



MAHATMA GANDHI UNIVERSITY



Mahatma Gandhi University
Priyadarsini Hills P. O.
Kottayam, Kerala - 686560

(Re-accredited by NAAC with A Grade)

Policy on Laboratory Safety

Mahatma Gandhi University is committed to the safety of all on its campus. The purpose of this policy is to establish the responsibility of the various stakeholders toward this goal. This policy applies to teaching and all research activities. This includes uniform procedures to ensure safety standards for individuals who learn, teach or work in all University laboratories. This policy is applicable to all employees, students, visitors, and contract workers.

The policy is based on the following Directive Principles:

- i. **Safety:** Safety for all on the University campus is the primary concern. All activities, including research and teaching, must be conducted without compromising safety.
- ii. **Accountability:** Any person having access to any equipment or material housed on the University campus must take personal responsibility for his/her actions/omissions and ensure adherence to the highest standards of safety.
- iii. **Trust but also verify:** The University recognizes that for a diverse institute with several Schools, Centers, and Instrumentation Centers, a large variety of research being conducted, there is a diversity of hazards and attendant risks. The persons responsible for setting up the facilities and guiding the experiments, are expected to be aware of the hazards and risks and are entrusted with taking the necessary safety precautions.

1. Safety Committee

The Safety Committee consist of faculty, staff, and other personnel of the concerned School/Centre as per the relevant norms. The primary roles of this committee are to:

- a. review this policy from time to time and suggest modifications, if any, required.
- b. oversee activities with respect to the effective implementation of safety policies and advise them from time to time.

2. Safety Officer

Each School/Center shall have a designated Safety Officer, who must be an Employee from the cadre of faculty or scientific staff with sufficient authority. The Safety Officer will be nominated by the Head of the Department. The Safety Officer shall:

- a. be the primary point of contact at a Department/Centre, for safety.
- b. be responsible for identifying any unrecognized hazards in the department.
- c. maintain a list of Supervisors-in-charges for all laboratories, along with their emergency contacts.
- d. maintain records of the biannual safety audits required from each supervisor/in-charges. Also, the Safety Officer must compile the biannual self-audits into a report.
- e. conduct an investigation into any safety complaint received from users.
- f. generate and maintain records of Safety Incident Reports. A copy of these must be sent shared with the Department members.

- g. establish an Emergency Response Plan for the department as per the norms established by the Safety Committee. This may include fire prevention, fire alarms, emergency evacuation, assembly points, and emergency response.
- h. educate the department community about the Emergency Plan in a mandatory safety session and a surprise emergency drill, to be organized at least once every year.
- i. establish an emergency response team responsible for overseeing any emergency response.

3. Supervisor-in-Charge

All laboratories must have a supervisor in charge. Typically, this will be a faculty member, scientific officer, or senior project staff. The Supervisor-in-charge is entrusted with the safety and well-being of all users in their laboratory. The Supervisor-in-charge shall:

- a. be responsible for implementing the safety policies in their respective laboratories. Any exceptions sought must be approved by the Head of the Department.
- b. be responsible for arranging and implementing the safety policies prescribed by the University. This includes personal protective equipment; safety detectors; storage cabinets; fume hoods; gas cabinets; signage; first aid boxes; and fire exits, as and when appropriate.
- c. appoint a laboratory safety monitor. This could be a senior research student, project staff, or scientific/technical staff member.
- d. ensure a prominent display of the laboratory plan listing hazards and entry/exits.
- e. develop well-documented safety protocols for non-standard equipment/facilities and ensure all users are trained in such protocols.
- f. respond to any request for safety infrastructure or complaints made by the users in their laboratory.
- g. provide a structure to appropriately train users in their Laboratory to manage hazards in the Laboratory. The structure must be comprehensive and designed with a 'reasonable' user in mind.
- h. monitor the entry of personnel into their labs such that only people with appropriate safety training are exposed to lab hazards. Conversely, people who cannot have such training must be excluded from labs.
- i. conduct a biannual safety audit of their laboratories.

4. Users

All users shall:

- a. be personally responsible for their safety.
- b. follow the instructions prescribed by the concerned School/Centre.

- c. undergo training in laboratory protocols and emergency responses.
- d. understand potential hazards in their respective laboratories and act in a way to minimize the risk associated with those hazards.
- e. not indulge in any activities that in their assessment can pose a threat to themselves or others on the campus.
- f. inform the Department **Safety Officer** of any coercion to violate safety norms. These reports will be kept confidential. In extreme cases, information will need to be provided to the Safety Committee.
- g. must strictly adhere to the safety practices and standard operating procedures established for the laboratories they work in. All users are expected to be trained and tested in these practices and procedures before starting work in the laboratory to which they are assigned, and must undergo retraining and testing at regular intervals. Serious violations might lead to the exclusion of the users from the laboratory for a specified period or indefinitely.

5. Consequences of Non-compliance

Any violation of this Safety Policy will be handled based on the severity of the violation like

- a. a time frame for remedial action
- b. ordering a temporary closure of the laboratory/facility until the violation remedied.

6. Acknowledgement

Lack of attention to sound safety practices can lead to loss of property, compromising years of painstaking research, serious injury, and loss of life. The University, therefore, considers it the duty of all individuals to adhere to this Safety Policy.

All faculty, staff, and students of the institute are expected to have read and understood this Safety Policy, and to agree to work towards adopting a strong culture of safety.

Visitors, short-term and long-term users, such as foreign students, visiting faculty, collaborators, interns, employees of companies, and individuals who temporarily access facilities at the University under any arrangement need to acknowledge the safety policy as below.

I hereby acknowledge that I have read the *'Policy on Laboratory Safety'* and understand my responsibilities under this Policy.

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Department: _____

Purpose of Stay: _____

Date: