

# NEUROPIXELS 1.0 HD

## User Manual

June 19, 2024



# Important Information

THE NEUROPIXELS PROBES **ARE ONLY INTENDED FOR RESEARCH USE ONLY (“RUO”) IN NON-HUMAN SUBJECTS** SUCH AS SMALL ANIMALS INCLUDING RODENTS AND NON-HUMAN PRIMATES. THESE NEUROPIXELS PROBES **SHOULD NOT BE USED IN HUMANS AND ARE NOT MANUFACTURED OR APPROVED FOR HUMAN USE**. THEY HAVE **NO PROVEN HUMAN EFFICACY AND ARE NOT INDICATED FOR HUMAN USE OR ANY FORM OF CLINICAL USE**.

## About Neuropixels

The Neuropixels 1.0 neural probe is an advanced silicon CMOS digital integrated microsystem and a tool for neuroscience research. It was developed through a collaboration funded by Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI), Wellcome Trust, Gatsby Charitable Foundation and Allen Institute for Brain Science. Probes were designed, developed and fabricated at imec, Leuven Belgium in collaboration with HHMI Janelia Research Campus, Allen Institute for Brain Science and University College London.

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## List of abbreviations

AP	Action Potential.
API	Application Programming Interface.
ASIC	Application Specific Integrated Circuit.
BIST	Built-In Self-Test.
CMOS	Complementary Metal-Oxide-Semiconductor.
DIW	De-Ionized Water.
EEPROM	Electrically Erasable Programmable Read-Only Memory.
ESD	Electro-Static Discharge.
FPC	Flexible Printed Circuit.
FPGA	Field Programmable Gate Array.
GND	Ground.
HS	Headstage.
HST	Headstage Test Dongle.
ID	Identification.
I/O	Input and/or Output.
IPA	Isopropyl Alcohol.
LDO	Low-DropOut.
LED	Light-Emitting Diode.
LFP	Local Field Potential.
MSVC	Microsoft Visual C++.
MXI	Multisystem eXtension Interface.
NI	National Instruments.
PBS	Phosphate-Buffered Saline.
PCB	Printed Circuit Board.
PC	Personal Computer.
PCIe	Peripheral Component Interconnect Express.
PXIe	PCI eXtensions for Instrumentation express.
REF	(External) Reference.
RT	Room Temperature.
SEM	Scanning Electron Microscope.
SMA	Sub-Miniature version A.
SMD	Surface-Mount Devices.
USB-C	Universal Serial Bus Type-C.
ZIF	Zero Insertion Force.

## Definitions of technical terms

- ASIC: Integrated circuit that contains recording electrodes, amplifiers, multiplexers and digitizers.
- Probe Shank: Implanted part of the probe ASIC.
- Probe Base: Non-implanted part of the probe ASIC.
- Flex: Flexible PCB (or FPC) onto which the probe ASIC and additional passive and active components are mounted. It connects to the HS.
- Control System: System components required to enable control of and data streaming from Neuropixels probes. These entail the headstage, interface cable and PXIe acquisition module.
- Headstage: Miniature board that enables reliable power supply to the probe and is essential for bi-directional data communication from/to the probe (Figure 10).
- Headstage Test Dongle: a small test box (Figure 14) that plugs into the ZIF connector of a headstage. Its purpose is to help verify the functionality of a headstage.
- Interface Cable: Thin and flexible cable for power and bidirectional data transmission between HS and PXIe acquisition module (Figure 12).
- PXIe Acquisition Module: Custom-made PCB module with two FPGAs for probe configuration, data acquisition and transmission to PC via PCIe interface (Figure 13).
- Port: USB-C plug on the front panel of the PXIe acquisition module. Each front panel contains 4 ports (Figure 13) allowing connection of up to 4 interface cables.
- PXIe Chassis: Houses PXIe modules and connects them with a high-performance backplane that offers timing and synchronization capabilities.
- Driver: The software files that need to be installed on the host PC to enable communication with the Neuropixels control system and to develop custom application software.

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# 1 About This Manual

This document describes the key features of the Neuropixels 1.0 HD probe and control system and how to install them prior to use. The Neuropixels hardware consists of:

- The Neuropixels probe.
- The Neuropixels control system which contains:
  - A headstage.
  - An interface cable.
  - A PXIe acquisition module or OneBox (coming soon)
- A headstage test dongle.

Even if you have read articles on the Neuropixels 1.0 probes and feel that you are familiar with using the Neuropixels probes we request and encourage you to carefully read the latest version of this *User Manual* to refresh your knowledge and remain up to date on possible changes that are relevant to the use of your probes.

If you are unfamiliar with the Neuropixels probes, then it is absolutely essential and imperative that you carefully read the complete *User Manual*.

Please check [www.neuropixels.org](http://www.neuropixels.org) for the latest version of this manual.

## 1.1 Related Documentation

The following documents and online resources contain information that you might find helpful as you read this manual:

- Application Software:
  - SpikeGLX: <http://billkarsh.github.io/SpikeGLX/>.
  - Open Ephys: <https://open-ephys.github.io/gui-docs/User-Manual/Plugins/Neuropixels-PXI.html>.
- Brochures and technical datasheets:
  - Neuropixels 1.0 HD Probe (available upon request).
  - Control System (available on [www.neuropixels.org](http://www.neuropixels.org)).
- Mechanical drawing of the aluminum metal cap (available on [www.neuropixels.org](http://www.neuropixels.org)).

## 2 Getting Started

### 2.1 Unpacking and Handling

Upon receiving the Neuropixels probe and control system, immediately inspect the shipping boxes and content for damage. In case of damage, please carefully read the included warranty document and follow the instructions.

The probes arrive in black shipping boxes containing black foam inlays. Both the box and foam inlays are manufactured from ESD compliant (antistatic) material. All system components are also delivered in antistatic bags or boxes. It is advised to wear ESD protective equipment when handling the probes and system components. Carefully read the guidelines on probe handling (Appendix A), soldering (Appendix B) and ESD safety (Appendix C).

### 2.2 Hardware & System Requirements

#### 2.2.1 PXIe acquisition module control system

Figure 1 shows the Neuropixels 1.0 HD probe and the PXIe acquisition module control system that can be purchased from imec through [www.neuropixels.org](http://www.neuropixels.org). To get started you need:

- one PXIe acquisition module (PXIE\_1000),
- one data/power interface cable (CBL\_1000),
- one headstage (HS\_1000) and
- at least one probe.

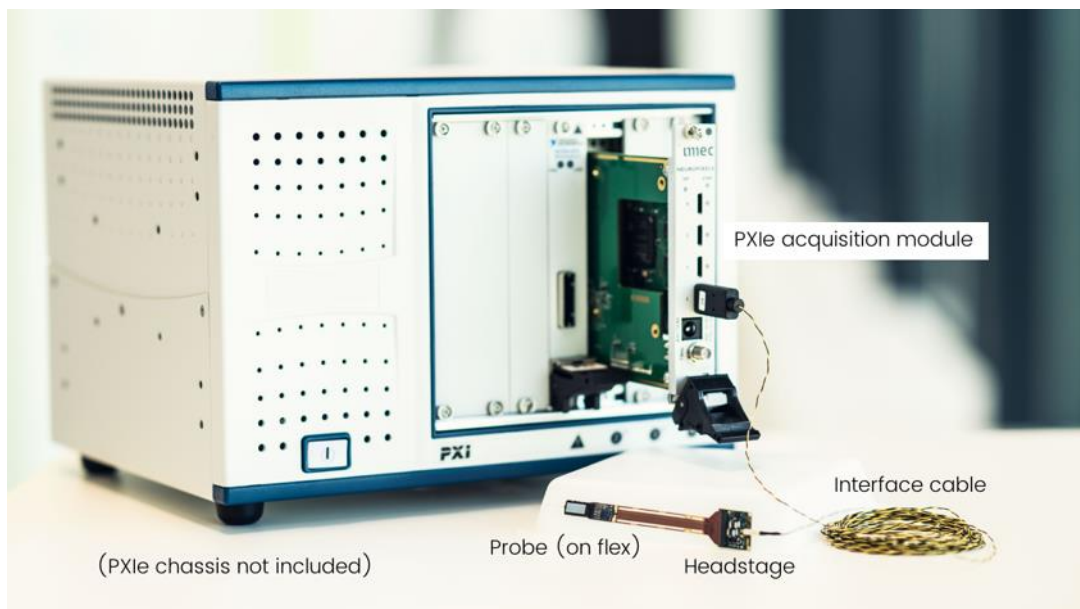


Figure 1: Neuropixels 1.0 HD probe and control system (chassis not included)

In addition, the PXIe chassis required for using the PXIe acquisition module must be purchased separately from third-party suppliers such as National Instruments (NI)<sup>1</sup>, Keysight<sup>2</sup> or Adlink<sup>3</sup>. Below we provide recommendations for PXIe chassis using a remote controller (MXI-Express interface) and a PXIe chassis with built-in Thunderbolt 3 remote controller ([link](#)). A detailed description of the system requirements can be consulted on the [SpikeGLX website](#).

For first-time probe users intending to use less than 3 PXIe acquisition modules (or 8 probes) simultaneously, we recommend the following entry-level chassis with build in Thunderbolt card:

- PXI-Express chassis: NI PXIe-1083 (5-Slot). PN 787026-01
- Power cord for chassis.
- Thunderbolt 3 Type-C Cable, Passive 20 Gbps, 5A, 2m. PN 785608-02

For more advanced, multi-probe users planning to use multiple PXIe acquisition modules simultaneously, we recommend the system with the highest bandwidth:

- PXI-Express chassis: NI PXIe-1088. PN 784782-01
- Power cord for chassis.
- MXI-Express interface: NI PCIe-8389 and PXIe-8389 (Gen 3 x16, 1 Port; incl. one MXI-Express x16 copper cable, 3m). PN 784177-01

Other chassis-remote controller combinations are technically possible. A list of combinations is given in Table 1 below:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ohm.ni.com/advisors/pxi/pages/common/intro.xhtml>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.keysight.com/us/en/home.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.adlinktech.com/en/index>

Table 1: Data acquisition configurations

Config	PXI-chassis		Remote controller		Data Acquisition		Bandwidth
	Name	PN	Name	PN	Name	PN	
Thunderbolt	NI PXIe-1083	787026-01	-	-	Imec card	PXIe_1000	2 GB/s
Thunderbolt (Figure 2)	NI PXIe-1071	781368-01	PXIe-8301	785679-01	Imec card	PXIe_1000	2.3 GB/s
PXIe-PCle	NI PXIe-1088	784782-01	PXIe-PCle 8398	784177-01	Imec card	PXIe_1000	16 GB/s
PXIe-PCle	NI PXIe-1082	End of Life	PXIe-PCle 8398	784177-01	Imec card	PXIe_1000	16 GB/s
PXIe-PCle (Figure 3)	NI PXIe-1082	End of Life	PXIe-PCle 8381	End of life	Imec card	PXIe_1000	2.3 GB/s
PXIe-PCle	NI PXIe-1071	781368-01	PXIe-PCle 8381	End of life	Imec card	PXIe_1000	2.3 GB/s
OneBox	-	-	-	-	-	ONE_1000	USB 3.0



Figure 2: PXIe chassis PXIe-1071 & Thunderbolt PXIe-8301

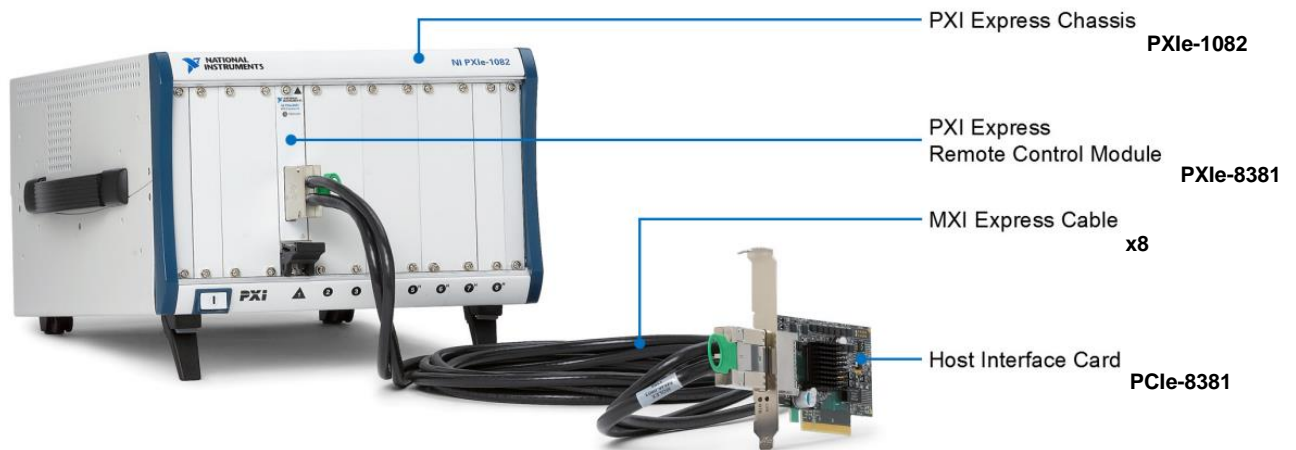


Figure 3: PXIe-8381 (remote control module) and PCIe-8381 (host interface card) allow desktop PC control of a PXI Express chassis with PCI Express Gen 2 x8 data throughput.

A host PC is needed for recording the neuronal data. Make sure the following PC specifications are fulfilled:

- PC Administrator rights.
- Windows 10.
- Dedicated solid state drive for data streaming.
- Intel motherboard
- In case you are using a thunderbolt configuration, make sure a thunderbolt 3 port is available on the host PC. In case of a PXIe-PCIe interface, make sure at least one PCIe slot (Gen 2 x8 or wider) is available to install the PXIe remote controller.

Please refer to the OpenEphys or SpikeGLX website for exhaustive PC requirements.

Chapter 4 in this *User Manual* contains further instructions on how to install the above hardware.

**NOTE:** *If you decide to use the existing application software packages SpikeGLX or Open Ephys described in Section 2.4.1, please consult the respective software User Manual and/or online Documentation to ensure you also comply with these system requirements.*

## 2.2.2 OneBox control system

*Coming soon*

## 2.3 Drivers

### 2.3.1 PXIe acquisition module control system

To install the Neuropixels PXIe acquisition module you need to download the following PXIe Acquisition Module driver files from the [SpikeGLX](#) GitHub site.

- *EnPcieDriverWin.inf*
- *EnPcieDriverWin.sys*
- *WdfCoInstaller01009.dll*
- *enpciedriverwin.cat*
- *Version\_1.9\_readme.txt*

Section 4.1.3.2 of this *User Manual* describes how to install the driver.

