



Victoria University Coastal Ecology Lab

Operations Manual

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1. Executive summary / Overview / Guiding Principles

This document outlines the operational policies governing all activities of the [Victoria University Coastal Ecology Laboratory \(VUCEL\)](#), a facility maintained by the [School of Biological Sciences \(SBS\)](#) of [Victoria University of Wellington \(VUW\)](#), to promote and support research excellence and education in marine biology and coastal ecology.

This is a “living document”, and as such, it is subject to periodic updates. Version information appears in footnotes. Updated versions will be distributed electronically to registered users of the lab; additionally these will be available from the [VUCEL website](#). The current version of this Operations Manual is comprised of a PDF document (“VUCEL - Operations Manual v4.7.pdf”) that contains hyperlinks to additional documents (in Word, Excel, and PDF formats) in a folder entitled “Appendices”. Both the main PDF document and the Appendices folder are required for complete information.

1.1. MISSION STATEMENT

The Victoria University Coastal Ecology Laboratory is a living laboratory for the advancement of knowledge through ecological research, education, and stewardship of the natural world.

1.2. VISION STATEMENT

- ***Achieving Excellence:***

VUCEL will provide unparalleled support for the School of Biological Sciences (SBS) research and teaching programmes in marine biology and coastal ecology. VUCEL will develop, promote, and manage high quality infrastructure in support of existing strengths in teaching and research in marine biology and coastal ecology. Secondly, VUCEL will seek to expand research capacity to related disciplines of strategic importance to existing coastal ecology staff, SBS, and VUW.

- ***Academic Freedom:***

VUCEL will promote, maintain and protect the academic freedom of the University, our staff and our students and the University’s role as “critic and conscience of society”. Investigator-driven research and teaching will remain the top priority for VUCEL support.

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1.3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- ***Learning and Teaching***

VUCEL will provide support for academically rigorous education that meets international standards to ensure that VUW qualifications, staff and students continue to receive recognition from comparable institutions nationally and internationally.

- ***Research***

VUCEL will promote and support research of international standing in terms of both quality and productivity.

- ***Health and Safety***

VUCEL will take all practical steps to ensure that teaching and research activities are conducted safely.

- ***Community Outreach***

VUCEL will endeavour to promote the research and expertise of its staff to the University's wider community, local and central Government, national and international bodies. VUCEL will work collaboratively with research and education partners to develop effective outreach programmes that are not a burden on primary core functions (i.e., research and teaching).

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2. Administrative structure

2.1. HIERARCHY/STRUCTURE, OVERVIEW OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Management structure consists of:

- ***VUCEL Director*** – An academic staff member from the School of Biological Sciences (SBS) who reports to the Head of School, sets policies and directives in consultation with the VUCEL Academic Staff Technical Staff, and lab users. The Director interfaces with internal and external entities on behalf of VUCEL to advance the lab's *Goals and Objectives* described above. **Nicole Phillips is Director of VUCEL.**
- ***VUCEL Deputy Director*** – An academic staff member from the School of Biological Sciences (SBS) who assists the Director with mutually agreed ad hoc tasks and acts as Director as and when needed. **Alice Rogers is the Deputy Director of VUCEL.**
- ***VUCEL Technical Team*** – Technical staff members from SBS who report to the *VUCEL Director* on matters relating to lab operations. The Technical Staff serve as *de facto Lab Managers*, and oversee daily operations, assist with policy development, and interface with lab users and other technical staff to ensure smooth, safe and efficient operation of facilities.
 - The VUCEL Technical Team's line manager is **Stephen Meyer (SBS Technical Services Manager)**.
 - **John van der Sman (Technical Officer)** and **Daniel McNaughtan (Technical Officer)** provide primary on-site technical support for VUCEL. In addition, John serves as the University's *Boating Safety Officer*. Daniel serves as the *University Diving Safety Officer*.
 - Additional support for VUCEL activities is provided by the **SBS Technical Team**.
 - Administrative Support is provided by the **SBS Administrative Team**.
- ***University Diving & Boating Committee*** – A University committee that reports to the Vice Chancellor and provides oversight for University-related diving and boating activities.

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VUCEL Administrative Structure

