

Imperial College London

Postdocs who contribute towards the research student supervisor partnership: Formal appointment of Assistant Supervisors and Co-Supervisors

Postdocs make important contributions towards the supervision of PhD students and it is proposed that the title of assistant supervisor, or in exceptional circumstances Co-Supervisor, would be an appropriate way for the College to recognise this. Formalising these roles and titles would also be helpful for Postdocs because they would be able to record this on their CV.

1. Assistant Supervisors

1.1 Before a postdoc can be assigned as an assistant supervisor, they should be made fully aware of what the role entails and complete the mandatory short course. A roles and responsibilities document for assistant supervisor has been developed, together with a Continuing Professional Development Framework to support this role. It should also be noted that many PhD students approach postdocs for help with experiments directly in an informal way. This also needs to be considered when assessing the contribution that an individual postdoc makes, to ensure that no postdoc is over-burdened.

1.2 Subject to completion of the mandatory training, the following process for the assignment of Assistant Supervisors has been agreed with HR:

1. Postdoc completes "*Introduction to Supervising at Imperial College London*", an online course developed by the Graduate School in partnership with the Educational Development Unit. The Graduate School will send a termly report to Departments of all staff who have completed the course.
2. Subject to completion of this course, and taking into consideration other work commitments, the line manager and postdoc discuss the roles and responsibilities of assistant supervisors and the CPD Framework.
3. Subject to agreement between the line manager and the postdoc, the Department will send an email to their HR representative, confirming that formal assignment to the role of assistant supervisor can be made.
4. HR will issue a formal letter to the postdoc confirming their assignment (**Appendix 1**).
5. The line manager and postdoc may wish to discuss the role of assistant supervisor as part of PRDP discussions.
6. Additionally, the main Supervisor of the student which the postdoc will be supervising, should lead discussions with the co-supervisor and assistant supervisors, about how the supervisory team will work. To facilitate this discussion, the following document can be used, *Defining the Roles within Research Degree Supervisory Teams*.

2. Co-Supervisors

2.1 The College's Policy for Research Degree Supervision states that:

Exceptionally, subject to the agreement of the Head of Department, and provided the individual has completed the College's mandatory continuing professional development training requirements for Co-supervisors, a person in this category of postdoctoral research fellows, with appropriate seniority may be appointed a co-supervisor. Further, a person in this category can only be appointed a co-supervisor if they will be present for the duration of the student's research programme.

2.2 The College already has in place a "[Framework for the support and development of Imperial College London PhD Supervisors](#)," so postdocs appointed to the role of co-supervisor are subject to this in the same way as all other College main and co-Supervisors. Further, a postdoc will only be considered for assignment to co-Supervisor if the following criteria are met:

- Appropriate seniority as determined by the Head of Department
- Contracted to College for the duration of the research student's period of registration
- Permission from the Head of Department is granted

2.3 Subject to completion of the mandatory training and the criteria stipulated in 2.2, the following process for the assignment of Co-Supervisors has been agreed with HR.

1. Postdoc completes "*Introduction to Supervising at Imperial College London*", an online course developed by the Graduate School in partnership with the Educational Development Unit. The Graduate School will send a termly report to Departments of all staff who have completed the course.
2. Subject to completion of this course, and taking into consideration other work commitments, the line manager and main Supervisor of the student concerned (in some cases the line manager of the postdoc will also be the main supervisor of the student) will lead discussions with the co-supervisor and any assistant supervisors about how the supervisory team will work. To facilitate this discussion, the following document can be used, *Defining the Roles within Research Degree Supervisory Teams*.
7. Subject to agreement between the line manager and the postdoc, the Department will send an email to their HR representative, confirming that formal assignment to the role of Co-Supervisor be made.
8. HR will issue a formal letter to the postdoc confirming their assignment (**Appendix 2**).
9. The line manager and postdoc may wish to discuss the role of co-Supervisor as part of PRDP discussions.

Appendix 1:

PERSONAL

Dr xxxx

Department of xxxxxx

Faculty of xxxxxx

Dear Dr xxxxxx

Appointment as Assistant Supervisor

I am writing to confirm your appointment as Assistant Supervisor in the Department of [insert name of Department]. Please find enclosed a copy of the roles and responsibilities document for this post, together with the College's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Framework for Assistant Supervisors.

The appointment will commence on xxxxxx and will run until further notice.

There is no honorarium associated with the duties that you will be carrying out in connection with this post.

All other terms and conditions of service remain unchanged.

If you do not agree to the change above, please contact me in writing.

If you wish to discuss anything within this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Senior HR Administrator

Appendix 2:

PERSONAL

Dr xxxx

Department of xxxxxx

Faculty of xxxxxxxx

Dear Dr xxxxxx

Appointment as Co-Supervisor

I am writing to confirm your appointment as Co-Supervisor to [insert name of student] in the Department of [insert name of Department).

The appointment will commence on xxxxxx and will run until further notice.

There is no honorarium associated with the duties that you will be carrying out in connection with this post.

All other terms and conditions of service remain unchanged.

If you do not agree to the change above, please contact me in writing.

If you wish to discuss anything within this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Senior HR Administrator