



# Cateye External Cavity Diode Laser

*Extended Chassis*



Revision 1.06

## Limitation of Liability

MOG Laboratories Pty Ltd (MOGLabs) does not assume any liability arising out of the use of the information contained within this manual. This document may contain or reference information and products protected by copyrights or patents and does not convey any license under the patent rights of MOGLabs, nor the rights of others. MOGLabs will not be liable for any defect in hardware or software or loss or inadequacy of data of any kind, or for any direct, indirect, incidental, or consequential damages in connection with or arising out of the performance or use of any of its products. The foregoing limitation of liability shall be equally applicable to any service provided by MOGLabs.

## Copyright

Copyright © MOG Laboratories Pty Ltd (MOGLabs) 2006 – 2015. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of MOGLabs.

## Contact

For further information, please contact:

MOG Laboratories Pty Ltd  
18 Boase St  
Brunswick VIC 3056  
AUSTRALIA  
Tel: +61 3 9939 0677  
Email: [info@moglabs.com](mailto:info@moglabs.com)  
Web: [www.moglabs.com](http://www.moglabs.com)

# Preface

Diode lasers can be wonderful things: they are efficient, compact, low cost, high power, low noise, tunable, and cover a large range of wavelengths. They can also be obstreperous, sensitive, and temperamental, particularly external cavity diode lasers (ECDLs). With external cavity feedback and advanced electronics such as the MOGLabs DLC external cavity diode laser controller, a simple \$10 100 mW AlGaAs diode can become a research-quality narrow-linewidth tunable laser. The “cateye” laser described here provides a robust, stable, acoustically inert, narrow linewidth and highly tunable laser alternative.

We hope that you enjoy using the MOGLabs CEF. Please let us know if you have any suggestions for improvement in the laser or in this document, so that we can make life in the laser lab easier for all, and check our website from time to time for updated information.

MOGLabs, Melbourne, Australia  
[www.moglabs.com](http://www.moglabs.com)



# Safety Precautions

Safe and effective use of this product is very important. Please read the following laser safety information before attempting to operate the laser. Also please note several specific and unusual cautionary notes before using MOGLabs lasers, in addition to the safety precautions that are standard for any electronic equipment or for laser-related instrumentation.

CAUTION – USE OF CONTROLS OR ADJUSTMENTS OR PERFORMANCE OF PROCEDURES OTHER THAN THOSE SPECIFIED HEREIN MAY RESULT IN HAZARDOUS RADIATION EXPOSURE

Laser output from the laser can be dangerous. Please ensure that you implement the appropriate hazard minimisations for your environment, such as laser safety goggles, beam blocks, and door interlocks. MOGLabs takes no responsibility for safe configuration and use of the laser. Please:

- Avoid direct exposure to the beam.
- Avoid looking directly into the beam.
- Note the safety labels (examples shown in figure below) and heed their warnings.
- When the laser is switched on, there will be a short delay of two seconds before the emission of laser radiation, mandated by European laser safety regulations (IEC 60825-1).
- The STANDBY/RUN keyswitch must be turned to RUN before the laser can be switched on. The laser will not operate if

the keyswitch is in the STANDBY position. The key cannot be removed from the controller when it is in the clockwise (RUN) position.

- To completely shut off power to the unit, turn the keyswitch anti-clockwise (STANDBY position), switch the mains power switch at rear of unit to OFF, and unplug the unit.
- When the STANDBY/RUN keyswitch is on STANDBY, there cannot be power to the laser diode, but power is still being supplied to the laser head for temperature control.

**WARNING** The internal circuit board and piezoelectric transducers are at high voltage during operation. The unit should not be operated with covers removed.

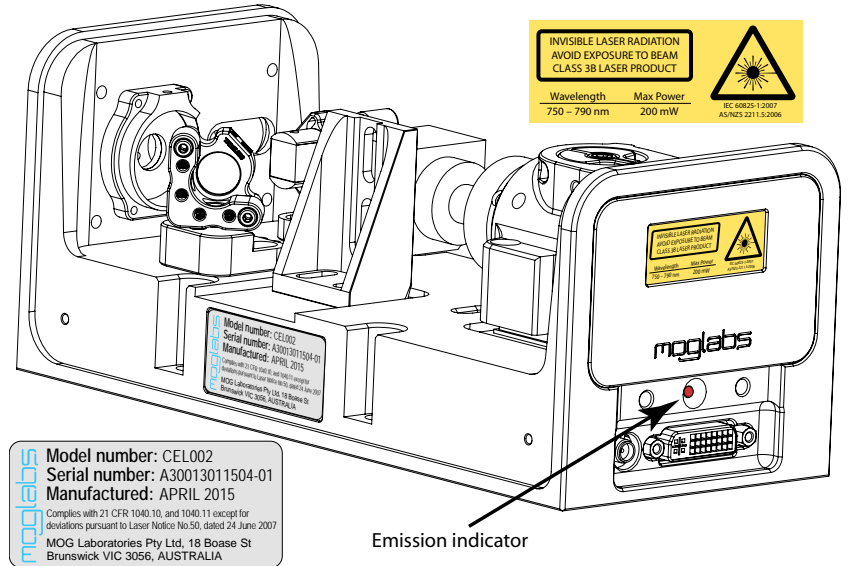
**CAUTION** Although the laser is designed and priced with the expectation that the end-user can replace the diode and change the alignment, some components are fragile. In particular the filter, piezo actuator, and output coupler are very easily damaged. Please take care of these items when working inside the laser.

The filter and output coupler are hard-coated and can be cleaned but great care is needed as with any intracavity laser optics.

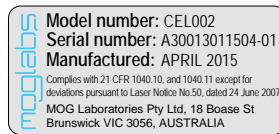
**NOTE** MOGLabs products are designed for use in scientific research laboratories. They should not be used for consumer or medical applications.

### *Label identification*

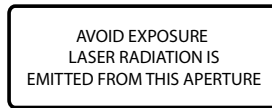
The International Electrotechnical Commission laser safety standard IEC 60825-1:2007 mandates warning labels that provide information on the wavelength and power of emitted laser radiation, and which show the aperture where laser radiation is emitted. Figures 1 and 2 shows examples of these labels and their location on the laser.



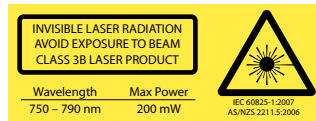
**Figure 1:** Schematic showing location of laser warning labels compliant with International Electrotechnical Commission standard IEC 60825-1:2007, and US FDA compliance label. Aperture label engraved on the front of the laser near the exit aperture; warning advisory label on the rear and compliance label on side.



US FDA compliance



Aperture label engraving



Warning and advisory label  
Class 3B

Figure 2: Warning advisory and US FDA compliance labels.



# Protection Features

MOGLabs lasers includes a number of features to protect you and your laser.

**Protection relay** When the power is off, or if the laser is off, the laser diode is shorted via a normally-closed solid-state relay at the laser head board.

**Emission indicator** The MOGLabs controller will illuminate the emission warning indicator LED immediately when the laser is switched on. There will then be a delay of at least 2 seconds before actual laser emission.

**Interlock** It is assumed that the laser power supply is keyed and interlocked for safety. The laser head board also provides connection for an interlock (see appendix B), if used with a power supply which does not include such an interlock.

# RoHS Certification of Conformance

MOG Laboratories Pty Ltd certifies that the MOGLabs External Cavity Diode Laser does not fall under the scope defined in *RoHS Directive 2002/95/EC*, and is not subject to compliance, in accordance with *DIRECTIVE 2002/95/EC Out of Scope; Electronics related; Intended application is for Monitoring and Control or Medical Instrumentation*.

MOG Laboratories Pty Ltd makes no claims or inferences of the compliance status of its products if used other than for their intended purpose.