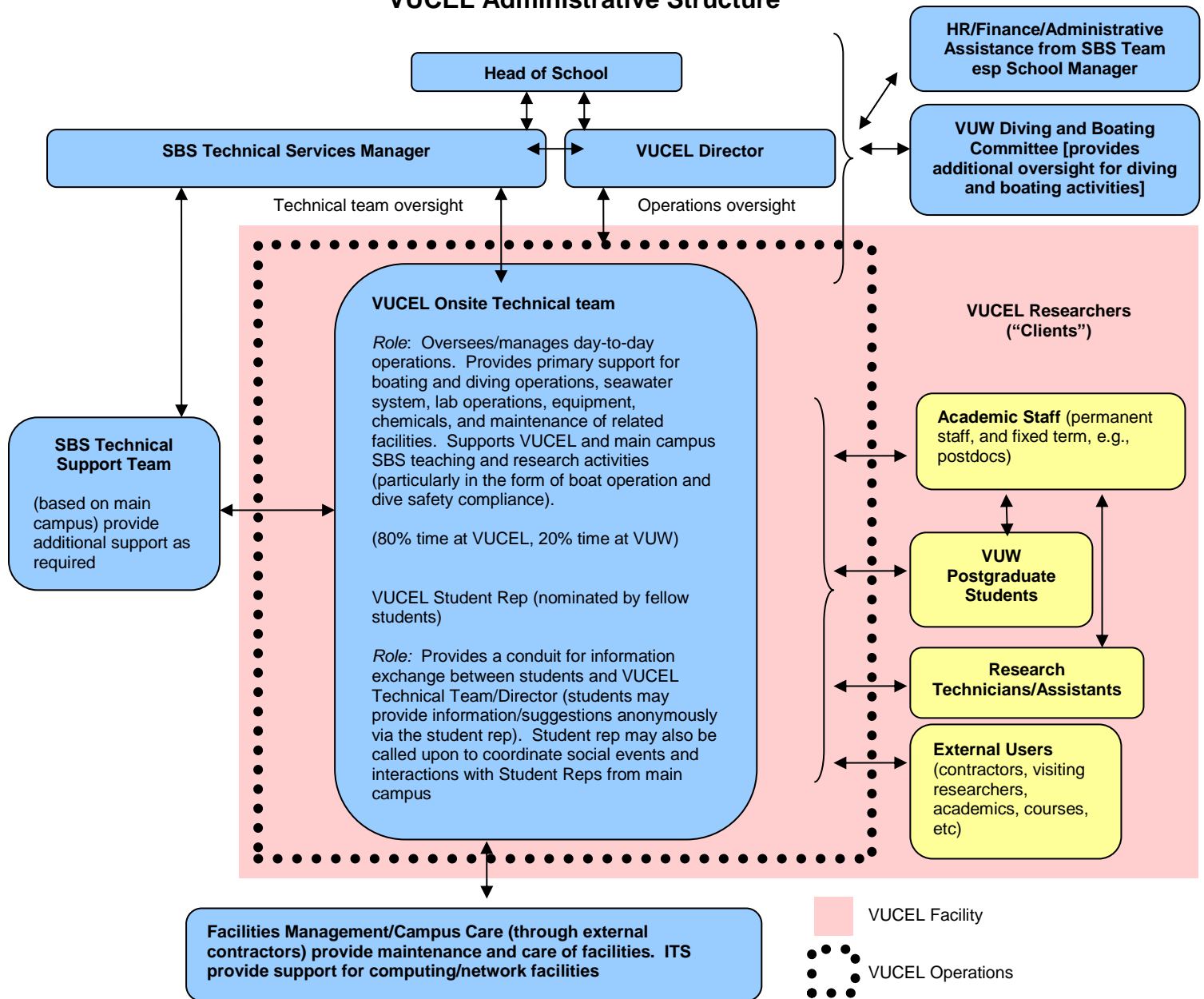


Figure 1 – Hierarchy of administrative and research structures within VUCEL. Student researchers are expected to consult jointly with supervisors and appropriate VUCEL technicians to develop and implement specific research projects. This is best facilitated by at least one initial meeting involving the student, academic supervisor, and VUCEL technician(s) to discuss scientific goals, methods, logistics, and safety issues (e.g., for incorporation into the required *Risk Assessment* – completed in RiskTeq).

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2.2. CODES OF PRACTICE/PHILOSOPHY

Access to VUCEL facilities and resources is a privilege, not a right. In order for the laboratory to operate safely and efficiently, all users are expected to conduct themselves in a safe and responsible manner at all times.

Communication between users is essential. Actual and/or anticipated requirements for shared facilities and resources should be communicated in advance to other users to avoid conflicts. Field trip activities must be communicated appropriately. **New major research and/or teaching programmes involving VUCEL facilities should be discussed with the VUCEL director/technicians** prior to initiation. see [Resource Usage and Bookings](#) for details.

Serious breaches of safety and/or ethics will result in a loss of privileges, review/revision of policies, and possible disciplinary action by VUW. All serious disciplinary actions should be communicated and/or contested through the VUCEL Director and/or the Head of School of Biological Sciences, who reserve the right to seek additional advice as appropriate.

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3. Facilities, Equipment, and Resources

3.1. OVERVIEW.

The Victoria University Coastal Ecology Laboratory (Fig 2) comprises 816 m² of state-of-the-art research space that includes a fully functional dry laboratory constructed to PC-2 standards (113 m², Fig 3), two wet lab facilities (totalling 168 m², Fig 4) with access to both raw and filtered flow-through seawater, 161 m² of office space (Fig 5) for up to 30 VUCEL research students and staff, a substantial staging area for coastal and subtidal research.



Figure 2. Victoria University Coastal Ecology Laboratory (VUCEL), located at 396 The Esplanade, Island Bay, Wellington New Zealand.



Figure 3. Dry laboratory facilities within VUCEL



Figure 4. Wet laboratory facilities within VUCEL

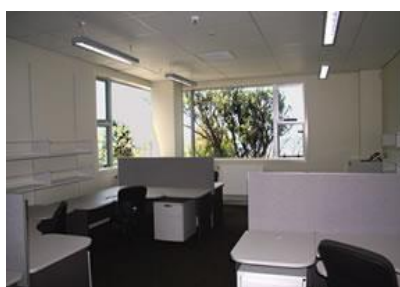


Figure 5. Office facilities within VUCEL

VUCEL maintains four research vessels. The 8.5m tri-hull research vessel, *Raukawa Challenger* provides a stable platform for research in inshore waters of Cook Strait and the Kapiti Coast. Three 4.6m aluminium StabiCraft vessels, the *Pipi*, *Tuatua*, and *Tipa*, each with 40HP outboard engines, support much of the work in Wellington Harbour, the Kapiti coast, and in sheltered sections of the Wellington south coast. VUCEL maintains three utility vehicles capable of trailering *Pipi*, *Tuatua*, and *Tipa* anywhere in New Zealand.



Figure 6. VUCEL Research vessel, *Raukawa Challenger*, 8.5m aluminium tri-hull



Figure 7. VUCEL Research vessel, *Pipi* (and sister vessels, *TuaTua* and *Tipa*) 4.6m aluminium Stabicraft

The lab also maintains a substantial repository of research equipment for use in the laboratory (e.g., standard laboratory equipment, microscopes with image analysis capabilities, freeze-drier, drying ovens, aquaria, and constant-temperature facilities) and for use in the field (e.g., CTDs, SCUBA facilities, sampling gear). Users may discuss their requirements for research equipment with the VUCEL Technicians, the Director, and/or (if a student) their supervisors. Some equipment incurs recharge costs, and additionally, costs of consumables are the responsibility of individual researchers/teams. Details pertaining to resource usage are given in a [subsequent section](#) of this document.

Much of the research activity conducted from VUCEL makes use of the diversity of environmental conditions and habitats found nearby. The coastline along Cook Strait (including sites within Taputeranga Marine Reserve, immediately adjacent to the lab) provides outstanding intertidal and subtidal rocky reef sites. Relative to the open coast, Wellington Harbour is comparatively replete with nutrients, generally has higher rates of primary production, and thus provides a useful comparison to the open coast for several active research programmes. The nearby Kapiti Coast (including Kapiti and Mana Islands), and the Marlborough Sounds provide other important study sites within different environmental settings. Pauatahanui inlet offers a large soft shore estuarine ecosystem; nearby, Titahi Bay provides additional sandy bays and rocky reef ecosystems that experience oceanographic conditions distinct from those of Cook Strait. The tides in the Titahi Bay/Pauatahanui area are offset from Wellington's tides, such that research may be conducted at low tides in both regions on the same day.

VUCEL also provides logistic support for research in more remote settings (e.g., Antarctica, sub-Antarctic Islands, and elsewhere in the South Pacific).

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3.1.1. RESEARCH BASE

Researchers at VUCEL work on a diversity of marine and terrestrial topics spanning coastal ecosystems. Much of the ongoing work conducted from the lab focuses on rocky intertidal and shallow sub-tidal ecosystems; the facilities actively support terrestrial research, and the lab has a long history of studies in pelagic and soft-sediment ecosystems. Several VUCEL researchers maintain active programs in remote locales, and opportunities for students to become involved in field research in Australia, Tahiti, Indonesia, Antarctica, and Hawaii may arise from time to time.

Many VUCEL staff and student research programmes relate to conservation biology, with particular emphasis on the effects of marine reserves or other restoration efforts. VUCEL research programmes often address "applied" issues, for example, those relating to aquaculture or the impacts of terrestrial run-off and/or sewage on benthic marine ecosystems.

The VUCEL group maintains strong collaborative links to research groups at the [National Institute for Water and Atmospheric Science](#), the [Cawthron Institute](#), the [Department of Conservation](#) and to researchers at other universities in New Zealand and overseas.

Most of the funding that supports VUCEL research programs comes from external sources including the [Royal Society of New Zealand Marsden Fund](#), the [Ministry for Primary Industries](#), the [Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment](#), contract research, and overseas funding.

3.1.2. RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATIONS

VUCEL promotes ethical and responsible use of biological resources for teaching and research. Researchers and educators are required to conduct all activities in accordance with VUCEL [regulations](#) on scientific collecting, care, and disposal of biological material, and animal ethics.

In addition, researchers and educators are expected to take all reasonable steps to the minimise impacts of research activities on environments under study.

All reasonable efforts should be undertaken to retrieve non-degradable sampling equipment/gear at the termination of a study; this is an ethical and financial obligation of each investigator.

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4. Operations

4.1. NEW USER INDUCTION

4.1.1. ALL USERS ARE REQUIRED TO:

- Read, understand, and adhere to the content in this Operations Manual.
- Successfully complete an induction processes administered by a VUCEL Technician. Prospective users should organise a time for their induction in advance of any planned research activity to be undertaken from VUCEL.
- Register and remain on the VUCEL email list-server (vucel@lists.vuw.ac.nz); resident users should also be added to [Vucel-deskholders@lists.vuw.ac.nz](mailto:vucel-deskholders@lists.vuw.ac.nz).
- Complete and lodge a Risk Assessment for proposed research and/or educational activities online in RiskTeq. This Risk Assessment must be approved prior to commencement of any activity (i.e., field work and lab-based work).
- Abide by the [VUW Health and Safety Policy](#)
- Adhere to [VUW Staff Conduct Policy](#) or [VUW Student Conduct Statute](#)

The induction process will introduce new users to operational policies including Health and Safety issues, protocols for booking and usage of lab facilities and resources, and will facilitate access to VUCEL. The email list-server is used to communicate important information (including updates to the Operations Manual) to users all users. Active users must remain on this email list-server.

VUCEL provides opportunities for new and existing users to complete a range of training/refresher courses that can facilitate research activities (e.g., first-aid/CPR, O2 administration, scientific diving, boating, etc). These courses are generally offered in November of each year (in advance of the summer field season). More information is given in a [subsequent section](#) of this document.

4.1.2. GRANTING OF ACCESS TO FACILITIES

- Access to facilities requires a formal induction (described above)
- Access to space (including office/desk space) is subject to availability, and is at the discretion of the Director.
 - When office/desk space becomes limiting, priority will be determined in the following order: (1) fee-paying students who work locally (e.g. those who require VUCEL facilities for their research programmes) and who make regular use of their VUCEL office; (2) fee-paying students who work elsewhere but make regular use their VUCEL office; (3) fee-paying students who work locally or elsewhere, but who do not make regular use of their VUCEL office; and (4) non-fee paying students.

- The VUCEL Director and/or Technicians reserve the right to re-assign spaces as required (e.g., students in the final stages of thesis write-up may be re-assigned desk space on Kelburn campus).
- Approved users will be issued a key upon receipt of a \$50 key deposit (refundable when key is returned).
- Access to specialised resources (e.g., boats, vehicles, SCUBA, some laboratory equipment) may require additional training and approval.
- Visiting researchers must also complete, sign, and file a letter of indemnity with the SBS School Manager. A template for this letter can be obtained from the VUCEL Director.

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4.2. HEALTH AND SAFETY

VUCEL accommodates a diversity of research activities, each with a unique combination of Health and Safety risks that must be assessed, eliminated, and/or managed. Activities include field work (e.g., work in rugged, slippery, and/or remote terrain; sometimes requiring the use of specialised equipment such as boats, SCUBA, etc) and laboratory work (e.g., requiring the use of chemicals, lab equipment, etc).

All VUCEL users are required to assess, eliminate and/or manage the Health and Safety risks associated with their particular programme of study. In addition, all users are required to remain aware of risks and safety protocols associated with activities of others, which may be conducted within shared facilities.

A registry of known risks (hazards) at VUCEL can be found in [Appendix 5.1](#)

Risk Assessments must be completed in **RiskTeq** (a software package that facilitates formal risk assessments and their review), and these must be approved prior to any activity.

4.2.1. LABORATORY SAFETY

All lab work conducted from VUCEL requires a thorough *Risk Assessment* which should be completed with, and approved by a Supervisor.

VUCEL Laboratory facilities consist of “wet labs” and “dry labs”, each with their own Health and Safety (H&S) risks. Procedures to mitigate potential risks associated with work in each of these settings are outlined below, with further detailed information given in appendices. H&S protocols that are generic to the collective facilities (e.g., in the event of fire, earthquake, or tsunami) are also given.

4.2.1.1. FIRE, EARTHQUAKE, TSUNAMI

VUCEL is fitted with fire alarms and sprinkler systems. In the event of a fire alarm, immediately stop work and proceed to the assembly point outside the boat garage.

In the event of an earthquake, seek refuge under desks or door frames, and exit the facilities when it is safe to do so. More details on dealing with emergencies including a Tsunami Evacuation plan can be found in the VUCEL Emergency Management Plan in [Appendix 5.2](#). A hard copy of this document can be found by the emergency phone opposite the student offices. In the event of a significant tsunami warning, anticipate a mandatory stand-down period for access to coastal areas of 48hrs. For more information check the Wellington Region Emergency Management Office [website](#).

4.2.1.2. GENERAL DRY LAB SAFETY

Dry lab users are required to abide by the following rules. These rules are in addition to other required Health and Safety Literature (e.g., the Code of Practice for CRI and university exempt laboratories that can be found on this [Worksafe webpage](#).

General information on SBS Lab Safety can be found in [Appendix 5.3](#).

Dry lab users should also note that this facility occasionally doubles as a teaching space, and in such times, the lab may be temporarily “decommissioned” to facilitate less restrictive access (e.g., for participants of field courses, seminars, open days and/or workshops). The following rules apply whenever this space is in active use as a research laboratory:

- 1) No work is to be carried out in the dry lab before an induction from the Lab Manager has taken place
- 2) Though VUCEL dry lab facilities are constructed to PC2 standards, the facilities are not currently operated as such (and no work that requires PC2 facilities shall operate on these premises).
- 3) Laboratory doors shall generally remain closed, to ensure that access to the laboratory is limited to authorised personnel.
- 4) Waterproof covering of skin wounds is required.
- 5) Laboratory gowns / coats are to be worn when working within the laboratory and removed before leaving the laboratory. Glasses, safety glasses or face shields must be worn when manipulating hazardous chemicals. Gloves are to be discarded with laboratory wastes before leaving laboratory area. To avoid contaminating your hands, face and clothing, refrain from directly touching these areas with your gloved hands when working in the laboratory. Wash your hands thoroughly with disinfectant soap before leaving the laboratory and after handling cultures. Mouth pipetting is strictly prohibited.
- 6) Long hair should be tied back. Use caution around Bunsen burners. Remove any clothing which may drape over a Bunsen flame. Do not leave a Bunsen flame unattended.

- 7) Personal clothing is to be kept separate from laboratory gowns / coats.
- 8) Bare feet, jandals and open sandals are not permitted in the laboratory under any circumstances. Smoking, eating, drinking and the application of cosmetics are strictly prohibited in the laboratory. Storage or consumption of food or drink in the laboratory is prohibited.
- 9) Only furniture with impervious surfaces may be situated in the Laboratory. All other furniture is prohibited. Electrical cords should not generally be situated directly in contact with the floor or bench top surface, i.e. they are tied and kept up off the floor and bench top surface. No cardboard boxes or other items made of absorbent material are to be situated directly on the floor. No pipette tips, microfuge tubes, tubes of any description, plastic, paper or other waste is to be placed or left on the floor.
- 10) Special care should be taken to ensure that reading/writing materials eg. Lab note book, are not contaminated in the lab.
- 11) Significant spills and all accidents or incidents which have the potential to cause injury or damage must be reported immediately to the Laboratory Manager (John van der Sman or Daniel McNaughtan). The Laboratory Manager will organise for an Incident Report Form to be submitted to Health and Safety (safety@vuw.ac.nz) and to the Chair of the SBS Health and Safety Committee, Peter Ritchie.
- 12) All broken glass is to be disposed of in the sharps bin.
- 13) Work surfaces are to be decontaminated after spills. The inside of the fume hood and the surrounding area are to be left free of waste and kept tidy. Chemicals are not to be stored in fume hood.
- 14) No items are to be stored in the sinks for longer than 24 hours.
- 15) All bottles and other vessels containing chemicals or biological material are to be clearly labelled as to their owner, contents, concentration, date dispensed, and a hazard classification label if necessary.
- 16) Chemicals and/or biological samples are not be stored for long periods on the bench and are to be transferred to a secure storage area when not being used.
- 17) The weighing balance is to be left clean and free of powders and drops.
- 18) Incompatible chemicals are to be segregated and all chemicals are to be stored only in designated storage areas.
- 19) Dealing with waste correctly is the responsibility of the user. Specialised wastes should be segregated i.e. 1. General Waste, 2. Biological Waste and 3. Chemical Waste. See the [Appendix 5.4](#) for information on dealing with hazardous waste.
- 20) The yellow wheelie bin is for bio-hazard waste and is to be replaced when full and not overfilled. Notify technicians, who can organise this.
- 21) Sufficient hand detergent in the dispenser and paper hand towels must be maintained.
- 22) All technical procedures shall be performed in a way that minimises the creation of aerosols. In particular, operations such as powder dispensing, vortexing which may generate hazardous aerosols are to be done in a chemical fume hood (for chemicals).

4.2.1.3. USE AND STORAGE OF CHEMICALS

Information on chemical use and storage can be found in [Appendix 5.4](#). All use and storage of **Chemicals** must be conducted in accordance with the *Health and Safety Standards* listed in the Code of Practice for CRI and university exempt laboratories that can be found on this [Worksafe webpage](#).

A **Chemical Inventory for VUCEL** is maintained by the VUCEL technicians. New chemicals may not enter the dry lab until they have been added to the chemical inventory by one of the VUCEL technicians. The technicians will print off the MSDS sheet and a signed copy [confirming that it has been read and understood by the proposed user(s)] of this sheet must be retained in the folder outside the entrance to the dry lab.

For all new chemicals, users must check whether the compound has a hazardous classification according to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). Information is available at the [Chemical Classification and Information Database](#).

For all new chemicals, users must also check whether the compound has a hazardous classification according to the chemical's MSDS sheet.

Students using chemicals should discuss and receive approval from the lab manager and their supervisors prior to any activity in VUCEL Laboratories.

It is essential that users of all chemicals that have a hazardous classification have read and understand the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for these chemicals and have indicated this by signing a copy to be retained in the folder outside the entrance to the dry lab. If you have not read and signed the MSDS sheet for a particular hazardous chemical, then you are not permitted to use this compound at VUCEL.

Regarding any substances for which use of a chemical fume hood is recommended on the information provided by ERMA, on the chemical MSDS sheet or in any of the Health and Safety Literature listed in Section 4 above, e.g. organic solvents, this work must be conducted in a chemical fume hood.

4.2.1.4. WET LAB SAFETY

Wet lab spaces are used for a wide variety of applications, and the primary Health & Safety risk in these spaces is slippage due to wet floors. Appropriate footwear (with suitable non-slip tread) should be worn at all times in this room. Chemicals and other hazardous materials and equipment should not be used in this space.

NOTE: All floor drains in this space drain directly to the sea. No chemicals or non-native species, etc. should be permitted to enter floor drains (see also next section)

4.2.1.5. HOUSING OF NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Housing of non-native species within VUCEL facilities requires consultation with the VUCEL Technical Team, and approval from the VUCEL Director. Organisms that fall under the jurisdiction of the SBS Transitional and Containment Facility (i.e. requiring PC2 containment) are not permitted.

