

Code of conduct for lab courses

Why this code?

We have noticed in the last years that there are many unwritten rules that we, the staff of the Education Institute for Molecular Sciences, adhere to or that we expect you to adhere to. For many reasons, with a growing and heterogeneous student population, it becomes harder to communicate these rules in an informal way.

Therefore, we feel that it is necessary to write down our previously unwritten rules, so that all students, but also all staff and Teaching Assistants ('TAs') are aware of them and can be urged to adhere to them. Students may expect staff and TAs to *lead by example*.

Strictness & communication

The rules in this Code are formulated in a strict manner and might even appear harsh sometimes. You may note, for instance, that the phrase '(...) will lead to your exclusion from the course' appears frequently. This does NOT mean that we would like to exclude as many students as possible from our courses, on the contrary! It is only the most extreme consequence of the most extreme behaviour: the rules are for everyone, but the consequences only for the few that seriously fail to live up to them. Thus, a regular student should never have to encounter these consequences, other than by reading them in this document.

To prevent this text from becoming long and unreadable, we do not provide justifications or explanations here, but you can be ascertained that these exist and can be explained to you. Should you feel that a rule is unjust or inapplicable to you personally, the staff is open for discussing issues with you. Note that exceptions to these rules *in favour of* students can always be made by staff if there are good reasons for such an exception. However, such reasons should be provided by *you* in a timely and correct manner (*i.e.* as a request, not as a statement). Being able to, or training to communicate in this way is also part of your academic education. Likewise, students may expect staff and TAs to communicate in a courteous, friendly and academic manner.

As an example: sending an e-mail one day stating that you cannot be present for a practical the next day due to a doctor's appointment that you made two months ago is neither considered timely, nor correct, and will be no reason to grant an exception to the rule of mandatory presence. We would have expected you to make an appointment on another day or, if it is absolutely impossible to do so, to consult us and *request* permission timely, *i.e.* *before* making the appointment.

Rules

Mandatory presence

Lab classes always start at 8.30h sharp and end at 17.00h. Presence for lab classes is mandatory.

Failure to attend a lab class without notification and/or for a valid reason results in your exclusion from the course.

Of course, it is possible that days or parts of days are missed for valid reasons beyond your control, such as illness. A single missed day for a 3ec course or two subsequent missed days in the same week for a 6ec course can be compensated for on scheduled days later in the year. More missed days cannot be compensated for and will cause you to fail the course. You will have to attend the complete course again in the next year.

Notes of absence

In case of absence for a valid reason, it is imperative to notify the lab staff upfront. Notifications should *always* be sent [1] to practicum-mw@science.ru.nl before 8.30h on the day of absence, regardless of any other notifications that are sent to fellow students, TAs, staff, etc. as a matter of (much-appreciated) courtesy. Notifications to this address are received by Tom Bloemberg, Luuk van Summeren and any academic staff member responsible for a running practical course. They will inform your TAs.

In case of sensitive private information, it is also possible to communicate this confidentially with *e.g.* one of the student advisors, who can relay the fact that you will be absent for a valid reason without disclosing the reason itself.

Failure to send a notification in time will result in your absence being regarded as invalid and your exclusion from the course.

Leaves of absence

Requests for leaves of absence for *e.g.* a wedding, a funeral, medical surgery that cannot be scheduled on another day should also be sent [1] in due time to practicum-mw@science.ru.nl or posed in oral communication with the lab staff or the responsible academic staff member.

Failure to send a request in due time will result in your not being granted a leave of absence.

Being late

Being late due to reasons beyond your control (an extreme traffic jam, a train delay), can happen sometimes. Notify the lab staff as soon as possible by sending [1] an e-mail to practicum-mw@science.ru.nl. Being considerably late (> 10 min.) for invalid reasons (*e.g.* oversleeping) counts as a missed day that has to be compensated. This only holds if you notify the lab staff before 17.00h on the day of absence, otherwise your absence counts as invalid and results in your exclusion from the course. Being slightly late (< 10 min.) for invalid reasons typically affects your grade for the course. If this happens frequently, you risk exclusion from the course.

