

**Information for Faculty Interested in Mentoring Non-UK Students  
Working on Research Projects:  
Issues to Consider**

The University wishes to continue encouraging faculty and staff to work with young people in high school to encourage them to consider careers in research and discovery. At the same time, the University feels an obligation to make employees aware of some facets of mentorship that may not be obvious. For example, minors are restricted to certain working hours, must avoid certain equipment, and require greater supervision than older individuals. This memorandum attempts to summarize some of the relevant considerations. If you need additional information, or want handouts on the Kentucky Child Labor Law, please contact me. In all instances, please be sure your chair and dean are informed of the student's participation.

Some requirements are set out in the UK Chemical Hygiene Plan which states, "**Authorized Access.** The laboratory supervisor must restrict access to laboratories. Children (under age 17) are not allowed in laboratories except as authorized by the laboratory supervisor for an officially sanctioned activity (e.g., class or open house)." As also noted in the Chemical Hygiene Plan, Lab Supervisors are also obligated to: "Inform and train students and employees concerning chemical safety and other laboratory hazards as required by this Plan. Retain training records and all documentation." This means the volunteer student must go through all applicable safety training an employee would complete. The supervisor must also ensure that the volunteer uses all required safety equipment, and follows all lab safety procedures, including using appropriate safety reference materials.

As indicated in the Chemical Hygiene Plan, high school students should be closely supervised at all times, and especially when using equipment and chemicals. Most certainly, they should not be permitted to work in laboratories "after hours" when inadequate supervision may exist.

You should note that wage and hour laws (which are applicable to individuals "permitted or suffered to work") prohibit minors from performing certain tasks, and may restrict the hours worked. Students under the age of 18 are prohibited from working with certain hazards, including radioactive substances and certain equipment. Supervisors should be particularly cognizant of chemicals stored and used in labs and their associated hazards. Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act there is potential liability for inadequate supervision if someone active in your laboratory or other research setting is injured. It is particularly noteworthy that this liability can be individual, not institutional, i.e., legal liability rests with the person in charge of the laboratory, not with the University.

In addition to activities in the lab, there are a myriad of potential liability issues associated with having high school students, who likely are minors under the law, accompanying faculty or staff members to professional meetings or other off campus activities. Faculty members will want to carefully consider the special issues associated with traveling with minors.

The goal of this communication is to sensitize potential mentors to issues they may wish to consider in order to help achieve a satisfactory mentorship experience. The purpose is not to discourage mentorship relationships with high school students. If you would like to discuss any of the issues addressed in this memo, or any other aspect of the mentorship program, please contact the Assistant Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies.

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