Lab users who wish to house non-native species at VUCEL will need to:

1. Prepare a "Safe Method of Use" document that outlines the risks, safe use procedures, and what to do in an "emergency". If approved by the VUCEL Director, this document will be circulated to all users of the facility, and posted next to the hazard (and it should be of sufficient detail and clarity to enable someone not familiar with the specifics of the hazard to respond appropriately in the event of an emergency).
2. Design and implement an effective secondary containment (e.g. a primary tank that is contained within a large plastic box), such that if the primary containment failed, the spill would be contained. What to do in the event of a spill should be covered in the Safe Method of Use document.
3. First response items should be kept next to the hazard (e.g., sufficient quantities of bleach kill the hazard in the event of a spill, or when the experiments have finished. The safe use of bleach should also be covered in the Safe Method of Use document).

4.2.2. FIELD SAFETY

All field work conducted from VUCEL requires a thorough *Risk Assessment*, and communication of *trip-specific details* (both elements completed within *RiskTeg*). Fieldwork is governed by VUW's Off-campus Activities Policy which can be found [here](#). An online SBS guide to using Riskteq can be found [here](#).

4.2.2.1. FIELD WORK REQUIRING DIVING AND BOATING

Diving and boating activities from VUCEL may be undertaken ONLY:

1. For the purposes of research/teaching
2. By authorised personnel

Oversight of all diving and boating activities throughout the University is provided by the *University Diving and Boating Committee*, which reports to the Vice Chancellor. The Terms of Reference for this committee are available in [Appendix 5.5](#). Day-to-day dive operations are managed by the VUW Dive Safety Officer (Daniel McNaughtan). Similarly, day-to-day boat operations are managed by the VUW Boating Safety Officer (John van der Sman).

Dive safety policies are detailed in the *VUW Code of Practice for Diving*, available in [Appendix 5.6](#).

Boating safety policies are detailed in the *VUW Code of Practice for Boating* ([Appendix 5.7](#)), and *Maritime Transport Operating Plans* (available in [Appendix 5.8](#) for the *Raukawa Challenger*, and [Appendix 5.9](#) for the *Pipi*, *Tuatua*, and *Tipa*).

4.2.2.2. FIELD WORK REQUIRING VEHICLE USE

All users of VUCEL vehicles must:

- Have a current license specific to the vehicle type being driven (NZ licence holders must have a minimum qualification of 'NZ Restricted'; overseas licence holders must hold a full licence and must obtain a New Zealand licence after 1 year of employment or study).
- Be assessed by a VUCEL/SBS technician, and approved to operate SBS vehicles.
- Ensure that loads do not exceed the rated capacity of the vehicle, and that these are properly secured.
- Not use the vehicles off-road unless having undertaken the approved training (see technicians for more details)
- Comply with all road rules and New Zealand laws.
- Report any defects immediately
- Record vehicle mileage in the log book (in vehicles) and within the VUCEL Booking System (following completion of trip).

4.2.3. ACCIDENT AND INCIDENT RESPONSE

4.2.3.1. IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO SERIOUS ACCIDENT

In the event of any time-critical emergency such as a serious accident which requires acute medical attention (or a chemical spill which requires containment), administer First Aid or other appropriate action, and then phone:

- VUW Campus Care emergency number, **extension 8888** (or **04-463 9999** from a mobile or external phone line),
- New Zealand Emergency Services number on **1-111** (111 from a mobile or external phone line) and provide them with details of the location and nature of the accident.

4.2.3.2. ACTIONS REQUIRED IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING ANY ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT

Any accident or incident (i.e., an *incident* is defined as “near accident” that could have resulted in an injury) also requires immediate reporting (i.e., as soon as practical to do so) to:

- VUCEL technical staff and/or Director
 - if unavailable, notify Health and Safety (safety@vuw.ac.nz) and the Chair of the SBS Health and Safety Committee (Peter Ritchie)
- Student Supervisor or Line Manager
- Fill out an incident report online available [here](#).

4.2.3.3. IN THE EVENT OF ANY ACCIDENT/INCIDENT INVOLVING VEHICLES

Contact the Technicians and Student Supervisor as soon as practical. If anyone is injured, you must notify immediately:

- New Zealand Emergency Services (dial 111) as appropriate
- New Zealand police, and follow their instructions.

Do not leave the scene of the accident until:

- You have collected the details of anyone else involved
- Any witnesses who may have seen the accident.
- Ensure you also record the registration plates of any other vehicles involved.

If possible, return the vehicle to VUCEL, retain the keys, and ensure that the vehicle cannot be used again until it has been checked by one of the technicians. If the vehicle cannot be driven, then arrange to have it towed to VUCEL (phone Fleetsmart 0800 353 387 who provide a 24 hour breakdown service for university vehicles).

4.2.3.4. IN THE EVENT OF ANY ACCIDENT/INCIDENT INVOLVING BOATING OR DIVING

Contact the technicians and your supervisor as soon as practical.

Refer to the *VUW Code of Practice for Boating* ([Appendix 5.7](#)), and *Maritime Transport Operating Plans* (available in [Appendix 5.8](#) for the *Raukawa Challenger*, and [Appendix 5.9](#) for the *Pipi*, *Tuatua*, and *Tipa*).

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4.3. RESOURCE USAGE AND BOOKINGS

4.3.1. OVERVIEW

VUCEL maintains a variety of shared resources that can be made available to users, to support specific research and teaching activities. Some resources require specialist training and approval prior to use; other resources also incur a recharge to users. Lastly, some resources maintained on-site are the property of individuals or research teams, and are not available for general use. For these reasons, users are asked to consult with VUCEL Technicians prior to use of any resource.

Our preference is to assume that lab users will be reasonable in their expectations of access to shared resources, and conscientious in their usage. In the event that shared resources become monopolised by one or a few researchers at a cost to others, the VUCEL Director and/or Technicians reserve the right to implement systems that ensure equitable access (e.g., VUCEL currently operates a system of priority bookings for the *Raukawa Challenger*, detailed in [Appendix 5.10](#); a similar system could be implemented for other resources as required).

4.3.2. ADVANCE COMMUNICATION OF USAGE

Shared resources (e.g., lab and field equipment, instrumentation, sea tables, vessels and vehicles) are generally subject to seasonally heavy usage, and thus they require careful management and conscientious usage. The “busy season” for most research programmes conducted from VUCEL falls between November and April of each year. Users are asked to communicate regularly with their supervisors (if students), VUCEL Technicians, and with other users, about their anticipated resource requirements. Expectations for access to shared resources should be realistic; if users are uncertain of what may constitute realistic expectations, please consult with VUCEL Technicians and/or the Director.

Communication of intended usage may be made well in advance of required usage, via informal discussions with others, or more formally via messages sent to the VUCEL email listserver. For some resources, the VUCEL Technicians maintain a schedule of future usage.

