

The Imperial College London Photography Guidelines

Photography has a central role in Imperial's communication with its audiences, and in all of our photography, we aim to show the energy, vibrancy, and excitement of Imperial life, we want to ensure that the viewer feels connected with the subjects and with Imperial. Our photographs are used across the Imperial website and social media channels, throughout our printed publications, marketing material and international media. We should emphasise storytelling over straightforward representation and images should be 'suffused with science' wherever possible.

Don't forget:

- **Be polite and respectful:** it is very important that our subjects and those present have a positive experience on the shoot, prepare to be flexible to keep everyone happy.
- **Show diversity:** it is important to reflect and amplify our diverse community in photography
- **Show engagement:** try to capture natural shots with minimal interference, the best shots are 'fly on the wall', we prefer to avoid forced set up shots which might not look natural. Keep an eye out for energy and engagement, listening, talking, laughter, eye contact and faces.
- **Show our name:** if anyone has Imperial branding on their clothing or surroundings, then make the most of this in the photography, but avoid shooting clothes featuring any other strong branding, in this case ask if the subject has any alternative clothing available.
- **Take notes:** photograph the Imperial ID card and write down the name of the person you are photographing, where the shoot is taking place, and what you are capturing. Note the instructor's/researcher's name, and the subject. If you are photographing an event, this might not be feasible.
- **Selection:** provide horizontal, vertical, close, medium and wide establishing shots.
- **Think about safety:** see the following page for more guidance on health and safety.
- **Thank you:** remember to thank everyone who has helped or appeared in a shoot.
- **Delivery:** please deliver files digitally, with a minimum expiry of 2 months.
- **Size / Colour space:** please supply images in **original full size resolution and in sRGB**
- **File names:** year/month/day/name/description/number eg, 171123_smith_john_biology_001.jpg



Health and Safety in photography

If it's not correct in an image, we cannot use the image

Before beginning a shoot in a laboratory or workshop environment, check the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements for the space by reviewing (and photographing) the PPE sign on the door and by talking to the lab manager. All individuals photographed engaging in research MUST be wearing the correct PPE required for the space they are in, or we cannot use the photographs.

For portrait photography away from the workbench, or laboratories that do not have specific PPE requirements, all photography subjects should still follow general guidelines for safe attire: long hair tied back, no dangling jewellery, protective eyewear, lanyards tucked into clothing, lab coats buttoned up to the VERY TOP button, sleeves rolled down, and closed-toe shoes.

Take a photograph of the Imperial ID Card of each person featured in the photographs.

For more information on PPE in photography, read our policy here:
imperial.ac.uk/communications/what-we-do/photography/guidelines/



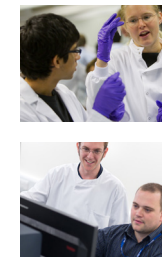
BAD



GOOD

Lab coats

If lab coats are worn, they must be fastened right up to the top button, even for portraits. If one person in shot is wearing a lab coat, then everyone must wear a lab coat properly buttoned up, even those in the background.



BAD



GOOD

Howie lab coats

The types of lab coats that appear in shot should be consistent. Howie lab coats (with the high neck and closed collar) should not be mixed with non-Howie coats, and should be fastened up to the top button.



BAD



GOOD

Protective eyewear

If there is any activity involving liquids, then protective eyewear must be worn in lab photography, even if the liquid is harmless. If one person is wearing protective eyewear in shot, then everyone must wear protective eyewear.



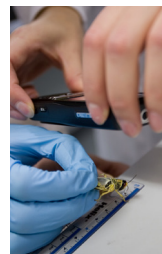
BAD



GOOD

Long hair and jewellery

Long hair should be tied back and there should be no hanging earrings or jewellery.



BAD



GOOD

Gloves

If gloves are necessary, then their use should be consistent in images, and everyone in the shot should be wearing them.



BAD



GOOD

Portraits

For portraits the PPE rules can be relaxed. However, there must be no visible activity in the background, everything must be put away and the subject clearly away from the bench. However, lab coats, if worn, must still be fastened up to the top!

