



Safety and Risk
Management

MINORS IN LABORATORY PROGRAM

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Table of Contents

Minors in the Laboratory	1
University Policy #126 – Protection of Minors on Campus	1
Safety and Risk Management Office Approval Process	1
Work Restrictions for Minors.....	3
Approval Process Summary	4
Laboratory Definition.....	4
Appendix A: Laboratory Minor Approval Form	5
Appendix B: Laboratory Minor Training Checklist	6

Minors in the Laboratory

Laboratory safety extends not only to employees but also to any person visiting University laboratories, especially minors under the age of 18, who may potentially be exposed to hazardous materials. Laboratories are common sources of hazardous activities involving chemical, biological, and radiological risks, high-pressure activities, electrical hazards, lasers, and other dangerous equipment. Due to their lack of experience, restrictions are placed on minors to help ensure a safe and educational laboratory experience.

Registered WCU students under the age of 18

The Minors in Laboratory policy does NOT apply to students under the age of 18 enrolled in a laboratory course as a registered WCU student. A registered student receives laboratory safety training as part of the course requirement.

University Policy #126 – Protection of Minors on Campus

WCU has implemented standards and procedures for the protection of minors participating in programs or activities that are under the control or direction of the University, regardless of location. The policy stipulates the approval process in place for accepting minors on campus and the requirement for criminal background checks for WCU personnel supervising or working directly with the minor(s).

Departments should review University Policy #126 to determine applicability and initiate background checks, liability waivers, training, and parental consent requirements administered through WCU’s Legal Department prior to submitting any additional approval forms (described below) to the Safety and Risk Management Office.

Safety and Risk Management Office Approval Process

In addition to University Policy #126, minors under the age of 18 are NOT permitted in University laboratories, or office spaces located inside a laboratory area, except in the following situations:

Approved Laboratory Entry
1) Approved for observational events only such as a laboratory tour or demonstration. The minor will not have any hands-on activity in the laboratory.
2) Approved laboratory work for an officially sanctioned group education program (i.e. science camp, science fair, open house event, etc.).
3) Approved laboratory work while participating in research or clinical activity (i.e. mentoring program for a high school student conducting research).

Minors in the laboratory must be under direct supervision and closely monitored by a trained and knowledgeable employee at all times.

1) Observational Events involving minors (Tours or Demonstrations)

Non-University students under the age of 18 who are touring a laboratory for observational purposes only, must be under the direct supervision of the faculty member responsible for the laboratory or a designated lab employee who is trained and knowledgeable of the laboratory's hazards. Prior to allowing minors to tour a lab, the supervising employee must conduct a safety orientation and require strict adherence to personal protective equipment (PPE) and safety policies. Tour participants may not conduct any research or clinical activities or be present during an activity with the potential for exposure to hazardous materials.

Observational Event Approval Process:

- Approval from the faculty member responsible for the laboratory and the Department Head is required. Approval documentation is retained by the supervising department.
- Approval documentation is NOT required by the Safety and Risk Management Office for observational tours or demonstrations.

2) Officially Sanctioned Group Educational Laboratory Programs

Non-university minor students under the age of 18 who are working in the laboratory as part of an officially sanctioned education program such as a group science camp or other hands-on laboratory activity is permitted.

To protect the health and safety of the participating minor, adult supervisors must adhere to the following guidelines:

- The sponsoring faculty must receive approval from the Department Head using the [Laboratory Minor Approval Form](#) (Appendix A). When signatures are obtained from the responsible parties, the form is submitted to the Safety and Risk Management Office for review.
- The sponsoring faculty must follow all relevant safety and compliance requirements and adhere to the approved supervisory plan. The sponsoring faculty may act as the minor's direct supervisor or designate another faculty or staff member to serve in that role.
- The supervising employee must conduct a lab specific safety orientation and require strict adherence to personal protective equipment and lab safety policies. The training should be documented using the [Laboratory Minor Training Checklist](#) (Appendix B) and be available during a laboratory audit.

3) Mentoring Research or Clinical Programs

Minors may request an opportunity to participate in an approved research or clinical activity while under the mentorship and supervision of a sponsoring faculty member or designated employee.

To protect the health and safety of the participating minor, adult supervisors must adhere to the following guidelines:

- The sponsoring faculty must receive approval from the Department Head using the [Laboratory Minor Approval Form](#) (Appendix A). When signatures are obtained from the responsible parties, the form is submitted to the Safety and Risk Management Office for review.
- The sponsoring faculty must follow all relevant safety and compliance requirements and adhere to the approved supervisory plan. The sponsoring faculty may act as the minor's direct supervisor or designate another faculty or staff member to serve in that role.
- The supervising employee must conduct a lab specific safety orientation and require strict adherence to personal protective equipment and lab safety policies. The training should be documented using the [Laboratory Minor Training Checklist](#) (Appendix B) and be available during a laboratory audit.

