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Service Level Agreement

Faculty of Science Mass Spectrometry Centre

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1. Introduction and Objectives

The following Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been produced to advise researchers about the facilities and services that the Faculty of Science Mass Spectrometry Centre (FoS MS Centre) is currently able to offer, the standard of service users can reasonably expect, and the responsibilities of the user.

While this SLA also refers to how external business is being dealt with, it has not been written for passing onto customers external to the University. Commercial Terms & Conditions have to be developed should the FoS MS Centre attract new external business. Furthermore, some of the detail in this SLA, such as data transfer to a file server and provision of consumables, applies to UoS-based researchers only. External users should discuss with the Facility Manager mutually agreeable arrangements.

The FoS MS Centre is a resource of the Faculty of Science but it is also available to researchers from other departments and faculties of The University of Sheffield. It also provides a contract service to companies external to the University of Sheffield. The aim of the facility is to provide a range of MS analysis and characterisation facilities for users in chemical, biological and medical sciences.

The facility is managed following the Faculty of Science's Facilities Management Framework and the Centre Directors and Facility Managers ensure the professional running of the facilities as well as providing scientific advice. User feedback is welcome, be it on the standard of service provided or of scientific nature, to allow the facility to constantly improve and develop.

2. Services Provided

The FoS MS Centre provides access to, and guidance in the use of, a wide range of mass spectrometry instruments, allowing routine analyses through a high-throughput open-access mode of operation to specialised experiments requiring user training and/or assistance from facility staff. More detail about available instrumentation and types of analyses can be found on the FoS MS Centre website and through discussion with facility staff.

Standard consumables are provided in the facility and the cost is included in the per sample/per unit time charges for MS analysis. Non-standard consumables will be charged for and it is important to discuss experimental plans with facility staff to identify requirements for the purchase of any specific reagents or consumables. Specific sample preparation and data analysis steps can be performed by facility staff and an appropriate service fee will be applied.

3. User Induction & Training

For users within the MS facility in the Dainton building, a basic lab induction will be provided. Users in the Metabolomics facility located in the Alfred Denny building must complete a comprehensive induction which will be arranged by the Facility Manager.

In most cases, MS analyses will be performed by the Facility Manager or technical staff. More advanced users who wish to use the bookable instrument will receive the necessary training for their experiments before they are allowed to book instrument time. Some instruments may be booked via a Q-reserve.

4. User Responsibilities

4.1 Health & Safety and Code of Conduct

The Health & Safety (H&S) rules governing the Facility are clearly outlined to users during the induction to the Facility. Facility users must read the Users Code of Conduct document for specific policies.

4.2 Sample Preparation and Use of Equipment

Sample preparation is normally the responsibility of the user after training by facility staff; however, the user is strongly recommended to discuss this with facility staff in case of any doubts.

- Do not bring samples or chemicals into the laboratory without first discussing their properties and origins with a member of staff.
- The user shall inform facility staff of any potential ethical and H&S considerations directly or indirectly associated with the samples, for example, any samples that comprise or relate to human tissues or fluids.
- Label all glassware, plastic ware, sample tubes and box with your full name, sample type and date. Anything without this information will be disposed of.
- Always wear the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and adhere to good laboratory practice (GLP).
- Where users carry out their own measurements and analysis, it is the responsibility of the user to have the skills and knowledge necessary to use the facility's technology competently. As detailed in Section 3 of this SLA, training will be provided but it is the responsibility of the user to request further instructions and training should he/she not feel confident in the use of any equipment following the initial training or should any refresher training be required.
- All equipment must be handled with a high standard of care as would be expected for any scientific equipment. While the Facility aims to maintain all equipment, should the user find equipment malfunction or should any damage have occurred during usage, it is the user's responsibility to report this immediately to the Facility Manager.
- Users are requested to collect their samples (if appropriate) for their own storage or disposal.
- It is the user's responsibility to ensure that they read, understand and adhere to all notifications and reminders sent out by the Facility staff via email.

5. Facility Availability and Accessibility

The Facility staff may, from time to time, need to take an instrument out of action for essential maintenance or repairs. When such down-time is planned, ample notification will be given via email to the existing user base and will always be planned during the quieter times of the academic year (i.e. out of term time).

When such down-time is unplanned (e.g. break-down of equipment or lack/failure of key infrastructure), Facility Management will make every endeavor to notify the user base of the problem via email with an estimate of likely down-time.

When not undergoing maintenance or repairs, the open-access instrumentation is available 24/7 (with the exception of Departmental shut-down at Christmas) with the permission of facility staff and completion of the required out of hours training.

6. Turnaround time

Any samples submitted to the facilities for analysis will be turned around as quickly as possible, keeping in mind the other demands on the Facility staff's time.

It is unrealistic to give a guaranteed turn-around time, as experiment conditions vary widely (some measurements taking just minutes, some taking many hours or even days).

Internal customers are notified that their data is available by email. The data will have been suitably processed and comments are given if extra care needs to be taken in the interpretation or other noteworthy factors.

Full support and training can be provided for familiarising users with the relevant software packages.

7. Data Storage

We recommend that users take a copy of their data files, specific arrangements are in place for doing so in each facility. All data will be stored for a maximum of 10 years on a UoS mirrored file store in compliance with UK grant funder requirements. In some cases, MS data will need to be deposited in a public repository in accordance with publisher requirements, facility staff can help with this process if necessary.

8. Provision of Cost Estimates for Grant Applications

The Full Economic Cost (FEC) rates for MS facility costs in grant applications have been calculated by the Faculty of Science finance team and are applied to Research Council grant applications. Different rates are applied for grant applications to charity funders based on their allowable costs. Note that per sample/per hour rates vary depending on the type of analysis so the unit price listed in the grant costing tool is not necessarily accurate. An official quote must be obtained from a member of the FoS Mass Spectrometry Centre (<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/mass-spectrometry>) before the submission of projects for approval.

Contacts

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9. Invoicing

Internal users are required to complete a sample description form and include a grant code/cost centre to which the MS costs are to be charged, prior to analysis. External work is logged and a summary of charges is provided monthly to Accounts, who issue a University invoice against the Purchase Order. No work is carried out for external customers without a valid Purchase Order.

10. Confidentiality

All analytical data and any related information regarding work taking place in the facility will remain confidential and not released in any format without the permission of the user or their line manager.

11. Publications

Simple and routine MS analysis does not require co-authorship but the following sentence should be included in the acknowledgment section of manuscripts:

"Mass spectrometry analyses were performed by (facility staff name(s)) at the Faculty of Science Mass Spectrometry Centre at the University of Sheffield."

Within the context of academic research projects, any substantial intellectual contribution from our scientific members justifies a co-authorship on a resulting manuscript. This will be the case during the planning, execution and data analysis. We advise users to discuss this arrangement at the outset of projects involving the facilities.

If a publication or grant arises from work performed in the Faculty of Science Mass Spectrometry Centre, please let us know.

This information importantly contributes to the continuity and quality of our mass spectrometry facilities and therefore is critical for us.

11. Contact

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