

University Research Facility in Life Sciences

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

General User Policy

1. General Information

- 1.1. The equipment of the University Research Facility in Life Sciences (ULS) is solely available to registered and authorised persons (hereinafter referred to as “ULS users” or “users”).
- 1.2. An online booking system has been implemented to cover most ULS equipment. Users are required to register for an online booking account and for each piece of equipment they would like to access (if applicable). Please refer to Section 2 for details.
- 1.3. Access to each piece of equipment is subject to the satisfactory completion of an official training by ULS staff and approval by the Director of the ULS (DoULS) or his representative(s).
- 1.4. Users and their supervisors are required to abide by the rules set out in this General User Policy.
- 1.5. The ULS reserves the rights to amend the General User Policy when deemed necessary. Users and their supervisors should refer to the ULS website (<https://www.polyu.edu.hk/uls/-/media/department/uls/content/download/uls-general-user-policy.pdf>) for the latest revision.

2. Registration for Equipment Booking Account

- 2.1. A prospective user shall apply for an online booking account *via* the University Research Facility Management System (URFMS; https://urfms.polyu.edu.hk/user_registration/all).
- 2.2. Users shall read the Terms and Conditions (T&Cs) for accessing ULS equipment and confirm they agree to abide by the regulations.
- 2.3. Users shall seek endorsement from their supervisors *via* URFMS to activate their booking accounts.
- 2.4. Upon receiving email notifications, supervisors shall read the T&Cs, and confirm whether they would endorse the users’ request to access URFMS for booking ULS equipment.
- 2.5. Users and supervisors shall notify the ULS if any of the provided information has been changed.

3. Equipment Training and Access

- 3.1. Training for ULS equipment is to be arranged upon request. Users shall make training requests *via* URFMS or email the staff-in-charge of an equipment directly.
- 3.2. Requests for training shall be made at least 7 days in advance and are subject to the availability of the staff-in-charge.
- 3.3. Users are required to prepare their own samples prior to the training session.

- 3.4. Users are required to submit an Equipment Access Request Form (<https://www.polyu.edu.hk/uls/-/media/department/uls/content/download/equipment-access-request-form.pdf>) to the staff-in-charge during training.
- 3.5. The equipment will only become available for booking upon completion of these steps, and after the staff-in-charge determines that the user is able to operate the equipment in a safe and proper manner.
- 3.6. Users are not allowed to use any ULS equipment for which they have not received training from a ULS staff, or if their names are not listed on the user list for that piece of equipment.

4. Room Access and Security

- 4.1. Users are required to complete safety course(s) offered by the Health and Safety Office (HSO) of PolyU and/or produce certain license(s) before they can access ULS laboratories. Details are available from our staff or on the ULS website.
- 4.2. Some ULS equipment is located in laboratories not managed by the ULS. Access to these laboratories is subject to the respective departmental policies. Users might be required to submit registration form(s) and attend safety briefing(s) offered by the ULS on their behalf. Detailed procedures for accessing each of these laboratories will be explained during an equipment training session or available upon request.
- 4.3. As a general principle, ULS equipment is open to all ULS users. However, for ULS equipment located in laboratories managed by other departments, the respective department has the sole right to impose preferential access policies (*e.g.*, access hours) for departmental, non-departmental and non-PolyU ULS users. The ULS will take reasonable steps to notify the users of the most up-to-date departmental access policies for these pieces of ULS equipment.
- 4.4. Users are not allowed to use other non-ULS equipment in these laboratories unless they are authorised by the respective departments that manage the non-ULS equipment.
- 4.5. In the event of discrepancies or conflicts between ULS and departmental policies concerning the access to ULS equipment located in laboratories managed by the respective departments, the latter shall prevail.
- 4.6. Users are not allowed to bring any unauthorised personnel into any of the ULS laboratories.
- 4.7. Users should not use any objects to prevent the proper closing of doors.
- 4.8. A closed-circuit television (CCTV) video surveillance system has been installed in some of the ULS laboratories for security and investigation purposes. Captured footages will be retained for 30 days. Requests to view and/or obtain captured footages shall be made to DoULS by writing. Such requests will be assessed by DoULS, and will normally be processed within 7 days.

5. Equipment Booking

- 5.1. Once a ULS equipment is included in URFMS, users will have to book the equipment using the system. Booking will not be available by any other means.
- 5.2. It is the responsibility of prospective users to apply for an online booking account, request for equipment training and obtain room access in time to avoid delays and interruptions to their experiments.

- 5.3. For new users of an equipment, their booking right will be granted after they have activated their online booking accounts, completed the required training and submitted the Equipment Access Request Form.
- 5.4. Booking is available 15 days in advance to authorised users and is on a first-come-first-served basis.
- 5.5. Booking limits may be imposed for some of the ULS equipment. Details are available on the ULS webpage.
- 5.6. Bookings may be made in sessions with increments of 15 minutes. Any used parts of a 15-minute session will be counted as a whole 15-minute session.
- 5.7. Bookings may be amended or cancelled up to 24 hours prior to the beginning of a booked session *via* URFMS. Requests for changes and cancellations within the 24-hour time window shall be made to the staff-in-charge and might be subject to a penalty equivalent to 50% of the rate of the whole session.

6. Equipment Usage and Safety

- 6.1. If a smartcard reader is installed for an equipment, the user should wave his/her staff or student card to begin a booked session. At the end of the session, wave the card again to sign off. Charges will be calculated automatically by the system.
- 6.2. Users are not allowed to book any ULS equipment on behalf of other authorised or unauthorised users.
- 6.3. Users are required to operate ULS equipment according to the instructions given by ULS staff during equipment training and as notices placed near the equipment.
- 6.4. Unauthorised reconfiguration, removal and/or relocation of any hardware or software are strictly forbidden.
- 6.5. Users are requested not to open any doors and operate some of the equipment with gloved hands.
- 6.6. Users are required to maintain cleanness and good working order of the equipment; reset the equipment to the original configuration as instructed by our staff, and tidy up the work area after each use.
- 6.7. Since most ULS laboratories are classified as biosafety level 1 (BSL-1) for general open-bench research work, biological samples of risk group 2 or above are not allowed in our laboratories. Users shall refer to the “Guidelines for Laboratory Biological Safety” available on the HSO website.
- 6.8. Users are required to dispose of glass, sharps, animal, infectious and/or clinical wastes in their own laboratories. The ULS does not handle the disposal of these wastes for users.
- 6.9. Users shall report any damages or malfunction of an equipment to the staff-in-charge as soon as practicable.
- 6.10. Users are required to sign the log sheet for an equipment by filling in all the required fields right after each use.
- 6.11. Users are not allowed to use any USB storage devices (*e.g.*, USB flash drives and portable hard disks) or rewritable discs (*e.g.*, CD-RW and DVD-RW) to copy their data from any computers connected directly to ULS equipment. Unless the equipment PC is connected to the ULS Data Server, users should prepare an unused, non-rewritable CD-R or DVD-R disc to copy their data.

- 6.12. Users are advised to copy their data immediately after each experiment. Any experimental data stored on computers connected to ULS equipment for more than 14 days may be removed without prior notice.
- 6.13. Eating or drinking is strictly prohibited in all ULS laboratories. Offenders will receive a warning and their supervisors will be notified.