### 2.3.2 OneBox control system

Coming soon

## 2.4 Application Software

### 2.4.1 Existing Software

You can acquire data from Neuropixels 1.0 HD probes with either of two existing software packages: [SpikeGLX](#)<sup>4</sup> or [Open Ephys](#)<sup>5</sup>. The former is being developed by Bill Karsh at Janelia Research Campus. The Open Ephys GUI is a plugin-based application for extracellular electrophysiology data acquisition and is being developed by Josh Siegle and Jakob Voigts.

Both packages use the same underlying Neuropixels API to communicate with the probes, so their functionality as far as acquiring data should be identical, though they differ in their online graphical display, interface for modifying probe settings, options for online data processing, and file formats for saving data.

SpikeGLX is distributed with an extensive *User Manual* while Open Ephys has a detailed online *User Documentation* section. To install the software and configure the probes, carefully read these documents and follow the instructions.

**NOTE:** *Each of the above software packages may require additional third-party hardware or software installations. Please read the respective software User Manual or online Documentation to ensure you meet all PC and system requirements.*

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<sup>4</sup> <http://billkarsh.github.io/SpikeGLX/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://open-ephys.github.io/gui-docs/User-Manual/Plugins/Neuropixels-PXI.html>

## 2.4.2 Developing New Software

If you are interested to develop your own application software, you will need the 32-bit or 64-bit windows *.dll*, *.lib*, and *.h* files for the API driver. These files and the complementary *API Manual* are available upon request. The API is compatible with MSVC and MinGW.

## 2.5 Probe Configuration Files

Probe-specific configuration files will be provided with each probe shipment via the WeTransfer file transfer service to the technical contact person listed on the sales order. The provided configuration files must be loaded into the software prior to using the probes. These files are essential to correct for CMOS processing-induced deviations of probe performance.

Details on how to load these files into the application software are described in the respective *User Manual* and *User Documentation* of SpikeGLX and Open Ephys.

In case you lost the calibration files of your probes or in case the WeTransfer link expired, please contact [neuropixels.sales@imec.be](mailto:neuropixels.sales@imec.be). They will provide you with the correct calibration files.

## 3 Neuropixels Hardware Description

### 3.1 Probe

The Neuropixels 1.0 HD probe is a silicon CMOS digital integrated microsystem and tool for in vivo neuroscience research in small animals. The probe features 6144 low-impedance TiN recording sites densely tiled along a thin, 10 mm-long, straight shank. The 384 parallel, configurable, low-noise recording channels integrated in the base enable simultaneous, dual-band recording of hundreds of neurons. The electrodes are arranged in a dense 2D array layout. Additional specifications are provided in Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 2: Electrode specifications

ELECTRODES	
NUMBER	6144
PATTERN	dense 2D array (8 x 768)
PITCH	6 $\mu\text{m}$ (see Figure 4)
MATERIAL	Porous TiN
SIZE	5 x 5 $\mu\text{m}$
IMPEDANCE	~700 k $\Omega$ (at 1 kHz in PBS)
SELECTIVITY	Local switch under each electrode

Table 3: Shank specifications

SHANK PROPERTIES AND MATERIALS	
NUMBER	1
WIDTH	70 $\mu\text{m}$
LENGTH	10 mm
THICKNESS	24 $\mu\text{m}$
BENDING	$\leq 100 \mu\text{m}$ (base to tip)
TIP LENGTH	175 $\mu\text{m}$
TIP SHAPE	Chisel
TIP ANGLE	~20°
FRONTSIDE MATERIAL	Silicon nitride ( $\text{Si}_3\text{N}_4$ )
BACKSIDE MATERIAL	Silicon dioxide ( $\text{SiO}_2$ )
SIDEWALL MATERIALS	Silicon (Si), silicon dioxide ( $\text{SiO}_2$ )

Table 4: Recording channel specifications

RECORDING CHANNELS AND DIGITAL INTERFACE	
NUMBER	384 (dual-band)
AP BANDWIDTH	0.3–10 kHz
LFP BANDWIDTH	0.5–500 Hz
AP INPUT-REFERRED NOISE	5.9 $\mu\text{V}_{\text{rms}}$ (typical <sup>6</sup> )
LFP INPUT-REFERRED NOISE	9.2 $\mu\text{V}_{\text{rms}}$ (typical)
AP SAMPLING FREQUENCY	30 kHz
LFP SAMPLING FREQUENCY	2.5 kHz
DIFFERENTIAL GAINS	50–3000 (8 values)
CROSSTALK	$\leq 0.13\%$ (at 1 kHz; typical)
INPUT VOLTAGE RANGE	$\pm 5 \text{ mV}_{\text{pp}}$
ADC RESOLUTION	10 bits
DATA RATE	163.8 Mb/s
POWER CONSUMPTION	$\sim 15 \text{ mW}$ (in recording mode; typical)
SHANK HEATING	$< 1^\circ\text{C}$ (in the brain)

The probe ASIC is packaged (glued and wirebonded) on a flexible polyimide printed circuit board populated with several SMD components (Figure 4). The components include

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<sup>6</sup> Process corner

passives for biasing and decoupling, an IC generating a low-noise reference voltage, and an EEPROM for probe identification.

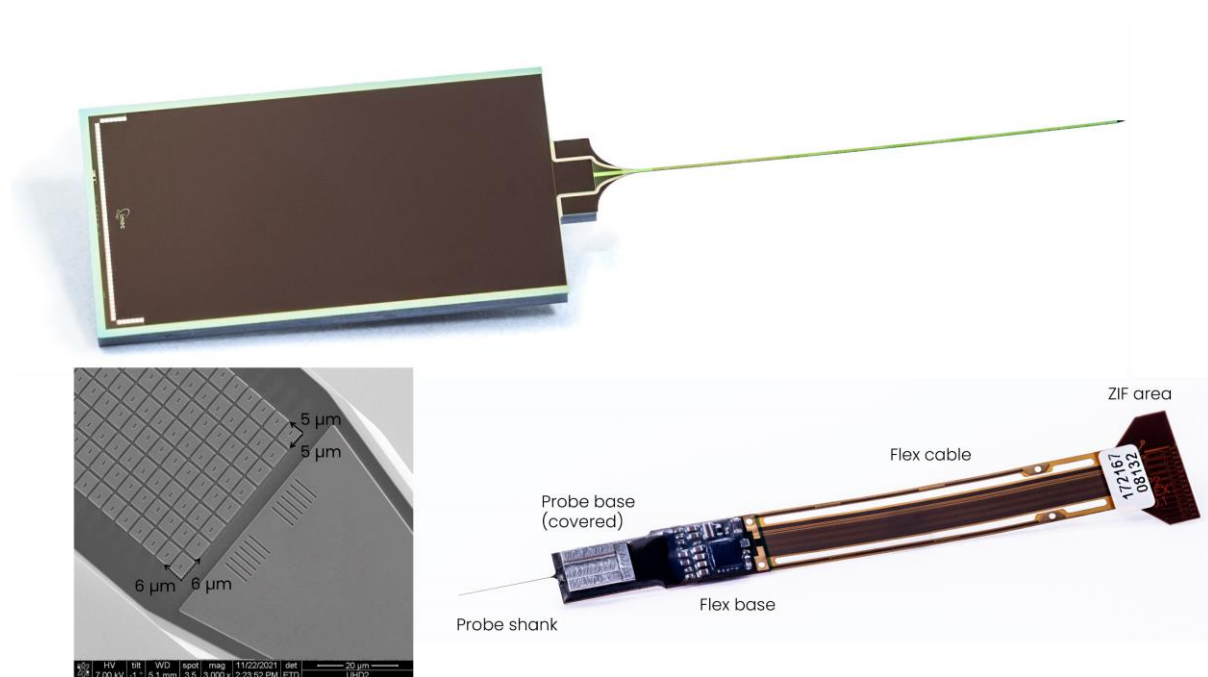


Figure 4: Top: Bare die of the Neuropixels probe ASIC. Bottom left: SEM image of the probe tip with marked electrode size and pitch. Bottom right: Packaged probe ASIC with metal cap covering the probe base. The SMD components are covered with conformal coating.

There are multiple input pads for external reference (REF) and ground (GND) on the flex base and along the narrow side arms of the flex cable (Figure 5). These side arms can be cut to length or completely removed when not used.

**NOTE:** Please be careful when cutting the narrow side arms of the flex. Use a pair of fine, pointed scissors. Avoid any damage to the wider middle section of the flex since this can render the probe non-functional.

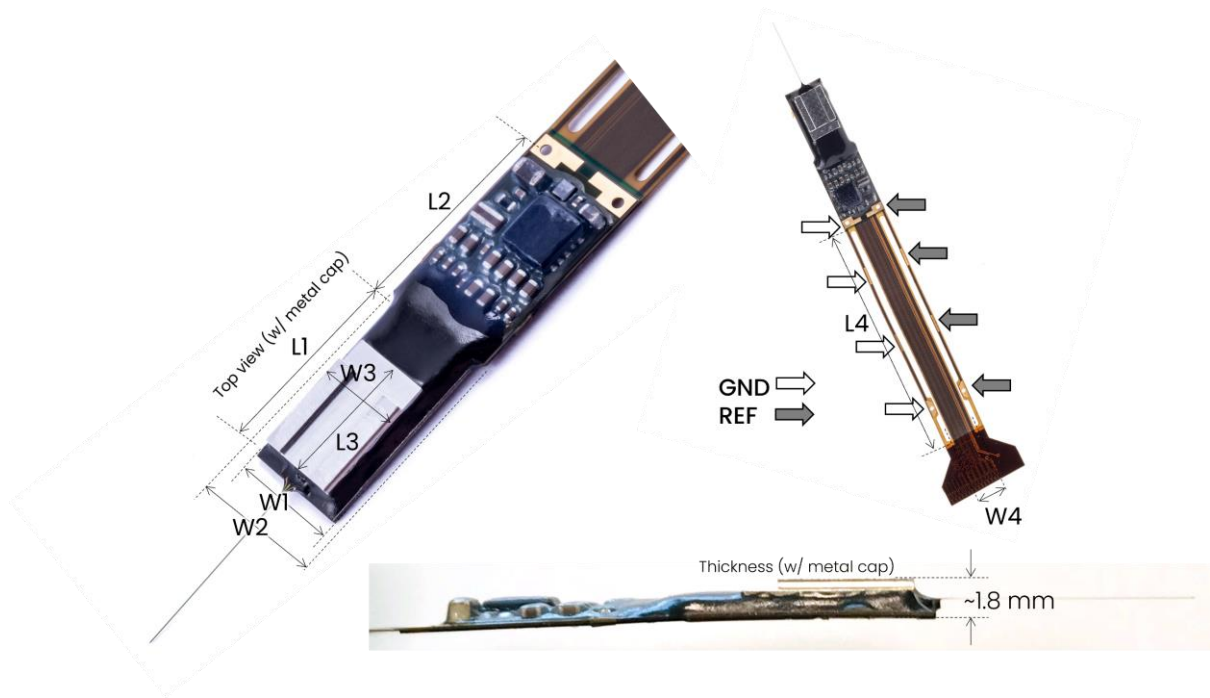


Figure 5: Top left: Dimensions of a probe package with metal cap. Top right: Locations of REF/GND pads along the flex. Bottom: Thickness of the probe package. Dimensions are in mm.

Each probe has a unique identifier code stored on the EEPROM and written on the small label attached to the ZIF area (Figure 6). The acquisition software packages described in Section 2.4.1 automatically read the probe ID stored on the EEPROM.

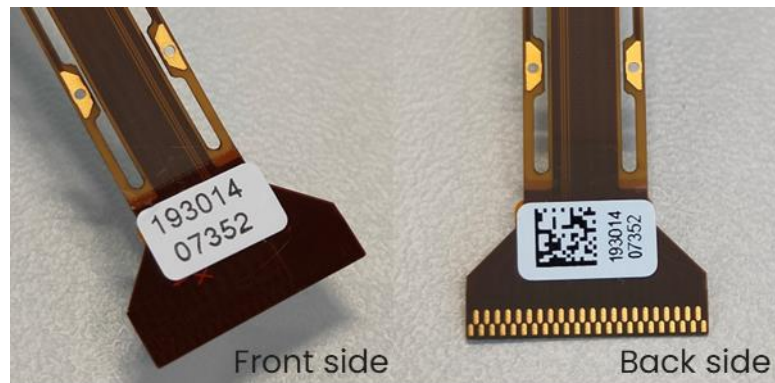


Figure 6: Left: Label with unique probe ID attached to ZIF area front side. Right: ZIF area back side with metal contact pads and unique probe ID and QR code.

The probe base is covered with an aluminum metal cap ( $7.3 \times 4.8$  mm) with dedicated dovetail structures (Figure 9). This serves primarily as a light shield for the light-sensitive circuits in the probe base but also enable alignment and attachment of compatible stereotactic insertion drives developed amongst others at HHMI Janelia Research Campus. The HHMI design is manufactured at imec and can be purchased via the RFQ form under the order code HOLDER\_1000\_C. The holder is compatible with Neuropixels 1.0 (HD) probes, Neuropixels 1.0 probes with Cap and with Neuropixels 1.0 NHP probes. The holder is shown in Figure 7 and Figure 8 below.

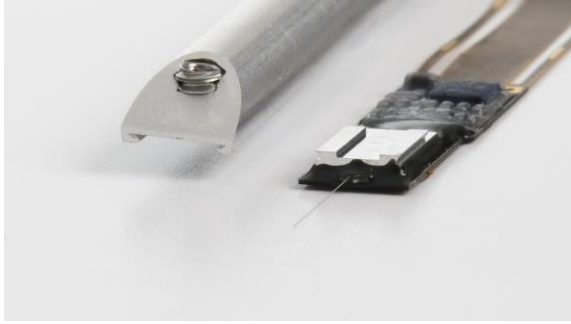


Figure 7: Neuropixels 1.0 HD probe with Cap and the dove tail holder (HOLDER\_1000\_C)



Figure 8: Neuropixels 1.0 HD probe mounted on the dedicated dove tail holder (HOLDER\_1000\_C)

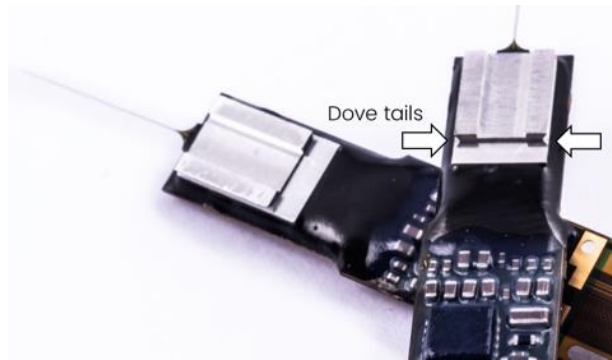


Figure 9: Probes with aluminum cap featuring dedicated dovetail structures.

