

The Management of Laboratory Training



Institute of Biomedical Science

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As the UK professional body for biomedical science the Institute has established the following policy on training for those responsible for the management and delivery of laboratory services. The Institute believes that training does not cease at the point of qualification or the confirmation of competence, but continues through all career levels. A strong training culture benefits not just the individual but also the employer and the service user.

The UK health departments have put patient care and safety at the heart of healthcare provision. It is the responsibility of the respective providers and all those involved in the delivery of service and care to deliver safe and high quality patient care. It is the responsibility of the professions themselves to establish those standards of best practice relative to their own service.

What this policy does

This policy is a professional benchmark of best practice for the management and delivery of laboratory training.

What this policy does not

This policy does not mandate on staff numbers or grades or times required to undertake the role. These are dependent on local services and circumstances.

Role nomenclature and definitions

Training manager/co-ordinator – the individual with overarching responsibility for training in a multi-section single department, or over a multi-department laboratory service (this may cover more than one site).

Training officer – the individual(s) responsible for the delivery of training within a section or department.

Where a laboratory is a satellite laboratory of a network service there must be a named training officer IF receiving individuals for training and verification of competencies.

Training mentor – an experienced professional colleague who assists the 'mentee' in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance their professional and personal growth.

Training responsibility requirements

Individuals with responsibility for training are required to have the appropriate knowledge and skill to deliver a training and education programme in accordance with guidelines from the relevant professional and registration bodies, commensurate with the needs of the service and professional development of staff. Training managers/co-ordinators and training officers must have specific named responsibilities irrespective of whether this is a full time role or an element within a wider remit. Whilst all biomedical scientists should be involved in training as part of their professional responsibility, it should be recognised that some individuals may have a specific joint role between a higher education institution and the employer or may act as mentors within an education and training programme.

The role and responsibilities of the Training Manager/Co-ordinator

The Institute recommends the appointment of a training manager/co-ordinator with overall responsibility across all laboratory departments for the oversight and planning the training needs of all non-medical personnel, from support staff to senior scientists. The Training Co-ordinator may in some instances be the laboratory manager, but it is essential that whoever undertakes this role is of sufficient seniority to direct training across all disciplines. This role forms an integral part of the overall laboratory management team and, within this structure, is responsible for overseeing the implementation, development and co-ordination of training processes and procurement projects within pathology.

It is recommended that a training co-ordinator should be an appropriately registered Fellow of the Institute (FIBMS) and have a minimum of five years post-registration experience in an Institute approved training laboratory. It is strongly recommended that the training manager/co-ordinator holds a recognised training qualification such as the Institute's Certificate of Expert Practice in Training.

The post of training co-ordinator is a position with comparable responsibility to that of quality manager and should be recognised as such. The role requires knowledge of the different levels of qualifications, training and the options therein. The breadth of responsibilities of a training manager/co-ordinator is dependent upon the needs of the individual service provider and the training activities undertaken in the laboratory which may include scientific, technical and clerical staff. The objective of the training co-ordinator is to ensure there is a training policy that covers all staff, which enables mandatory, departmental and individual training objectives to be met.

The training co-ordinator is responsible for the co-ordination of training officers, who in turn are the focus for delivering the training strategy and respective training programmes.

The training manager/co-ordinator is responsible for the development of an overarching training policy that addresses relevant professional standards and guidelines.

In laboratories providing a service to the NHS it is the responsibility of the training co-ordinator to be aware of the requirements for the fulfilment of HCPC registration training for biomedical scientists and to ensure that the department has the capacity to train, whether delivered through a dedicated post or through the acceptance of undergraduate placement students. The training co-ordinator has the authority to determine and prioritise training needs taking in to account the skills requirement of the department, the human and financial resources available to deliver training and the developmental needs of the individuals concerned.

In service providers that do not have a training manager/co-ordinator it is the responsibility of the overall departmental manager to ensure the co-ordination of training through the individual laboratory training officers to ensure uniformity of approach and prioritisation of training issues within the overall context of laboratory management.

Dependent on the scope of the training co-ordinators responsibility, the role is usually supported by discipline specific departmental training officers with responsibility for the delivery of training.

[Please note: In adherence with NHS Cervical Screening Programme (NHSCSP) guidelines, laboratories delivering a cervical cytology screening service must appoint a dedicated training officer with appropriate cytology screening qualifications, in addition to the Training Co-ordinator].

Role and responsibilities of a Training Officer

The training officer is the individual who delivers the training or who delegates specific aspects of training to named individuals. It is recommended that training officers should be appropriately registered Members of the Institute (MIBMS) with a minimum of three years post-registration experience in an Institute approved training laboratory. The Institute strongly recommends that training officers hold a recognised training qualification such as the Institute's Certificate of Expert Practice in Training.

Training officers support the training manager/co-ordinator in the development of a training policy and the accompanying training programme and are responsible for the delivery of training. It is essential that as a minimum departmental training officers are familiar with:

- The Institute's support staff qualifications (the Certificates of Achievement Parts I and II)
- The Institute's Registration Training Portfolio
- The HCPC Standards of Proficiency for Biomedical Scientists
- The Institute's Specialist Portfolios and their training requirements
- The Institute's Higher Specialist Diploma

- The Institute's Expert and Advanced diplomas
- The Institute's requirements for training laboratory approval

The training officer must maintain all procedures and records that relate to individual training.

The role and responsibilities of a mentor

A mentor is not the same as a trainer: mentoring is "relational," while training is "functional."

The role of mentor is not a formal laboratory role, rather it is a named individual who is there to support and encourage their mentee. A mentor is usually a more experienced staff member (but not necessarily at a senior level) who is willing and able to pass on the benefit of their experience. The role is not simply to 'tell' the mentee what to do, the role of the mentor is to listen and be supportive, provide guidance and pass on knowledge and experience. It is recommended that mentors and prospective mentors will have had some training or instruction that enables them to understand the purpose and significance of this role. All staff undertaking an Institute expert or advanced qualification would be expected to have a named mentor (this may be a medical pathologist if appropriate) for guidance and support.

Where staff are undergoing a period of cross discipline training (e.g. as part of a multi-discipline blood sciences service) a mentor is recommended to support the training officer in the training and familiarisation process for already qualified staff.

Training governance arrangements

Management structures vary according to local preference and need. However, it is expected that the training manager/co-ordinator (if not also the laboratory manager) will be responsible directly to the laboratory manager. It remains the responsibility of the laboratory manager to agree and implement the recommendations of the training manager/co-ordinator.

In organisations where there is an individual training manager/co-ordinator across all laboratory disciplines it is the responsibility of this individual to ensure the uniformity of understanding and implementation of the laboratory training policy. To this end the training co-ordinator is advised to form a training committee, if one does not already exist, that holds minuted meetings, and which reports in to the formal departmental committee structure. The training committee must include individuals with training responsibility at a departmental level. Its purpose is to address common training issues and to provide an effective mechanism for the dissemination of training information within the laboratory and also between the laboratory and laboratory service users.

It is essential that the role of the laboratory training co-ordinator is recognised outside of the laboratory context and that provision exists for laboratory representation by the training co-ordinator on appropriate external committees. It is essential that the training committee, through the training co-ordinator, ensures co-operation with professional colleagues, that the profile of training in the laboratory is maintained and appropriate to the requirements of the service.

Glossary

Competency programme - the in house assessment of competence against skills required for a specific service element

Department – a specific area within a larger laboratory service

Laboratory - the primary service unit that may comprise a number of separate laboratories with their own manager and training individuals

Support staff – Staff who are not regulated by statute and who are under the supervisory responsibility of qualified and regulated staff

Training policy - The training policy is a generic departmental document that details the strategic approach to education, training and development of all non-medical staff.

Training programme – this is specific to each individual qualification and describes the detailed structured approach to the delivery of training and assessment of competence for each stage and the schedule for any rotational training programme through other disciplines, where applicable. It must include the programme of seminars and tutorials, proposed secondments (if appropriate) and an indication of time and duration within each section of the department

Training placement – the period of time spent by an individual as a mandatory part of an accredited degree course whereby practical experience is gained in an approved training laboratory.

Training secondment – the period of time spent by an individual in a different location from that where they are routinely employed in order to gain experience that they would not routinely encounter and which may be necessary or a particular qualification.

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The logo for 'benchmark' is displayed in a light blue, lowercase, sans-serif font. The letters are spaced out, and there are horizontal lines above the 'b', 'e', and 'm'.

About this policy document

Title: Institute of Biomedical Science Policy on the Management of Laboratory Training
Produced by: Education and Professional Standards Committee
Version: Version 2
Active date: January 2014
Review date: July 2017
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