

Policies and Procedures for the Nikon Center of Excellence (COE)

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1. Gaining Access to the Nikon Center of Excellence

1.1 Becoming a new user

To become a Nikon COE user, you will need to [set up an iLab account](#) and fill out a Nikon Center of Excellence Request Form. At the end of the form, you will acknowledge that you have read and understood this COE Policies and Procedures Manual. You will contact the appropriate staff member (Stanislav Vitha, stanvitha@tamu.edu) to say that you have completed your Nikon Center of Excellence Request Form and set up a time to meet and begin training.

1.2 Training request on a Nikon COE instrument

If you are already an iLab user and would like to request training on a new instrument you will need to contact the appropriate staff member and fill out a Nikon Center of Excellence Request Form for the instrument.

1.3 Key code access to the facilities

Once training is complete and a user is “checked out”, that user will be given key codes to the doors at the Nikon COE facility. For the COE, the key codes to the doors will be made available. After-hours and weekend operation of equipment is available at an “off-peak rate” for qualified users who have been trained to operate instruments independently.

1.4 Location and Parking

The Nikon COE is located in the Biological Sciences Building West (BSBW) building basement suite 017. Visitors can park in the Biology

Visitor parking spaces. You will need to sign into the logbook in Rm 017 if parking in the visitor parking spaces.

2. Billing

2.1 Billing Protocol

Users of the facility will be billed each month for their usage through iLab. When receiving training in the Center of Excellence, you will be billed for the staff time needed to train you on the equipment. If you would like to request refresher training, consultation, or other staff assistance you will be charged for staff time. Fee schedule found [here](#).

2.2 Equipment Reservation Policies

Instruments in the COE can be scheduled up to 2 weeks in advance and microscopes can be reserved for blocks up to 6 hours at a time no more than twice a day. Instruments in the COE have extended use and some labs are given first privileges. Please refer to the iLab schedule to see blocked-out times.

During training, a user will only be allowed to reserve equipment during COE business hours from 8:00am-5:00pm on weekdays, excluding holidays. Please note that for all laser-based instruments in the Nikon COE [laser safety training](#) is required and you must bring a paper copy of your laser safety training certificate.

Any reservation cancellations should be made 12 hours in advance to allow other users to schedule time on the instrument.

The assessment of a No-Show fee will be at the discretion of the equipment manager. For COE No-Shows, there will be a 30 min grace period, after which the reservation is cancelled, and others can use the machine.

If a user or advisor feels that fees have been applied in error because of a medical or family emergency, the advisor should submit a written appeal to the equipment manager and the MIC Assistant Director.

2.3 iLab Kiosk

Upon arrival at the COE to use the reserved instrument, users must check in at the kiosk located in the main room of the BSBW-017 instrumentation suite. This will start the iLab session and begin use for the equipment. If more time is needed than what was reserved the user is responsible for extending their session in iLab. After equipment use is complete, users will log back into iLab at the kiosk and terminate their session. If this does not occur the user will be charged the walkout time.

Any remote use of the COE equipment must have an active iLab session and cannot be used to bypass usage fees or interfere with other users.

2.4 Equipment Failure

No fee will be assessed for late cancellations or no-shows during any period when the instrument is unavailable because of maintenance or repairs.

If any problems with the equipment occur during operation or are discovered at check-in, the user is responsible for notifying the equipment manager as soon as possible.

PIs will be responsible for the cost of repairs from damages due to negligence or misuse of instruments by users in their group.

Proper usage and maintenance of the equipment are critical for optimal data collection. It is important that users properly perform the startup, shutdown, operating, and cleaning procedures as described in the training sessions. Users are responsible for returning equipment and/or accessories to their proper place at the end of each session. Failure to comply with all usage procedures as laid out in equipment tutorials, manuals, and training sessions can result in restricted or suspended access to MIC equipment. Users should contact the equipment manager with any questions or clarifications on procedures.

3. Data Policies

Users are responsible for their own data. Data and images collected on the local hard drive should be transferred from the microscope computers to portable media or to an adjacent networked machine for data storage promptly. Individual user USB drives may not be allowed on some image acquisition computers, so use the networked data drives. Users should bring a USB drive to take their data from the networked computers or acquisition computers (if allowed) with them at the end of the session. Upon approval by the equipment manager, data may be stored up to 2 weeks and after that may be deleted without notice to the user/PI.

Do not, under any circumstances, download/upload programs or files onto COE computers. Users doing so will have their use of the facility restricted. COE computers are not to be used for any purpose other than COE related activities.

4. Safety

4.1 General Safety Information

All users of the COE are responsible for the safe utilization of instrumentation. Electrical and chemical hazards, as well as hazards associated with the utilization of high-vacuum instruments exist.

All new users of the facility shall receive site-specific safety training at the beginning of their instrument training.

No biohazardous material may be brought into the laboratory unless procedures for their use and disposal have been approved and all members of the COE are properly informed of potential hazards.

A handbook of safety procedures and a Texas A&M University Hazardous Waste Disposal Manual is located at the entrance to the laboratory. Users of the laboratory are obligated to use proper safety procedures and are expected to both read and understand the contents of these documents.

Material Data Safety Sheets are maintained on all chemicals used in the laboratory. Contact a staff member for manuals.

4.2 Biohazardous Safety

No Biosafety Level (BSL-2), (BSL)-3, BSL-4 agents/pathogens or radioactive material are allowed in the facility at any time.

Selected rooms in the COE have been approved as a BSL-1 laboratory space. BSL-1 samples are only allowed in BSL-1 designated rooms.

Anything brought into the laboratory must be taken out for disposal following the conclusion of the experiment. All trash/waste within these rooms must be disposed of properly.

For more information, please see the website for [Research Compliance and Biosafety](#) .

5. Experiment Error

There will be no charge for experiments that fail due to errors* by the COE staff or equipment malfunction if no usable data is collected. If the investigator elects to collect data from experiments that are not up to standard, then normal charges will apply. The investigator may elect to terminate the project prior to completion. However, charges will be applied for all procedures completed prior to the experiment termination.

*(Errors are defined as mistakes in carrying out the planned procedures. Unsuccessful sample preparation based on the unique nature of the samples or sample response to routine preparation methods is not considered an error. Investigators are encouraged to provide methods from literature as a basis for preparation of new samples to minimize potential sample preparation problems.)

6. Export Controls

Texas A&M and the COE also have a commitment to comply with all applicable export controls, as established by federal regulations, in its policy on export controls (see The Texas A&M University System Policy 15.02 Export Controls).

7. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is required for all COE users who are members of the TAMU research community. External users of the facility are extended similar confidentiality treatment. Confidential disclosure/nondisclosure agreements are executed for external users upon request through the Contracts Administration (contracts.tamu.edu). The COE will aid in establishing such agreements.

(<https://financeits.tamu.edu/resources/protecting-confidential-information/>)

9. MIC Acknowledgment Policy

To best acknowledge the COE in publications and presentations that have utilized the COE facilities please include this statement in your paper: “The use of Texas A&M University Microscopy and Imaging Center Core Facility and Nikon Center of Excellence (RRID:SCR_022128) is acknowledged.”

The FEI Quanta 600 FE-SEM must have special acknowledgment per NSF guidelines as follows: *“The FE-SEM acquisition was supported in part by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. DBI-0116835.”*