

Using the Wet Lab

30 September 2025

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The School of Architecture Wet Lab is a tiny, shared, user-maintained space where *qualified* School members can work with clay, plaster, concrete, and similar materials.

Qualification has three components.

- 1) Completing the B1 Wet Lab Tutorial or equivalent,
- 2) passing the Dalhousie online WHMIS course and letting Susanna know (it's at <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/open/programareas/dal-exclusive/ehs.html>) and
- 3) caring for the lab before, during, and after your work there. The key is for each of us to leave the lab in slightly better shape than we find it. If we don't, the lab can degenerate to where it can't be used, but if we do, it will soon be sparkling.

Signing In

- 1) Ask the Wet Lab Assistant or Supervisor to book a time. If you're on the qualified list we'll do that. Sometimes that can be soon, but if you're aiming for a class time or a night or a weekend, it's best to check ahead. If the Assistant is not around, feel free to ask me (Emanuel).
- 2) At the appointed time, one of us will unlock the door.
- 3) Together we'll assess the condition of the space, maybe snap a picture, agree on the little way in which you'll improve the space, and note this in the logbook. If you want a disposable dust mask or a pair of rubber gloves (cement products are somewhat corrosive) please ask.

Signing Out: When you're done your work and your cleanup, notify the Assistant or me. If neither of us can come right away, feel free to leave. Either way, we'll check that you've cleaned up and done that bit more. If you haven't, we'll point out the shortcomings and ask you to finish the job. Too much of that could affect your lab access.

Keeping the Air Clean. The main health hazard in the lab is dust. Always leave the door open when using the lab. Dust is mainly raised by sweeping and by scraping dried or set materials. Cleaning while things are wet avoids that. When cleaning the counters, use damp cloths and wet things down before you do any scraping. Damp mopping is better than sweeping. When using cloths and wet mops, rinse them often. Otherwise you're just pushing dirt around that will reveal itself in streaks when the water evaporates.

Protecting the Plumbing. Drains clogged with wet lab materials would be massively expensive to clear and would put the lab permanently out of business. The sink is designed to maintain a small amount of water. This allows particles to drop out, leaving cleaner water to flow down the drain.

The rubber basins in the sink are a first layer of protection for the sink. Use them as much as possible. Feel free to dump or scrape leftover wet materials into these basins. The Assistant or Supervisor should clean them out from time to time, but if they're too full of waste material you can dump that into the earth materials bin or into the black cart, normally out in the hallway. (If you use the cart for something else, dump any earth materials in the east-facing part of the recycling enclosure and return it to the hallway when you're done.) If the wrong kinds of organic matter get into the sink, the water may develop weird growths. Soap can have that effect. So you should rinse your hands clean of earth materials in the wet lab but wash them in the washrooms.

Caring for Materials. Earth materials left in the lab gradually degrade through contamination. Or containers burst or spill. In order that materials are used before any of that happens, our policy is that any materials left in the lab are for anyone to use... unless you label them with your name and phone number and a will-be-done-by date. Materials in large paper bags should go into a tall plastic bin, or the material may be dumped. Keep the lids on them securely so stuff won't get contaminated. Label the material, ideally with the material name and WHMIS information cut from the bag. Clay mixed for use will dry out, so we keep it in a sealed container. If it's getting dry, just add a little water and it will become useable again.

Maintaining Tools. Clean them before materials set or dry out! It's so easy! Plastic, Aluminum, and stainless steel can be left to drip-dry but plain steel tools need to be dried off or they'll rust. Please remember that cleaning tools and cloths also need to be rinsed and wrung out several times to clean them after use. Keep containers on the shelves; tools in the appropriate bins.

Protecting Our Equanimity Work is so much easier when you can find things where they're supposed to be, and when other things aren't in your way. If projects must be kept in the lab temporarily, put them on the counter to the left of the sink, behind the door. Waste earth materials (clay, sand, concrete, plaster, etc.) go in the small bin. The large garbage can is for everything else, like paper and packaging. The Supervisor or Assistant will empty the bins from time to time, but if they're ever too full you can dump the earth materials bin into the black cart or take the garbage bag to the green dumpster behind the building's transformer. There should be fresh bags inside the garbage can: please fit one in place. If you see the black cart or other wet lab items elsewhere in the building, please bring them home.

The Wet Lab Tutorial has three parts:

- 1) Come at your scheduled time or if you can't, just trade places with a classmate. Your clothes will probably get clay or plaster on them, so dress accordingly. You'll work with clay, plaster, and Vaseline, become accustomed to the housekeeping, and create a small work of architecture. If you can, bring a plastic bag or two, at least big enough for two fists.
- 2) You'll complete the project not long after the session. When you're done, show it to Emanuel.
- 3) At that time, you'll also need to answer some questions based on this handout. Ideally, you'd bring your WHMIS ticket, too.