A black epoxy (EPO-TEK/H70E) encapsulates the probe perimeter and bond wires. The SMD components are also coated with a conformal, hermetic coating (ELPEGUARD/SL 1307 FLZ-T). The probe package with metal cap weighs 440 mg. The thickness at the probe base is ~1.8 mm (Figure 5). Table 5 summarizes the package dimensions and properties.

Table 5: Probe package description

PACKAGE DESCRIPTION	
WIDTH AT PROBE BASE	6.2 mm
WIDTH AT SMD BASE	7.2 mm
WIDTH OF METAL CAP	4.8 mm
WIDTH OF FLEX	4.3 mm
LENGTH OF PROBE BASE	10.7 mm

LENGTH OF SMD BASE	12.2 mm
LENGTH OF METAL CAP	7.3 mm
LENGTH OF FLEX	39.5 mm
THICKNESS AT PROBE BASE	~1.8 mm (w/ metal cap)
THICKNESS OF FLEX	80 $\mu$ m
EXTERNAL REFERENCE INPUT	REF (multiple pads along flex)
GROUND INPUT	GND (multiple pads along flex)
BLACK EPOXY	EPO-TEK / H70E
CONFORMAL COATING OF SMD	ELPEGUARD / SL 1307 FLZ-T
WEIGHT	440 mg (w/ metal cap)

**NOTE:** Please carefully read and follow the guidelines on soldering (Appendix B) before soldering separate wires to the REF and GND input pads. It is advisable to have prior experience in soldering before soldering to the Neuropixels probes.

**NOTE:** Please carefully read and follow the instructions on probe handling (Appendix A) and ESD protection (Appendix C) prior to handling any Neuropixels system components. Familiarize yourself with the probes by first handling and testing dummy probes which can be ordered separately.

### 3.2 Headstage

The HS (Figure 10) is 16  $\times$  15 mm and weighs 0.9 g. It contains several LDO regulators for power supply, a serializer chip for communication to/from the PXIe acquisition module, and an EEPROM for identification. A 45-pin FPC ZIF connector with a black latch connects to the probe (Figure 10). A 4-pin Omnetics connector plugs into the 5-m long twisted-pair interface cable (Figure 12).

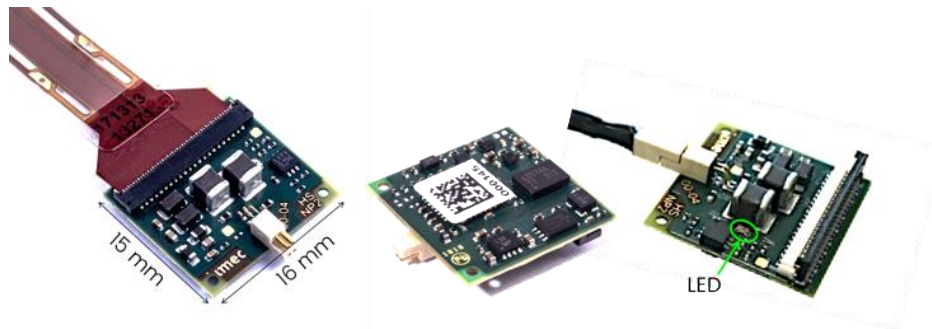


Figure 10: Left: Top side of a headstage connected to a probe flex. Center: Bottom side of a headstage with unique serial ID. Right: Headstage connected to an interface cable.

A red status LED (Figure 10) indicates the correct functionality of the headstage. The LED can be enabled and disabled using a dedicated API call. A HS EEPROM contains information on serial number (as printed on the label), part number, PCB version and revision number. Table 6 summarizes the key headstage specifications.

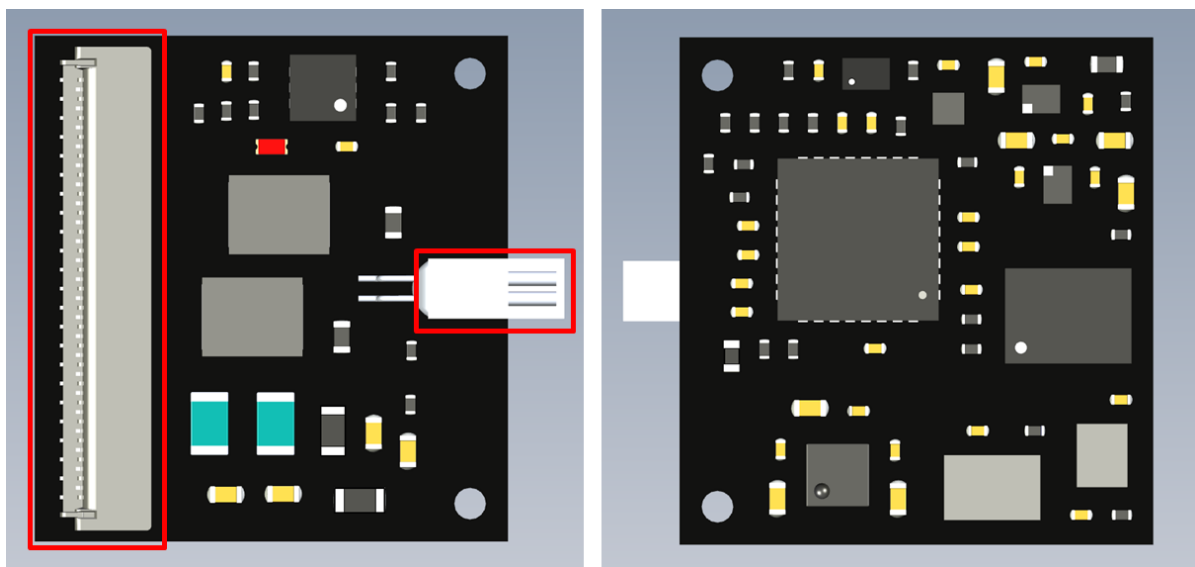
Table 6: Key headstage specifications

HEADSTAGE	
SIZE	15 $\times$ 16 mm

WEIGHT	0.9 g
ZIF CONNECTOR	45-pin
CABLE CONNECTOR	4-pin (Omnetics)
LED INDICATOR	One red LED
MECHANICAL FIXTURES	Two mounting holes of 1 mm Ø
CONFORMAL COATING	ELPEGUARD / SL 1307 FLZ-T

*NOTE: Please carefully read and follow the instructions on ESD protection (Appendix C) prior to handling any system components.*

The headstage is covered with a layer of conformal coating. Some parts are not covered to keep electrical contact possible. The area of the headstage, which is not covered in conformal coating, is indicated in Figure 11 below. The ZIF connector and the Omnetics connector are not covered.



*Figure 11: Left: Head stage top side drawing. Right: Head stage bottom side drawing. Areas which are not covered with conformal coating are indicated in red.*

### 3.3 Interface Cable

The Neuropixels single twisted-pair interface cable (Figure 12) provides power from the PXIe acquisition module to the HS and transfers control and neural data to/from the HS. The cable assembly weighs 5 g (excl. USB-C connector) and consists of two 5-m long wire strands each having a diameter of 0.41 mm.



Figure 12: Twisted-pair interface cable with Omnetics-to-USB-C termination.

The HS side of the cable is terminated with a 4-pin Omnetics connector. The PXIe module side is terminated with a USB-C connector.

Table 7: Key cable specifications

TWISTED-PAIR DATA/POWER CABLE <sup>7</sup>	
LENGTH	5 m
WEIGHT	5 g (excl. USB-C connector)
DIAMETER	0.41 × 0.82 mm
HEADSTAGE CONNECTOR	4-pin (Omnetics)
PXIe CARD CONNECTOR	USB-C
WIRE STRANDS	1 twisted pair

**NOTE:** Avoid repeated sharp bending of the cable ( $\leq 2$  cm bending radius) as this may degrade cable quality and signal integrity. Use the cable only with the Neuropixels PXIe acquisition module; do not plug the cable into any other USB-C port as this may damage the cable.

### 3.4 PXIe Acquisition Module

The PXIe acquisition module (Figure 13) is a custom-made board with a deserializer chip and two FPGAs<sup>8</sup> for probe configuration, data acquisition and transmission to PC via a PCIe interface. It is compatible with a standard PXIe chassis, which must be purchased from other well-known third-party vendors such as NI, Keysight or Adlink. Chassis recommendations are provided in Section 2.2 .

<sup>7</sup> Custom cable assembly.

<sup>8</sup> Xilinx ZYNQ and Xilinx Artix-7

The module has 4 USB-C input ports, thus allowing simultaneous connection and operation of up to 4 probes. Various trigger signals<sup>9</sup> can be configured to synchronize and use multiple PXIe modules and thus probes simultaneously.

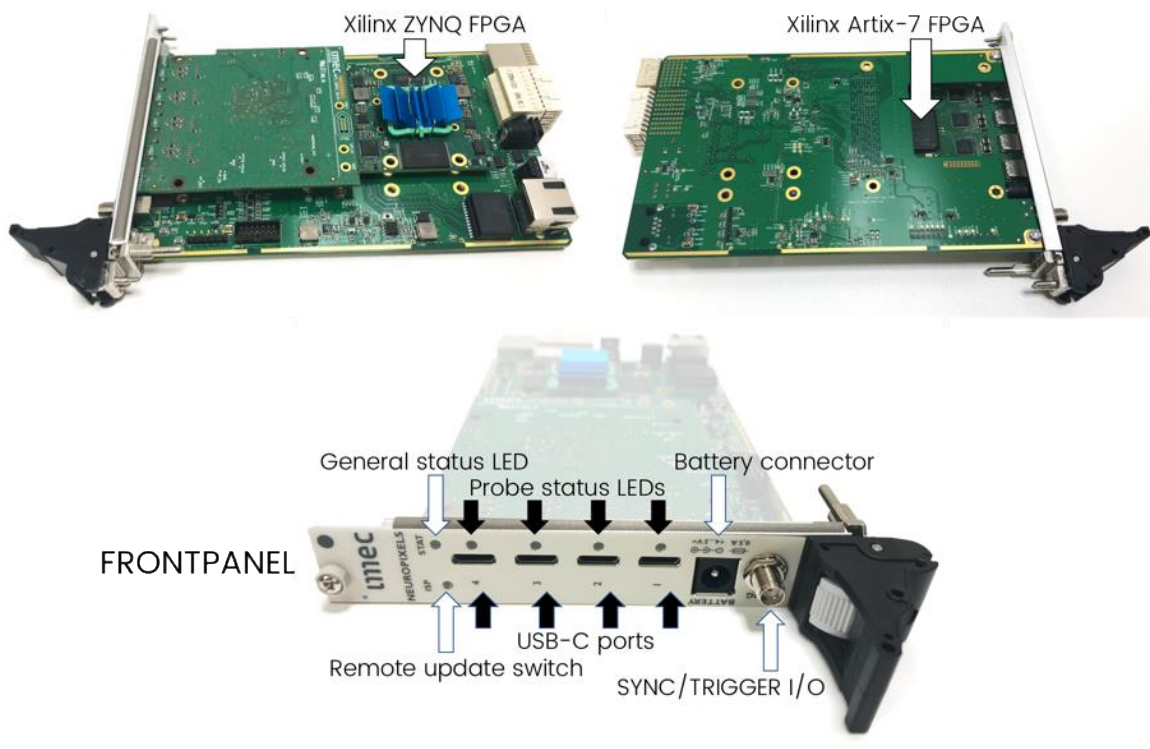


Figure 13: Top: PXIe acquisition module. Bottom: Front panel of the module.

The front panel of the PXIe acquisition module (Figure 13, bottom) contains the following connectors and status LEDs:

- Four numbered USB-C ports allow connection of up to 4 probes. Interface cables can plug into the USB-C port in either orientation.
- An LED next to each USB-C port indicates the status of the respective probe and HS:
  - Off: No clock signal (from a probe) detected. This occurs if the power to the port is not enabled, no probe is plugged into the port, or there is a faulty probe, HS, or cable.
  - Red: The probe is powered on but not initialized.
  - Green: The probe is powered on and configured. This is the normal status during operation of the probe.
  - Blinking green: The probe is powered on but not correctly configured.
  - Blue: An internal data emulator on the Artix-7 FPGA is active. The probe data is not used.
- A general status LED indicates the status of the PXIe module:
  - Off: The Artix-7 FPGA is not powered, or the boot code is not loaded successfully.

<sup>9</sup> A trigger line switch matrix and configurable sync clock are implemented. Various trigger signals can be programmed: SMA connector, 7 trigger lines on the PXIe bus, user defined data or software trigger. Common trigger for multiple modules and/or external instruments.

- Red: Error status related to ZYNQ FPGA or PXIe bus.
- Green: The Artix-7 FPGA is powered on and the boot code is loaded, waiting for a start trigger to start transmitting neural data.
- Blue: The Artix-7 FPGA is triggered and is transmitting data to the ZYNQ FPGA.
- Purple: Combination of red and blue. Data is not read sufficiently fast by the PC. This indicates data loss.
- A switch used for remote updates of the Artix-7 and ZYNQ FPGA boot codes.
- A battery connector to supply power to the probe and HS. The use of this connector is optional. The hardware automatically detects if an external supply is connected and, if so, switches the port supply from internal system supply to external supply. Connect a 4.0-to-5.0 V battery.
- A SYNC/TRIGGER I/O SMA connector:
  - This can serve as an input to connect an external digital trigger signal to start data acquisition, or it can serve as an output to indicate the occurrence of an internal trigger such as a software trigger, a user-defined data trigger, or a trigger from the PXI backplane trigger bus (another PXIe acquisition module or card in the PXIe chassis).
  - It can serve as an input for an external SYNC signal, or it can serve as an output for an internal SYNC signal. This SYNC signal is recorded with neural data across all probes connected to the chassis and can be used to align neural data over different probes in time. When used as an output for the internal trigger signal, a 1 ms pulse is generated on the SMA. When used as an input, a pulse with a minimum width of 16 ns must be connected.
  - The use and polarity of the SYNC/TRIGGER signal is configured using API functions. The SYNC/TRIGGER line is compatible with 5.0 V logic signals. When used as an output (software trigger or SYNC output), a high impedance load must be connected to the SMA connector to observe the SYNC/TRIGGER output.

An EEPROM contains the serial number, part number, version, and revision number of the PXIe acquisition module. While the PXIe module contains hardware provisions for an ethernet connection, neither FPGA code nor API currently support this functionality.

