equipment to allow research staff to undertake work that cannot be carried out while off site. This includes access to research facilities (SRFs). This remains the primary aim of Biochemistry's return to onsite working process.
The University has now moved to Level 1 of the University's Business Continuity Planning (BCP) framework https://www.ox.ac.uk/coronavirus/status, this allows for the removal of most COVID-19 restrictions in the University and allows for on-site working for most staff.

Travelling To/From Work:	
Outline any foreseeable and significant risks:	*Outline risk reduction measures to be adopted:*
Personnel with symptoms	• No one is to travel to the site if they are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19. If individuals are at work and start to display symptoms, they must leave immediately and seek a PCR test. They can check if they have symptoms using the NHS 111 Coronavirus Service. • If a lab member has symptoms they must self-isolate, and inform their line manager. More details are to be found at nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolate-advice.

Personnel who may be classed as vulnerable **Travel to work challenges safe distancing advice**	• Personnel must not attend the site if they are self-isolating due to a positive or suspected case of COVID-19, or if they have been advised to do so by NHS Test & Trace. • If classed as a vulnerable person, the person may return to the workplace but may wish to think about additional precautions. They may also wish to contact their line manager and/or HR for further guidance. • Personnel in higher risk COVID-19 categories may have particular concerns about safely traveling to work. Any concerns should be considered as part of their on-site working conversations with line managers and/or HR.
Social Distancing:	
Outline any foreseeable and significant risks:	*Outline risk reduction measures to be adopted:*
Movement of reagents between Lower Ground Floor and other areas of Biochemistry	Caution and courtesy should be applied to wait until those who are already in the walkway/staircase/work space have passed. The 2m social distancing restriction has been removed, however, continued consideration of other's personal space is still recommended. It is now mandatory to wear face-coverings in communal areas as well as research and write up spaces (in accordance with Biochemistry return to onsite work (RTOSW)).
Movement of reagents, samples and equipment between Lower Ground Floor and BSB	• Regular movement to and from Lower Ground Floor with BSB will be managed as outlined in annexed document: Appendix A, movement of personnel, equipment and samples between Biochemistry Phase II Lower Ground Floor and BSB.
Movement of reagents, samples and equipment between Lower Ground Floor and other buildings	• All Lower Ground Floor users will be required to read and sign the RTOSW induction for Lower Ground Floor. • When in Lower Ground Floor, all users must observe the local Biochemistry as well as specific Lower Ground Floor procedures. • Specific attention will be paid to hand cleaning when moving across between areas, even if the buildings are close by. • Pipettes, tubes, etc. that will be used regularly will remain in Lower Ground Floor and will not be transferred between departments. • If samples at room temperature or on ice are to be transported, they will be contained in leak-proof secondary containers labelled with contact details in case of an emergency. • Note that samples requiring to be transported on dry ice will be transported in a box that prevents build-up of gas.

Movement between Lower Ground Floor lab spaces	• Containers will be wiped down were possible, or users will wash their hands thoroughly after handling the container. • Shared equipment will be cleaned before and after use as per local rules.
Limited room occupancy in specific areas	• There are no longer occupancy limits in secondary lab spaces and write up areas. However, some groups may wish to manage numbers in certain areas, please be aware of local signage regarding occupancy limits and booking quotas. Meetings with multiple people in offices should be kept to a minimum. • A booking system will be implemented for bench spaces and all shared equipment. All staff are requested to book any area they plan to use as an indicator to others of occupancy levels. • When entering or exiting lab bays or side rooms caution and courtesy should be applied to wait until those who are already in the walkway/lab space have passed. • Room occupancies will be monitored by user groups and Biochemistry and amended if required/as appropriate.
Bringing to, and working with, human samples in Lower Ground Floor	• In this study, urine is collected from healthy research participants at home. Containers are sent to the home address of the research participant via Royal Mail. Urine collection pack and actiwatch (https://www.camntech.com/motionwatch-8/) have been thoroughly wiped down with universal cleansing wipes/spray. • The researcher will ensure that the participant notifies the researcher at the start of the urine collection if they: o Have reason to believe they have been in contact with anyone with COVID in the past 14 days o Have experienced any COVID-19 symptoms (a high temperature, a new continuous cough, a loss of sense of smell or taste) in the past 14 days o To confirm they consider themselves to be free of COVID-19 (See symptom screening questionnaire in appendix B) • Samples are returned to the researcher via Royal Mail, following Royal Mail guidelines for restrictions and packaging for category B, biological samples. • Packaging and samples will be wiped down with universal cleansing wipes/spray by the researcher before transporting to Lower Ground Floor and will be cleaned again on arriving at the laboratory with universal cleansing wipes/spray. • Samples will be pipetted in a safety cabinet located in Lower Ground Floor. Standard laboratory PPE will be worn. • Samples will be pipetted slowly and gently with the pipette touching the side of the vessel when dispensing. Tubes will never be overfilled and will

