

Common topics in lab handbooks

WHAT WE DO AND WHY WE DO IT

- Philosophy of scientific principles and how the lab should operate
- Chronological and academic history
- Future research goals
- A list of papers, blog posts or articles that all lab members should read

ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

- Who's who and what they do
- Expectations of everybody, including the PI, from everybody's perspectives

OPEN SCIENCE

- Why and how the lab deals with sharing data, code and materials externally
- Why and how the lab manages data, code and materials and how to co-ordinate this with external collaborators

COMMUNICATION

- How to talk to each other (e.g. 'always use Slack', 'phone calls are only for emergencies')
- How long to wait before nudging the PI
- How regular meetings with the PI and with one another work, and how to prepare for them

LOGISTICS

- Work hours, remote working and holiday
- Lab location(s)
- Allocation/booking of lab spaces/meeting rooms both in the lab and in the department and university
- What to do if you get locked out

DAY-TO-DAY INFORMATION

- Health and wellbeing
- Pet policy
- Sickness policy
- Allergies information
- Information on the lab culture
- Dress code and hygiene

CODE OF CONDUCT

- Policies on scientific integrity, sexual harassment and discrimination
- University-wide policies
- How the PI manages conflicts between lab members
- How to provide feedback about others' conduct (anonymously or not)

RECURRING EVENTS

- Information on lab meetings, departmental seminars and other regular meetings
- Daily, weekly and monthly task lists (differing by roles)

MENTORSHIP

- How to choose a project
- How to solicit feedback from others
- How to initiate collaborations inside or outside the lab
- Doing a thesis or dissertation
- Professional development opportunities
- How to get support from inside or outside the lab

- How to make mistakes productively
- Routine training for new members
- General support, (i.e. 'Always ask questions!')

INTERNAL RESOURCES

- Information about anything and everything in the lab that lab members will need access to: servers, software, web tools, shared credentials, room keys and other physical resources, etc.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- Helpful information for beyond the lab – from how to get a library card to which building has the best photocopier
- Links to websites and tutorials germane to the lab's work

ONBOARDING (JOINING PROCESSES)

- Checklists of everything new lab members need
- Credentials, software, hardware, keys, ID and so on

ETHICS AND SAFETY

- Human and/or animal subject policy/protocol and oversight
- What to do and who to call if something goes wrong

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- The lab website
- Social media policy (both lab and personal)
- Expectations surrounding outreach
- Procedures for recruiting participants
- How to be a good departmental citizen

HOW TO RUN EXPERIMENTS

- Detailed instructions for the lab's experimental methods

DATA

- Managing and analysing data
- Code – how to write, document, version-control and archive it
- Data protection and security

PUBLICATIONS

- Authorship policy
- Pre-publication checklist
- Policies on preprints, postprints and open access
- Preferences about journals and/or preprint servers

CONFERENCES

- How and why to give a talk
- Which conferences lab members usually attend
- Considerations regarding visualisations, confidentiality, authorship for conference submissions

MONEY

- Which funders support the lab and why
- What expenses the lab will and won't pay for
- Ordering coffee/milk/biscuits
- What requires PI approval and what doesn't

OFFBOARDING (LEAVING PROCESSES)

- What to do when you leave the lab, including policies on data, credentials, your work, intellectual property
- How to stay in touch