*NOTE: Please carefully read and follow the instructions on ESD protection (Appendix C) prior to handling any system components.*

## 3.5 OneBox

Coming soon

## 3.6 Headstage Test Dongle

The HS test dongle (HST) is a small test box (Figure 14) that plugs into the HS ZIF connector of a headstage. Its purpose is to help verify the functionality of a HS. This is useful when e.g. neural data seems corrupt or cannot be recorded or when a probe cannot be programmed correctly anymore.



Figure 14: Headstage test dongle with flex cable that plugs into the ZIF connector of a headstage.

Verifying the HS functionality is one of the first steps when identifying the root cause(s) for observed failures. The HS tests are integrated in the application software (Open Ephys, SpikeGLX). In case of failure, the application can provide more detailed information about the exact source of the failure (e.g. power supply, serial data link, clock signal, reset signals, etc). LEDs on the HST indicate status and result of the HS tests. We recommend always repeating the HS test also with an unused, good HS to verify that the failure is not related to other system components such as the interface cable.

**NOTE:** The API provides several built-in self-tests described in the Troubleshooting Section 5.3. These can be implemented in the application software and help diagnose and debug potential hardware failures along the entire signal chain from ASIC to PC.

**NOTE:** Liquids, metallic particles etc. might cause a short-circuit on the HS. Such short-circuits are detected with the HST, except for 2 specific locations on the HS, which are indicated in yellow on the figure below. If such a short would occur without being detected by the HST, the neural data recorded by the probe will be corrupted on multiple channels.

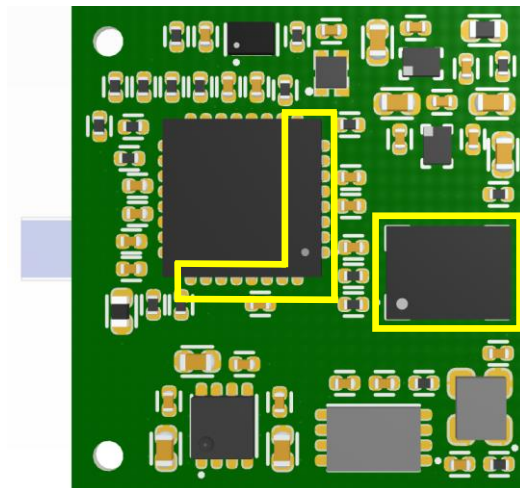


Figure 15: Locations on the HS in which an electrical short-circuit cannot be detected.

## 4 Installation and Configuration

### 4.1 PXIe acquisition module control system

This Chapter describes how to install and operate the Neuropixels Control System using a remote controller interface or a Thunderbolt configuration.

#### 4.1.1 Thunderbolt installation

Make sure you have the following hardware components available:

- Third-party PXIe chassis + thunderbolt controller (see Section 2.2 for provider recommendations),
- Desktop or laptop with at least one thunderbolt 3 port.
- Neuropixels PXIe acquisition module (PXIe\_1000).

The best installation results were achieved for computers with a preconfigured Thunderbolt port from the factory. Adding a thunderbolt PCIe card to an existing desktop is possible but the card needs to be specifically matched to the motherboard. Matching the manufacturer is not enough to guarantee a successful connection.

The first step is to install the third-party thunderbolt card into your PXIe chassis. Here we will provide you with some basic guidelines but we do emphasize the need to follow the instructions and safety information described in the user manuals of the chosen PXIe chassis and remote controller provider.

Follow the steps below to install the PXIe-8301 thunderbolt card into the NI PXIe-1071 chassis and connect the thunderbolt cable to the PC:

1. Power-off the PXIe chassis but leave the power cable plugged in to ground the chassis.
2. Identify a valid PXIe slot and remove the filler panel. The slot type on the chassis can be identified by symbols next to the slot number, as shown in Figure 19. The PXIe-8301 thunderbolt module must be plugged into the 'PXIe Controller Slot'.









	System Timing Slot
	Star Trigger Slot
	PXI Peripheral Slot
	PXIe Peripheral Slot
	Hybrid Peripheral Slot (accepts PXI and PXIe cards)
	PXI Controller Slot
	PXIe Controller Slot
	PXIe System Timing Slot or PXIe Peripheral Slot

Figure 16: PXIe chassis slot symbols (source: ni.com).

3. Push the ejector handle down (Figure 20) by pressing the grey button (step 1) on the handle and subsequently pushing the black handle (step 2) down.

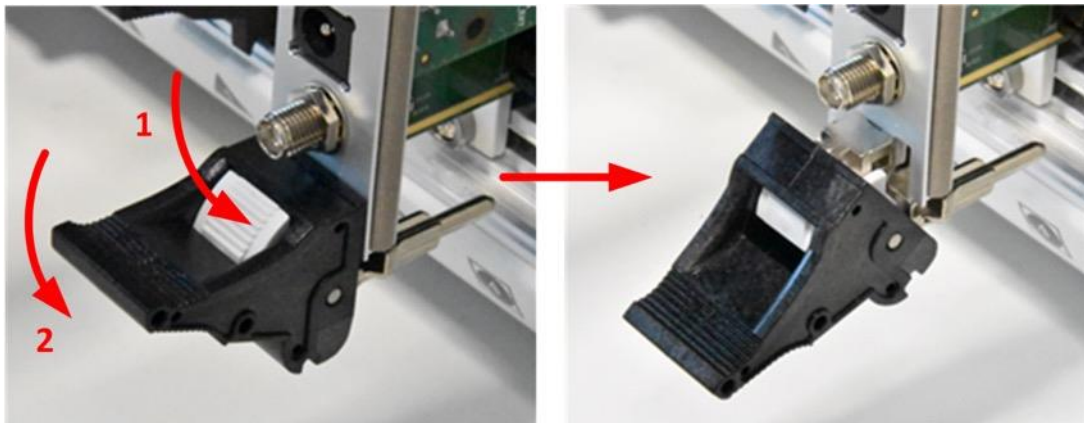


Figure 17: Push the ejector latch down prior to inserting the module.

4. Slide the module into the PXIe slot. Observe the correct orientation of the module. When the ejector handle touches the metal rail of the chassis, lift the ejector handle to push the module into the slot for the last few millimeters.

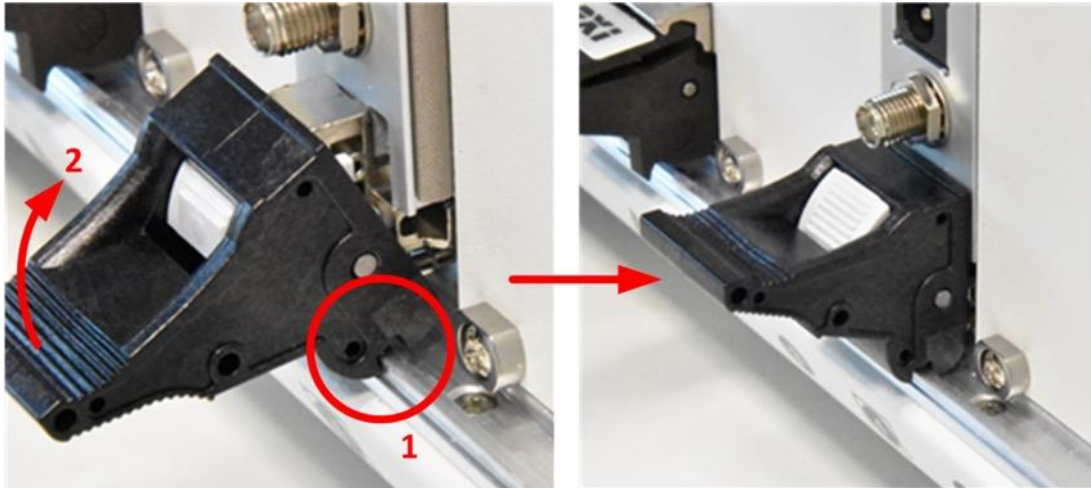


Figure 18: Push the ejector latch up to plug the BS module into the backplane connectors.

5. Secure the PXIe module with the mounting screws on the front panel.
6. Plug one side of the thunderbolt cable in the thunderbolt port of the PXIe 8301 module and connect the other side to a thunderbolt port on the PC. (Warning: make sure the thunderbolt cable is connected to a thunderbolt port and not a standard USB-C port.)
7. Update the BIOS firmware of the PC in case this is not the latest version.
8. Install the latest Thunderbolt drivers in case the standard thunderbolt driver is missing.
9. Power off the PC.
10. Continue with step 14 in section 4.1.3 on page 29.

#### 4.1.2 PXIe Chassis and Remote Controller

This section describes how to install and operate the Neuropixels Control System using a PXIe chassis and Remote Controller. Make sure you have the following hardware components available:

- Third-party PXIe chassis + remote controller (see Section 2.2 for provider recommendations),
- PC with at least one PCIe slot (Gen 2 x8 or wider) (see Section 2.2 for additional hardware and system requirements; also consult the requirements for the application software you intend to use)
- Neuropixels PXIe acquisition module (PXIe\_1000).

The first step is to install the third-party remote controller into your PXIe chassis. Here we will provide you with some basic guidelines but do emphasize the need to follow the instructions and safety information described in the user manuals of the chosen PXIe chassis and remote controller provider.

Follow the steps below to install the PXIe-8398 remote controller into the NI PXIe-1071 chassis and the NI PCIe-8398 board into the PC:

1. Power-off the PXIe chassis but leave the power cable plugged in to ground the chassis.

- Identify a valid PXIe slot and remove the filler panel. The slot type on the chassis can be identified by symbols next to the slot number, as shown in Figure 19. The PXIe-8398 remote control module must be plugged into the 'PXIe Controller Slot'.









	System Timing Slot
	Star Trigger Slot
	PXI Peripheral Slot
	PXIe Peripheral Slot
	Hybrid Peripheral Slot (accepts PXI and PXIe cards)
	PXI Controller Slot
	PXIe Controller Slot
	PXIe System Timing Slot or PXIe Peripheral Slot

Figure 19: PXIe chassis slot symbols (source: ni.com).

- Push the ejector handle down (Figure 20) by pressing the grey button (step 1) on the handle and subsequently pushing the black handle (step 2) down.

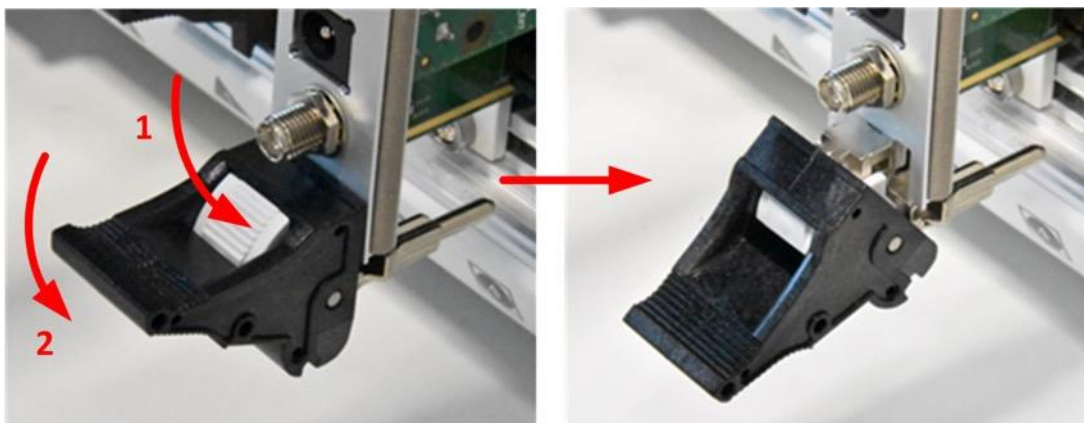


Figure 20: Push the ejector latch down prior to inserting the module

- Slide the module into the PXIe slot. Observe the correct orientation of the module. When the ejector handle touches the metal rail of the chassis, lift the ejector handle to push the module into the slot for the last few millimeters.

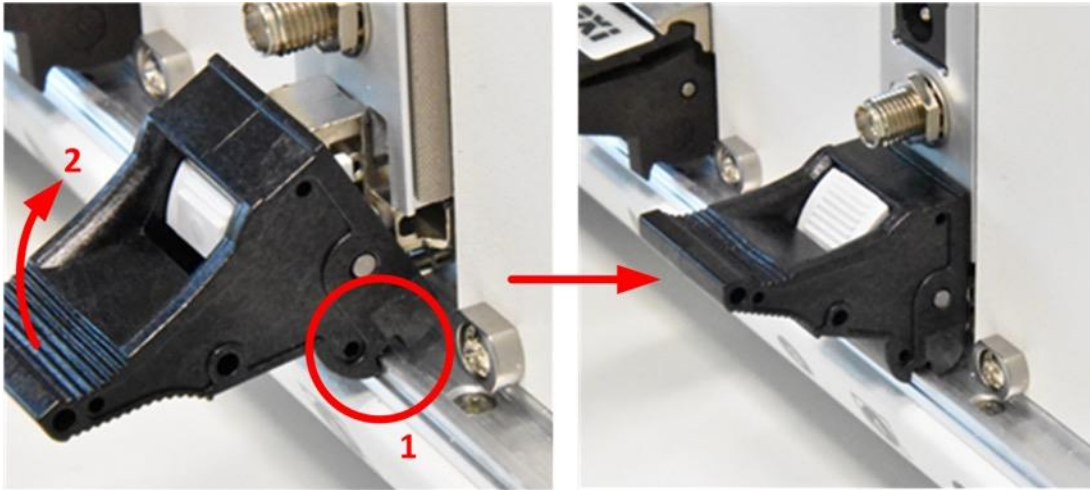


Figure 21: Push the ejector latch up to plug the BS module into the backplane connectors

5. Secure the PXIe module with the mounting screws on the front panel.
6. Power off and unplug your host computer.
7. Remove the top cover or access port to the PCIe expansion slots.
8. Select any available PCIe x16 expansion slot (Figure 22).
9. Locate and dislodge the metal bracket that covers the cut-out in the back panel of the computer for the slot you have selected.
10. Insert the PCIe-8398 board into the expansion slot (Figure 23).
11. Secure the metal bracket back in place.
12. Replace the computer cover.
13. Connect the MXI-Express x16 cable to both MXI-Express x16 cards. The cables have no polarity, so you can connect either end to either card.

Continue with step 14 in section 4.1.3.1 further below.



Figure 22: PCIe x16 slot on the PC motherboard.



Figure 23: NI PCIe-8398 board plugged into the PC.

### 4.1.3 Neuropixels Hardware

All Neuropixels system hardware is delivered preconfigured by imec. No further configuration is required. An update procedure is available for the PXIe acquisition module in case an update of the FPGA firmware code is required. The full procedure to update the FPGA firmware is described on the website of [SpikeGLX](http://SpikeGLX).

