

Department of Chemistry

Laboratory Assistant Handbook

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Introduction

The Department of Chemistry provides approximately 30 laboratory sections in general, organic, analytical and other areas of chemistry. Instructors teach all of these laboratories and many benefit by the addition of student assistants. A student assistant provides many useful functions in the laboratory that include acting as a teaching assistant, maintenance of the laboratory, and insurance of safety. Many benefits are accrued by working as an assistant.

These benefits include:

- Being paid as a part-time worker.
- Reinforcement and enhancement of basic chemistry knowledge and skills.
- Experience in teaching.
- Assistance to the Department of Chemistry. (Frequently recognized in recommendations to future employers or graduate schools.)
- Involvement as a part of the departmental “community” of students and instructors.

As a laboratory assistant, you will be continuing the tradition of experienced students helping to bring along and enhance the success of junior level students. We welcome your contribution to our department.

General Job Duties:

Prior to Laboratory:

A laboratory assistant is assigned to a laboratory for which it has been determined that the student is qualified and has had sufficient experience. The student assistant is expected to have read and be familiar with all the material to be covered in the laboratory period. Their

knowledge must be sufficient to answer student questions regarding the material presented. In many cases, this may involve advanced contact with the laboratory instructor for more specific instructions.

Depending on the prior experience of the laboratory assistant or the nature of the laboratory period, the instructor may suggest that the student worker occasionally attend the laboratory recitation period. Laboratory Assistants should not routinely attend recitations.

Laboratory assistants should introduce themselves to the Chemistry Associate who is in charge of the stockroom and laboratory preparation.

Dress:

Laboratory assistants should present a positive professional image and thus should dress accordingly. They are expected to be clean and well groomed. Laboratory assistants will adhere to the same dress restrictions as students and as described in the laboratory safety contract.

Open toed shoes and shorts will not be allowed.

Laboratory Goggles:

Unless instructed otherwise, all students must have and wear approved laboratory safety goggles. If students do not have their own, they may rent them. When the student returns the goggles, they may retrieve their identification card. **It is your responsibility, as well as that of the laboratory instructor, to be certain that all students have and wear laboratory goggles.**

Assisting Students:

During the period in which the students are working, you should move around the room to insure that students are carrying out instructions in a safe and correct manner. You are encouraged to assist the students in the form of helpful advice or suggestions on proper

laboratory procedures. However, be careful not to answer the question for the students or do their work for them. Watch for minor safety or contamination infractions such as leaving reagent bottles open, pouring or inserting materials in reagent bottles, lighting burners near flammable, reagents, etc. Be available to student to answer laboratory questions or to assist with general questions concerning laboratory or lecture material. Be sure to answer questions within your ability. If you are unsure about an answer or a procedure, or are otherwise unable to provide sufficient or accurate information, consult with or refer students to the laboratory instructor. Some of the routine duties are listed below. Your laboratory instructor may ask you to perform other duties as needed.

DO:

- Become familiar with the experiments being performed. Anticipate questions that the students may have and offer assistance when necessary.
- Check to be sure the correct laboratory drawers are unlocked prior to lab.
- Know where all safety equipment is in the laboratory. (Fire extinguishers, eye wash fountains, safety showers, etc.)
- Move around the laboratory and assist students with questions.
- Insure students have and wear goggles at all times.
- Help students maintain a clean and safe laboratory environment.
- Assist students in carrying out instructions and procedures in a safe and effective manner.
- Insure that students replace reagents back in the proper place.
- Be prepared and aware of safety procedures for emergency or injury situations.
- Notify the laboratory instructor if a student is uncooperative or a hazard to others or themselves.
- Be sure de-ionized water bottles are filled.

- Be sure the benchtops are clean at the end of lab.
- Be sure the balance area is clean.
- Be sure the reagent areas are orderly.
- Replace paper towels, hand soap and detergent as needed.
- Report damaged equipment and replace broken glassware.

DO NOT:

- Work on homework or other personal material during the laboratory period.
- Sit in one place and do nothing or talk. (There is always maintenance or students to help.)
- Make personal prolonged telephone calls.
- Leave the laboratory without notifying the instructor or leave for extended periods.
- Be abusive or overbearing to students. (Maintain a professional and satisfactory working environment.)
- Give direct answers to the laboratory questions.
- Make measurements or carry out any laboratory procedure for the students.
- Socialize with the students

Higher-level Laboratory Duties:

In addition to general chemistry laboratories, you may be assigned to higher level laboratories. All duties described above apply, however, you may have some specific duties unique to you in the assigned laboratory. Additional duties are listed below.

