

Reopening and Operation of Research Administrative Support

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedures for the opening and operation of the Research Administrative Support (RAS) group. The RAS group provides administrative support to the Department's research operations, including processing purchase orders, invoices and expense claims, managing routine human resources documentation, and handling mail and courier requirements. A core element of the work is maintaining physical records as required by University and funding Agency Policy, for example printing and filing financial documents processed electronically for which paper archives are required. This can only be done on site. There is also a backlog of mail that includes invoices and other items that must be processed and cleared.

Regular Review

This plan will be reviewed regularly and revised if changing circumstances warrant. This will be done in compliance with University policy and recommendations from Environmental Health & Safety (EHS).

Principles

- Paramount will be the health, safety and protection of staff and all clients including faculty, students, post-doctoral fellows and staff
- Applicable EHS, FAS and Departmental directives and guidelines will guide the restart and ongoing operations.
- Planning and implementation will follow the principles described in this document and revisions.
- The Department will provide reasonable accommodation to staff members for personal circumstances while balancing the needs of the University and its members and adhering to agreements, policies, procedures, guidance documents and legislation.
- Public parts of the building, including classrooms and lecture halls will have specific requirements for teaching and not covered in this document, as will teaching and research labs. RAS staff will be required to follow any policies or procedures applicable when in those areas. This document will focus on RAS work areas.

General Preparation for Reopening

This section outlines general guidelines for Research Administrative Support.

- All RAS areas will have prominent notices located at the corridor entrances outlining rules for clients. There will also be a COVID hygiene poster.
- It will be the responsibility of the RAS staff to ensure that the signs are in good condition, barriers are in place and in maintaining the supplies. These will be inspected at least daily and more frequently as required.
- All standard safety practices are to be followed.

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- Face masks will be made available, and should be used as directed by [University Policy](#). They should be worn in all common-use indoor University spaces (e.g. corridors, washrooms, stairwells, classrooms) but are not required in offices unless physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Non-RAS persons will not be allowed into RAS work areas except for a specific task of short duration. Physical distancing must be maintained and masks worn while non-RAS staff are present.
- If necessary to manage traffic in RAS areas, a reservation system will be setup for the RAS staff by email or using Microsoft Booking. This information will be circulated to the supported groups.

General procedures for all Staff

- Staff should stay home if they feel unwell or are experiencing symptoms, and should report any absences to their Supervisor as soon as possible.
- If staff suspect they have COVID-19 symptoms or believe they may have been exposed to COVID-19 they should complete the [Ontario Ministry of Health self-assessment for COVID-19](#) and follow the directions provided. An employee who tests positive for COVID-19 should immediately contact U of T's Occupational Health Nurse by email at <mailto:ehs.occhealth@utoronto.ca>.
- Staff members are to practice physical distancing at all times, keeping a minimum of two meters apart. Work apart as much as possible.
 - If this is not possible (i.e. needing help with moving materials) then a face mask is required. All areas of common contact are to be cleaned afterwards.
 - Avoid sharing of office equipment or work areas. If they are shared then they must be sanitized between uses.
- Staff will eat at their desks; no common lunch room will be provided, and there will be no access to refrigerators, microwave ovens, etc.
- Hands should be washed with soap and water frequently, especially after contacting materials and surfaces others may have handled.
- Re-wash hands when re-entering the workspace.
- All personal work areas are to be cleaned at the start of the workday. This includes desks, counters & benchtops, phones, keyboards, tools, etc. Any materials, equipment etc. entering or leaving a personal workspace must be cleaned.
- Report hazards and concerns to the appropriate supervisor.
- All relevant COVID-19 protection procedures should be reviewed and followed.
- Use equipment and/or PPE as defined for the workspace.
- Consider changing clothes when arriving at and leaving from work, especially if using public transit.
- All other safety protocol & procedures for workplace hazards are to be followed.