4.3.3. FORMAL BOOKING OF RESOURCES

VUCEL maintains an online *Resource Booking System* for most shared resources. This system is accessible from the [SBS website](#). The system enables users to view- and schedule new bookings for a wide range of resources (and additional resources may be added as required, by VUCEL Technicians). Some resource bookings (e.g., boats) will require additional communications and/or prior approval from the VUCEL Technicians. Note that the resource booking system may be used to facilitate quarterly invoicing of resources that may incur a recharge to users (described below).

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4.3.4. LABELLING OF RESOURCES IN ACTIVE USE

Space resources (e.g., dry lab bench top space, wet lab sea tables, aquaria, storage spaces, etc.) that are in active use should be labelled with a user's name, contact information, and anticipated period of use (which should correspond to a formal booking). This information communicates that a space is in active use by another researcher (even if it appears to be available), and it also enables others to contact specific users if required (e.g., in the event of a chemical spill, or if water supply to sea tables is compromised, etc).

4.3.5. COST-RECOVERY SCHEME

VUCEL aims to recover costs of its activities through a combination of: 1) cross-subsidised recharges to internal users that *partially* recover costs of operation and depreciation of vessels, vehicles, and equipment; (2) income generated to SBS from marine biology and ecology programmes (including EFTS income from undergraduate and postgraduate education and research); (3) overhead income to SBS from externally funded projects that make use of VUCEL facilities; and (4) depreciation costs for major VUCEL equipment (e.g., boats, vehicles, CTDs, nutrient analyser, etc) recovered from externally funded projects **[NOTE: programmes making use of major equipment at VUCEL that are funded by external grants are expected to budget depreciation costs of equipment that is to be used].**

4.3.5.1. CATEGORIES OF RECHARGE DEFINED

Two categories of recharge cost-recovery are recognised:

- *SBS Internal Rate* – a recharge rate structure applied to SBS courses, students, postdocs, and academic staff engaged in research or teaching activities.
- *External Rate* – a recharge rate structure applied to any “contract” research, defined as projects initiated by- or conducted on behalf of persons outside of SBS.

The *External Rate* is the estimated “market rate” for equivalent services offered outside the University. The *SBS Rate* is a heavily discounted rate to promote and facilitate research/teaching activities that generate direct income for SBS from other sources (e.g., EFTS income, PBRF income).

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4.3.5.2. RECHARGE RATES

4.3.5.2.1. RECHARGES FOR MAJOR RESOURCES

VUCEL recharge rates for major resources are listed below. Note: Cancellations made less than 18 hours of a booked resource will still incur a recharge.

Equipment	External Rate (contract)	Internal Rate
<i>Raukawa Challenger</i> ¹ with skipper ²	\$1500/7.5hr day + fuel	\$160/0-4hr, \$320/4-8hr, \$32/hr thereafter
Small boats with skipper ²	\$1000/7.5hr day + fuel	\$160/0-4hr, \$320/4-8hr, \$32/hr thereafter
Small boats, self-skippered	NA	\$10/hr
VUCEL Utility Vehicles	\$150/day+ \$0.62/km + fuel	\$0.62/km ³
SCUBA tank fills	\$10/tank	\$5/tank
Technician (safety diver, etc)	\$1000/8hr day	NA
Penalty for late cancellation of boats ⁴	Payment in full	Equivalent to half-day rate for resource for skippered vessels; penalty for self-skippered vessels at discretion of VUCEL Director
CTD Batteries	NA	\$10 each
Reference seawater	NA	\$80/bottle

¹ *Raukawa Challenger* bookings are managed under a routine/priority booking scheme, detailed in [Appendix 5.10](#).

² All bookings that require a skipper must be made in consultation with the VUCEL Technicians

³ Internal charges for the vehicles will commence when travel exceeds 50km, however these may be waived (at the discretion of the HOS) for research projects conducted locally.

⁴ Excluding cancellations made by skipper (e.g., due to inclement weather/unsafe working conditions). Boat hirers who cancel for any reason (e.g., illness, poor diving conditions, etc) less than 18 hours prior to a booking will be charged this cancellation penalty.

4.3.5.2.2. RECHARGES FOR SPONSORED TRAINING AND REFRESHER COURSES

VUCEL provides opportunities for training and refresher courses covering a range of topics. Many of these courses are required for specific field work activities (e.g., boating, diving). Courses offered through VUCEL incur a nominal cost to facilitate the purchasing of consumables and cost-recovery of equipment used for training. In the case of some certifications (e.g., rescue diver, O2, first aid, VHF radio), users are welcome to substitute VUCEL offerings with equivalent courses from outside providers. Courses will generally be run on an annual cycle, in November. Internal recharge rates for courses are listed below. Contact VUCEL Technicians for more information.

<u>VUCEL Training Courses*</u>	
Rescue Diver Certificate	\$350
DAN Oxygen Provider	\$90
EFR First Aid	\$120
Swimming Proficiency Test	\$5.50
Checkout Dive	No Charge
Boat Master	\$240
VHF Radio	\$50
Small Outboard Engine Maintenance	\$60
20hrs Small Boat Handling	No Charge
Boat Handling Refresher	No Charge
OSH Compressed Gas cylinder Filler**	\$75

* NOTE: costs given are based on *internal rates*. An estimated “full cost” (including salary time of VUCEL Technicians) will be assessed for external participants.

** NOTE: No Charge if in conjunction with O2/First Aid training

4.3.5.2.3. RECHARGES FOR COST-RECOVERY OF CONSUMABLES AND GEAR SERVICING

Costs of consumables and annual servicing of individual user’s dive equipment (and similar items) are not covered by VUCEL. In some cases, VUCEL technicians (at their discretion) may be able to facilitate purchases of consumables, or servicing of individual user’s dive equipment. In such cases these costs will be fully recovered from users.

Costs of consumable items not listed above may be recharged to users at the discretion of VUCEL Technicians and/or Director; e.g., where usage and/or costs become substantial). Costs of repairs and maintenance of equipment that has been returned in unsatisfactory condition (i.e., due to gross negligence) may also be recharged to users if they are deemed to be responsible for damage.

4.3.5.2.4. RECHARGES FOR EXTENDED CONTRACTING OF VUCEL TECHNICIANS

VUCEL Technical staff may occasionally be “contracted” by VUCEL users for longer term activities (e.g., to provide dedicated research assistance, and/or at a remote location for an extended period of time). This activity is permissible only if: 1) VUCEL technicians, their manager, the VUCEL Director, and the SBS HoS approve of this activity; 2) VUCEL users who may be affected have been appropriately consulted and agree that any adverse implications can be adequately managed in the technician’s absence; 3) a plan for TiL accrual and management has been reviewed and approved by VUCEL technicians, their manager, the VUCEL Director, and the SBS HoS.

