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Open Source Microfluidic Scaffolds

PLOS One

Harry Felton¹, Robert Hughes¹

¹University of Bristol

Harry Felton

DISCLAIMER

There is no guarantee that the techniques or procedures outlined in this document will work as intended for the user. Users should ensure they have undertaken their own, independent risk assessment before undertaking the work detailed within this document. The author's may not be found liable for any loss of life, effect of health, damage or loss of wealth that may be incurred by following this protocol.

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GUIDELINES

There are no particular guidelines for this work.

SAFETY WARNINGS

- ! There are no particular safety guidelines required for this work. However, the following basic guidelines should be followed:
 - MEX/FDM 3D printers should only be used in well ventilated spaces and/or with a suitable filter
 - Care should be taken when working with hot surfaces, with adequate signage warning a surface is hot if not immediately obvious
 - Care should be taken whilst using sharp tools

OPEN ACCESS

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BEFORE START INSTRUCTIONS

To produce a full microfluid mould, the user will need:

- Computer/Laptop (Windows or MacOS based)
- An internet connection
- MEX/FDM 3D printer with suitable material (PLA recommended)
- Hot plate/oven - capable of reaching 200\degree C
- Glass microscope slides (x2)
- Tweezers/tongs/oven gloves
- Scalpel (or similar)

Further equipment and material will be needed for PDMS casting (not discussed within this document).

Design

- 1 User designs the required microfluid system from the sub-systems available.

Generate Models

- 2 Download, install and open Fusion 360.

Note

NB: Although Fusion 360 works on iOS and Android devices the add-in will not and so a Windows or MacOS device should be used.

Software

Fusion 360	NAME
Windows/MacOS/iOS/Android	OS
Autodesk	DEVELOPER

3 Load the μ -fluid add-in into Fusion 360

3.1 Download the μ -fluid add-in as a zip file from GitHub (<https://github.com/dmf-lab/microfluidics>)

3.2 Extract zip file to suitable location on your PC/Mac.

3.3 Within Autodesk Fusion 360 go to:

"TOOLS -> ADD-INS -> Scripts and Add-Ins... -> Add-Ins" and click on the little "+" icon next to "My Add-Ins". Select the folder "Fusion Add-In" contained within the folder from the previous step.

4 Run the μ -fluid add-in. This will be shown in the "TOOLS" and "SOLID" toolbars.

5 Choose module, set parameters and joints.

You will have the option to "Export to stl" - this will export the generated model as an stl file (needed for printing) to a folder of the user's choice. The folder selection menu will appear after pressing "Ok".

6 Do you need more models? If so, go to step #4 . If not, continue.

Slice Model(s) For Printing

7 Download, install and open Ultimaker Cura. Make sure to follow the correct set-up for your printer.

Software	
Cura	NAME
Windows/MacOS	OS
Ultimaker	DEVELOPER

8 Within Ultimaker Cura, open the model(s) generated previously. ("File -> Open File(s)...")

9 Change the profile as appropriate.

Note

NB: This will only work using the downloadable profiles when using Cura for an Ultimaker 3/3 Extended. If you would like to use a different printer, please open the appropriate profile and copy the relevant settings. This should give you a good starting point for printing the scaffolds.

9.1 The μ -fluid channel profiles can be downloaded from github: (<https://github.com/dmf-lab/microfluidics>). The profiles are contained within the "Cura Profiles" folder (within the Microfluidics zip).

MicroChannels01.curaprofile - Intended for use with 0.1mm nozzle.

MicroChannels04.curaprofile - Intended for use with 0.4mm nozzle.

10 Slice models on buildplate within Ultimaker Cura.

11 Save gcode to file and/or send gcode to printer.

Printing

12 Print models as you would a normal 3D print with the equipment available to you.

13 Once the print is completed, remove the models from the build plate.

Note

We found the best way to do this was using a stanley knife (or similar) and prising the connectors of the build plate. The channels are very delicate so this takes some practice and patience.

Thermal Bonding to Glass

8m

14 Mount the 3D-printed microfluid channel modules onto 1 mm thick glass microscope slides in the desired configuration using the ball-and-socket-connectors.

1m

15 Place a second 1mm thick glass slide on top of the channel configuration to act as a weighting slide

30s

16 Heat the slide-channel-slide assembly at 200\degreeC for 45-60s to bond the PLA thermoplastic to the glass substrate and smooth out inconsistencies. This is best performed on a temprature controlled hot plate, but heating could also be achieved in an oven or over a flame, however timings and cosistency will vary.

1m

Safety information

CAUTION: Hot surfaces and heated assemblies can cause severe burns.

Note

NOTE: Heating times will vary depending on the height of the 3D-printed scaffold.

- 17** After heating, use tweezers, tongs or oven gloves to transfer the thermally bonded slides onto a metal cooling plate (weighting slide down), and leave for 5 minutes.

5m

- 18** After cooling, slide a blade between the substrate and weighting slides and gently twist to remove the weighting slide.

30s

Note

NOTE: If the channel scaffolds disbond slightly from the substrate during this step, they can be easily rebonded by briefly reheating the substrate slide at 200 deg C without the weighting slide.

PDMS Fabrication

- 19** Use the resulting thermally bonded channel design on the substrate slide as the master mould for PDMS casting. See work by Lake *et al.* for a more detailed explanation of this step (<https://doi.org/10.1038/protex.2015.069>).