Work Restrictions for Minors

Non-university minor students who are approved to work in a laboratory are restricted from working with the following hazardous materials or equipment:

Biological Hazards

- Minors are prohibited from working with biohazardous materials at Biosafety Level 2 (BSL-2) or higher.
- Minors may not be exposed to, or work with, biological material or agents that require medical surveillance.
- Minors may not perform duties in which they are required to work directly with human and/or non-human primate blood, body fluids, and tissue.
- Minors may not work directly with research animals.

Radiological Hazards

- Minors may not work with radiation sources (sealed or unsealed).
- Minors may not work with radiation generating equipment (i.e. X-Ray).
- Minors are not permitted in areas with open beam Class 3B or 4 lasers.

Chemical Hazards

- Minors are not permitted to work with carcinogens, reproductive toxins, controlled substances, highly reactive materials, or other acutely toxic chemicals.
- Minors may handle lower risk chemicals in limited circumstances, with the proper safety equipment, and at the discretion of the sponsoring faculty and laboratory safety officer.

Hazardous Equipment

- Minors are not permitted to operate hazardous equipment such as lathes, drill press, laser cutters, etc.

Approval Process Summary

Type of Event	Departmental Approval	Safety & Risk Management Approval
WCU registered minor student	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Observational Tour or Demonstration (no hands-on activity)	YES	Not Applicable
Group Event (science camp, science fair, hands-on activity)	YES	YES, Appendix A and Appendix B
Mentoring Program (research or clinical activity working directly with sponsoring faculty or designated employee)	YES	YES, Appendix A and Appendix B

Laboratory Definition

As used in this program, “laboratory” refers to any part of a building used by the University for scientific or technical activities which may be hazardous, and includes teaching laboratories, research laboratories, visual art studios, theatrical scene shops, and other shop areas where hazardous chemicals, machinery, and tools are stored and/or used. This program also applies to field work locations where approved educational activities are conducted.

Appendix A: Laboratory Minor Approval Form

This form must be completed for non-university minor students under the age of 18 who will be participating in a group education program or working in a research or clinical laboratory.

Type of Event (check one): Group Educational Event OR Mentoring Program

Name of Minor Student (for individual mentoring program): _____

Sponsoring Faculty: _____ Contact Email: _____

Direct Supervisor: _____ Contact Email: _____

Laboratory Location(s): _____

Department: _____ Department Head: _____

Program Start Date: _____ End Date: _____

Description of laboratory activities, including materials and equipment used, and training that will be provided (attach additional page if necessary):

Departmental Consent

I acknowledge that I have read and am familiar with the requirements for minors working in a laboratory. I agree to provide supervision for the minor(s), to provide the required training, and to ensure the safety of the minor(s) under my supervision.

Sponsoring Faculty Signature: _____ Date: _____

Direct Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Department Head (Director, Chair, etc.) Approval.

University Policy #126 requirements have been processed: Yes No

Department Head Signature: _____ Date: _____

Submit signed form to the Safety and Risk Management Office (safety@wcu.edu)

Safety & Risk Management Signature: _____ Date: _____

Laboratory Safety Officer Name: _____

Appendix B: Laboratory Minor Training Checklist

Lab Safety Training Documentation

Sponsoring Faculty: _____

Direct Supervisor: _____

Lab Location (building/room): _____

Name of Group Event OR Mentoring Student: _____

General Lab Safety Practices	Supervisor Initials
Laboratory doors must remain closed to maintain security and ventilation controls. Doors must remain locked when the lab is unoccupied.	
Eating, drinking, smoking, handling contact lenses, applying cosmetics, and storing food for human consumption is not permitted in the laboratory.	
Work benches must be maintained as organized and clutter-free as practical.	
Animals and plants not associated with work being performed are not permitted in the laboratory.	
Lab personnel must wear appropriate attire, to include closed-toed shoes and clothing to minimize exposed skin. Long hair should be tied back.	
Additional PPE (gloves, safety glasses, etc.) must be worn as required by the lab supervisor.	
Mouth pipetting is prohibited; mechanical pipetting devices must be used.	
Sharps are disposed of in an approved sharps container.	
Hazardous liquid and solid wastes will be collected following WCU's laboratory waste management guidelines.	
Minors working in the laboratory will not be left alone or be granted unsupervised access to the building and laboratory.	
All incidents or unsafe work practices must be reported to the laboratory supervisor.	
Chemical or biological spills must be reported to the laboratory supervisor. If safe to do so, the supervisor will clean up the spill following safe cleanup procedures.	
Minors must be familiar with the emergency procedures for the laboratory. They must know the location of safety equipment such as first aid, safety eyewash/shower, chemical/biological spill kit, emergency exit and meeting location, and emergency contact information.	

I certify that I have reviewed the general laboratory safety practices listed above with the minor student(s) under my supervision.

Direct Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

This completed form will be maintained by the department and available during laboratory audits.