

Communication Norms

Abdullah Lab, IMMEI, University Hospital Bonn

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Author: Dillon Corvino

Purpose

This document defines **how communication works** in the Abdullah Lab.

Clear communication supports: - Efficient day-to-day work - Productive supervision - Early identification of problems - A respectful and professional lab culture

These norms apply to **all lab members**.

General principles

- Communicate clearly and proactively
- Choose the appropriate channel for the topic
- Share information that affects others
- Raise issues early rather than letting them accumulate

Communication channels

Mattermost (day-to-day communication)

Mattermost is the primary platform for day-to-day lab communication.

Use Mattermost for: - Quick questions - Coordination (e.g. equipment, schedules) - Short updates - Announcements relevant to the lab

Keep messages concise and considerate of others' time.

Email (formal and external communication)

Use email for: - Formal communication - Administrative matters - Communication with external collaborators - Topics requiring a clear written record

Avoid using email for rapid back-and-forth discussion when Mattermost is more appropriate.

Meetings

Supervisor meetings

- PhD students are expected to have **regular supervisor meetings**
- Meetings are typically **weekly or biweekly**, as agreed with the supervisor
- Frequency and format may evolve over the course of the PhD

Preparing for meetings

To make meetings effective: - Prepare key updates in advance - Identify questions or decisions that require input - Bring figures or data when relevant

Meetings work best when both sides arrive prepared.

Group meetings and discussions

- Participate actively and respectfully
 - Ask questions and contribute constructively
 - Provide feedback focused on the science
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Documentation and follow-up

Important decisions or outcomes should be: - Documented (e.g. notes, shared documents) - Reflected in project plans or records - Followed up where action is required

Verbal agreements should be written down if they affect timelines, responsibilities, or experimental direction.

Raising issues and concerns

If you encounter problems: - Scientific (e.g. experiments not working) - Organisational (e.g. access, resources) - Interpersonal (e.g. communication difficulties)

Raise them early.

Where appropriate: - Start with direct discussion - Involve a supervisor or senior lab member if needed

The goal is resolution and progress, not blame.

Disagreements and feedback

- Scientific disagreement is normal and expected
- Discuss differences professionally and respectfully
- Focus on data and reasoning rather than individuals

Feedback should be constructive and aimed at improving outcomes.

Scope and limitations

This document: - Defines **how communication is handled** - Supports efficient collaboration

It does **not**: - Replace institutional policies - Define performance evaluation - Specify response-time guarantees

Notes

These communication norms may evolve as the lab grows.

If something is unclear or not working well, raise it so expectations can be adjusted.