7. Equipment-specific Safety Policies and Access Arrangements

- 7.1. Due to the potential health hazards of gas anaesthetics, users who need to use isoflurane (or any other gas anaesthetics) with our equipment are required to abide by the HSO's Code of Practice for Working Alone, which stipulates that "a second person should remain within call distance whenever these acute hazards are present". In addition, users should check on a regular basis that the gas analysers are in normal operation. When an alarm from a gas analyser is heard, users are required to evacuate from the laboratory and notify the staff-in-charge or the Campus Control Centre at once.
- 7.2. Users accessing the Bruker Animal MRI System at the Animal Imaging Centre are required to observe the regulations for accessing the controlled area (*i.e.*, the magnet room) due to such hazards as strong magnetic fields, use of gas anaesthesia and risk of asphyxiation or injury during quenching.
- 7.3. Users who would like to access the PerkinElmer IVIS systems on a workday are required to notify the staff-in-charge either by email or phone at least 3 hours in advance, or before 6:00 pm, whichever is earlier.
- 7.4. Users who would like to access the PerkinElmer IVIS systems during the weekend, or on public or University holidays are required to make arrangements with the staff-in-charge during office hours of the preceding workday.
- 7.5. Requests to access the PerkinElmer IVIS systems at short notice are subject to the availability of the staff-in-charge and may not be entertained.
- 7.6. Microscope users are required to clean the oil and water immersion objective lenses (if they have used any) with 70% ethanol using a lens paper, lower the objective nosepiece and click the objective with the lowest power into position after use.
- 7.7. Users of flow cytometers are required to disinfect and wash the instrument according to the instructions given during an equipment training session and as notices posted near the instrument.

8. Charging Scheme

- 8.1. A charging system has been implemented to cover most ULS equipment.
- 8.2. The costs for equipment usage, overtime usage, no-show penalty, training, consumables, technical support and/or other running costs will be charged to the supervisors' accounts.
- 8.3. Charges for equipment usage are calculated from the record of URFMS.
- 8.4. Subsidised rates for equipment usage are offered to internal users and collaborators.
- 8.5. "Internal users" refer to current PolyU staff members and students with a valid PolyU staff/student card and NetID.
- 8.6. "Collaborators" refer to users from other UGC-funded tertiary institutions and users from companies with ongoing collaborative projects with principal investigators at PolyU.

- 8.7. "External users" refer to users from companies without ongoing collaborations with PolyU and those who do not fall into the categories as defined in clauses 8.5 and 8.6.
- 8.8. The ULS reserves the rights to make final decisions on determining which group a user belongs to and whether or not a subsidised rate is to be offered to the user.
- 8.9. All charging rates are subject to change without prior notice. The latest charging scheme is available on the ULS website (<https://www.polyu.edu.hk/uls/-/media/department/uls/content/download/charging-scheme.pdf>).
- 8.10. Equipment usage will be charged from the beginning of a booked session until the user signs off. Any booked but unused timeslot thereafter will be charged at 75% of the original rate.
- 8.11. A 150% charge rate will be imposed for the overtime segment of a session.
- 8.12. If a user fails to show up and sign in for an entire booked session, a no-show penalty of 100% of the charge rate for the whole session will be imposed.

9. Obligations and Penalties

- 9.1. Supervisors are responsible for informing the users of the university and/or departmental safety policies, as well as the potential hazards and safety precautions in relation to each experiment.
- 9.2. Users will be given warnings (verbal and/or written) for misuse of equipment or misconduct. Repeated offences will lead to suspension of the online booking account and/or access to ULS equipment.
- 9.3. Supervisors are liable to the costs for repairing and/or replacing a damaged equipment resulted from misuse by the users.
- 9.4. The online booking accounts and access to ULS equipment of all associated users will be suspended if the supervisor is unable to settle the equipment usage charges within 3 months of the invoice date.

10. Acknowledging the ULS in Publications

- 10.1. As the acquisition and maintenance of ULS equipment are heavily subsidised by the University, users are requested to acknowledge the ULS in their publications (*e.g.*, in journal publications, conference papers and theses).
- 10.2. The information is a measure on how ULS equipment is being utilised to advance the research activities in the University and the statistics is important for the understanding of the research needs and trends of users, and securing funding for the running of the ULS and acquisition of new equipment in the future.
- 10.3. Credits for equipment usage will be awarded upon receipt of details of the acknowledgement. For each journal publication, credits for 3 hours of equipment usage will be awarded; for conference papers and theses, credits for 1 hour of equipment usage will be awarded.