#### 4.1.3.1 PXIe Acquisition Module

Continue with the steps below to install the PXIe acquisition module into the chassis:

14. Ensure the PXIe chassis and host PC are still powered off.
15. Identify a valid PXIe slot in the chassis and remove the filler panel. The slot type on the chassis can be identified by symbols next to the slot number, as shown in Figure 19. The PXIe acquisition module must be inserted into a 'PXIe Peripheral Slot', 'Hybrid Peripheral Slot' or 'PXIe System Timing Slot'.
16. Follow the same steps 3-5 as above.
17. Power on **first** the PXIe chassis and **then** the host computer (in this sequence). The global status LED on your PXIe acquisition module should switch from red to green as shown in Figure 24. The 'LINK' status LED of the remote controller will also turn green.



Figure 24: Global status LED of the PXIe acquisition module switching from red to green after correct installation.

#### 4.1.3.2 Drivers

After mounting the PXIe acquisition module into the chassis, install the Enclustra FPGA driver files that you have downloaded as described in Section 2.3.

A detailed procedure with screenshots on how to install the driver on a Windows 10 machine is given below.

1. Start the Windows Device Manager with an administrator account. The example in the screenshot below shows the device manager for a chassis with one base station plugged in, prior to installation. The PXIe acquisition modules show up as **PCI Memory Controller** under **Other devices**.

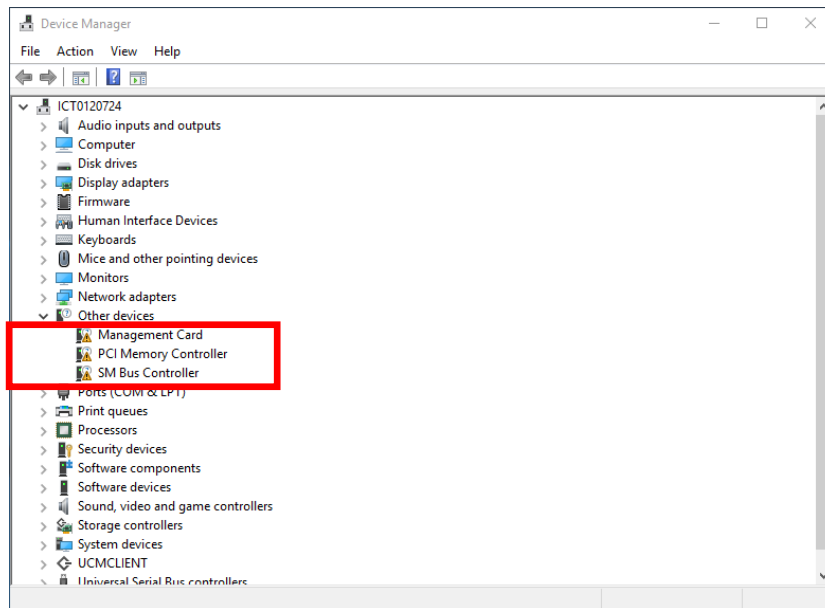


Figure 25: Windows 10: Device Manager before driver installation.

2. Right click 'PCI Memory Controller'. Click 'Properties'.
3. Click 'Change settings'

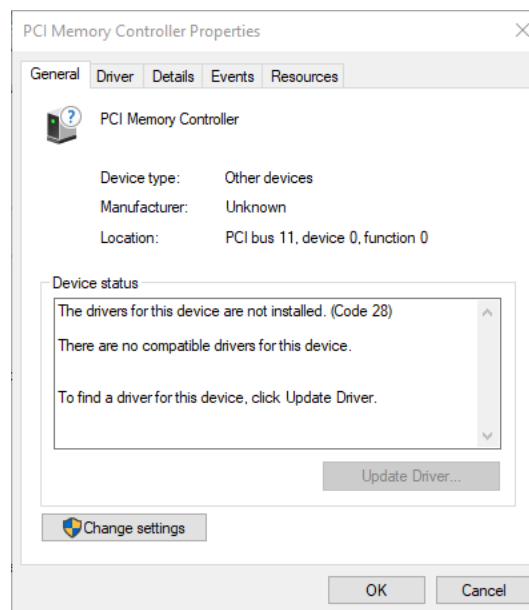


Figure 26: Windows 10: Uninstalled device properties.

4. Click 'Update Driver...'

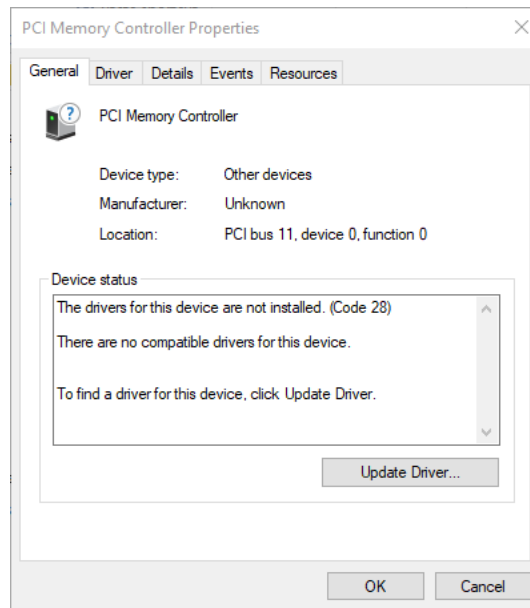


Figure 27: Windows 10: Editable device properties.

5. Click 'browse My computer for driver software'

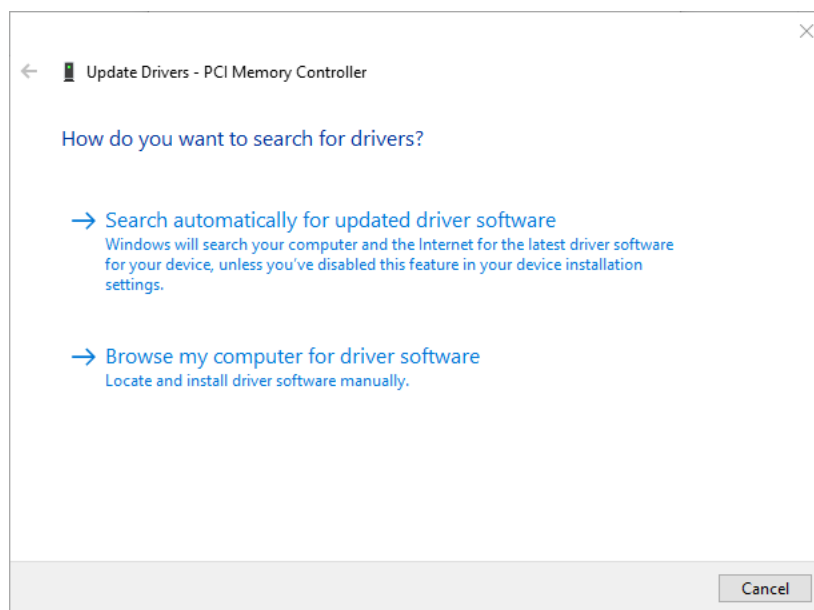


Figure 28: Windows 10: Install driver.

6. Browse to the location with the driver files. Click 'Next'.

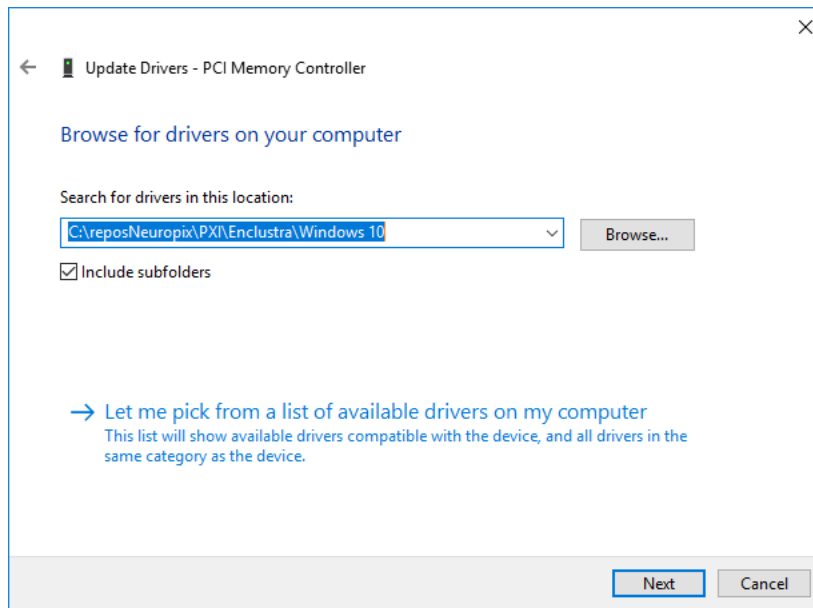


Figure 29: Windows 10: Select driver file.

7. If all goes well, you get a screen saying that Windows has successfully updated your driver. Click 'Close'.

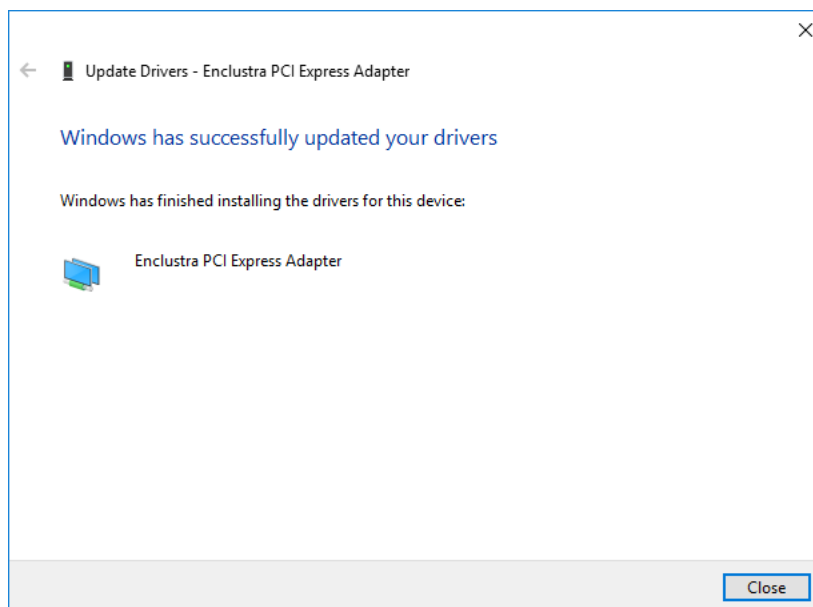


Figure 30: Windows 10: Successful driver update confirmation.

8. Click 'Close'.

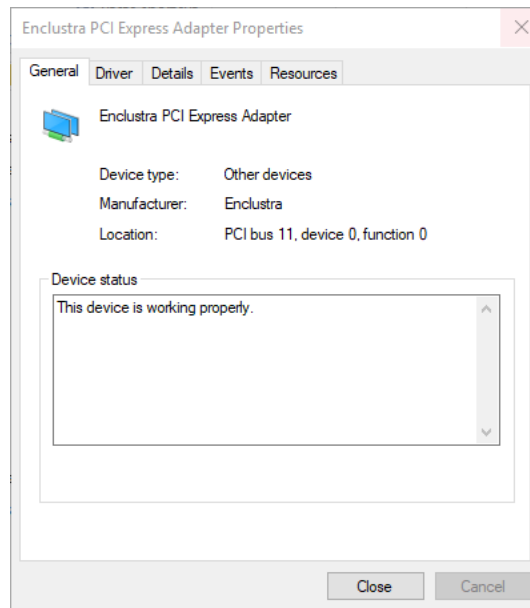


Figure 31: Windows 10: Device properties after installation.

9. Reboot the PC and log in with a normal user account. Check the installation of the driver in the Device Manager. After successful installation, an **Enclustra PCI Express Adapter** shows up in the **Device Manager** under **Enclustra Devices**.

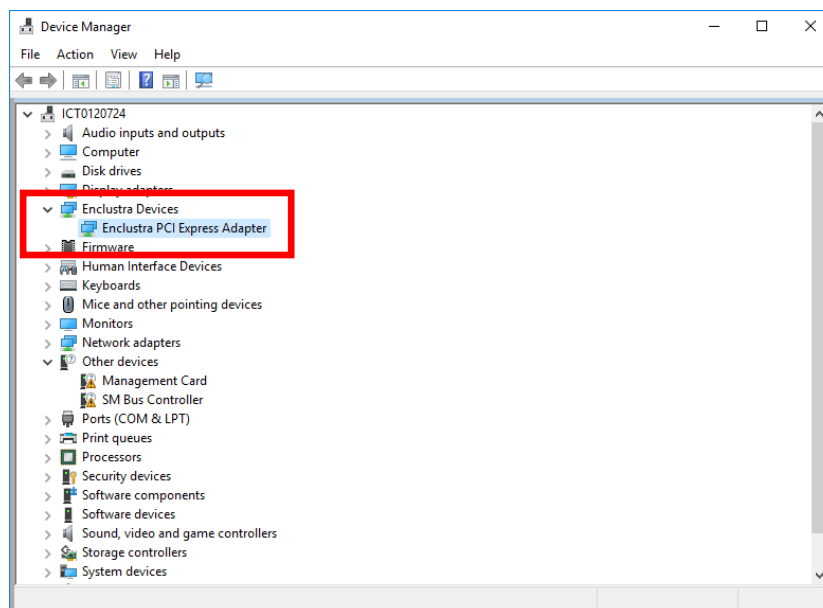




Figure 32: Windows 10: Device manager after installation.

To start Windows 10 in safe mode or get to other startup settings:

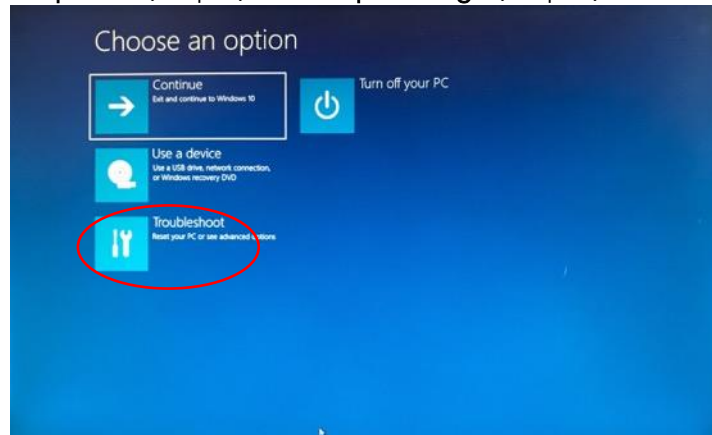
1. Select the **Start**  button, then choose **Settings** .
2. Select **Update & security** > **Recovery**.
3. Under **Advanced startup** select **Restart now**.