# Contents

<b>Preface</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Safety</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Protection Features</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>RoHS Certification of Conformance</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 External cavity . . . . .	2
1.2 Mode competition . . . . .	3
1.3 Piezo-electric frequency control . . . . .	4
1.4 Temperature and current . . . . .	4
<b>2 First light</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Temperature . . . . .	6
2.2 Current . . . . .	7
<b>3 Operation</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Wavelength . . . . .	9
3.2 Scanning . . . . .	11
3.3 External modulation . . . . .	12
<b>4 Alignment</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1 Laser diode replacement . . . . .	15
4.1.1 Pre-alignment of lens tube and diode . . . . .	15
4.1.2 Initial diode test . . . . .	17
4.1.3 Orientation and polarisation of the output beam	17
4.1.4 Cateye reflector . . . . .	18
4.2 Faraday isolator alignment . . . . .	21
4.3 Fibre alignment . . . . .	22

4.3.1	Reverse beam: using a visual fault locator . . .	23
4.3.2	Mirror adjustment . . . . .	24
<b>A</b>	<b>Specifications</b>	<b>27</b>
A.1	RF response . . . . .	29
A.2	Mechanical . . . . .	30
<b>B</b>	<b>Laser head board</b>	<b>31</b>
B.1	B1045/1046 headboard . . . . .	32
B.2	B1047/B1240 headboards . . . . .	33
B.2.1	SMA input . . . . .	34
B.3	Laser connection . . . . .	35
B.4	RF coupling . . . . .	35
	<b>References</b>	<b>40</b>

# 1. Introduction

Semiconductor laser diodes are compact, efficient and low-cost, but usually have poor wavelength control, linewidth and stability. The addition of an external frequency-selective cavity allows control of the operating wavelength over a few nm range, with sub-MHz linewidth and stability. The MOGLabs extended cateye laser (see Fig. 1.1) is machined from a solid aluminium block, so that the laser is stable, robust, and insensitive to acoustic disturbances. The cavity is hermetically sealed for additional suppression of environmental fluctuations and drift.

The laser is a “cat-eye” design (see Fig. 1.2), in which an external cavity is formed between the rear reflecting surface of the semiconductor diode, and a cat-eye reflector at several centimetres from the diode [1–3]. Rather than the customary diffraction grating of Littrow-configuration ECDLs, a high efficiency ultranarrow filter is used to select a single external cavity mode. Without the need for illuminating a large area of a grating for feedback, a cat-eye retroreflector and partially transmitting output coupler can be used to form the external cavity. The cateye reflector is inherently self-aligning,

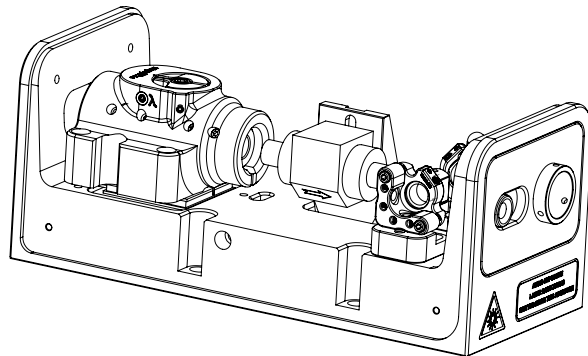
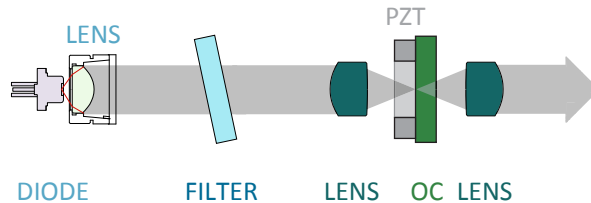


Figure 1.1: Inside the MOGLabs CEF cateye laser.

so that the laser is extremely insensitive to mechanical disturbance, and also ensures high feedback coupling efficiency and consequently narrow linewidth.



**Figure 1.2:** Schematic of a cat-eye external cavity diode laser (ECDL). The external cavity, formed by the rear facet of the laser diode and the output coupler, determines the laser frequency. One longitudinal cavity mode is selected by an ultranarrow intracavity bandpass filter. A cat-eye reflector is formed by the output coupler (OC) and intracavity lens, and the light is recollimated by the extracavity output lens.

The output beam from a laser diode is collimated with a high numerical aperture (NA) lens and incident on the filter. The filter transmission wavelength depends on the rotation angle. Transmitted light is back-reflected by the cat-eye lens/output-coupler combination which efficiently couples light back into the laser diode. More details can be found in the references [1–3].

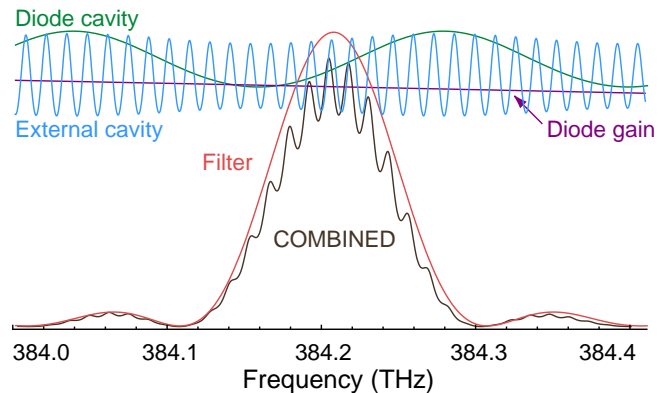
## 1.1 External cavity

Semiconductor laser diodes normally have a high reflectivity rear facet and a front facet with reflectivity of only a few percent. The diode cavity is called the intrinsic or internal cavity. The *external* cavity is formed by the cat-eye and the diode rear facet, and when the external feedback is greater than that of the front facet, the external cavity determines the lasing wavelength. The external cavity is typically around 40 mm long from rear facet of semiconductor to output coupler, giving a cavity mode spacing (FSR) of  $c/2L = 3$  to 4 GHz.

The laser diode and collimating lens are held rigidly in a focusing tube. The filter is fixed to a bearing-mounted rotation assembly with fine actuator screws to adjust the angle. The spring-loaded screws operate in a push-pull arrangement which can be locked against each other to further reduce the effects of mechanical vibration. Variation of the filter angle is used for coarse selection of the wavelength, within the gain bandwidth of the laser diode.

## 1.2 Mode competition

As the wavelength is varied, competition between the frequency determined by the internal and external cavities, and the filter transmission window, leads to *mode hops*. From figure 1.3 it can be seen that the net gain (combined product of semiconductor gain, filter loss, internal and external cavity interference) can be very similar at adjacent external cavity modes. A small change in the internal cavity mode, or the filter angle, can lead to the overall gain being greater at a mode adjacent to the mode in which the laser is oscillating, and the laser then hops to that higher-gain mode. See Ref. [4] for a detailed discussion.



**Figure 1.3:** Schematic representation for the various frequency-dependent factors of an ECDL, adapted from Ref. [4], for wavelength  $\lambda = 780 \text{ nm}$  and external cavity length  $L_{\text{ext}} = 15 \text{ mm}$ .

### 1.3 Piezo-electric frequency control

Small changes to the laser frequency are achieved by controlling the external cavity length with a piezo electric actuator. For the MOGLabs cateye laser, the output coupler is mounted to a multi-layer piezoelectric “stack”. The cavity length variation is of order 10 nm per volt, producing a frequency shift of 70 MHz/V with a range of 10 GHz for 150 V drive voltage. The bandwidth is limited by mechanical resonances, typically 25 kHz.

### 1.4 Temperature and current

The laser frequency is also dependent on temperature and injection current; the sensitivities are typically 3 MHz/ $\mu$ A and 30 GHz/K [5]. Thus, low-noise stable electronics, such as the MOGLabs DLC external cavity diode laser controller, are essential (see Ref. [6]) to achieve sub-MHz linewidth and stability.

A critical aspect of an ECDL is temperature control of the cavity, since the laser frequency depends on the cavity length and hence on the thermal expansion coefficient of the cavity material [4]. The cavity can be machined from materials with low thermal expansion coefficient but even then the passive stability is inadequate for research applications. Active feedback of the cavity temperature combined with cavity length control provide a flexible and stable approach. The MOGLabs cateye laser uses a negative temperature coefficient (NTC) thermistor to sense the cavity temperature and Peltier thermoelectric cooler (TEC) to heat and cool the cavity material.



