

Lab Manager Guidance

In 2005, we started the role of *Lab Module Managers* in which each lab unit (in 2021 this was Chemistry **CRL** and **ICL**) had a (typically) single postdoctoral researcher who acts as a coordination point. This is the model now in the Franklin and Pharmacology.

This role is distinct from the co-supervisors present in some groups in the department and was there to primarily provide a central logistics- and safety-related contact for each unit.

The official supervisory role and responsibilities of the group rest tend to rest solely with BGD.

The key roles of the *Lab Managers* are

- to provide an additional co-signature for risk assessment ($RISK = f(HAZARD) \times f(EXPOSURE)$) – to give advice on the quality of this assessment and to be aware of what that person is doing.

In discussions I give the following advice to researchers:

“As a simple gauge if your lab book is not being countersigned by your lab manager at least 90% of the time then you need to re-think how you plan your risk assessments and expts

In summary - Order of People to look for:

LAB MANAGER then OTHER LAB MANAGER / ME then as last resort OTHER PDRAs. Some of you (probationary first 3m) must get things signed by me – this stays the same.”

- the same roles apply to overnight forms – following inspection by the co-signatory
- to provide a contact point for logistical issues on e.g., chemical collections, storage, equipment, ordering. This person is a good person for Amy or I to be in touch with if issues arise specific to a unit.
- the lab managers also have ‘signing rights’ for large purchase orders but that responsibility also lies with the Lab Technician or myself.
- to be a rallying point for group issues and discussions (both in the 15 min slot of Tues meetings and on other occasions) and to help improve communication in all directions. This is fantastic in flagging issues early and bringing them to my attention. Please do try to talk with the group regularly and do come and see me directly and personally when anything that you think is important crops up.
- to be a ‘moral compass’ for the unit. To just highlight the importance of mutual respect in working in a unit – this necessitates raising issues of careful and safe usage of the common lab space and the equipment within it. Examples include: a) overnight forms proper usage (this may necessitate shutting down incorrect experiments lest they cause damage or create a risk); b) highlighting how properly set-up and maintained communal items (space/kit) may occasionally require some maintenance by a given individual but benefits all (what goes around...)

What is not expected is for you to take the responsibilities of a co-supervisor. We try to avoid a hierarchical structure, which can prevent openness and can lead to the views and feelings of group members being subverted by a misguided sense of obedience to the organisational structure.

BGD is the line manager to all PDRAs and the supervisor to all students and visitors – these roles come with certain responsibilities and are subtly and importantly different but, regardless, I take responsibility as mentor for all. I aim to build an individual (and importantly confidential) intellectual relationship with all to further the scientific aims of the group and to educate its members. It may therefore be inevitable that the group character will reflect certain aspects of my own views but the spirit of the group (and sometimes aspects of its organizational make-up and ethics) can change and evolve. I hope that all group members will feel that the exchange of knowledge and skill is part of what the group is all about and not a result of 'hierarchical duty'. Whilst many will understandably join the group for their own individual goals, any selfishness and/or lack of communication and/or lack of respect ultimately undermines groups. Do come see me anytime to discuss any aspects of this.