

LAB COATS

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San Francisco State University
Environment, Health & Safety

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Lab Coat FAQ

(Eligibility, Obtaining and Laundering Lab Coats)

1. WHAT IS CONSIDERED A LAB COAT?

A lab coat is a garment intended for a scientific laboratory environment that reaches approximately to the knee with long sleeves to the wrist and either buttons or snaps in the front. SFSU offers three types of lab coats: poly/cotton blend (standard type), Nomex fire retardant, and polyester barrier type for certain applications.

A lab coat is NOT a chef's coat, artist's smock, apron, coverall, or shop coat.

2. WHO IS REQUIRED TO WEAR A LAB COAT?

Anyone working in a scientific laboratory, where the potential for hazardous chemical, biological, or radiological contact exists. This is mandated by the University Practice Directive, "Required Attire For Entry Into Laboratories Where Hazardous Materials Are Used or Stored".

A lab coat is minimum body protection, so certain areas or tasks may require additional protection.

3. FOR WHOM DOES THE CAMPUS PROVIDE LAB COATS?

The campus provides lab coats for its employees where lab coats are mandated by the Practice Directive or Chemical Hygiene Plan.

An employee is anyone who is paid by the university, is a documented official volunteer or an affiliated community member, such as a visiting scholar.

Visitors entering an area requiring lab coats will be provided one during their stay.

4. DOES THE CAMPUS PROVIDE LAB COATS TO STUDENTS?

No. Students enrolled in a laboratory class that requires lab coats must provide their own.

Exception: Classroom labs with biohazards provide lab coats to students that stay in the room when class ends. Students that have other lab courses, must buy their own lab coats for these courses.

Student employees, such as TAs, GTAs, research assistants, work study, etc. are employees and will be provided a lab coat while working.

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5. WILL STUDENTS HAVE TO BE EMPLOYED BY A CERTAIN POINT IN THE SEMESTER TO BE ELIGIBLE?

Student employees are eligible to receive a lab coat as soon as they start work in an area that requires lab coats. In fact, they may not enter these areas until they have been issued the appropriate lab coat.

6. HOW WILL STUDENT EMPLOYMENT BE DETERMINED OR WILL ROSTERS BE PROVIDED?

A roster will not be provided. The Supervisor must determine whether the I-9 form (Employment Eligibility Verification) is in the system and the student eligible to work. If the person will not be paid, but will, in essence, do the same work as employees or work in the same area (i.e., post-docs, ORSP researchers, etc.), then a lab coat must be provided to them. Supervisors are responsible for completing the appointed volunteer employee process through their department office.

University Student-Employees: Bring a letter or email from your supervisor certifying your status as a student-employee when you pick up your lab coat.

7. WILL STUDENTS WHO WORK FOR AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS (E.G., SODEXHO, UCorp, AS) BE INCLUDED?

Yes. Student employees must be issued a lab coat by their employer, if they work in scientific laboratories that require lab coats. In this case, UCorp, etc., is the employer and must purchase the lab coats if required for their work.

8. HOW WILL THE CAMPUS ISSUE STUDENT EMPLOYEES THEIR LAB COATS AND MONITOR THE PROGRAM?

Within the College of Science & Engineering (COSE), supervisors contact their stockroom staff to arrange for their employees to be fitted for a lab coat.

Outside COSE, supervisors should contact Linda Vadura, EH&S Liaison for COSE, for an appointment to fit their employees for a lab coat. The supervisor must either accompany their employees or provide them a signed written request with each person's name and SFSU ID number.

9. WILL EMPLOYEES BE ABLE TO EXCHANGE A DIRTY OR DAMAGED LAB COAT?

Yes. The COSE has a lab coat laundering program. The campus strongly discourages employees from taking their lab coats home to wash. To make an exchange, contact the department stockroom (within COSE). For departments outside of COSE, contact the Linda Vadura at lvadura@sfsu.edu. Check for available hours before coming by. This service is free to employees.

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10. WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO TRANSPORT A USED LAB COAT?

If it becomes necessary to take a lab coat out of the lab, the lab coat should be folded "dirty side-in" and placed in a plastic bag to keep the "clean side" clean, and protect the other items being transported in the same container / book bag.

Exceptionally dirty or contaminated lab coats should be placed in a laboratory waste container suitable for the type of contamination.

11. WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE FOR STUDENTS TO GET THEIR LAB COATS LAUNDERED?

Enrolled students that aren't employees are eligible for the laundry service at the end of each semester. Most departments have a voucher system.

This is the procedure for student coats in the College of Science & Engineering:

1. Turn in the lab coat for a voucher at the department's stockroom. A department may designate additional location(s), if needed.
2. You will write the type and size of the lab coat on the voucher.
3. The department collecting the coats will hold on to the voucher stub.
4. To pick up a cleaned coat, students must present their voucher at their department's designated location no later than two weeks after the first day of classes.

Main Lab Coat Exchange Centers

- Chemistry Stockrooms: TH 706 and SCI 104
- Biology Stockroom: HH 540
- TH 217 COSE EHS Office (by appointment only)

This is the procedure for student coats outside COSE:

1. Contact the EH&S Specialist in Thornton Hall 216 to turn in the lab coat for a voucher. Email: lvadura@sfsu.edu
2. You will write the type and size of the lab coat on the voucher.
3. To pick up a cleaned coat, students must present their voucher to the EH&S Specialist no later than two weeks after the first day of classes.

Figure 1: Example of a student voucher

Student Lab Coat
Voucher
Size: _____
☐ Mens ☐ Womens ☐ Unisex
Exchange this voucher for a lab coat of the same size. (Photocopies not accepted.)
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Laundering Rules (Student Coats):

- The deadline for turning in dirty lab coats is the last day of Finals (that is not a weekend day).
- A lost voucher means no lab coat may be claimed.

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- Unclaimed coats will become part of the COSE community "legacy" pool.
- Students will get the same size but not the exact same lab coat.
- **Spring** Semester: Cleaned coats may be picked up during the 3 weeks after classes start the following semester. (Note that cleaned coats should be available 3 weeks after finals week if a student needs it back earlier.)
- **Fall** Semester: Cleaned coats may be picked up 3 weeks after New Year's Day and during the 3 weeks after classes start the following semester.

12. WHERE CAN STUDENTS BUY THEIR LAB COATS?

Students can buy their lab coats or bring their own as long as they meet the minimum criteria in Question 1. Some sources of lab coats are listed below.

- Student Bookstore in the Cesar Chavez Center

13. HOW WELL DOES THE LAB COAT NEED TO FIT?

Lab coats must fit properly. A coat that is too big can cause the wearer to knock things over. Rolling up sleeves can trap contaminants. A coat that won't close means the front of your body is not protected. If it is so tight that it is difficult to move you either won't wear it or it can tear at the seams.

- Sleeves must reach to the top of the wrist but no longer than the fingernails.
- Buttons or snaps must close.
- Coat must reach at least to the top of the knees but not past the top of the ankles.

Lab coats come in several cuts, so different body shapes can usually find a coat that will fit and be comfortable.

- Unisex – Usually similar in fit to mens
- Mens – Longer sleeves and a bit wider in shoulders
 - Available in the Student Bookstore and Mission Linen Web Store
- Womens – Shorter sleeves and a bit wider at the bottom
 - Available in the Student Bookstore and Mission Linen Web Store
- Talls – Longer sleeves and longer length to fit people taller than 6'1"
 - Only available on the Mission Linen Web Store or other specialty outlets

Don't get caught up on the gender label. Find the cut that fits you best.

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