

Laser Diode Optical Feedback Warning

Semi-conductor laser diodes are highly sensitive to optical feedback. They can suffer damage that maybe immediately apparent through loss in power or a reduction in life. Furthermore, wavelength stabilized laser diodes may lose their spectral characteristics such as center wavelength and linewidth if sufficient optical feedback exists.

Your Ondax laser diode does not incorporate an optical isolator, so may be susceptible to extraneous optical feedback. We recommend the following precautions:

- If the output of the laser diode is collimated, all reflective surfaces in the optical path should be angled so that surface reflections would not be reflected back to the laser diode. Furthermore, since optimal alignment for interferometric measurement instruments is often achieved with the instrumentation optics at normal incidence to the laser, we recommend the use of optical isolators or slightly misaligning the instrument to avoid direct feedback into the laser.
- Beware of focusing the light output on a highly reflective/scattering surface. This is another means of generating high optical feedback to the diode.
- If fiber coupling, anti-reflective (AR) coated tips are recommended for multimode (MM) fiber. Angle polished tips and AR coating are recommended for single mode (SM) fiber.
- Beware of wavelength selective filters with narrow wavelength pass bands. Care should be taken not to align at normal incidence to the beam. Furthermore, be careful not to align the reflected light to be normal incidence during the alignment process (e.g. sweeping the beam back across the laser during alignment). If such a possibility is unavoidable, use a sufficient OD filter (or isolator) at the output of the laser diode during the alignment process. Please note that if sufficient additional feedback reaches the laser diode, it would overcome the grating-induced stabilization, unlocking and shifting the wavelength of the laser beyond the pass band of the filter. This will dramatically increase the reflected intensity back into the laser possibly causing damage.