Lab Research - Science for humanity

Showing off our world class facilities and people - celebrating our world leading humans

People in situ

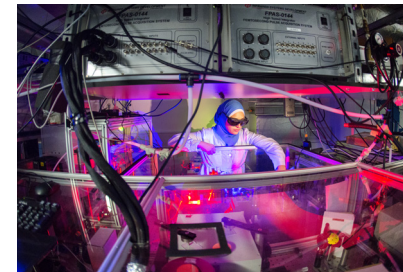
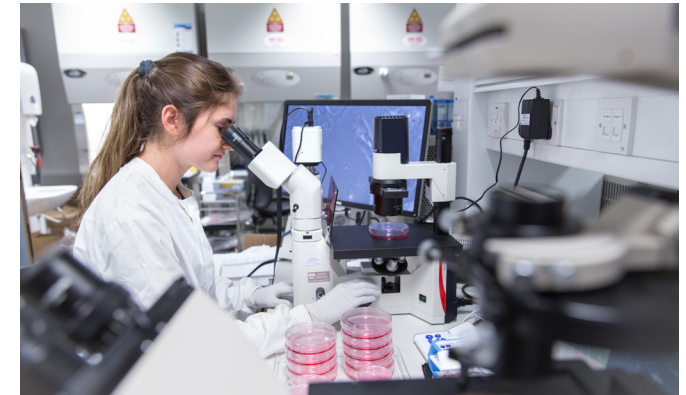
Aim to provide photographs that are 'fly-on-the-wall' where the subject is performing a task that they would ordinarily do, not interacting with, or looking at the camera. Be very careful in these situations to observe the health and safety requirements of the location yourself, as well as ensuring everyone you are photographing is in the correct PPE for the space. Ask permission before using a surface for your equipment and be very careful not to bump or move anything.

Be aware that some people in the environment may not be involved in the shoot, so be sure to check that they are happy to appear in the background of any shots, taking care to avoid any disruption to their work.

For editorial usage try to include some shots with a shallow depth of field and some breathing space for the type to sit on top. Examples of editorial usage are included on the final page.

Keep angles natural and aligned to the subject matter wherever possible. Avoid dramatic angles or diagonals unless absolutely unavoidable to bring a key item into frame. Try to keep your range of subjects diverse.

Ensure that any personal or patient data on screens or labels is not visible or blurred out completely in post production.