4. After your PC restarts to the **Choose an option screen** (step 1 below), select **Troubleshoot** (step 2) > **Advanced options** (step 3) > **Startup Settings** (step 4) > **Restart**.
5. After your PC restarts, select **'7'** or **'F7'**, your PC will automatically reboot with the new startup setting.

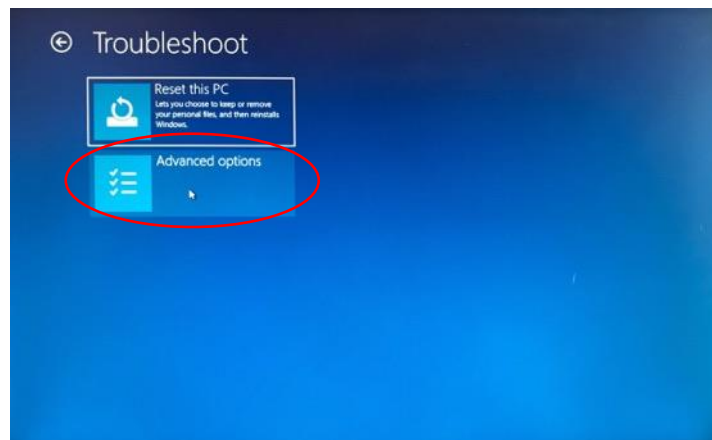
Alternatively, you can get to the startup options from the sign-in screen:

1. On the sign-in screen, hold the **Shift** key down while you select **Power > Restart** (in the lower-right corner of the screen).
2. After your PC restarts to the **Choose an option screen**, select **Troubleshoot** (step A) > **Advanced options** (Step B) > **Startup Settings** (Step C) > **Restart** (Step D).

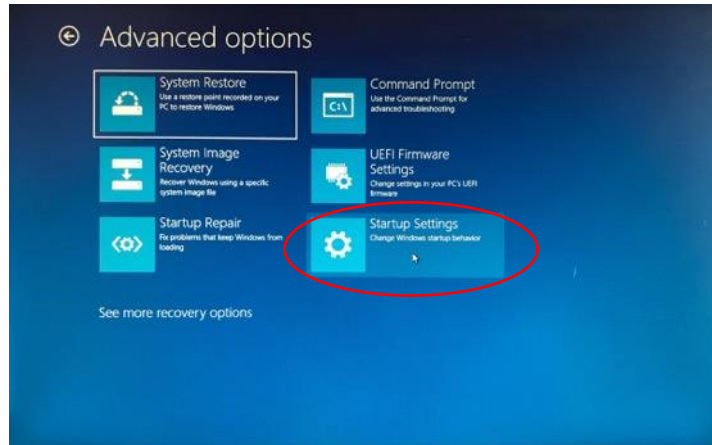
STEP A



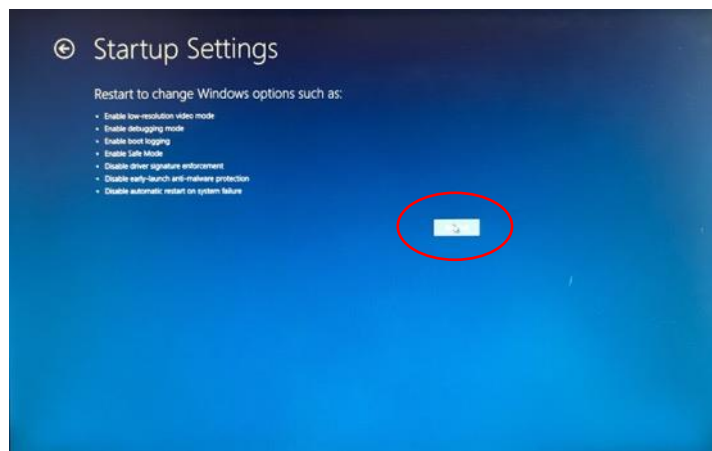
STEP B



STEP C

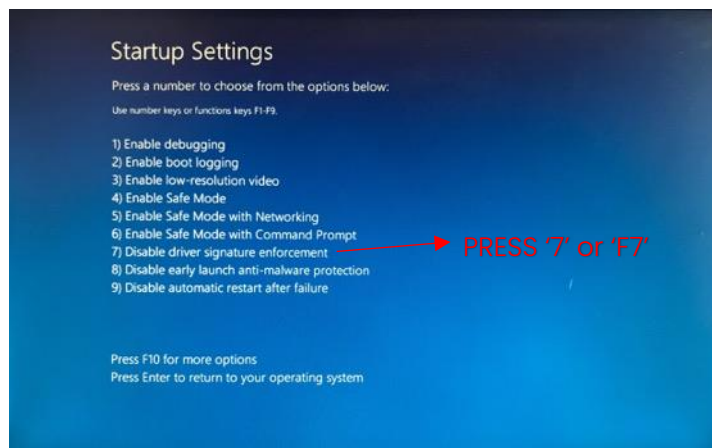


Step D



3. After your PC restarts, press '7' or 'F7' (Step E), your PC will automatically reboot with the new startup setting.

Step E



An unsuccessful installation of the driver can also be fixed by uninstalling and reinstalling the driver.

### 4.1.3.3 Remote FPGA update

The PXIe acquisition module is always shipped with the latest firmware release programmed on the board. However, firmware updates which extend the functionality of the PXIe acquisition module will be released. Updating the firmware on the board can be done with the application software packages SpikeGLX or Open Ephys. However, in case this update procedure would fail, for example due to a power failure of the system during the update process, a recovery procedure needs to be followed:

- If the PXIe chassis has not been switched off after the firmware update procedure has failed, you can simply repeat the update procedure from the application software.
- If the PXIe chassis has been switched off after an unsuccessful firmware update, you need to press and hold the ISP switch on the front panel of the PXIe acquisition module during powering on of the PXIe chassis. You can use a pen to press the switch. Keep the switch pressed for a few seconds, until the STATUS led lights up as green. The update procedure can now be repeated from the application software.

## 4.2 OneBox

Coming soon

## 5 Using the System

### 5.1 Connecting the System Components

#### 5.1.1 Probe to HS

The probe flex connects to the HS via the ZIF connector (Figure 33, right). To plug the flex into the HS, gently lift the black latch of the HS ZIF connector (Figure 33, left). If the HS ZIF connector faces up, the gold contacts on the flex cable (Figure 6, right) must face down. Ensure that the flex cable is fully inserted into the HS ZIF connector before closing the connector latch. It is best to close the latch while maintaining slight pressure to keep the flex seated; a good connection is crucial for the recording. In case you are not able to record from a probe please try to reseat the probe flex into the headstage. Insert the flex as deep as possible in the zif connector and maintain force on the flex while closing the black lid.

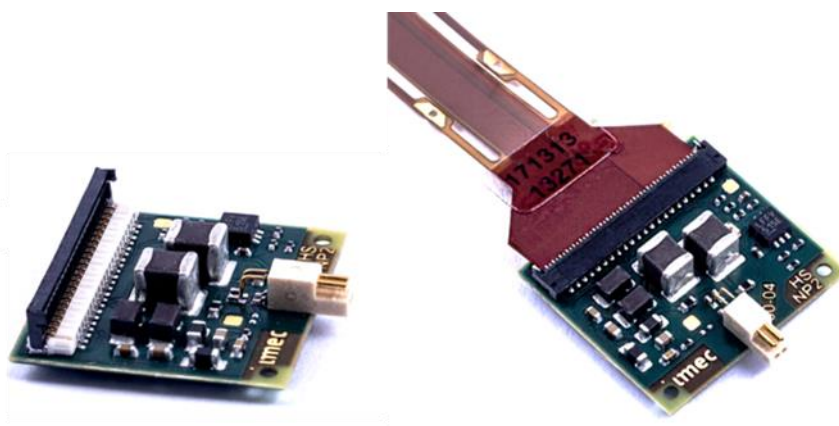


Figure 33: Connecting the probe flex to the HS.

#### 5.1.2 HS to PXIe Acquisition Module or Onebox

The PXIe side of the interface cable is terminated with a USB-C connector, which is symmetric and can thus be plugged into the PXIe acquisition module or OneBox in either orientation. The HS side of the cable is terminated with a 4-pin Omnetics connector. This connector is not symmetric and must be plugged into the HS so that the two exposed metal pins mate easily with the two receiving holes (Figure 10, right).

*NOTE: Please carefully read and follow the instructions on probe handling (Appendix A) and ESD protection (Appendix C) prior to handling any system components.*

### 5.2 Probe and System Configuration

The Neuropixels API provides various functionalities to control, configure and test the probe and control system, including (but not limited to):

- Selection of recording electrodes, reference inputs, channel gains, and bandwidth.
- Selection of trigger mode.

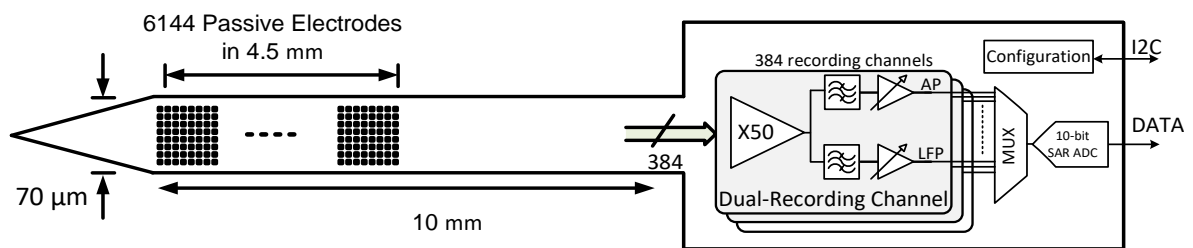
- Loading of probe-specific configuration files (these files are provided by imec with every probe shipment through a file transfer service. In case you lost the calibration files please contact [neuropixels.sales@imec.be](mailto:neuropixels.sales@imec.be).)
- Reading of serial numbers, part numbers, hardware versions, and software versions.
- Enabling of BISTs.
- and others.

Most of these functions are already implemented in the application software packages mentioned in Section 2.4.1 and are described in the respective online *User Manual* and *Documentation*.

Below, we will briefly describe the electrode selectivity and reference selection.

### 5.2.1 Electrode Selectivity

In the UHD programmable shank, the electrodes are arranged as an 8x768 array covering only half of the shank starting from the tip (~4.5mm). 384 of the electrodes can be selected and routed to the 384 outputs, with the selection being done in groups of 2x8 pixels, thus the selection granularity is coarser.



Due to the larger pixel array (i.e. 8x768) and more complex mapping caused by the grouping of electrode selection into 2x8 pixel groups, the schematic mapping is complex. The mapping is calculated based on spreadsheet formulas.

When considering the 8x768 electrode array, multiple possibilities for naming the electrodes exist. The following scheme is used in the shank:

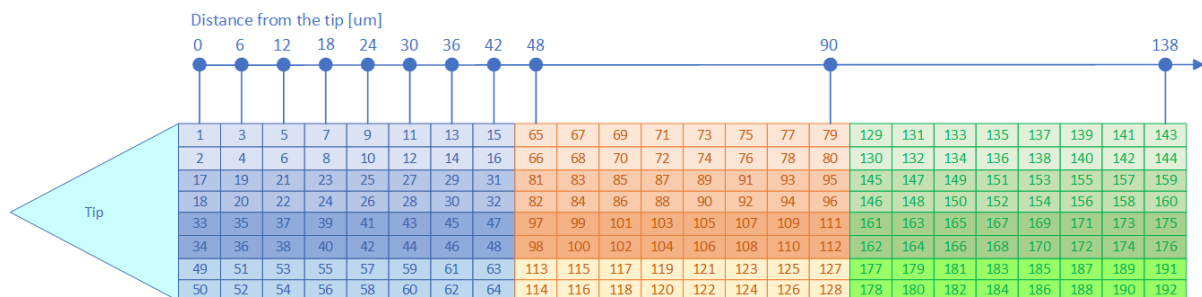


Figure 34: Electrode numbering scheme on the UHD programmable probe showing the first 192 electrodes from the tip.

The electrodes are numbered in groups of 16 (the selectable unit) and as shown in Figure 34, groups are consecutive going top to bottom and then tip to base.

## Electrode selection modes & scrambling

It is desired to be able to select electrodes in a manner that is as flexible as possible, however, two configurations stand in opposite extremes: selecting all the electrodes in a compact grouped area (8x48) and selecting the electrodes in a long and narrow area (2x192) to cover as much of the shank as possible.

Since the electrodes are configurable only in groups of 16 (2x8) the electrode selection is designed considering this unit in mind. With the 384 available channels, 24 such electrode groups can be selected simultaneously.

The proposed arrangement of groups is shown in Figure 35 below.

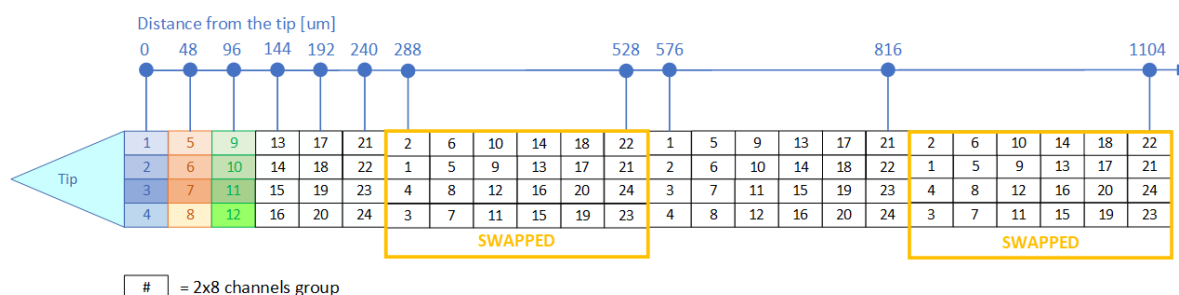


Figure 35: Layout of the shank electrode groups.

Each group number from 1 to 24 represents a unique set of 16 channels (for a total number of  $24 \times 16 = 384$ ) to which the electrodes present in that position can connect. Once all the groups are placed, they will repeat. However, the repetition order can be changed to allow more flexibility (i.e. scrambling the output such that within the next set of 384 electrodes, each is connected to another possible output).

*Example:* The arrangement of the first groups in order (i.e. the first 6 columns from the tip in Figure 35) allows for a selection of compact areas, however, to increase the ability to select a longer and narrower continuous area, every 2 groups may be swapped (i.e. 1-2, 5-6, etc) as shown in columns 7 to 12 in Figure 35. This creates the two arrangements named *Direct* and *Swapped* which repeat alternately across the shank.