## 2. First light

Initial installation of the laser is typically a matter of mounting it to an optical table and connecting to a MOGLabs controller. The laser can be mounted to posts using the M3 threaded holes on the base, or by removing the cover and screwing directly to the optical table using the M6x16 socket head cap screws provided. The hole spacing also allows direct mounting to imperial tables for non-metric countries (Burma, Liberia and the USA).

The laser includes a water cooling channel for laser operation at unusually high or low temperatures, or in laboratories with high or unstable air temperature. For most applications, water cooling is not required; dissipation to the air and/or optical table is sufficient.

The performance of an external cavity diode laser is strongly dependent on the external environment, and in particular acoustic vibrations. Very small changes in the external cavity length have a large effect on the laser frequency, typically 25 MHz per nanometre length change. The monolithic block construction of the MOGLabs laser reduces the influence of vibrations on the cavity length, but some elasticity remains. Acoustic disturbances in the air gap also affect the frequency. Active feedback to the laser frequency reduces these influences, but some simple measures to minimise coupling to environmental variations and vibration sources may be warranted. For example, a surrounding box to reduce air movement and accidental bumping of the laser; mounting the laser to a heavy support, and isolation from the optical table with an intermediary breadboard which is separated from the main optical table with viscoelastic polymer (e.g. Sorbothane™).

Once the laser is mounted appropriately, the laser can be switched on. Please refer to the supplied test data for nominal temperature and current settings, and in particular be aware of the maximum current limit.

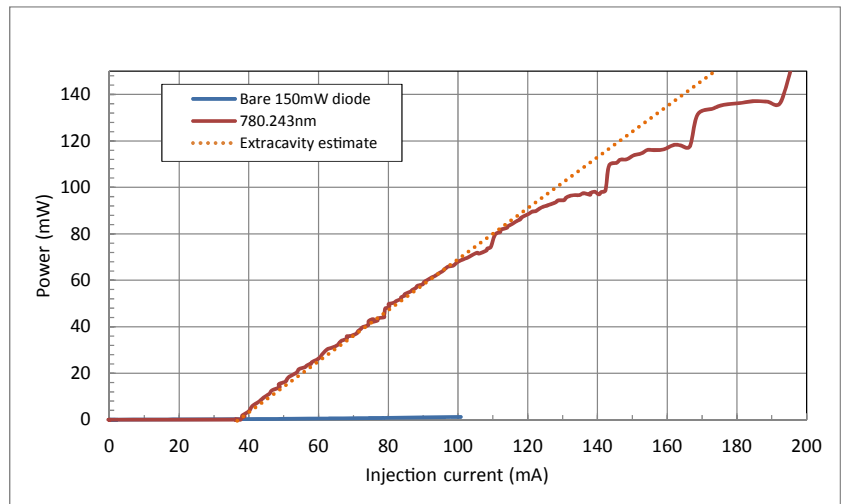
It is assumed that a MOGLabs DLC controller will be used to drive the laser. If an alternative supply is used, note that +5V must be provided on pin 15 of the headboard connector to open the protective relay. See section B for connection details. Also please refer to the laser test data for the maximum safe operating current.

## 2.1 Temperature

The preferred diode temperature will depend on the diode, the required wavelength, and the ambient room temperature. For example, typical AlGaAs diodes used for data storage applications (CD-R burners) have a nominal wavelength of  $\lambda = 784\text{ nm}$  at  $25^\circ\text{C}$ , with a  $d\lambda/dT$  slope of  $-0.3\text{ nm}/^\circ\text{C}$ , implying an optimum temperature of about  $12^\circ$ . Depending on the humidity, low temperatures may induce condensation on the diode and collimation lens. The filter will determine the final wavelength, and the feedback is generally sufficient to “pull” the wavelength by  $\pm 5\text{ nm}$ , and thus in this example a sensible set temperature would be about  $17$  to  $18^\circ\text{C}$ .

## 2.2 Current

The output of semiconductor laser diodes follow a nominally linear power vs. current relationship, once the current is above a device-specific threshold (see Fig. 2.1). Initially the current should be set above threshold, but well below the nominal maximum operating current, until the laser is fully aligned.



**Figure 2.1:** Sample laser diode power-current characteristic curves, with and without an external cavity. The output for a diode with good anti-reflection coating is negligible. The steps show that for higher currents, some of the light from the diode is not transmitted by the filter, typically because the external cavity mode frequency is not exactly the same as the peak filter transmission frequency.

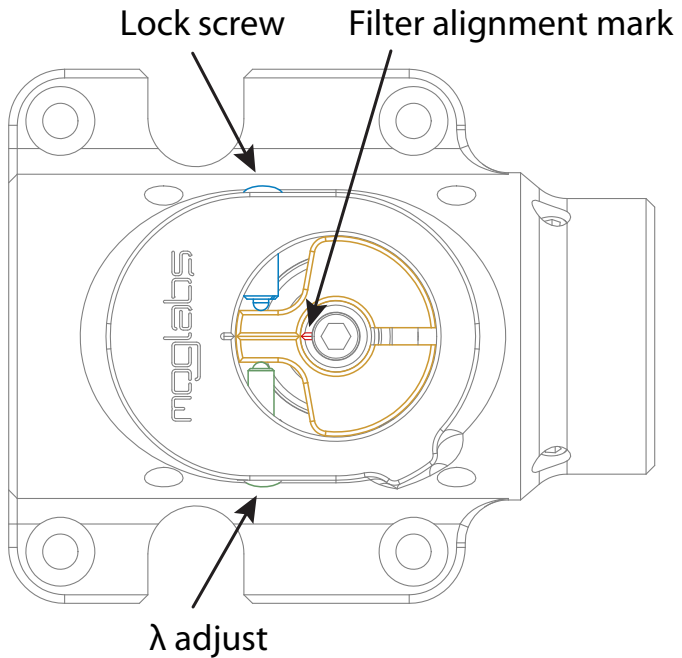


# 3. Operation

Normal operation of the laser is usually a matter of adjusting the filter rotation angle to select the correct wavelength, and adjusting the piezo offset, diode injection current and bias to achieve the maximum possible mode-hop free scan.

## 3.1 Wavelength

The primary control of wavelength is the filter rotation angle, which can be adjusted while the laser is operational. A wavemeter, high-



**Figure 3.1:** Filter angle adjustment, showing the primary find adjustment wavelength adjustment screw, and the counter-acting clamping screw.

resolution spectrometer, or similar is almost essential, although with patience it is possible to find an atomic reference by carefully adjusting the filter angle while scanning the laser.

To change the wavelength:

1. Unlock the filter so that it can rotate, by turning the lock screw anti-clockwise, for example one full turn. The lock screw has a spring-loaded ball plunger, so it will retain pressure on the filter rotation cam.
2. Set the laser current so that the output power is sufficient, taking care to ensure that the internal cavity power is below the maximum rated for the diode (see Fig. 2.1).
3. Adjust the filter angle using the fine thread  $\lambda$  screw, acting against the spring-loaded ball plunger of the lock screw.
4. The laser will hop between external cavity modes as the wavelength is adjusted, through cycles of dim and bright output.
5. It may be necessary to adjust the lock screw repeatedly so that pressure is maintained on the filter adjustment cam without locking completely.
6. Adjust the angle to one of the bright modes nearest the optimum wavelength, and then adjust the laser current and the piezo voltage to achieve the exact wavelength required.
7. Lock the filter using the lock screw.