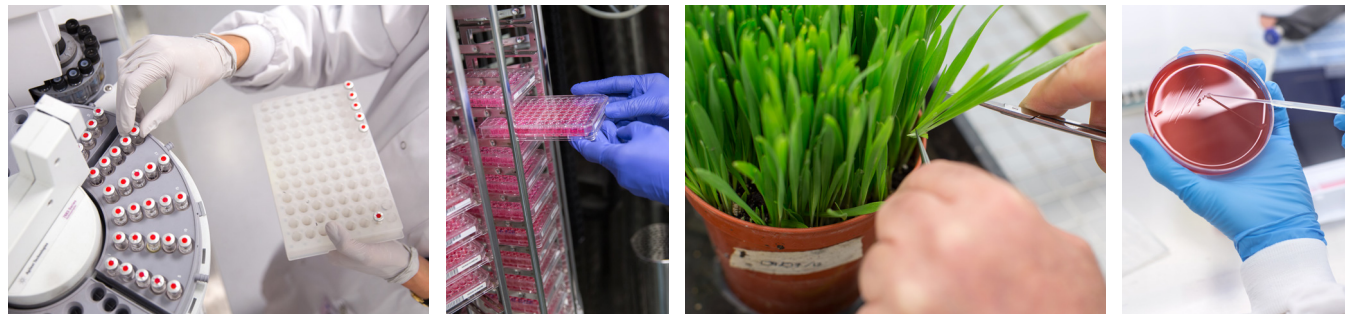


Lab Research imagery - up close and beautiful

Giving a window into the science

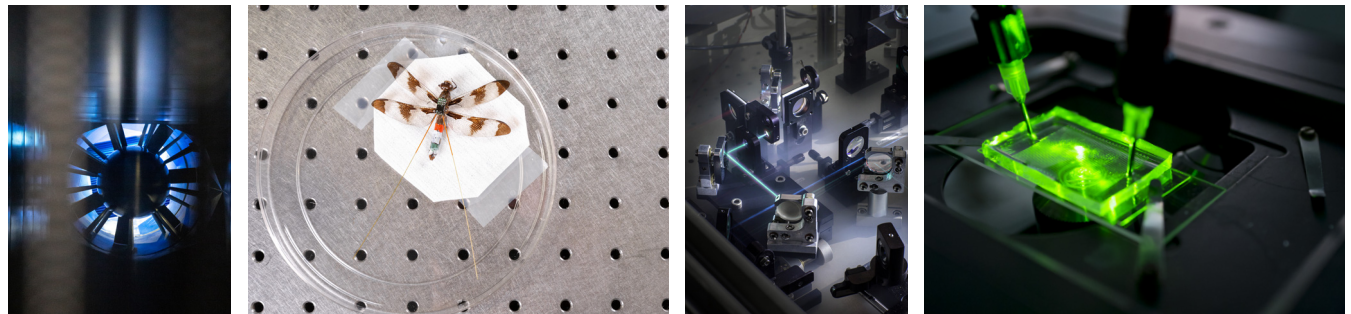
Hands only, no faces

Be careful when holding an object toward the camera (such as the petri dish on the right) that it does not appear too forced. Avoid holding objects straight on to the camera. Ensure that the correct PPE procedure is followed. If the subject should be wearing gloves in a real situation, then this should be shown in the image.



Objects only, no people

These shots can be very useful editorially. Good use of shallow depth of field, angles and space, can allow great opportunities to lay copy on the images and crop to different spaces. However, be careful to allow enough depth of field to capture the key focus area of the object that you are featuring.



Abstract/detail imagery

These images need to be sourced directly from researchers. These abstract images are best used for covers of documents or event posters, and can be treated to enhance impact.



Learning and Teaching - Suffused with science

Showing off our world class facilities and people

Academic classes

Aim to provide photographs that are ‘fly-on-the-wall’ where the subjects are not interacting with the camera, and they are naturally engaged in an activity that might be usual to them. Once they are engaged in such an activity it should be easy to work as unobtrusively as possible around them to capture the action.

Try to capture scenes of interaction (for example, the academic talking to a group of students) and more one-to-one interaction (such as an academic and student discussing or looking at something, or performing a task together). These interactions are a great way to show energy and engagement, try to allow the space for this to occur naturally. Consider diversity, and try to include a range of subjects.

Keep angles natural to the subject matter wherever possible. Avoid dramatic angles or diagonals unless absolutely unavoidable to bring a key item into frame. Try to keep verticals vertical.

Be aware that some people in the environment may not be involved in the shoot. Be sure check that they are happy to appear in the background of any shots and take steps to minimise disruption. Try to include some shots with a shallow depth of field and some breathing space for the type to sit on. Examples of this editorial usage are included on the final page.



Events

Sharing the wonder

Informal events

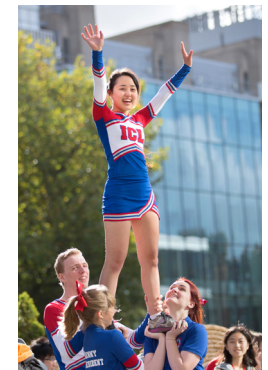
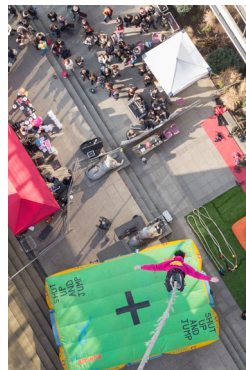
A fly-on-the-wall approach should be taken with all event photography and try not impose on the event or it's attendees in any way, try to be invisible! Always be polite, appreciative and unobtrusive in any interactions that do occur.

Natural available light should be used wherever possible, it's fine to use a high ISO for this.

Aim to capture engagement, energy, colour and diversity. Capture faces where possible to convey emotion and excitement.

These engagement events are very different from more formal events and are a great chance to have a little fun and be creative with framing and angles. If you see somewhere not easily accessible that might make a great angle, ask your contact if they can give you access to take a few shots.

