

## **Lab Book Advice**

I thought I'd drop you an important note regarding lab books, as I sense there has sometimes been some confusion (and stress caused too !) about what a lab book is for.

Perhaps I can share my thoughts? (which are not comprehensive and you should consult the departmental GLP too).

a) the lab book is foremost a safety record - this is what is checked on a regular basis in lab inspections and by me and is what the Health and Safety Executive use as a record in the event of an accident. It's a legal record, if you like, that you have made a risk assessment and had it checked by someone else (as indicated by signature). To not do this is a breach of GLP and so a breach of your employment contract or your student contract or your visitor contract - sorry to sound heavy or formal but this is an important point for you all to take on board. If you fail to do this then in UK law this has consequences that can lead to prosecution.

b) it's also a legal record used to show discovery in patents - your inventions belong to the university (all of us) and so again, your contract with the university requires you to do this too.

c) it's also a record that proves to referees, examiners and, indeed, anyone who asks to see it that you have done what you have written up in any paper or thesis. So every single experimental that you type up/write up should have an exactly written lab book page that corresponds to it. If you can't prove this by scanning your lab book and adding that to the SI, if needed, then you would need to retract your work (thesis or paper). This is an ethical duty as a researcher. This is why the good keeping and long term storage of your lab book after you have left the lab is also essential.

In the past year we have had to remove a number of key sections of papers in preparation that could not be substantiated by lab books – this understandably upsets those involved but this is the only way that we can behave. Just saying “But I did it and here is the spectrum/TEM/product/word document...etc” is essentially meaningless without the lab book page to prove it.

d) it's also for many of you a working diary, for planning, for making unusual observations and guiding your later experiments too. This is where many of you will, quite rightly, feel an emotional connection to your lab book (much like a diary indeed). This is where sometimes one can perhaps feel that someone else looking at your lab book feels like a breach of your own personal space. I think many of us understand the emotional place that this comes from but because of (a)-(c) above this is not quite correct. Please don't feel that it is an intrusion to be asked to show your lab book - it really isn't in any way - in fact, it's vital to help you keep up good practice and keep safe and ensure that you will get your thesis and/or papers.

If any of you want to chat about this then I'm really happy to explain what is a multifaceted thing and so I understand can be confusing at first sight.

Above all, getting into a careful, regular, professional approach on this is key to your work here and also in any future career in science - it's a lynchpin skill for you to acquire. Thanks in advance.

BGD, Jan 2017.