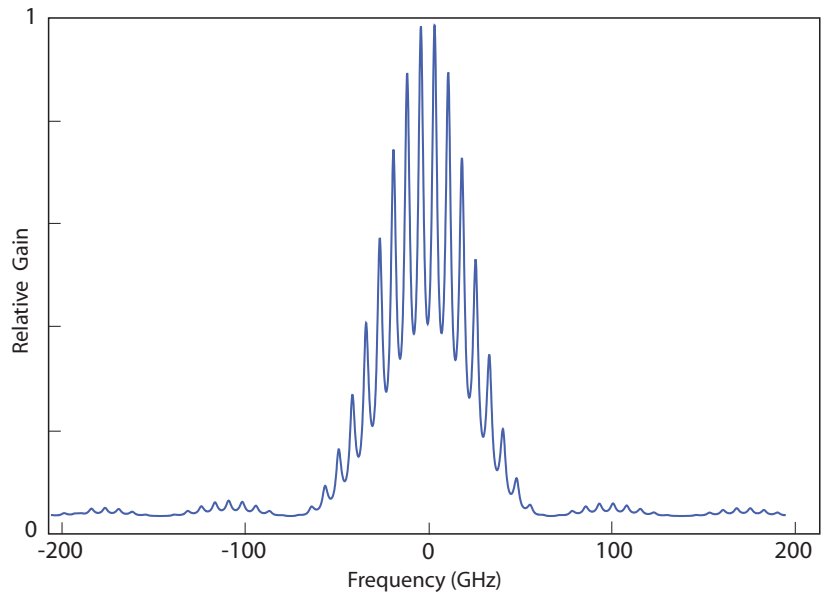
The filter transmission wavelength shifts with rotation according to

$$\lambda(\theta) = \lambda_0 \sqrt{1 - \left( \frac{\sin(\theta)}{n_{\text{eff}}} \right)^2} \quad (3.1.1)$$

where  $\theta$  is the angle of incidence,  $\lambda_0$  is the filter wavelength at normal incidence and  $n_{\text{eff}}$  is an effective refractive index;  $n_{\text{eff}} = 1.7$  for most filters. The sensitivity to rotation of the fine tangential wavelength adjustment screw is about 0.5 nm per turn.

## 3.2 Scanning

The external cavity length is controlled by piezo actuators moving the output coupler. The cavity length increases with increasing voltage on the piezos, thus decreasing the laser frequency. For a large frequency change, the laser will usually hop to a neighbouring cavity mode (see Fig. 3.2).



**Figure 3.2:** Combined gain for an external cavity diode laser, including the internal and external modes, the diode laser gain, and the filter absorption. The predominant feature is the frequency selectivity of the filter, and the smaller peaks are the external cavity modes (see Fig. 1.3). A small relative shift of the external cavity mode relative to the filter frequency will cause the laser to jump to another external cavity mode with higher net gain.

The continuous scan range (free of mode hops) can be optimised by careful adjustment of the injection current, which affects the refractive index of the diode semiconductor and hence the frequency of the cavity mode.

This shift of cavity mode frequency allows for compensation of the mismatch of tuning responses. The diode injection current can be “automatically” adjusted as the laser frequency is changed, using a “feed-forward” or current bias which changes as the piezo voltage is changed. Feed-forward current bias adjustment is a feature of MOGLabs DLC controllers. Adjustment is straightforward. The laser frequency is scanned (with a downward ramp voltage to the piezo), and the current bias control is adjusted so that the current is also ramping downward, until the maximum mode-hop-free scan range is observed. Small changes to the injection current optimise the scan range near the nominal centre frequency.

### 3.3 External modulation

The laser diode injection current can be modulated directly, or via the SMA input on the laser headboard (see chapter B). Two versions of the headboard are available. The standard version provides a bias tee for injection of RF signals at up to 2.5 GHz

An enhanced headboard is available with active modulation, to enable wide bandwidth frequency stabilisation, for example to a high finesse optical cavity or using polarisation spectroscopy. Modulation extends from DC to 10 MHz with the enhanced headboard, or to 2.5 GHz with the RF bias tee. Even higher frequencies can be used with addition of an appropriate microwave bias-tee such as the MINICIRCUITS ZFBT-6G+, between the laser headboard and the diode.

Direct modulation is commonly used for frequency stabilisation, e.g. the frequency modulation sideband method [7, 8], Pound-Drever-Hall [9], and also for offset locking schemes [10, 11]. Microwave modulation is often used for two-frequency pumping of alkali atoms, for example to access both a laser cooling transition and a repump to prevent trapping in dark states [4, 12, 13], or to add noise for coherence control.

For sideband generation, the modulation efficiency can be enhanced



by matching the external cavity length to the modulation frequency. That is, set the cavity length  $L = c/2\Omega$  where  $\Omega$  is the modulation frequency. The cavity length can be adjusted slightly by sliding the collimation tube in the monolithic block. For example, to access the  $^{87}\text{Rb}$  hyperfine ground states, separated by 6.8 GHz, the cavity length could be 2.2 cm and the modulation at 6.8 GHz, or 4.4 cm with modulation at 3.4 GHz so that the two sidebands are used and the carrier is off-resonant.



# 4. Alignment

This chapter describes alignment of the laser optics, the optional Faraday isolator, and fibre coupling.

In normal operation, the cateye reflector arrangement is self-aligning, and should not require adjustment. However, laser diodes have a finite lifetime, and diode replacement may necessitate alignment of the internal optics, in particular the diode collimation and cateye lenses.

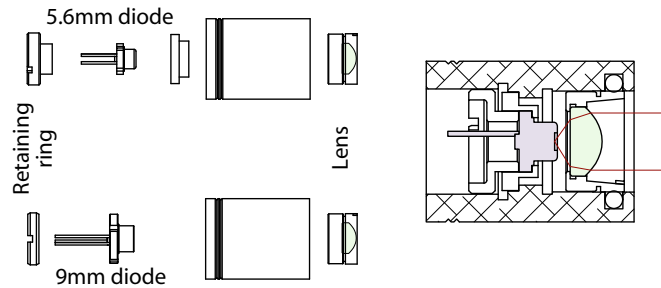
For longer wavelength lasers, an infra-red upconversion card or CCD camera can be very helpful. Common low-cost security cameras, computer USB cameras, and home movie or still cameras are also good options, although they often have infrared filters which may need to be removed.

Diodes are very sensitive to electrostatic discharge. Please make sure you are electrically grounded, ideally with a wrist ground strap. If you do not have a proper wrist ground strap, at least be sure you are not wearing woolen clothing, and touch something grounded from time to time (e.g. a soldering iron tip, the earth of a power supply, the MOGLabs DLC controller).

## 4.1 Laser diode replacement

### 4.1.1 *Pre-alignment of lens tube and diode*

1. Insert the laser diode into the lens tube (see Fig. 4.1). If using a lens tube with alignment screws, ensure that the V-notch in the diode is aligned with one of the alignment screws.
2. Add the retaining threaded ring, and tighten gently, just enough such that the diode does not move.
3. If using a lens tube with alignment adjustment screws, use the



**Figure 4.1:** Lens tube assembly with diode, lens, and mounting hardware. The same tube can be used for 5.6 mm and 9 mm diodes.



**Figure 4.2:** Lens tubes.

5.6 mm retaining ring even for 9 mm diodes.

4. Approximately centre the diode using the alignment adjustment screws and two 0.9 mm hex keys.
5. Insert the collimation lens, taking care to ensure that the lens does not contact the diode. Also ensure the lens is tight; if not, use PTFE tape on the lens threads. One or two layers of thick tape (90  $\mu\text{m}$  as used for gas plumbing) is good.
6. Mount the lens tube in a holder or mount that allows rotation of the entire assembly around the long axis.
7. Apply power to the diode, above threshold but well below the maximum permissible current.

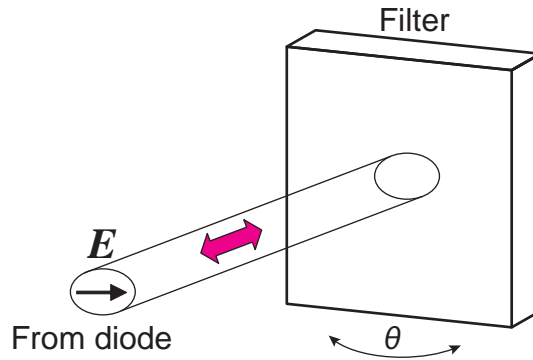
8. Approximately focus at four metres distance. It may be helpful to reflect it from a mirror and back so that you can adjust the alignment and see the effect nearby. You should adjust focus until you see a clean symmetric ellipse at this distance.
9. Rotate the collimation assembly and adjust the alignment screws until the beam remains reasonably well on-axis.
10. Tighten the retaining ring (hard) and re-check that the diode remains aligned.
11. Focus the collimation lens such that the laser focuses to a spot at 4 m distance. Then rotate the lens clockwise about 1/8 to 1/4 turn so that the beam is slightly diverging. Laser stability and modehop free range are generally slightly better if the beam is not perfectly collimated [6].