	be closed gently and away from the researcher ensuring that no splashes can occur on the researcher. • Samples will be stored at -20°C once aliquoted. • Labcoats will be sent for cleaning after each use. • Participants will be instructed to inform the researcher or study coordinator if they have tested positive for COVID-19 during and within 2 weeks of research participation. Researchers commit to informing their PI or study coordinator, if they or the participant develop symptoms of COVID-19 during or within 2 weeks of testing participants. • If a participant subsequently tests positive within 2 weeks of research participation, the associated samples will no longer be considered to be COVID free. In the event of this occurring, the safety office will be contacted and the samples will either be transferred to a CL3 laboratory to be worked on, destroyed (1% Virkon overnight), or action taken as advised by safety office.
Cleaning Regimes	
Outline any foreseeable and significant risks:	*Outline risk reduction measures to be adopted:*
Multiple users of lab spaces and equipment	**All lab spaces** • Put on clean gloves prior to touching any lab equipment. • Users will clean before use benches and any shared equipment, touchpoints including access buttons (including keyboards), handles and eyepieces for microscopes with Dettol disinfectant, which will be provided and accessible. The same applies to fridge/freezer handles and cabinet doors. • All surfaces will be cleaned with disinfectant by the user at the end of each session. • Lab benches will be kept as clear as possible in between users **Tissue culture** • Use 70% ethanol to wipe the hood control buttons and screen before use. **Shared equipment** • Before and after use, the shared equipment stations should be wiped with 70% ethanol/Dettol disinfectant by each user.
Bringing samples in to the lower ground floor	• Where necessary to bring samples in to the lower ground floor, sample boxes will be wiped down with 70% ethanol on arrival. The outside of the sample vial/container will also be wiped with 70% ethanol upon removal from the box. Users will ensure hands are washed for at least 20 seconds after handling the sample box and container.

Personal Protective Equipment	
Outline any foreseeable and significant risks:	*Outline risk reduction measures to be adopted:*
Supervision of new staff and students	Users will ensure that a face mask/face covering is worn at all times in communal areas inline with the University guidance. The new starter will be associated with a lab member or a fixed group of lab members. Face masks/coverings will be worn at all times during training. Where possible supervision will be carried out side-to-side or back-to-back rather than face-to-face. No additional risks were identified to include PPE beyond that already outlined for lab work.
Individual Needs	
Outline any foreseeable and significant risks:	*Outline risk reduction measures to be adopted:*
Work required out of hours	• Work to be centred between the hours of 8am-6pm when the building will be at maximum occupancy. • A system will be put in place so that lone workers will message their pre-agreed contact on arrival and again when leaving the building. There are no additional risk factors which require alteration of working practices related to out-of-hours working.
Communications	
Conflict due to ineffective communication within the lab and office spaces	• All RTOSW risk assessments will be circulated by e-mail and made available on the relevant departmental intranets. • The available lab space is allocated by research group. This will remain but where a group is not using their space on a certain day/time flexibility is expected for others to use this space. This will maximise use of space for everyone. • All bookings, via Bookkit, will be made openly available to view by all lower ground floor staff and students.

	• Bookings (desk space, lab space and equipment) should be made well in advance to ensure everyone can plan their experiments accordingly. • Bookings should only be made following discussion and planning with your group lead. • In all cases where there are competing demands on the same space or equipment, people should be as flexible and considerate as possible so that all users are able to complete their work. Any conflicts which cannot be resolved with group leads will be adjudicated by Russell Foster and ultimately Kevin Talbot. • If you need to shorten or cancel a booking, update the calendar as soon as you can.

4. MANAGING EXISTING RISKS	
Have existing risk assessment been reviewed:	**Yes**
Are additional control measures required:	**No**
Outline any additional control measures below:	
N/A	

5. UNIVERSITY SAFETY OFFICE REVIEW / HEAD OF DEPARTMENT APPROVAL

- The Risk Assessment/Work Plan must be reviewed by the University Safety Office during Phase 1.
- Heads of department are expected to take in account the comments raised by the University Safety Office and incorporate in their Risk Assessment/Work Plans.
- The University Safety Office will capture the outcome of Phase 1 Departmental Risk Assessments/Work Plans to help develop the guidance for Phase 2.