Standard Operating Procedures

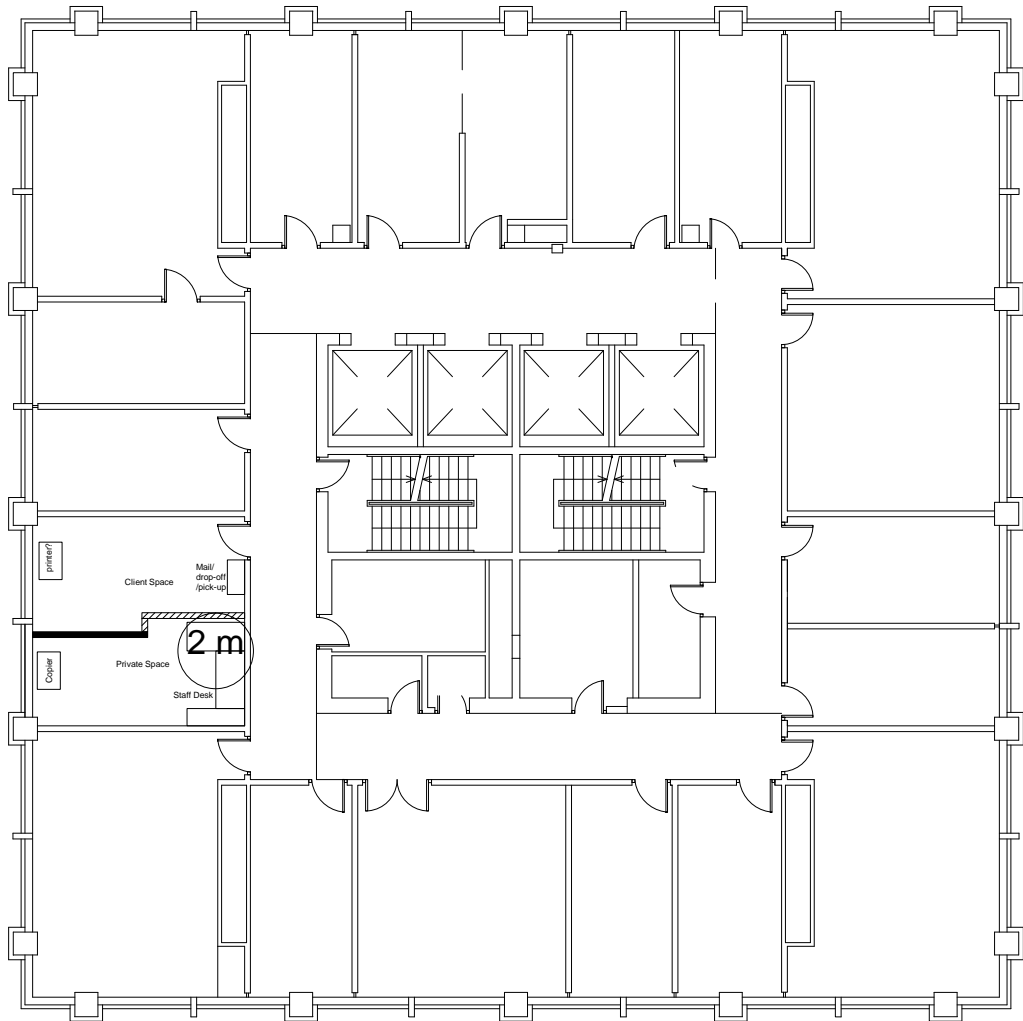
- Schedules will be arranged and communicated to clients to minimize the time staff spend on-site.
- Anyone wishing to visit an RAS office or obtain help from the staff will make advance arrangements by email, or by using a reservation system.
- Maximum room occupancy will be one staff member, and one client.
- In each RAS room a private area will be marked of (i.e. around desk), and accessed by a single RAS staff person only.