Organic Chemistry Laboratory:

In addition to general duties listed above, laboratory assistants will be required to obtain reagents from the stockroom and/or Organic Prep Room and set them out for student use. In addition, assistants may be required to prepare unknowns and solutions of reagents for student

use as per given instructions. Laboratory assistants should be competent in the use and capable of providing instruction on the use of a gas chromatograph, FT-infrared spectrophotometer and a refractometer.

Biochemistry Laboratory:

Biochemistry laboratory assistants also assist with laboratory preparation, coordinated with the laboratory instructor. In general, two or three hours per week outside of the laboratory meeting will be necessary. Written instruction for preparing the labs will be provided.

Quantitative Analysis:

In addition to the general duties listed above, laboratory assistants in Quantitative Analysis Laboratory are expected to prepare and dry unknown samples for laboratory students, calibrate and prepare pH meters and spectrophotometers, clean laboratory pipettes on a weekly basis and insure that the de-ionizing resin remains active.

Time Cards:

Time cards are created and kept for each student worker in the main office of the Department of Chemistry.. The student worker must sign in before beginning work for the day and enter finishing times for work upon completion of the day's duties. The work period must be approved by the instructor for whom the student has been assigned. Be certain that your assigned instructor initials your time sheet. The departmental secretary will transfer your written hours to your university time card. **It is your responsibility to sign the time sheet and time card immediately. Absence of the student employee signature may result in a significant delay in being paid.**

Instructions:

1. LABORATORY ASSISTANT TIME SHEET. This is the time sheet in the white notebook that you write your times on each time you start and end your laboratory

session. **BE SURE TO SIGN THE BOTTOM OF THE “LABORATORY ASSISTANT SIGNATURE” LINE.**

2. UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA TIME CARD. This is the time card that the department secretary will fill out and send to the Payroll Department. You will be asked to sign all your time cards for the semester when you first sign up to work.

A new time sheet will be placed in the white notebook for each time period with the information the department secretary needs already fill in. All you need to do is fill in the times you arrive and leave.

Paychecks are issued on the second Friday after the pay period ends. You may pick them up from the Bursar’s Office on the first floor of University Center. If you decide to have your checks deposited directly into your checking account, you will pick up your pay stub in the department office. It will be attached to your time sheet.

Employment Requirements:

To apply for a laboratory assistant position, you will need to satisfy several State of Oklahoma, University and Department requirements.

Enrollment:

*During the first 3 weeks of the fall and spring semesters, preference for on-campus jobs is given to those undergraduate students who are enrolled in at least twelve (12) semesters hours or graduate students enrolled in at least nine (9) semester hours. Audits and correspondence courses do not count when determining the number of hours enrolled for employment eligibility. After the 3rd week of school, all students enrolled in a minimum of 6 hours may apply to work on campus. However, international students must be full-time students throughout the entire semester and in good standing with the INS in order to apply for and/or continue with on-campus employment.**

Preference for on-campus student jobs during the first week of the summer semester will be given to students enrolled in at least 3 graduate or undergraduate hours. After the first week of classes, summer enrollment is optional relative to securing on-campus employment for all students previously enrolled full-time in the spring semester. This policy statement does not apply to those students with Federal Work-Study awards. Federal law mandates that students receiving monies from Federal Work-Study awards must be enrolled at least half time.

Those students who are not enrolled in classes during the summer session are eligible for employment as a temporary laborer. A temporary laborer may work a maximum of 39 hours per week if they are enrolled full-time in the spring semester and intend to enroll for the next fall semester. Monies earned during this time period are subject to all applicable tax withholdings.

Job Skills and Experience:

Students applying for a laboratory position must have previously completed the laboratory course for which they will be assigned. Preference is given to those having taken the laboratory course at the University of Central Oklahoma. Others will be interviewed as to previous subject material studied and may be required to demonstrate their knowledge and ability. Applicants will not be placed in a laboratory for which they have no previous experience or are currently enrolled.

*Italicized areas denote text taken from the University Student Employment Program Guide

Other Considerations:

The student employment program is administered without discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability or status as a veteran. The prospective student worker must be able to perform the duties of the job including the ability to communicate effectively with the instructor and especially with students enrolled in the laboratory.

Getting Hired:

You can become a laboratory assistant simply by applying with the Chemistry Department Laboratory Assistant Coordinator. You will be briefly interviewed to determine your qualifications. **This interview may include a brief survey examination in order to determine the best place for you to work.** Upon successful interview and evaluation of which laboratory courses you may be qualified to assist, you and the coordinator will determine a working schedule. The coordinator will try to work within your course schedule. **It is important that you bring or know your class and personal schedule as it will otherwise be impossible to provide you with a work schedule.** Laboratories are usually assigned on a first-come-first-serve basis. Exceptions include instructor requests and attempts to resolve schedule conflicts.