Under such circumstances, costs of the technician’s time will be recovered from the “contractor”, at a rate determined by a 1.55 multiplier [ACC, holiday pay [10%] and overheads [45%] of true salary of the technical staff member in question. These funds will be transferred to an appropriate SBS account that can then be drawn upon to cover costs of replacement technicians or services (e.g., relief skippers, outside contractors, etc) during the period of absence or at other times when VUCEL technicians may be unavailable as a direct- or indirect result of extended absence (e.g., owing to TiL accrual).

4.3.5.2.5. RECHARGES FOR CONTRACTING OF NON-VUW STAFF (E.G., RELIEF SKIPPERS)

Non-VUW staff may be contracted to provide a service for VUCEL and/or its affiliates at the discretion of the VUCEL Director, Technical Team leader, or HoS. Examples of this contracting include: hiring of a “relief skipper” or a skipper with additional qualifications required for a specific activity. Under instances where VUCEL staff members are unavailable to provide a required level of service, the costs of externally contracted staff will be covered as follows:

- i. If required service is beyond a level of H&S training currently held by VUCEL staff (or if required service is on pre-determined dates to be covered by contract staff), then costs of external contract staff will be covered by VUCEL operational budget.
- ii. If requirement for external contractor arises directly or indirectly from an extended absence of a VUCEL staff member contracted for other activities (e.g., see above), then costs of external contractor will be covered from the designated SBS budget set aside for this provision.
- iii. If requirement for external contractor is to cover a “*priority boat booking*” (see [Appendix 5.10](#)) at a time when appropriate VUCEL staff are unavailable [excluding instances covered by point (i) or (ii) above], then costs of external contract staff will be covered by VUCEL operational budget.

- iv. If requirement for external contractor is to cover a “*routine boat booking*” (see [Appendix 5.10](#)) at a time when appropriate VUCEL staff are unavailable [excluding instances covered by point (ii) above], then costs of external contract staff will be covered by the “contractor”.
- v. If an external contractor is arranged by a contractor for any other reason not covered by the above provisions, then costs of external contract staff will be covered by the “contractor”.

4.3.5.2.6. RECHARGES FOR VISITING COURSES

VUCEL teaching lab space may be rented to visiting field courses, workshops, and tour groups (or similar) subject to prior approval from the Director, and will be assessed at a rate of \$100/person-day.

4.3.5.2.7. RECHARGES FOR VISITING RESEARCHERS

Visiting Researchers are encouraged, and independent researchers will be charged a nominal bench fee of \$50/person-day (for students, \$25/person-day), subject to approval from the Director. Bench fees for visiting researchers collaborating with VUCEL staff may be waived at the discretion of the Director. Bench fees entitle visiting scientists access to lab facilities, office space (subject to availability and approval from the Director) and internet/email access. Equipment rentals incur additional recharge rates as noted above. All visiting researchers must (1) complete a formal induction with the VUCEL Technicians and (2) file a signed letter of indemnity with the SBS School Manager (a template for this letter can be obtained from the VUCEL Director).

4.3.5.3. RECORDING RESOURCE USAGE AND INVOICING

Users are required to maintain a log of their usage of major equipment that incurs recharge costs. Vehicle usage must be recorded in vehicle log book, and in an amendment to the online booking form following completion of a trip. Users will be queried for this information and invoiced for equipment usage (and any other recharges) on a quarterly basis.

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4.4. RESEARCH- AND COLLECTING PERMITS

4.4.1. OVERVIEW

Research conducted from VUCEL may fall under the regulatory authority of the University Animal Ethics Committee, the Ministry of Primary Industries, the Department of Conservation, the Environmental Protection Authority and/or other authorities. All teaching and/or research activities must comply with these regulations. VUCEL laboratories do not currently operate as PC2 containment facilities, hence research requiring such facilities is not permitted at VUCEL.

Permits pertaining to Animal Ethics and/or research within marine reserves must be proposed and submitted (to the VUW Animal Ethics Committee and the Department of Conservation, respectively) by individual researchers (or student's supervisors), and these individuals are responsible for all compliance, record keeping, and reporting. VUCEL maintains a blanket permit from the Ministry of Primary Industries, facilitating collections of specimens made outside of marine reserves, for purposes of research and teaching. Users must remain compliant with this permit, maintain appropriate up-to-date records, and supply them to the VUCEL Director upon request (several times per year).

4.4.2. ANIMAL ETHICS PERMIT

All teaching and/or research involving vertebrates or 'higher invertebrates' (i.e., octopus, squid, crabs and lobsters/crayfish) requires approval from the University Animal Ethics Committee. Please refer to the [VUW Animal Ethics Policy](#) for full details. You must operate under an approved Animal Ethics Permit if your research involves vertebrates or 'higher invertebrates'; discuss permit requirements with you supervisor or VUCEL Technicians/Director in advance of initiation of such research.

4.4.3. MARINE RESERVE RESEARCH PERMIT

Marine reserves within New Zealand are managed by the Department of Conservation (DoC). All research conducted within any marine reserve requires prior approval from DoC. At present, DoC staff require a separate permit for each project. For more information and an application form, see the DoC webpage on [marine reserve research applications](#). Applicants should expect that the permitting process may take several months and there may be a cost to the applicant, and should therefore plan accordingly.

4.4.4. MINISTRY OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES COLLECTING PERMIT

All collecting activities (i.e., all collecting, sampling, harvesting, clearing, or other methods of removal of plant, animal, or algal material) conducted by SBS staff or students for purposes of research or teaching are regulated by the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI, formerly MPI). MPI regulations apply to all scientific collecting activities within any New Zealand waterway (both fresh and salt water), excluding marine reserves (where collections are regulated, permitted, and managed by DoC), and also excluding collections made further than 12 nautical miles from shore (which are regulated by the Environmental Protection Authority). All collecting undertaken from VUCEL (or with VUCEL resources) shall be for the purposes of research or teaching only.

VUCEL maintains a blanket permit for scientific collecting, and users must follow the regulations detailed in this permit (a copy of our permit may be found in [Appendix 5.11](#)).