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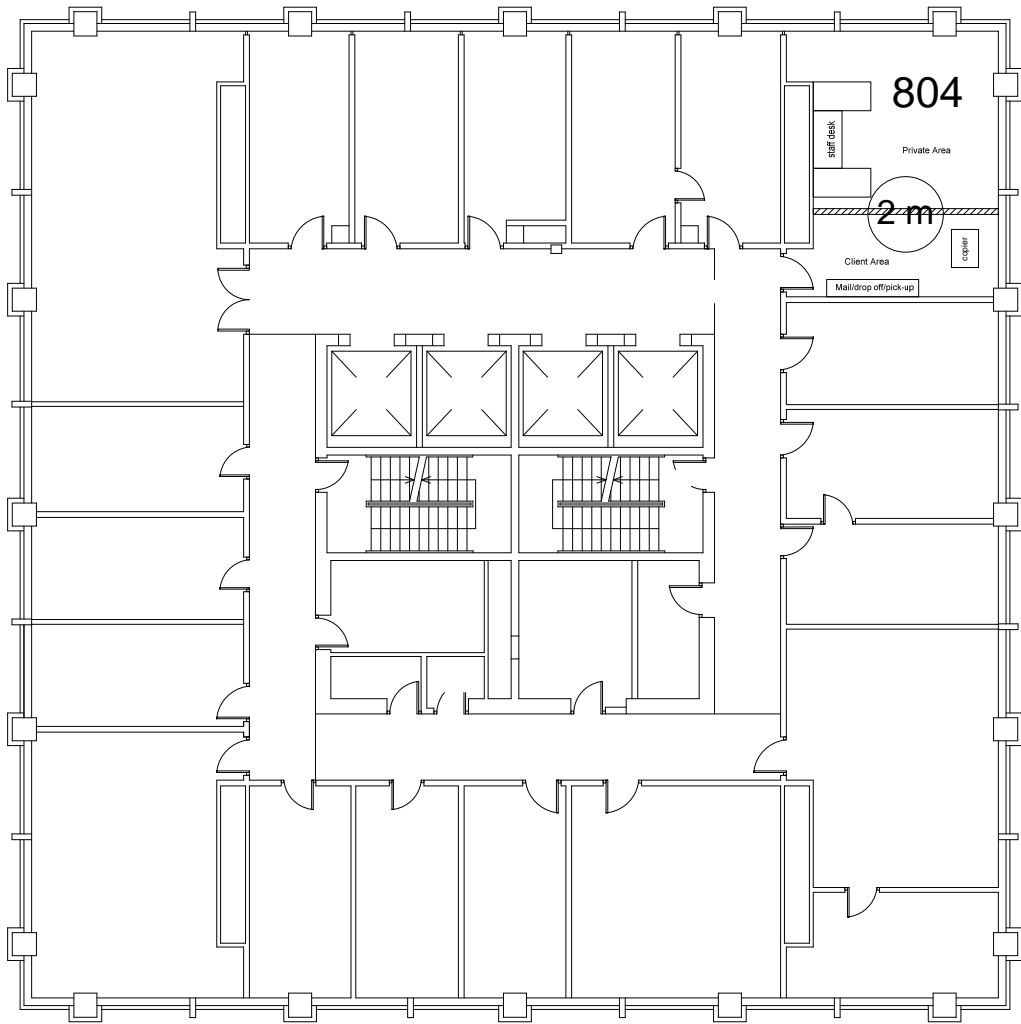
- Where possible, documents will be processed electronically. When documents must be handled on-site, a 72 hour quarantine will be used whenever possible. For example, an inbox/outbox system will be placed outside the staff member's private area for document transfers. When this is not possible, documentation processing will be done in batches. While processing un-quarantined documents, staff should wear masks, avoid touching their faces, and should wash hands as soon as possible afterward.
- Clients will be informed of the user guidelines with signs and email notices and will be expected to respect them.
- Clients will be asked to leave if they deliberately behave in a manner not consistent with this document. Anyone refusing to comply with these guidelines will not be allowed access to RAS services and repeated behaviour will be reported to supervisors or an appropriate authority.
- Clients may have to wait in a safe area, asked to return later or make an appointment if in the opinion of the RAS staff, physical distancing will be compromised.
- Clients should bring their own writing instruments (e.g. pens) for signing documents. Spare pens will be available, subject to sanitization and/or a 72 hour quarantine.
- Mail and other documents will be handled only by RAS staff and relevant clients. Clients may only handle their own mail (e.g. in their mail slot); shared mailboxes will be accessed only by RAS staff, who will provide mail to individual clients by request.
- Where possible, office machines will only be used by RAS staff. When this is not possible, machine users should inform the relevant RAS staff member by email. A log of office machine use will be maintained by RAS staff, with name, date, and time of use.
- Where possible, all office supplies, equipment, etc. must be cleaned after use by an RAS staff member before storage or reuse. Each staff member will be responsible for sanitizing touch surfaces in the client space between client visits.
- No Cash is to change hands. Deposit systems (e.g. for keys) will be suspended.