#### 4.1.2 Initial diode test

1. Inspect the beam profile for diffraction fringes. If the lens has been screwed in too far and made contact with the diode (particularly for 5.6 mm diodes), the lens can become scratched or stressed, leading to poor performance. Fringes can be an indication of such scratches (or an indication of a poor diode).
2. On the MOGLabs DLC controller, make sure DIP switch 4 (Bias) is OFF, the span is set to zero (fully anti-clockwise), and the frequency knob is at zero (middle of range; set the display selector to Frequency and adjust to zero volts).
3. Measure the power/current (LI) curve for the bare collimated diode. This provides a useful benchmark for comparison when optimising the threshold lowering with feedback.

#### 4.1.3 Orientation and polarisation of the output beam

The output from the diode is a widely diverging *elliptical* beam, normally TE polarised; that is, with polarisation parallel to the *short*



**Figure 4.3:** Orientation of the diode laser beam ellipse with respect to the filter rotation, for TM polarised diode, oriented with  $p$ -plane polarisation.

(minor) axis of the ellipse. The filter performance is typically better in  $p$ -polarisation; that is, with polarisation in the plane of reflection from the filter. In that case, for the MOGLabs CEF, the polarisation should be horizontal and the ellipse should be with long axis vertical.

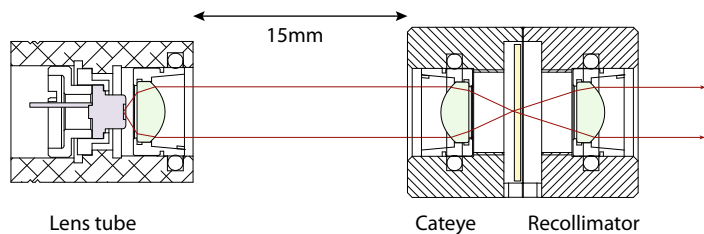
Some diodes, particularly around 750 to 820 nm, are TM polarised, with polarisation parallel to the long axis of the ellipse, as shown in Fig. 4.3. For these diodes, the ellipse should be horizontal.

The filter dependence on polarisation is weak and in most cases any rotation of the diode will work acceptably well.

#### 4.1.4 Cateye reflector

Light reflected from a cateye lens/mirror combination will be parallel to the incident radiation, regardless of the incident angle. Thus the cateye reflector is self-aligning: the light is always reflected back to the diode, even if the beam is not well collimated. The effect relies on the lens-mirror distance matching the focal length of the lens.

There are several methods for achieving optimum focus; probably the easiest is to adjust the focus so as to minimise the lasing threshold.



**Figure 4.4:** Arrangement of lens tube and cateye reflector for adjustment of focus of cateye.

Mount the diode collimation lens tube and cateye reflector assembly at about 15 mm apart, without filter (see Fig. 4.4). Set the diode current just below threshold, and then adjust the cateye lens focus until the output suddenly flashes brightly, indicating effective feedback which tends to lower the overall ECDL gain threshold. Repeat until the minimum is obtained.

The sequence is as follows:

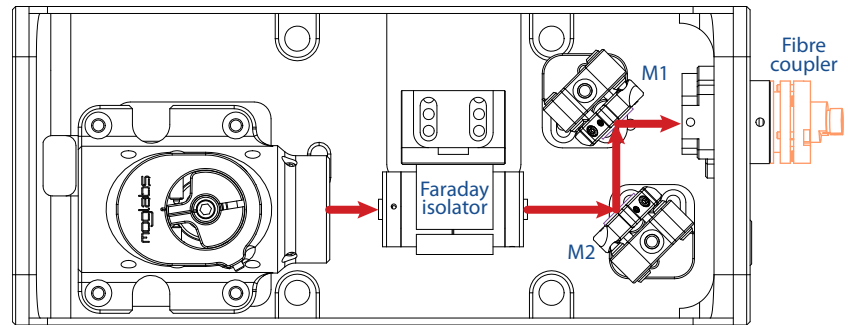
1. Mount the lens tube and cateye reflector about 15 mm apart.
2. Monitor the output beam on a piece of black card at a short distance from the cateye assembly. It is helpful to recollimate the output after the cateye; any lens can be used, at approximately the focal length of that lens from the output coupler. Monitor the beam spot using a security camera or webcam.
3. Adjust the injection current to just below threshold.
4. Adjust the cateye lens focus until a bright flash (i.e. lasing) is observed.
5. Iterate reduction of the injection current, following by focus of the cateye, until the minimum threshold is achieved.
6. Reassemble the laser and adjust the filter angle to achieve the desired wavelength.

7. If possible, scan the laser through an atomic resonance and view the absorption on an oscilloscope. With current bias disabled (DIP 4 on a MOGLabs controller) and full span, you should see a reasonable fraction of the absorption spectrum, with one or more mode-hops. A Fabry-Perot etalon or a fast high-resolution wavemeter (MOGLabs MWM) can also be used to optimise the mode-hop-free range.
8. Adjust the filter angle, and the injection current, to optimise the scans so that you see the maximum number of repeats and the deepest signals.
9. Check that the saturated absorption traces are clean. Noisy spectra indicate multi-mode operation, or high linewidth, which may be due to weak feedback. The lasing threshold is a good diagnostic: lower threshold indicates better feedback and consequently lower linewidth.  

A scanning Fabry-Perot or a MOGLabs MWM wavemeter is a very useful diagnostic tool to check for single-mode operation.
10. Measure the laser output power as a function of diode injection current, and plot the power/current response as in Fig. 2.1. Compare against the original data provided with your laser and if concerned about discrepancies, contact MOGLabs.
11. Switch the current bias (DIP switch 4) back on, and adjust the bias to optimise the mode-hop-free scan range.

The laser should now be operating with mode-selected feedback near the desired wavelength of the diode. The threshold current should be significantly lower than without feedback (2 to 5 mA for standard 780 nm diodes). Record the output power and threshold characteristics for subsequent reference.





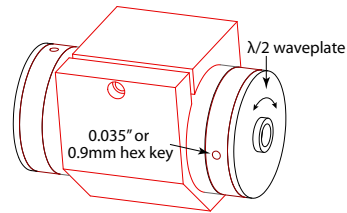
**Figure 4.5:** Schematic of the extended chassis laser showing Faraday isolator, and two mirrors used for aligning the beam to a single-mode fibre.

## 4.2 Faraday isolator alignment

Faraday isolators are almost always required for external cavity diode lasers. The very high gain of the semiconductor diode and low optical feedback of the external cavity mean that even very low power external feedback can have a significant effect on the laser frequency stability. Generally 30 dB of isolation is needed; that is, the optical feedback into the ECDL should be less than 0.1% of the output power.

The extended chassis version of the MOGLabs laser allows internal mounting of a Faraday isolator (see figure 4.5). Alignment is straightforward: the isolator should be concentric with the exit beam of the laser, and rotated axially so that the first polariser is parallel to the polarisation of the laser beam. The power of the laser should be measured before inserting the isolator, and then the isolator position and rotation adjusted to maximise the transmission. Depending on wavelength, the transmission varies from about 70% to 95%, with 90 to 92% typical at 780 nm.