With this layout in mind, the selection possibilities are shown in Figure 36 **Error! Reference source not found.** and allow for both a compact 8x48 selection and an elongated 2x192 selection.

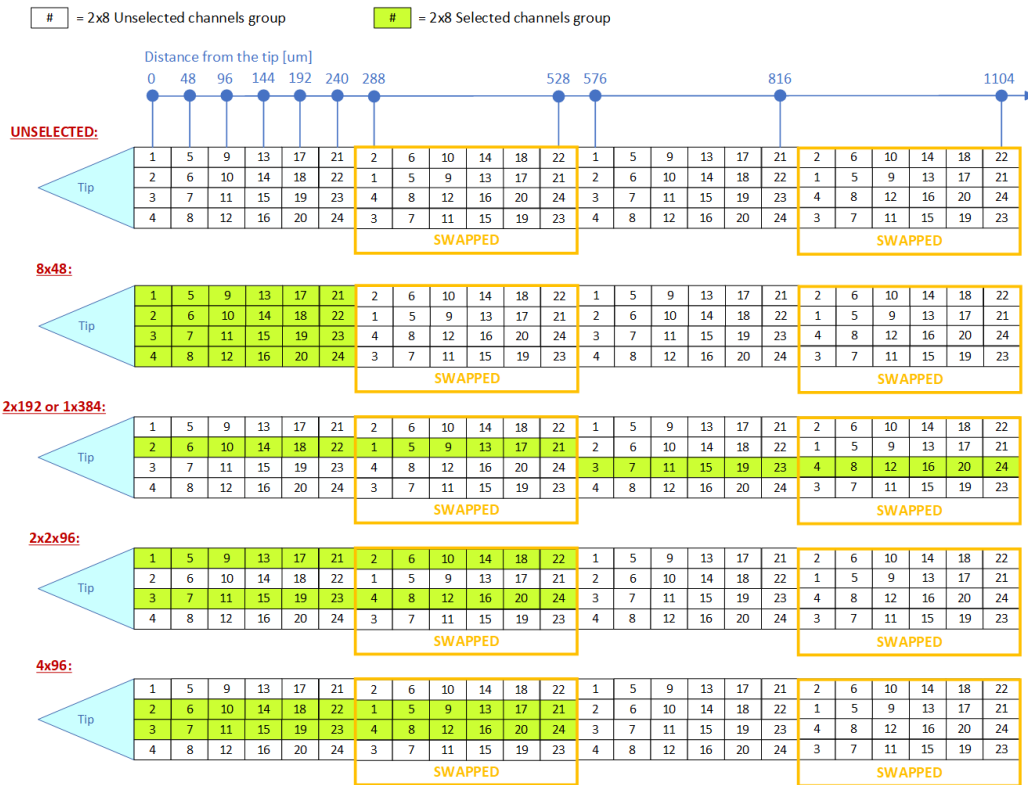


Figure 36: Shank electrode groups selection possibilities.

## 5.2.2 Reference Selection

Two reference inputs are available for each channel (see Figure 37):

- Internal reference electrode: a large TiN electrode located at the tip of the shank.
- External reference electrode: multiple input pads are located on the probe flex. Separate wires can be soldered to these pads (see also Figure 5).

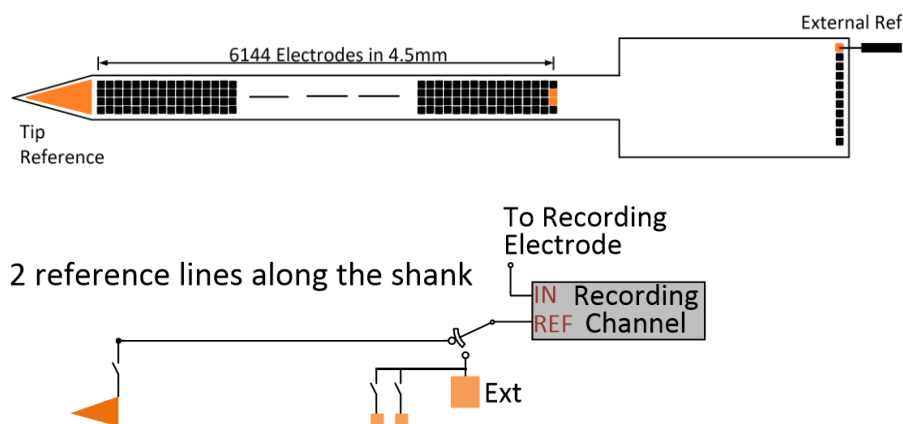


Figure 37: Visualization of the reference options.

## 5.3 Support and Troubleshooting

Neuropixels probes are provided to the neuroscience research community at low cost on a non-for-profit basis. All technical and user support is based on a community support model.

To learn how to use the Neuropixels probe and control system, new users are encouraged to attend one of the regularly organized user workshops or training courses prior to using the probes. [Courses](#) are currently offered by University College London through a grant by the Wellcome Trust and generously supported by the Sainsbury-Wellcome Centre.

If your Neuropixels probes appear to malfunction and not perform to specifications, we encourage you to:

- Carefully read this *User Manual*.
- Take advantage of the growing knowledge base shared on various online collaboration platforms: The [Neuropixels Slack channel](#). In addition, both SpikeGLX and Open Ephys are helpful information sources. A list of available web-based resources is available at [www.neuropixels.org](http://www.neuropixels.org).

In the unfortunate event that your probe is defective and/or non-functional, you may contact [neuropixels.info@imec.be](mailto:neuropixels.info@imec.be) or [neuropixels.sales@imec.be](mailto:neuropixels.sales@imec.be) to discuss a suitable remedy and process to make sure that you have functional Neuropixels probes. This will be the fastest and most efficient mechanism for you to resolve issues with your Neuropixels probes. Please do not contact imec directly at any of the generic imec email contact information addresses.

In the following we describe various tests that you can perform to identify the root cause of observed failures.

### 5.3.1 Visual Inspection

Inspect your probe and system components for visible defects. The probe shank should also be inspected under a microscope to determine possible debris contamination or physical damage such as scratches.

### 5.3.2 Built-In Self-Tests

As good practice you should start debugging your probe and/or control system by first running the BISTs which must be enabled in the application software. The results will indicate the type and location of possible failures modes. On system level, these tests verify whether all power and data links are functional and whether data integrity criteria are met. On probe level, these tests verify the correct programming of and data streaming from the probe ASIC, thus assessing functionality and performance of the electrodes and integrated electronics.

To run a BIST test in SpikeGLX follow the instructions below:

- Connect a probe with a headstage and cable to the PXIe data acquisition module.
- Open SpikeGLX
- Go to the menu "TOOLS" => "BIST (Imec probe diagnostics)..."

- Select the correct Slot, Port and Dock and press “Go”. This will run all defined tests by default.

Be aware the noise test may fail since you are testing the probe in suboptimal conditions.

### 5.3.3 Headstage Test Dongle

The HST is a small test box (Figure 14) that plugs into the HS ZIF connector of a HS. Its purpose is to help verify the functionality of a headstage (HS). This is useful when e.g. neural data seems corrupted or cannot be recorded or when a probe cannot be programmed correctly anymore.

Disconnect your probe from the HS and insert the HST flex into the ZIF connector of your HS. Run the HS tests which are enabled in the application software (Open Ephys, SpikeGLX). In case of failure, the application provides more detailed information about the exact source of the failure (e.g. power supply, serial data link, clock signal, reset signals, etc). LEDs on the HST indicate status and result of the HS tests. We recommend always repeating the HS test also with an unused, good HS.

### 5.3.4 Gain and Noise Measurements

The functionality and performance of a probe can also be verified with a simple gain and/or noise measurement in PBS solution. These measurements should be performed after loading the probe configuration files into the software.

Gain measurements must be performed using the external REF shorted to GND. This can be achieved by soldering two wires to the respective pads on the probe flex and shorting them to a signal generator's ground (Figure 38). If configured for a nominal gain of 1000 for both AP and LFP channels, a sinusoidal test signal of e.g. 500  $\mu\text{V}_{\text{pp}}$  and 1.8 kHz or 100 Hz, for AP or LFP band, respectively, can be applied to the PBS using a Pt, stainless steel or Ag|AgCl counter electrode. The resulting mean gain should not deviate >10% from the nominal value and at least 90% of the electrodes should have a gain within 5% of the mean gain. The results can provide qualitative and quantitative information about electrodes and/or channel performance.

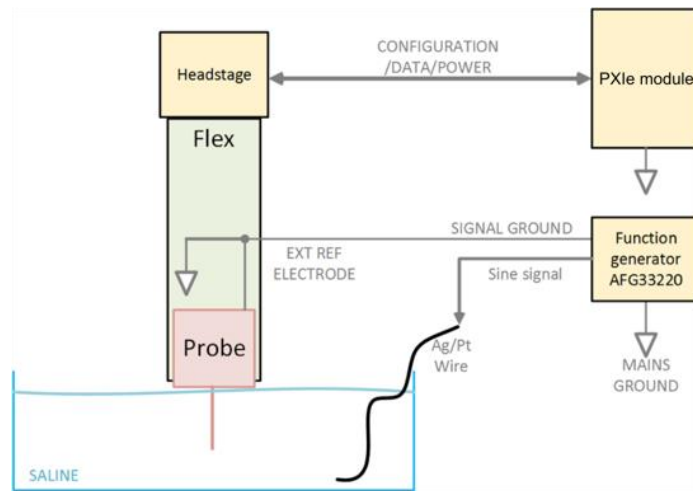


Figure 38: Setup for gain measurements in PBS.

Noise measurements should always be performed in a grounded Faraday cage. One can use either an internal REF electrode or the external REF shorted to GND. The reference selection is done via the GUI. The PBS solution must be grounded (Figure 38). During noise measurements, all internal REF electrodes must be immersed in PBS to avoid unwanted noise pick-up and cross-coupling. When using the external REF, the external REF electrode must be grounded via the REF and GND contact pads on the flex.

The nominal gain for both AP and LFP channels should be set to 1000. To obtain the actual input-referred noise, one must divide the measured noise by the actual gain measured above.

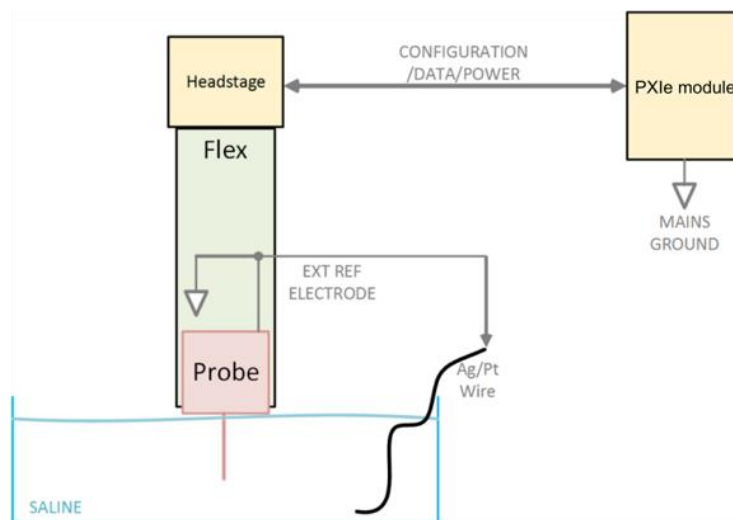


Figure 39: Setup for noise measurements in PBS.

### 5.3.5 Frequently asked questions

#### **Q1: What is the purpose of the dummy probes? Are they electrically functional?**

Dummy probes are physically the same as functional probes but are not able to be recorded from; they are not electrically functional. We provide users with dummy probes for mechanical tests and practice purposes. Dummy probes come in sets of 6pc/ box and can be ordered from the Order page on the Neuropixels website.

#### **Q2: What is the cost of the recording software and where can I get it?**

The Neuropixels software to record is open source and provided free of cost by SpikeGLX and/or OpenEphys. This software can be downloaded free of cost. Please visit following website for more information:

- <https://billkarsh.github.io/SpikeGLX/>
- <https://open-ephys.github.io/gui-docs/User-Manual/Plugins/Neuropixels-PXI.html#neuropixelspxi>

#### **Q3: How can I become a member of the dedicated Neuropixels Slack channel?**

Please subscribe using following link:

- [https://join.slack.com/t/neuropixelsgroup/shared\\_invite/zt-2c8u0k21u-CC4wSkb8~U\\_Fkrf3HHf\\_kw](https://join.slack.com/t/neuropixelsgroup/shared_invite/zt-2c8u0k21u-CC4wSkb8~U_Fkrf3HHf_kw)

#### **Q4: I want to place an order for probes and system parts. How do I proceed?**

Please download the RFQ form on the [website](#). Fill in all the details and quantities and send the document to [neuropixels.sales@imec.be](mailto:neuropixels.sales@imec.be). They will provide an official quotation which needs to be signed.

#### **Q5: What's the standard lead time for products?**

The standard lead time is 120 days. The orders will be shipped sooner if possible.

#### **Q6: I lost my calibration files. How can I retrieve them?**

Please send an email to [neuropixels.info@imec.be](mailto:neuropixels.info@imec.be) or [neuropixels.sales@imec.be](mailto:neuropixels.sales@imec.be). The calibration files will be sent to your email address.

#### **Q7: The imec data acquisition card PXIe\_1000 does not show up in the NI MAX tool?**

It's correct that the imec data acquisition card does not show up in the NI MAX tool. This does not mean that the card is dysfunctional.