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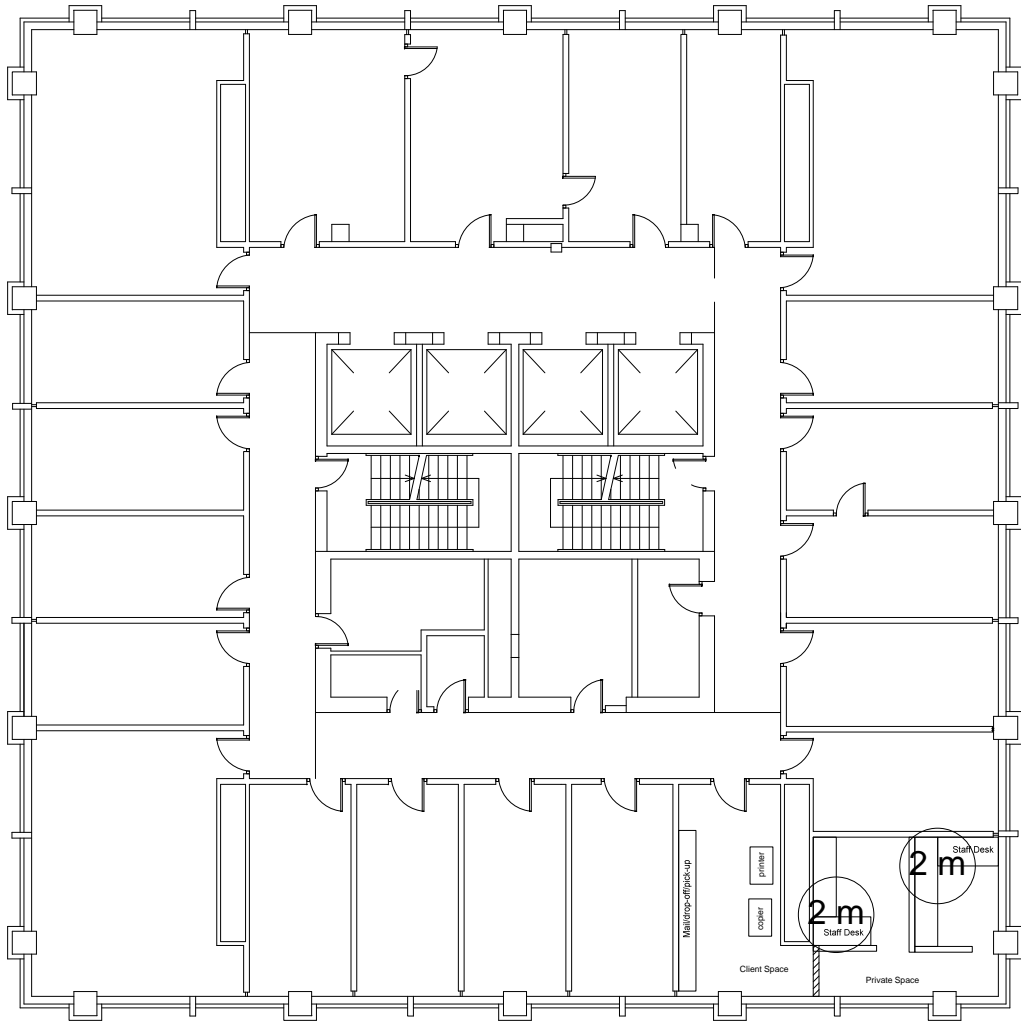
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