If you have never worked on campus before:

Return the Student Employment Action Form (given to you at Hiring and Benefits, Lillard Administration building or by the Laboratory Assistant Coordinator) to the Hiring and Benefits Department. When you report to the Hiring and Benefits Department to complete your payroll/Hiring and Benefits paperwork, you must take original documents with you to prove that you have the right to work in the United States. Several documents will satisfy this requirement, but the following seem to be the most common: valid drivers license or student ID or valid

passport: and social security card, birth certificate, valid INS employment authorization form or Native American roll card. All employees must complete payroll/Hiring and Benefits paperwork within three working days.

Note: International students who are hired to work on campus must obtain a Clearance Check List from the International Office before beginning work.

PERSONS WHO HAVE NEVER OBTAINED A SOCIAL SECURITY CARD MUST OBTAIN A CARD/NUMBER BEFORE BEING PLACED ON THE PAYROLL SYSTEM AND MUST PRODUCE THIS CARD IN THE HIRING AND BENEFITS OFFICE.

If you worked on campus previously and your supervisor has agreed to renew your employment:

Nothing is required. The Laboratory Assistant Coordinator will complete your renewal form.

If you are working on campus but want to change to a different job:

Return the completed Student Employment Action Form to the Hiring and Benefits Department.

General Employment Information:

Continuation of Employment:

Student employment is a temporary employment arrangement and can be discontinued at any time. If a position is to be eliminated, the student will be notified by the supervisor. If a student job is discontinued, funding runs out, etc. the student should report to the Hiring and Benefits Department for assistance in obtaining another position.

NOTE: Student employees are not eligible for unemployment compensation.

Working Hours:

Student employment is limited to a maximum of 20 hours per work week except during the intersession, at which time the student may work a maximum of 39 hours per workweek.

Disciplinary Action/Termination

Disciplinary action can be a verbal or written reprimand, suspension, or dismissal, depending upon the severity and/or frequency of the infraction. Student employees who feel disciplinary action was arbitrary, unjust or contrary to University policy, may contact the Hiring and Benefits Department.

Unpaid absence from Work:

All absences from work which can be anticipated (doctor appointments, going out of town, time off or personal business, etc.) should be approved in advance by the supervisor. In case of illness which prevents you from working, the supervisor should be notified before your reporting time.

NOTE: Failure to notify your supervisor of absences, patterns of tardiness, frequent absences, and failure to report for your assigned work shift may result in dismissal. When a student employee is absent from duty without approval for 3 consecutive work days, he/she will be considered to have abandoned his/her position and will be terminated. The record of job abandonment will become a part of the student's employment record and may result in the student's being refused further employment with the University.

Maternity:

Student employees who are pregnant will be allowed to work through the 6th month of pregnancy, provided physical health will permit the performance of required duties. Beginning with the 6th month, the student employee must submit regular letters from the attending physician indicating that the student is able to continue performance of her duties. When the physician deems it medically unsafe for the employee to continue work, the student must begin unpaid maternity leave. Within 30 days after discharge from the hospital, the student employee must signify in writing their intent to return to work at the University. The return to work must be reasonable and agreed to by all parties including the attending physician.

Use of University Equipment:

University equipment is to be used for official business only and is not for personal use. Personal telephone calls should be kept to a minimum to ensure that telephone lines are available for business use.

Changes in Address, Etc.:

All employees must promptly notify the Hiring and Benefits Department of changes in address, telephone number, etc. Failure to do so may result in a delay in important correspondence with the employee, W-2 statements being “Returned to Sender” by Post Office, emergency telephone calls not being transferred. etc. **Changing your student records through the Registrar’s Office, library or bookstore does not change your Hiring and Benefits/payroll records. Notify the Hiring and Benefits Staff if you have changed your address, telephone number, etc. so your employment file can be updated.**

On-the-job Injuries:

All employees are urged to exercise caution while performing job duties. Employees are covered by Worker's Compensation Insurance and should immediately report on-the-job injury to his/her supervisor.

Sexual Harassment:

The University is committed to providing an environment which is free of sexual harassment. If you believe you are a victim of sexual harassment, contact the Equity Office, ADM 210, Ext. 2573.

Confidentiality:

University records on employees and students are confidential. Student employees who have access to such records, or obtain information regarding employment or student matters, must maintain confidentiality. A breach of confidential records may lead to termination.