#### **Q8: Where can I find more information regarding the Neuropixels recording system and needed equipment?**

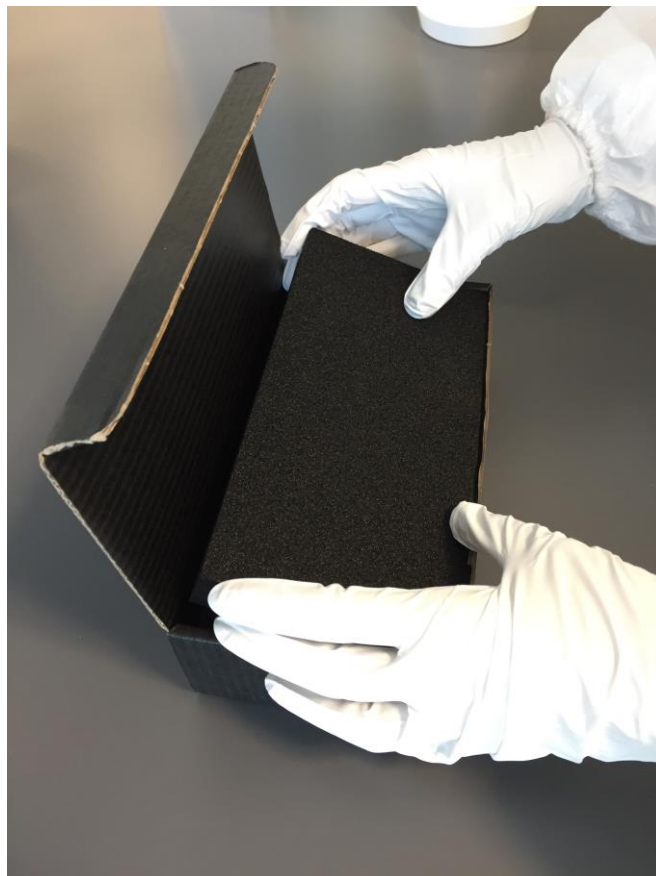
A good description is given on this website:

[https://github.com/billkarsh/SpikeGLX/blob/master/Markdown/SystemRequirements\\_PXI.md](https://github.com/billkarsh/SpikeGLX/blob/master/Markdown/SystemRequirements_PXI.md)

## Appendix A Probe Handling, Cleaning, Storage

Please follow these guidelines to remove the probes from the shipping box:

- Wear gloves to minimize dust and dirt contamination. Work in a clean environment.
- Carefully open the box with the lid pointing away from you. This way the shanks are the furthest from your body. Make sure the lid stays upright.
- Remove the cover foam by lifting it up at the side closest to the lid (Figure 40). The bottom foam has edges to prevent the cover foam touching the probes. By lifting the foam in this orientation, even the corners will never touch the shanks accidentally.
- Carefully take the bottom foam (containing the probes) out of the carton box to work easier.
- Up to six probes are shipped in each box.
- We advise to remove probes only from the leftmost non-empty slot not to accidentally touch the other probes.



*Figure 40: Removing the probe from the shipping box.*

- With one hand, push the foam holding a probe open to make space for the probe to be taken out (Figure 41).
- Take a pair of ESD-safe tweezers and carefully clamp the base of the probe as shown in Figure 42.
- Carefully pick up the probe while keeping the foam pushed open.
- At all times, keep your eyes on the shank and make sure that it does not touch the foam.



*Figure 41: Removing the probe from the shipping box (foam with vertical slits)*



*Figure 42: Removing the probe from the shipping box (foam with vertical slits)*

Please follow these guidelines to ensure mechanical integrity of the fragile shank, electrodes and flex:

- Do not touch the shank with your fingers or other objects.
- Do not subject the probe to vibrations (potential damage of TiN electrodes and shank). Such vibrations could arise e.g. when blow-drying the probe with compressed air or N<sub>2</sub> or when subjecting the probe to ultrasound.
- Always work in a clean environment and wear gloves.
- Regularly inspect the probes with an optical microscope to verify that shank and electrodes are undamaged and clean. Color changes/darkening of the TiN can indicate corrosion or other damage. Please report such observations.
- Do not pinch the flex of the probe and maintain a minimum bending radius of 3 mm.
- Store the probes in the black ESD safe shipping boxes at room temperature.

Follow these cleaning guidelines:

- Strong oxidizing agents (acids, bases, H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>, etc) and/or elevated temperatures (>100 °C) should be avoided as these may irreversibly deteriorate the TiN electrode impedance and thus noise. The following treatments and solutions have been tested and are safe to use with Neuropixels probes (no other organic solvents should be used):
  - Deionized water (DIW)<sup>10</sup> at room temperature
  - Iso-propyl alcohol (IPA)
  - Phosphate buffered saline (PBS) @ pH 7.4  
(<https://www.sigmaaldrich.com/content/dam/sigmaaldrich/docs/Sigma/Datasheet/pbs1dat.pdf>)
  - 25 mM MOPS (3-(N-morpholino)propanesulfonic acid)  
(<http://www.sigmaaldrich.com/catalog/product/sigma/m1254?lang=en&region=BE>), 150 mM NaCl, DI water, pH adjusted w/ NaOH and HCl
  - 100 mM MES (2-ethanesulfonic acid)  
(<https://www.sigmaaldrich.com/BE/en/product/fluka/69889>), 150 mM NaCl, DI water, pH adjusted w/ NaOH and HCl
  - Tergazyme  
(<http://www.sigmaaldrich.com/catalog/product/aldrich/z273287?lang=en&region=BE>)
  - Ethylene oxide gas sterilization
- When performing experiments in PBS, avoid submersing the electric components into the PBS. While coated with a conformal coating, full hermeticity cannot be guaranteed. Immediately rinse with DIW and IPA and re-test the probe.
- After use in PBS, always rinse the probes (including the electrical components) under a gentle DIW stream or in a beaker for 1-2 minutes followed by IPA rinsing for 1-2 minutes. Do not use a high-pressure water or IPA stream. After IPA rinsing, you can let the probes dry in air. The use of IPA is not mandatory but advised.

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<sup>10</sup> Rinsing or prolonged soaking of Neuropixels probes in DIW (pH ≈ 5.7) does not deteriorate the TiN impedance; if anything, the impedance slightly decreases after prolonged soaking (likely due to improved wetting). DIW degassing is not needed.

- Avoid leaving the probes dry out after removal from PBS. Salt crystals may form on the shank and TiN electrodes that are difficult to remove.
- Always use fresh solutions, i.e. don't use beakers with DIW, IPA, or PBS after prolonged exposure to air (~1/2 day) since dust particles on the liquid surface may irreversibly attach to the shank surface when immersed or rinsed with these solutions.
- After *in-vivo* use, soak the dirty probes in PBS until ready to clean them. Letting the shank dry out makes the cleaning less effective. Follow these cleaning steps:
  - Prepare 1% Tergazyme solution.
  - Soak explanted probes in standard PBS (pH 7.4) until cleaning with Tergazyme (to prevent drying out).
  - Immerse probes in Tergazyme solution @ RT (12h soaking on shelf).
  - Thoroughly rinse with DIW (~5 min under gentle DIW stream); if soaking in DIW is used, a brief rinse with DIW should be applied at the end.
  - Rinse the probes with IPA and let dry in air.

Store the probes in the black ESD safe shipping boxes at room temperature.

## Appendix B Soldering

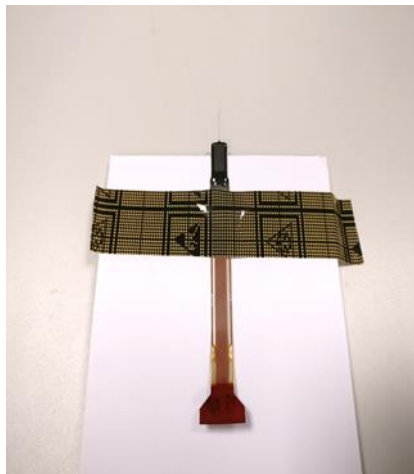
If the experiment requires a connection to the ground and/or external reference signal, the user can make use of the two GND and REF arms which are part of the probe flex. In case these arms are not usable as such, the user can extend or replace these by soldering wires to the provided solder pads on the flex. Four solder pads are available for both GND and REF connection. These solder pads are reinforced with blind vias to prevent peel-off of the solder pads from the flex.

A well-maintained solder iron makes soldering to the probe much easier. Below are some general guidelines to keep your solder tips in good condition:

- Set the temperature of the solder iron to the minimum required for the application.
- Apply some solder to the solder tip before switching off. This prevents corrosion to the tip.
- Switch off the solder station or unplug the solder iron from the station when not in use.
- Replace the tip when the solder wire does no longer melt on the very tip of the solder tip.
- Always choose a solder tip which matches the size of the solder pad as good as possible.

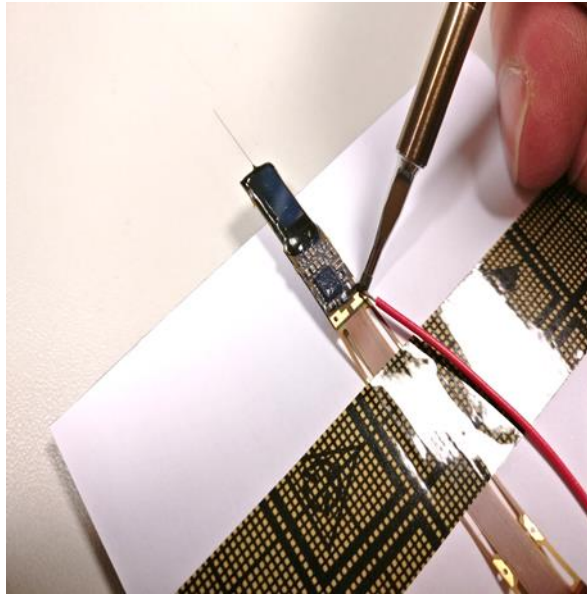
Solder procedure:

- Make sure to use a solder iron which is grounded via the mains supply of the soldering station for ESD protection.
- Fix the probe to a clean surface. A good method is to use ESD tape. (Figure 43)



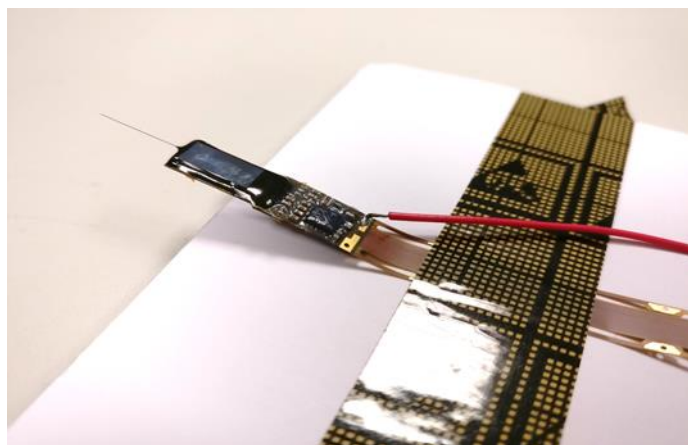
*Figure 43: Fixing the probe before soldering.*

- Clean the solder tip using a brass wire mesh or damp sponge. Repeat at frequent intervals.
- Wet the solder tip slightly with solder wire. This improves heat transfer from the iron to the solder pad.
- Insert the wire through the hole in the solder pad. Place the solder iron at the corner between the pad and the GND/REF wire. (Figure 44)



*Figure 44: Placing the solder tip in the corner between wire and pad.*

- Feed a small amount of solder to the corner between the solder tip and wire. The solder melts on the pad and the GND/REF wire. Solder wire can be purchased in different diameters. For this application it is advisable to use a smaller diameter ( $< 1$  mm), also depending on the diameter of the GND/REF wire.
- The soldering time and temperature should be minimized to  $< 4$  s and max.  $350^{\circ}\text{C}$ , respectively.



*Figure 45: Wire soldered to the solder pad.*

An alternative method does not make use of the hole in the solder pad:

- Apply some solder to the solder pad and GND/REF wire separately. (Figure 46)

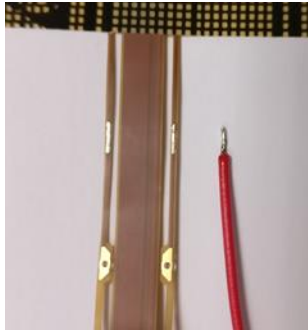


Figure 46: Solder applied to solder pad and GND/REF wire separately.

- Place the GND/REF wire on top of the solder pad.
- Press the solder tip on top of the GND/REF wire and feed some amount of solder wire. This forms a strong solder joint. (Figure 47)

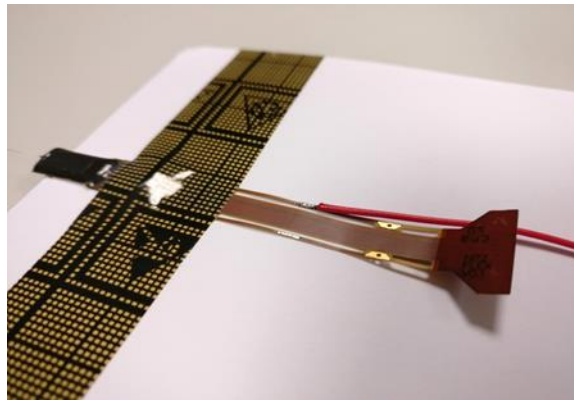


Figure 47: Soldered wire to solder pad without hole.

Always inspect the quality of the solder joint under a microscope before implanting. Also check the components surrounding the solder pads for eventual damage. Run the built-in self-tests after soldering to check the functionality of the probe.

IMPORTANT: Generally, poor connections are a common source of noise. The reference and ground connections on the probe and flex are critical as they are very close to the probe signal amplifiers. Please consult this website on best practices on soldering: [Noise: Learn How To Solder - SpikeGLX \(billkarsh.github.io\)](https://billkarsh.github.io/Noise-Learn-How-To-Solder-SpikeGLX/).

## Appendix C ESD Safety

To avoid ESD damage when handling the electronic hardware (probe, HS, PXIe, OneBox), the operator must be grounded via ESD protective equipment, such as a wrist wrap. General ESD guidelines can be found at: <http://www.esda.org/about-esd/esd-fundamentals/part-3-basic-esd-control-procedures-and-materials/>.

When the probe is implanted in an animal, special precautions are required; To protect the probe from ESD damage, potential static charge build-up on the animal must be discharged via a low-current path. ESD-compliant material must be used because the cables and connectors have an integrated 1M-10M resistor, which limits the current and thus induces a slow discharge rather than a spike.

Preventing static charge build-up on an animal can be challenging, especially when the animal is transported between locations (e.g., vivarium cage, transport cage, lab cage, operating table). Static charge build-up can be prevented by continuously keeping the animal on an ESD-compliant mat which is connected to earth ground via an ESD-compliant cable.

If continuous grounding of the animal is not feasible, the following guidelines should be followed:

- Grounding of the operator via ESD-compliant protective equipment when touching the animal.
- Grounding of the animal via ESD-compliant protective equipment prior to connecting the probe flex to the HS. This can be done, for example, by placing the animal on an ESD-compliant mat. Alternatively, if the external reference wire of the probe flex is connected to the animal's skull, the grounding can be done through this connection. This connection should be maintained throughout the experiment.
- Grounding of the probe flex ground pin or wire via ESD-compliant protective equipment prior to connecting the probe flex to the HS. This connection can be removed when the probe flex is plugged into the HS.
- Grounding of the PXIe module or OneBox to earth ground prior to connecting the probe flex to the HS. This is normally already achieved if the PXIe chassis is plugged into the mains supply.

*NOTE: A connection from the probe to the PXIe acquisition module ground does not provide an ESD-safe discharge path, because it does not contain a current-limiting resistor.*