The isolator rotates the polarisation of the laser beam by  $45^\circ$ . For lasers ordered with fibre coupling, or with dual beam output (using a PBS polarising beamsplitter cube), the isolator can in most cases be



**Figure 4.6:** Faraday isolator and exit  $\lambda/2$  waveplate. The waveplate can be rotated to rotate the plane of polarisation of the exit beam, for example to optimise coupling into polarisation maintaining fibre, or to adjust the ratio of exit beams for lasers fitted with a polarising beamsplitter instead of mirror M2.

ordered with internal half-wave retardation waveplate. The waveplate is mounted inside the final silver-coloured metal element of the retarder (see figure 4.6).

The waveplate angle may need adjustment, for example to vary the power ratio for the two beams exiting the PBS or to align the polarisation to a more convenient horizontal or vertical axis for experiments, or to align to a polarisation preserving fibre. To adjust the waveplate angle, loosen the radial set screw holding the waveplate using a 0.035" or 0.9mm hex key, rotate, and restore set screw tension.

A second waveplate holder is available, which mounts inside the exit face of the laser (see figure 1). A standard 25.4 mm waveplate can be inserted, to align the polarisation of the reflected exit beam to match to an external experiment or to a polarisation preserving fibre, independent of the direct output beam.

### 4.3 Fibre alignment

The extended chassis is most often used when coupling to a single-mode optical fibre. Two mirrors are used to align the beam to the fibre coupler: a common and familiar arrangement for optical scientists (see figure 4.5). The arrangement conveniently allows splitting

the output into two beams, using a PBS as the first reflector.

Given the 8% Fresnel loss from entrance and exit facets of the fibre, the maximum theoretical efficiency for single-mode fibre coupling is 92%. The stainless steel kinematic mirror mounts are stable and easy to use, and coupling efficiency of over 70% is easily attained at 780 nm.

Alignment requires first adjusting the mirrors so that the beam exits the laser chassis in the centre of the fibre coupling port, and parallel to the long axis of the chassis. The fibre coupler can then be installed, without fibre, and the mirrors adjusted so that the beam is clearly transmitted by the coupler (see below for detailed instructions).

For Schäfter-Kirchhoff 60FC fibre couplers, detailed instructions on optimising the coupling efficiency are provided via their website, [www.sukhamburg.com/download/CouplingSMS.pdf](http://www.sukhamburg.com/download/CouplingSMS.pdf). An eccentric key is provided for adjusting the lens focus.

For THORLabs FiberPort couplers, detailed instructions are available in the user manual at [www.thorlabs.com/thorcat/16100/PAF-X-5-B-Manual.pdf](http://www.thorlabs.com/thorcat/16100/PAF-X-5-B-Manual.pdf).

#### 4.3.1 Reverse beam: using a visual fault locator

A *Visual fault locator* is a very useful device for quickly achieving initial coupling of the laser beam to the fibre. A visual fault locator is a low-power red laser that injects a beam into the *exit* end of the fibre patchcord, thus propagating visible light backwards along the fibre and then into free space, forming a beam back into the laser cavity. These devices are very low in cost (search on eBay for *visual fault locator*; they are typically less than \$20).

Aligning the MOGLabs laser beam to the fibre is then simply a matter of adjusting the mirrors so that the MOGLabs laser beam and the visual fault locator beam overlap inside the laser. It will be easier if the Faraday isolator is temporarily removed.

### 4.3.2 Mirror adjustment

To maximise the fibre coupling efficiency, the angle and location of the laser beam at the fibre coupler must be optimised by walking the mirrors.

Let M1 be the mirror closest to the fibre coupler, and M2 be closest to the laser (see figure 4.5).

1. Adjust the laser current so that the output power is around 5 to 10 mW.
2. If some power is detected exiting from the fibre, skip to step 9 below.
3. If the fibre coupler is not yet installed, first coarsely adjust the mirrors so that the beam exits through the centre of the fibre coupler mount, and parallel to the long axis of the laser chassis. Then install the coupler.
4. If some power is detected exiting from the fibre, skip to step 9 below.
5. With fibre patchcord removed, adjust the mirrors so that the beam exits from the fibre coupler cleanly. You should be able to observe a bright beam centred in the circle of a shadow of the fibre coupler.
6. Measure the power just before the fibre coupler and record the power meter reading.
7. If not already installed, connect the fibre.
8. If a visual fault locator is available, use that to inject a backwards-propagating beam, and adjust the mirrors so that the MOGLabs laser and visual fault locator beams are coincident along their paths. The visual fault locator can then be removed: a measurable transmitted beam should be evident at the fibre exit.

9. Fix the power meter to monitor the output power exiting from the optical fibre. Make sure background light is not affecting the reading.
10. For the horizontal axis first, find the maximum output power by adjusting the mirror M1, closest to the fibre (furthest from the isolator), and record the output power.
11. Adjust the horizontal axis of mirror M2 furthest from the fibre (closest to the isolator) clockwise such that the output power drops by no more than 25%. If the efficiency is over 50%, drop the power by only 5 to 10% or less. Take note of roughly how many degrees rotation were required, so you can easily return to the original position.
12. Adjust the horizontal axis of mirror M1 and maximise for output power. Compare the new maximum output power to the output power obtained at step 10.
13. Repeat steps 10 to 12 if the power is increasing, or repeat but with reversed direction of adjustment if the power is decreasing.
14. Once horizontal alignment is optimised, repeat the procedure but using vertical adjustments.
15. Iterate horizontal and vertical alignment until power is fully optimised. As optimum coupling is approached, the adjustments should be reduced at each step.
16. If the coupling efficiency is less than expected, focus adjustment may be required (see instructions from Schäfter and Kirchhoff). Focus adjustment is not normally needed unless severe shock has moved the lens, or if a new diode has been installed in the laser, leading to change of beam waist location.
17. Once optimised, record the input power to the fibre coupler, maximum output power, and the laser current.

18. Increase the laser current to the desired operating current and optimise if needed.
19. Use the factory test results for your laser as reference. Degradation may indicate facet damage on the fibre patchcord. Reversing or replacing the fibre patchcord may be helpful.

# A. Specifications

Parameter	Specification
-----------	---------------

Wavelength/frequency	
780 nm	50 mW standard. Up to 250 mW output power available.
369.5 – 1120 nm	Please contact MOGLabs for availability.
Linewidth	Typically < 150 kHz
Filter	0.3 nm bandpass
Tuning range	Typically 10 nm for single diode

Sweep/scan	
Scan range	5 to 20 GHz depending on piezo
Mode-hop free	5 to 20 GHz
Piezo stack	3 $\mu\text{m}$ @ 150 V, 50 nF (typical)
Cavity length	35 mm

Optical	
Beam	3 mm $\times$ 1 mm ( $1/e^2$ ) typical
Polarisation	Vertical linear 100:1 typical (can be rotated)

Parameter	Specification
-----------	---------------

Thermal	
TEC	$\pm 14.5\text{ V}$ 3.3 A $Q = 23\text{ W}$ standard
Sensor	NTC 10 k $\Omega$ standard; AD590, 592 optional
Stability at base	$\pm 1\text{ mK}$ (controller dependent)
Cooling	Optional: 4 mm diam quick-fit water cooling connections

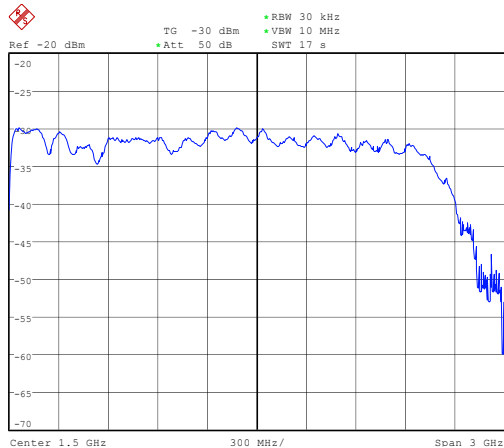
Electronics	
Protection	Diode short-circuit relay; cover interlock connection; reverse diode
Indicator	Laser ON/OFF (LED)
Connector	MOGLabs Diode Laser Controller single cable connect
Active modulation	See appendix B

Mechanical & power	
Dimensions	220 × 95 × 90.5 mm (L×W×H), 1.3 kg
Beam height	58 mm
Shipping	420 × 360 × 260 mm (L×W×H), 3.1 kg



## A.1 RF response

The standard B1047 headboard includes active modulation with bandwidth of 20MHz, either AC or DC coupled. The B1047 is supplied with lasers using high compliance (blue and UV) diodes. The B1240 headboard is provided with lower compliance voltage ( $< 2.5V$ ) longer wavelength diodes. The B1240 provides higher closed-loop bandwidth (shorter phase delay). Alternately, the laser can be supplied with an internal RF bias tee, with typical frequency response shown below.



