

Inclusive Laboratory Practicals

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In this talk

- Why talk about practicals?
- Student needs
- Good practice

Lab Practicals

- Specificity
 - Each practical may teach a new and specific skill, increasing likelihood of novelty
- Synchronicity
 - It's much harder to record & review later than e.g. a lecture or even a seminar
- Safety
 - Safety concerns have much higher stakes
- Sociability
 - Many practicals rely upon group work & social skills e.g. asking for help, sharing equipment

Potential challenges for students

- Information processing
 - Taking in information that may be given at short notice
 - Recording results
- Environment
 - Physically unfamiliar
 - Sensory discomfort e.g. smells, sounds, sights
 - Using equipment
- Working with others
 - Collaborating
 - Sharing space & equipment
- Timing
 - Staying on task
 - Finishing in time

Practical ways forward

- Information processing
 - Always make information reviewable (even if delivered on the day)
 - Make available as much as possible ahead of time
 - Psychological safety – allow ‘stupid’ questions
- Environment
 - Preview or premeet
 - Consistent seat location – quiet, exit
 - May need more equipment practice or assistance
- Working with others
 - Prior knowledge of how this will happen
 - Consistent groupwork partner may help
 - Guidance for all on how to signal need for help
- Timing
 - If there’s no structure, suggest one (break down time & tasks to help students track process)
 - Allow for breaks or make clear how they can be taken
 - Clarify: does task need finishing?

And finally...

- Speak with students! They are the expert in their needs.
- If a student has a support worker or extra assistance, ensure the student is in control
- Be flexible!