[1] If sending an e-mail is somehow impossible, you can call 024-3653452 (Tom Bloemberg) or 024-3652541 (Luuk van Summeren) instead.

Safety

You are required to be aware of the safety rules as described in the laboratory manuals of the different lab courses, or otherwise communicated, and to act accordingly. Any gross or deliberate violation of these rules may lead to your being denied access to the labs for *all* subsequent courses.

Clothing

A lab coat and safety goggles should be worn in the labs at all times. Failure to bring your lab coat or safety goggles will result in your being sent home to collect them. If this would take too long, the day counts as a missed day that has to be compensated.

Wearing shorts, open shoes, wide boots or personal clothing made of synthetic fibres is not allowed. If you arrive at the lab wearing any of these, you will be sent home to change. If this would take too long, the day counts as a missed day that has to be compensated.

Wearing headgear is, in principle, prohibited. If you need to wear a hijab because of religious reasons, it must be made of cotton, it should be tied back and you have to make sure there are no loose ends. For those with long hair, you are required to tie up your hair. Wear your hair in a ponytail or a bun on the back of your head.

Wearing jewelry or wristwatches during lab courses is discouraged in general, and even strictly prohibited for some biochemical courses. You will be notified of this by the course coordinator.

Electronic devices

The use of electronic devices, other than for educational purposes is strictly forbidden in the lab. The use of social media in the lab may result in your exclusion from the course. If you expect an important call or have to make one, notify your supervisors and take or make the call outside the lab.

Sobriety

It should be obvious to anyone that intoxication and chemical labs do not go together. You are not allowed to be on a lab when under the influence of alcohol or drugs. If you attempt to take part in a lab course when intoxicated, you will be excluded from the course immediately.

Reports

Deadlines

Writing one or more reports is part of all practical courses. Deadlines for handing in these reports are communicated clearly and are normally enforced by the use of Blackboard. As a result, the deadlines are very strict (one second too late is completely too late). Failure to hand in a report will result in you failing the course.

Make sure you know how to hand in reports, start in time with handing in a report, notify your supervisor in due time (*i.e.* before the deadline, not after it) if something goes wrong and make sure you save Blackboard's confirmation message that you get when your report has been received correctly. Apart from handing in reports via Blackboard, you may be obliged to hand them in in hardcopy as well.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is 'the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own' [2], and is considered scientific fraud. The concept is explained in more detail in reference 3. With respect to reports, it is forbidden to copy texts or pieces of texts from fellow students' reports, manuals or other sources. 'Working together' in writing texts is not allowed, unless otherwise specified. However, it *is* allowed (and even encouraged) to review each other's texts. Plagiarism is on a par with peeking while taking a test and can result in your exclusion from the course, or even, in very serious cases, in your exclusion from the university.

Grading

Grading is on a scale of one to ten, one being the lowest grade and ten the highest. Grades of six and higher are considered a 'pass', grades below six a 'fail'. Final grades are rounded off to the nearest half, except for grades between five and six, which are rounded off to the nearest integer.

Glassware and lockers

The use of glassware, equipment and chemicals is included in your tuition fee, but you are required to pay for broken or lost glassware. For this, you need to fill out and sign a 'recurrent direct debit mandate' for a maximum of €100,=. The expenses incurred will be collected in the middle of August following the academic year to which the debit mandate corresponds.

At the start of the first year, you will receive a key for a personal locker in one of the labs, that contains a standard set of glassware. You are required to check this set for completeness and intactness. Reclamation afterwards is not possible! After the check, any broken or missing glassware will be written on your account.

At the end of the year or in the unfortunate event that you quit your studies prematurely, you are required to present your complete, clean and intact glassware set for inspection. Any missing objects should be replenished from the glassware storage and will be noted on your account. After your set has been approved, you store it in your locker again and hand over the locker key to one of the lab staff. He or she will sign for approval and your locker key will be scratched from your account. If you fail to present your glassware set, a charge of €10,= will be added to your account for inspection and cleaning activities. Any missing or broken glassware will also be charged and there will be no possibility to protest.

[2] Definition by Google Translate, accessed 25 August 2016.

[3] T. Overton, S. Johnson and J. Scott, *Study and communication skills for the chemical sciences*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2011.