All researchers/instructors (and associated staff/students) must remain compliant with the blanket permit for scientific collecting. To remain compliant, users must:

- Not undertake collections exceeding permitted quantities of biological material (generally, up to 10kg greenweight per day *across all projects*, unless a special programme has been approved by MPI and is included in the permit).
- Not collect species or in regions that are specifically excluded by the permit (and not use excluded methods of collection).
- Notify MPI in advance of all collecting activities.
- Carry a copy of the collecting permit during all collections, and be prepared to show this to an MPI/Fisheries Compliance Officer upon request.
- Maintain records of all collecting activities (species, quantities, method/location/date of collection, and method of disposal).
- Forward copies of records to the VUCEL Director upon request.
- Comply with all other conditions detailed in our permit.
- Any questions regarding collections and permitted activities (including potential proposals for additional collecting activities that may exceed the blanket permit) should be discussed with the VUCEL Director in advance (i.e., all non-routine queries to MPI regarding the VUCEL Special Permit should come from the VUCEL Director). Note that proposals for additional projects (i.e., amendments to our existing permit made outside of the normal permit renewal period) incur a cost from MPI, and this cost is passed on to the proposer.

4.4.5. EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE AND CONTINENTAL SHELF RESEARCH (THE EEZ ACT)

The New Zealand Exclusive Economic Zone extends from 12 to 200 nautical miles offshore, and new legislation that came into effect on 28 June 2013 has implications for research conducted beyond the 12 nautical mile limit. If this applies to you, then you will need to familiarise yourself with the EEZ Act and its implications.

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4.5. OUTREACH ACTIVITY AND PUBLIC INTERFACE

VUCEL aims to support public outreach activities in a manner that is minimally disruptive to its core research and teaching missions. To this end, the lab sponsors a public Open Day each year, as part of a national SeaWeek campaign (usually scheduled on a weekend day in early March of each year). This is the lab's primary outreach event, and lab users are encouraged to participate, and share their research programmes with the general public. SeaWeek involves a modest disruption to research activities (because wet and dry lab facilities are temporarily decommissioned to house exhibits and facilitate access by the general public), and we appreciate lab users' understanding. For this reason, we try to limit the number of large outreach events to one day per year (the [Island Bay Marine Education Centre](#) and similar organisations are, generally, better positioned to provide public outreach).

In addition to the once-a-year SeaWeek Open Day, VUCEL facilities may be shown to visiting VIPs, school groups, or used by field courses, workshops, etc. VUCEL staff will aim to notify users in advance of such events.

Several postgraduate students have developed active outreach programmes (e.g. involving school groups, etc), and these provide useful opportunities for students to share their knowledge and research activities with others, and they can raise public awareness of VUCEL.

Lastly, VUCEL maintains an online social networking presence on Facebook and Twitter. These venues provide informal forums for communications within VUCEL community, and outwardly with the general public. Because both forums are "public", users are asked to maintain an appropriate level of professionalism—however VUCEL supports and encourages their regular use (e.g., to share and communicate exciting activities and events happening at VUCEL; see Twitter feeds from the Wellington Zoo for an example). Twitter feeds may be followed by the Science Media Centre and other relevant organisations, and can also raise public awareness of exciting VUCEL research and educational activities. Please contact the VUCEL Director if you are interested in contributing directly (e.g., as a site "administrator") to VUCEL's media channels.

4.6. HOUSE RULES

4.6.1. OVERVIEW

VUCEL strives to maintain a pleasant, safe, intellectually stimulating, and supportive work environment that caters to the research- and educational requirements of its users. Users are expected to behave in a professional, responsible, and collegial manner while using VUCEL facilities.

To help us maintain a productive and pleasant work environment, we ask that users:

- Comply with all regulations and other information provided in this *Operations Manual*, the new user induction, and in any updates or other communications circulated by VUCEL staff.
- Exercise common sense, and if unclear about an operational procedure or rule, please ask fellow lab users, VUCEL Technicians, or the Director.
- Keep spaces (i.e., offices, labs, communal spaces) clean and tidy.
- Keep doorways clear
- Keep the kitchenette tidy – wipe bench, put dirty dishes in the dishwasher, don't leave food on bench.
- Ask technicians if space is needed to store gear e.g. personal locker, diving gear storage space.
- Report damaged equipment to the technicians as soon as possible.
- Label all supplies and work spaces that are in active use (and remove labels when spaces become free).
- Maintain required records (e.g., diving and boating logs, records of scientific collections, resource use, etc.) and supply them upon request.
- Note that the technicians undertake periodic clean-outs of lab facilities, and these are not intended to substitute for individuals' obligations to keep spaces clean and tidy. Items collected during such cleanouts will be relegated to a "dump bin" in the basement for several weeks (during which time items may be reclaimed) and subsequently taken to the actual dump (from which point, reclamation becomes more difficult).
- Use computers, printers/photocopiers, and other shared resources responsibly and appropriately.
- Notify technicians of printer failures and when printer paper is getting low.
- Maintain a safe and secure facility: remain vigilant for unusual or suspicious activity, particularly when working after-hours. If you

suspect you may be the last person to leave the facilities, ensure that all doors are closed and locked, back gates are locked shut, alarm is set, and front gates are closed. If working after 12am, ring Campus Care 463 5398 and ask them not to set the automatic midnight building alarm. Note that storage of any personal possessions at VUCEL is done at the user's own risk.

- Note that office phones are "Internet phones" and loose connectivity when internet or power is lost. In the event of an emergency and/or internet phone outage, use the "safety phone" adjacent to the photocopier. The safety phone is for emergency use only.
- Note that important information (including flow-charts that give hot-fixes for likely problems) are posted on a pin board near the Technicians' office.
- Be mindful of water usage in the wet lab (water supply is limited and excessive usage triggers alarms and can cause the supply to cease entirely). Use filtered water only when necessary as the supply is reduced during certain times of the day when the filters are backwashed. Clean tanks using pot scrubbers when finished
- Maintain open channels of communication. Please provide suggestions for improvements or comments to the VUCEL Technicians, Director, Student Rep or Head of School. Suggestions can be made formally or informally, and anonymously (e.g., via the student rep or by slipping a note under the Technicians'/Director's door).
- Be kind and considerate to the VUCEL Technicians, campus support staff, and cleaners.
- Be considerate to other lab users: remember keys when leaving the building, make use of common spaces rather than offices for discussions, avoid monopolising shared resources, etc.
- Acknowledge the contributions of VUCEL facilities and/or technicians appropriately in research publications and presentations.
- Discuss science critically, vociferously, and at great length (remember, this is the reason why we are all here)
- Be productive.
- Be safe.
- Have fun.

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5. Appendices

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- 5.3. [SBS INTRO TO LAB SAFETY](#)
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