**Figure A.1:** RF response, SMA input on laser headboard to diode SMA output.

## A.2 Mechanical

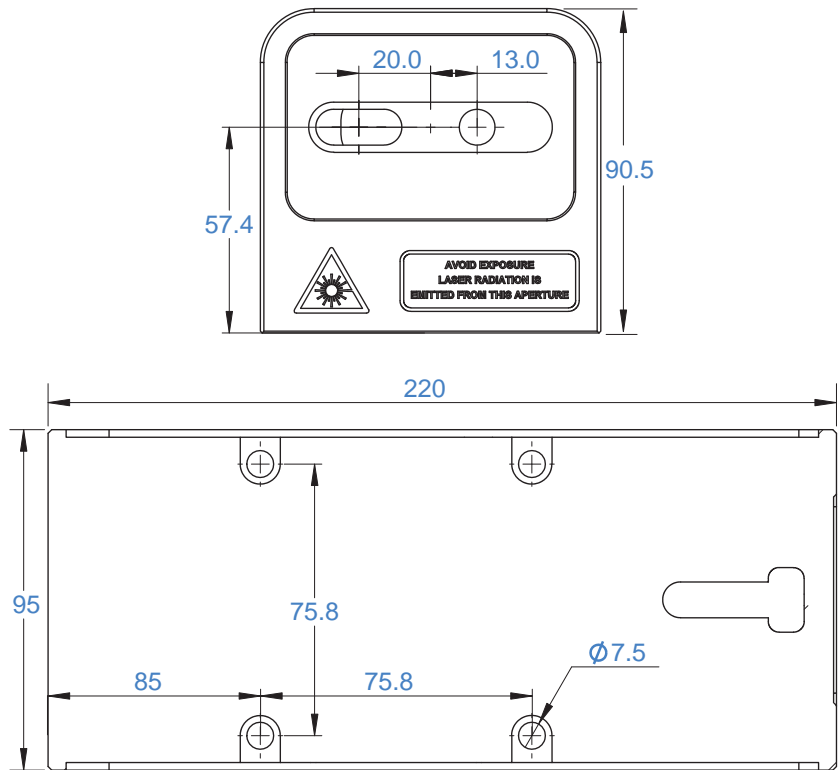


Figure A.2: Dimensions of CEF laser head.

## B. Laser head board

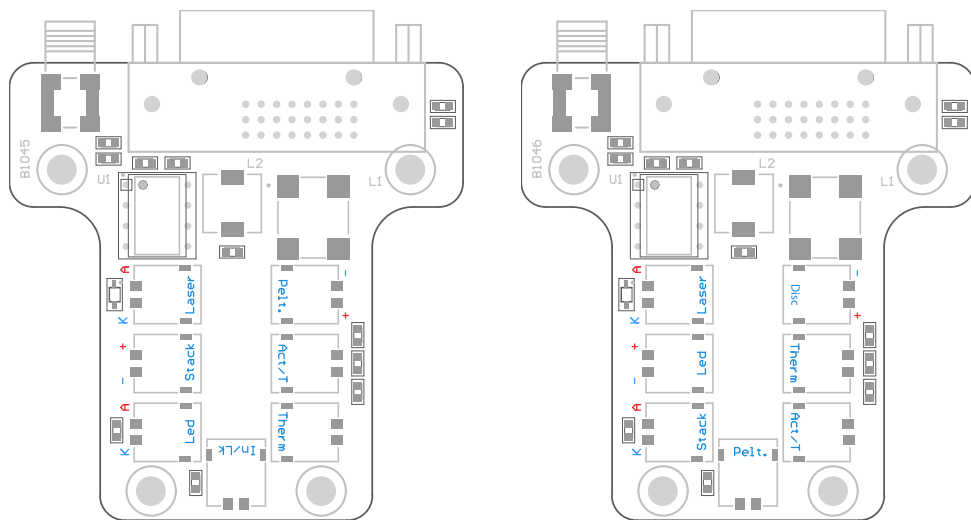
The laser head interface board provides connection breakout to the laser diode, TEC, sensor, piezo actuators, and laser head interlock. It also includes a solid-state protection relay and passive protection filters, a laser-on LED indicator, and an SMA connection for direct diode current modulation. The connections are made with Hirose DF59 “swing-lock” wire-to-board connectors.

Several versions of the laser headboard are available. Recent lasers have shipped with the B1047 headboard which provides high bandwidth active current modulation for wide bandwidth frequency stabilisation and linewidth narrowing, for example using a high finesse optical cavity or polarisation spectroscopy. Higher bandwidth is provided by the B1240 headboard which increases bandwidth and reduces phase delay, easily achieving sub-Hz linewidth narrowing. For RF modulation, a B1045 is available. The B1045 includes an RF bias tee allowing modulation up to 2.5 GHz, for example to add sidebands for repumping, or to add noise for coherence control. For high bandwidth RF modulation the diode can be directly soldered to a special interconnect assembly available from MOGLabs.

In all cases, there is no provision for the internal photodiode in many consumer-grade laser diodes.

## B.1 B1045/1046 headboard

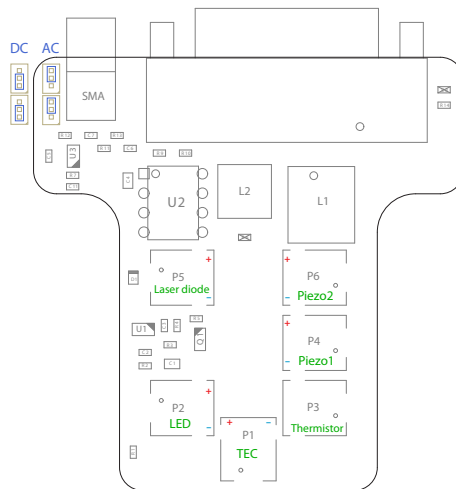
The B1045 and B1046 provide connection to one or two piezos (slow high-range multi-layer stack and fast disc), and either passive NTC thermistor or active AD590/592 active temperature sensor. Note only one temperature sensor should be connected, not both. They provide an SMA input for direct diode modulation via an RF bias tee (see B.4 below).



**Figure B.1:** MOGLabs B1045 and B1046 laser head boards showing connectors for laser diode, piezo actuator, temperature sensors, TEC and head enclosure interlock.

## B.2 B1047/B1240 headboards

The B1047 and B1240 provide high-speed active modulation of the diode current. They use 500 MHz opamps and very low latency circuitry to reduce phase delay to around 12 ns for the B1240. The B1047 allows for closed-loop bandwidth of about 1.2 MHz while the B1240 can achieve about 4 MHz (in both cases, without phase advance). The latter makes it particularly easy to achieve sub-Hz linewidth reduction by locking to a high-finesse optical cavity. The B1240 also allows direct-ground connection or buffered; the latter is about 10% slower but reduces problems with ground-loop noise. The B1240 is not suitable for diodes with high compliance voltage, typically diodes with wavelength below 600 nm.



**Figure B.2:** B1047 enhanced laser head board. Jumpers at top left can be configured for AC or DC coupling. Modulation input via SMA connector, sensitivity 2.5 mA/V. The B1240 is almost identical but has an additional jumper for direct or differential ground coupling adjacent to U2.

### B.2.1 SMA input

The B1047/B1240 SMA input provides AC or DC coupling to an active modulation circuit. Note that connection to the SMA input will reduce the diode current by about 1.6 mA (B1047) to 2.5 mA (B1240), with zero input voltage.