Department Safety Officer Name: (reviewing risk assessment/work plan)	Tiphaine Bouriez-Jones
Department Safety Officer Signature: (reviewing risk assessment/work plan)	
Date of Review:	01/11/2021
Any Review Comments:	
Head of Department Name: (approving risk assessment/work plan)	**Professor Kevin Talbot**
Head of Department Signature: (approving risk assessment/work plan)	

Date of Approval:	18th November 2021
Any Approval Comments:	

6. FURTHER REVIEW STAGE

7. REVISIONS

Appendix A:

Movement of personnel, equipment and samples between Biochemistry Phase II lower ground floor and the BSB

Bringing equipment from Biochemistry Phase II lower ground floor to BSB Level 1, 2 or 3

- For equipment that cannot be autoclaved prior to transportation, wipe the surface of the equipment with 70% ethanol/Anistel surface disinfectant
- Then put everything into a transparent plastic box, and wipe the surface of the plastic box with 70% ethanol/Anistel surface disinfectant prior to transportation and upon arrival at BSB Level 3
- To bring polystyrene boxes containing wet/dry ice to the BSB, wipe the surface of the polystyrene box with 70% ethanol/Anistel surface disinfectant prior to transportation and after arrival at BSB Level 3
- No equipment should be taken to level 2 unless vital.

Before leaving Biochemistry

- Check on BSB SharePoint calendar to see if the room to be used is available.
- All procedure rooms are bookable and should be reserved on the sharepoint booking system prior to use
- On Level 3, LTC rooms 30.22a and 30.23 are restricted to 1 person per room, whereas the large LTC room and the procedure/surgery room allow 2 people at a time

Entering the BSB:

- Any research staff wanting to enter the Animal houses should try to access the facility between 09:00 - 14:30 (07:00 - 08:30 and 15:00 – 16:00 are high staff traffic periods due to

starting and finishing BMS staff). Research staff can also access the facility after 16:00 until 21:00 when reception closes.
- When arriving at the BSB reception please be aware it can only accommodate 2 people at one time

At BSB Level 1:

- Follow the most recent level specific risk assessment, which can be found by changing room exit near the telephone on the wall
- Maximum room occupancy is noted on each room, and this should be followed
- Fitted face masks should be worn at all times for protection from animal allergens.

At BSB Level 2:

- Follow the most recent level specific risk assessment, which can be found at the main entrance to level 2
- Maximum room occupancy is noted on each room, and this should be followed
- Animal Holding rooms are to be avoided where possible by research staff, unless agreed otherwise by Level 2 management
- If Animal rooms are required to be entered by research staff this should be planned to take place after 16:00 but level must be vacated by 18:30, unless special extension of time has been granted
- Face masks should be worn when it is not possible to maintain social distance.

At BSB Level 3:

- Follow the most recent level specific risk assessment, which can be found by the door upon entry into BSB Level 3 mouse room
- Fitted face masks should be worn within BSB Level 3 mouse room to protect from animal allergens and in situations where it is not possible to maintain social distance.

Bringing samples and equipment from BSB Level 1, 2 or 3 back to Biochemistry

- Wipe the surface of equipment and boxes with 70% ethanol/Anistel surface disinfectant before leaving BSB Level 3 and after returning to Biochemistry

Appendix B:

This screening information must be completed for all research staff and participants at the start of urine collection

The following information is collected to ensure that research studies are not carried out if the individuals involved or members of their household are currently experiencing any symptoms related to COVID-19. Contact details are kept in case participants or researchers, for any reason, develop symptoms so that individuals who came in close contacted can be advised.

<table>
<tr><td>Name:
Participant / Researcher</td><td colspan="2">Iona Alexander</td></tr>
<tr><td>Name of Study:</td><td colspan="2">Quantification of circadian rhythms in the Vision Impaired (REC 18/WM/02900 IRAS 248419) / A randomised placebo controlled trial to access the effect of melatonin on circadian sleep-wake disturbances in ocular disease (REC 17/LO/12)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Contact details:
Email / phone number</td><td colspan="2">Iona.alexander@ndcn.ox.ac.uk
01865 546582</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Current Symptoms
(select all that apply)</td><td>Fever > 37.8° or feverish symptoms: ☐</td><td>Date of onset of fever:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Persistent cough: ☐</td><td>Date of onset of cough:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Loss of / change in sense of smell/ taste: ☐</td></tr>
<tr><td>To the best of your knowledge, does anyone from your household have any of the above symptoms?</td><td>Yes: ☐
If yes, which symptoms are they experiencing:</td><td>No: ☐</td></tr>
</table>

***Researchers*:** I understand that I need to contact the study coordinator in case I develop any of the above symptoms at any point.

***For research participants*:** I understand that I need to contact the research team if I develop any of the above symptoms within 2 weeks of taking part in the research study. (Contact details are provided in the Supplementary Information for Participants'.)

I understand and consent for my information to be held on a secure file for the duration of the study.

Date:	Signature: