

Histology Core FAQs

Note: These questions pertain to general Histology Core operations and ordering. For questions about immunohistochemistry or whole slide imaging, please see the separate links describing those services.

Q: How are samples submitted?

A: We accept samples in labeled cassettes placed in 70% Ethanol with an attached iLabs order sheet. Samples are not accepted in any other fixative and in anything other than cassettes. We do accept formalin fixed and paraffin embedded blocks to be sectioned. Depending on size, not all samples need to be submitted with sponges. However, small samples should ideally be sandwiched between two sponges, put in biopsy bags or placed in lens paper. We can provide sponges/cassettes in advance, if you need these to prepare your sample for submission; please email us ahead of time at Path-TMPSR-Histology@med.umich.edu or make a reservation with a comment/event note through iLABS.

Q: How do you drop off samples?

A: There is a cart across the hall from our lab. Please place your project on the bottom shelf, along with a printout of the iLabs order. Please do not wait for the “waiting for Core to agree” order status to change before dropping off samples.

Scheduling requirements for drop-offs depend on whether your materials are temperature-sensitive:

--If your materials are not temperature-sensitive, you do not need to let us know when you will be dropping off them off.

--If your materials are temperature-sensitive (antibodies, frozen samples, etc.), please schedule a drop-off time with our laboratory staff, by emailing Path-TMPSR-Histology@med.umich.edu or by making an iLABS reservation with a comment/event note describing the temperature requirement. Please wait for the staff to confirm your drop-off time.

Q: How are samples picked up?

A: You must first make an appointment on our Project pick-up reservation calendar in iLABS. Please wait for staff to confirm this appointment. Your project will be on the cart across the hall from our lab on the top shelf at your reserved time. If you cannot make your time, please cancel and reschedule.

Q: What size should the sample tissue be?

A: Your sample size should be roughly the size of a nickel. No tissue should be deeper than 4mm. Skin sections and other samples that are to stand on edge, need to be cut and no deeper than 4mm.

Q: How thick are the sections?

A: We use 4 micrometers unless specified otherwise. This is the standard micron for histology. If another thickness is desired, please let our technicians know by writing this in the “Special Instructions” area of the request form.

Q: What is the turnaround time?

A: Turnaround time varies depending on volume. Please do not inquire about turnaround time or project status unless it has been longer than 2 weeks, to help keep our number of customer inquiries at a manageable level.

Q: What does “adding heat” to the slides mean?

A: After we make your slides we can “add heat” to melt paraffin off and to help the section adhere to the slide. If this heat might harm such things as antigens for immunostaining, then this step can be bypassed. There is an option on the request form for this.

Q: What is “RNA/DNA Clean Protocol”?

A: This is an option on the request form that you can choose if (for example) you are doing a DNA/RNA extraction project. Our technicians use special care to make these slides with RNASE AWAY, Pure Distilled DNA/RNA free water, gloves and fresh blades. In iLabs, please enter a number corresponding to the number of blocks you are submitting (not #slides that will be cut). For each block, you will receive 5 slides cut at 4 microns (unless the customer requests a different micron thickness).

Q: What is decalcification and when do you need it?

A: Decalcification is a procedure our technicians use if you have “hard” tissue like bone. Without decalcification these samples are close to impossible to section. If you have “hard” tissue like bone in your samples you need to fill out the request form accordingly. The pricing is per cassette. If this portion is not filled out on the request form and our technicians have to “surface decal” your blocks the pricing is higher per cassette.