	B1047	B1240
Input range	$\pm 2.0$ V max	$\pm 2.0$ V max
Input coupling	AC/DC	DC (direct) AC/DC (buffered)
Phase delay	40 ns	< 20 ns (direct) < 30 ns (buffered)
Gain bandwidth ( $-3$ dB)	3 MHz	20 MHz
Input impedance	5 k	1 k
Current gain	1 mA/V	1 mA/V
Laser diode voltage	10 V max	2.5 V max

### B.3 Laser connection

The MOGLabs cable can be replaced with a standard digital DVI-D Dual cable. There is a bewildering assortment of apparently similar cables available; only high quality dual-link digital DVI-D cables should be used.

---

**WARNING:** The LASER connector is a standard DVI-D Dual Link socket as used for consumer digital display devices. It should only be connected to the corresponding MOGLabs DLC controller. It supplies the high-voltage signals to drive the laser piezoelectric actuators. The piezo drivers will be disabled if the cable is disconnected, but nevertheless considerable care should be taken to ensure that non-MOGLabs devices are not connected via this connector.

---

Pin	Signal	Pin	Signal	Pin	Signal
1	TEC -	9	DIODE -	17	DISC +
2	TEC +	10	DIODE +	18	DISC -
3	Shield	11	Shield	19	Shield
4	TEC -	12	DIODE -	20	STACK +
5	TEC +	13	DIODE +	21	STACK -
6	AD590/592 -	14	Relay GND	22	
7	AD590/592 +	15	Relay +5V	23	NTC -
8		16	Interlock +5V	24	NTC +

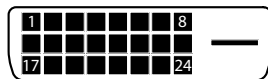


Figure B.3: LASER connector.

### B.4 RF coupling

For the B1045/1046 headboard, the SMA connector allows high-frequency current modulation via a bias-tee. The RF input is AC coupled, with low- and high- frequency limits of about 30 kHz and

2.5 GHz (see fig. A.1). Capacitor C4, either 47 nF or 100 pF, can be changed to adjust the low-frequency cutoff. For higher bandwidths, use an external bias-tee such as the Mini-Circuits ZFBT-4R2GW-FT between the head board and the diode.

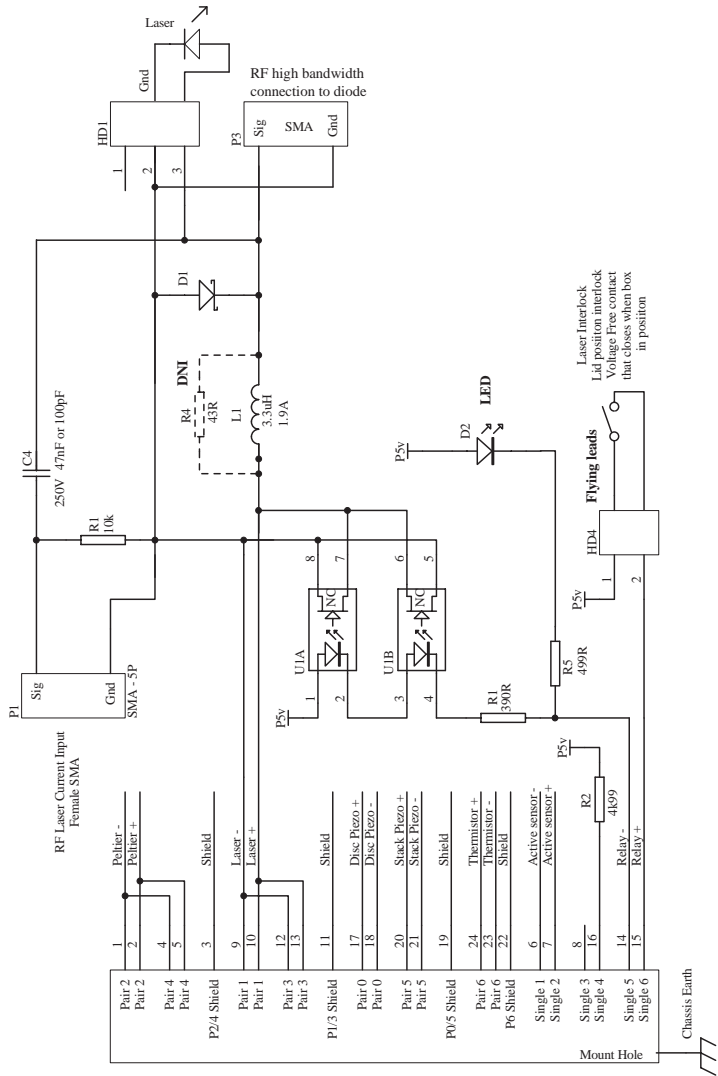
The input impedance is 10 k. The sensitivity depends on the diode impedance but is now typically around 1 mA/V.

---

**WARNING:** The RF input is a direct connection to the laser diode. Excessive power can destroy the diode. It is separated from the head board relay by an inductor, and thus the relay does *not* provide protection from high frequency signals.

---





**Figure B.4:** MOGLabs DLC laser head board schematic (B1040/1045). The RF modulation low-pass cutoff frequency is determined by C4 and the diode impedance ( $\sim 50\Omega$ ).



# Bibliography

- [1] Daniel J. Thompson and Robert E. Scholten. Narrow linewidth tunable external cavity diode laser using wide bandwidth filter. *Review of Scientific Instruments*, 83(2):-, 2012. 1, 2
- [2] X. Baillard, A. Gauguet, S. Bize, P. Lemonde, Ph. Laurent, A. Clairon, and P. Rosenbusch. Interference-filter-stabilized external-cavity diode lasers. *Opt. Commun.*, 266:609, 2006. 1, 2
- [3] M. Gilowski, Ch. Schubert, M. Zaiser, W. Herr, T. WÄijbbena, T. Wendrich, T. MÄijller, E.M. Rasel, and W. Ertmer. Narrow bandwidth interference filter-stabilized diode laser systems for the manipulation of neutral atoms. *Optics Communications*, 280(2):443 – 447, 2007. 1, 2
- [4] S. D. Saliba, M. Junker, L. D. Turner, and R. E. Scholten. Mode stability of external cavity diode lasers. *Appl. Opt.*, 48(35):6692, 2009. 3, 4, 12
- [5] H. Talvitie, A. Pietiläinen, H. Ludvigsen, and E. Ikonen. Passive frequency and intensity stabilization of extended-cavity diode lasers. *Rev. Sci. Inst.*, 68(1):1, 1997. 4
- [6] S. D. Saliba and R. E. Scholten. Linewidths below 100 khz with external cavity diode lasers. *Appl. Opt.*, 48(36):6961, 2009. 4, 17
- [7] S. C. Bell, D. M. Heywood, J. D. White, and R. E. Scholten. Laser frequency offset locking using electromagnetically induced transparency. *Appl. Phys. Lett.*, 90:171120, 2007. 12
- [8] G. C. Bjorklund. Frequency-modulation spectroscopy: a new method for measuring weak absorptions and dispersions. *Opt. Lett.*, 5:15, 1980. 12

- [9] R. W. P. Drever, J. L. Hall, F. V. Kowalski, J. Hough, G. M. Ford, A. J. Munley, and H. Ward. Laser phase and frequency stabilization using an optical resonator. *Appl. Phys. B*, 31:97–105, 1983. 12
- [10] M. Zhu and J. L. Hall. Stabilization of optical phase/frequency of a laser system: application to a commercial dye laser with an external stabilizer. *J. Opt. Soc. Am. B*, 10:802, 1993. 12
- [11] M. Prevedelli, T. Freearde, and T. W. Hänsch. Phase locking of grating-tuned diode lasers. *Appl. Phys. B*, 60:241, 1995. 12
- [12] P. Feng and T. Walker. Inexpensive diode laser microwave modulation for atom trapping. *Am. J. Phys.*, 63(10):905–908, 1995. 12
- [13] C. J. Myatt, N. R. Newbury, and C. E. Wieman. Simplified atom trap by using direct microwave modulation of a diode laser. *Opt. Lett.*, 18(8):649–651, 1993. 12



