Example of written procedure (protocol) for user of a Multi-User Laboratory

The multi-user nature of a lab creates additional safety problems and requires all users to give even greater consideration to safe operation and practices, both for their own benefit and for that of all other workers in the area. The following procedures are intended to provide maximum information at all times to all users; to minimise inconvenience to others; and to encourage good working practices.

1. Each individual laser has its own indicator to show when it is energised. A white board is provided by the door for those responsible for operating each system to record the following information:

i. Status (aligning, warm up, experiment in progress, etc.)
ii. Wavelengths generated, powers generated.
iii. Other hazards (specific chemical hazards, etc.)
iv. Additional notes, information.

This information should be initialled, dated and timed so that it is always clear that it contains current, up to the minute information. To be credible the time and date must show that the information really does reflect what is currently being undertaken with the system.

2. The whole of the multi-user laboratory is a properly designated laser area and consequently all standard entry restrictions apply. Additionally each laser system/experiment will be operated behind screens. Each screened off area should be regarded as if it were an individual 'designated area' - in particular users should avoid entering each others' screened areas just as they would not enter individual laser labs while warning signs are illuminated. A small board attached to one of the screens on each area should be used by the user to indicate the status of the system (it should be noted that this information does not remove from other users of the lab. the restriction on entry to that area).

3. Each authorised individual will have an access tag which is hung on the rack when they enter the lab. If laser glasses are taken from these racks, the tag is hung where the glasses were stored. On leaving the lab, the tag is removed from the rack. The tag system identifies who is in the lab at times when the lasers are energised.

4. Special care should be taken to return safety glasses to the storage by the entrance whenever they are not in use. This is a consideration for other users as well as encouraging the effective regular use of appropriate protection.

5. Each individual authorised to enter the lab. is responsible for ensuring their own safety as far as possible (i.e. by ensuring correct eye wear is selected based upon the information presented) as well as for ensuring safety for others.

6. Before a laser is turned on the operator has the responsibility to ensure that all workers already in the lab. are made aware and prepared, as well as ensuring that the

white-board located outside the laboratory, and that located on the screen to their particular area (see 1. and 2. above), is updated to warn others who may enter later.

7. Once the power supply for any laser is energised the key pad interlock system on the entrance door is energised. Anyone entering the lab who has not keyed in the correct number code will cause the power supplies on ALL lasers to switch off. This system is in place in order to prevent unauthorised access while laser systems are in operation. The code is available only to registered laser users for that laboratory.

Users are urged to encourage each other actively to adhere to these mutually agreed procedures.