Try to include wider establishing shots with more depth to show what is going on (with a central hero if possible), as well as with shallower, closer shots to highlight specific activities, interactions and expressions in order to tell a complete story.



Events

Sharing the wonder

Formal events

VIP visits

A fly-on-the-wall approach should be taken with all event photography. Natural available light should be used wherever possible. For VIP visits it's also important to include context and have enough depth of field to see what the visitor is interacting with, as well as enough width to see where they are. Most importantly you should respect the situation and not get in the way at all.

Always check the dress code and any particular protocols on formal events before attendance. Be prepared to be flexible and able to adapt quickly to changes in the plan. Include diversity where possible and also branding for context.

Receptions

Identify any key figures by speaking with your contact and ensure that you prioritise them in your photography. Wherever possible, try to avoid people with food in their mouths, drinking, or holding a glass of alcohol. Natural light is always preferable and using a high ISO is not a problem.

Lectures

Be sure to show the event as well as the speaker. Avoid angles (keep verticals vertical) and use available light where possible. High ISO is fine.



Events

Sharing the wonder

Graduation

A fly-on-the-wall approach should be taken with all event photography. Natural available light should be used wherever possible.

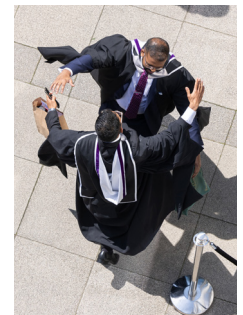
Dress formally and work unobtrusively. Be polite and appreciative, and avoid imposing on the event. Try to be invisible, **do not go on the stage**.

Aim to capture engagement, energy and colour. Capture faces where possible to convey emotion and excitement, capture a diverse range of subjects.

Try to tell stories, reflect the family and the occasion, have a little fun and be creative. If you see somewhere not easily accessible that might make a great angle, ask your contact if they can give you access to take a few shots.

Groups of friends enjoying themselves and heart warming family interactions are also a great thing to capture on the day.

Try to capture the unusual, Graduation is a well covered, but visually rich event, try to find something that captures the imagination!



Architecture

Exterior architecture

Exterior architectural photography should celebrate the iconic buildings of Imperial.

For historic buildings, natural shots should be taken: eye level, straight on and avoiding odd angles where possible. Try to avoid converging vertical lines.

Details and crops of buildings are also useful, these shots can have angles and creative composition.

For modern buildings, care should be taken to find interesting angles and areas of architecture. The crop is important and should be considered carefully.

Allow breathing space in some images for editorial content.

Students and staff can appear in these images. It's preferable to use a slightly longer exposure to capture movement wherever possible.



Architecture

Interior architecture

Interior architectural photography should capture the essence and grandeur of Imperial. Interior shots should be natural, i.e. taken at eye level and straight on, and avoiding odd angles and converging verticals.

Capturing detail shots is also important.

Long exposure: exterior and interior

Long exposure creates a sense of movement and life on campus. To create an interesting composition, there could be a mix of in people in and out of focus.

These images are more focused on the architecture and environment of Imperial.



Portraiture

All shots must be natural. Portraits should be at eye level and straight on, keep verticals vertical. Extreme low or high angles should never be used. Skin tones should be natural with a neutral white balance.

People engaging with the camera should be as natural as possible. They should be in their natural environment and their pose shouldn't be distracting.

Avoid taking portraits with the subject mid-task or holding objects while looking to camera, as it can appear forced.

Try to provide a selection of happy and more serious shots so that portraits can be used in a variety of situations.

Do not force the subject, they should be comfortable with their pose, and be in charge of their own image. If they do not wish to smile, then that is fine. It is fine to compromise on the creativity of a shot to keep the subject happy.

Unless it's specifically just a headshot, be sure to capture close, medium and wide establishing shots that give context and allow for editorial copy, portrait and landscape format options.



Generative AI

Using generative AI

The use of AI-generated imagery comes with important ethical, legal, and practical considerations. Broadly we prefer to avoid the use of such imagery at Imperial, and not at all for images involving people.

Avoid use of AI imagery featuring people

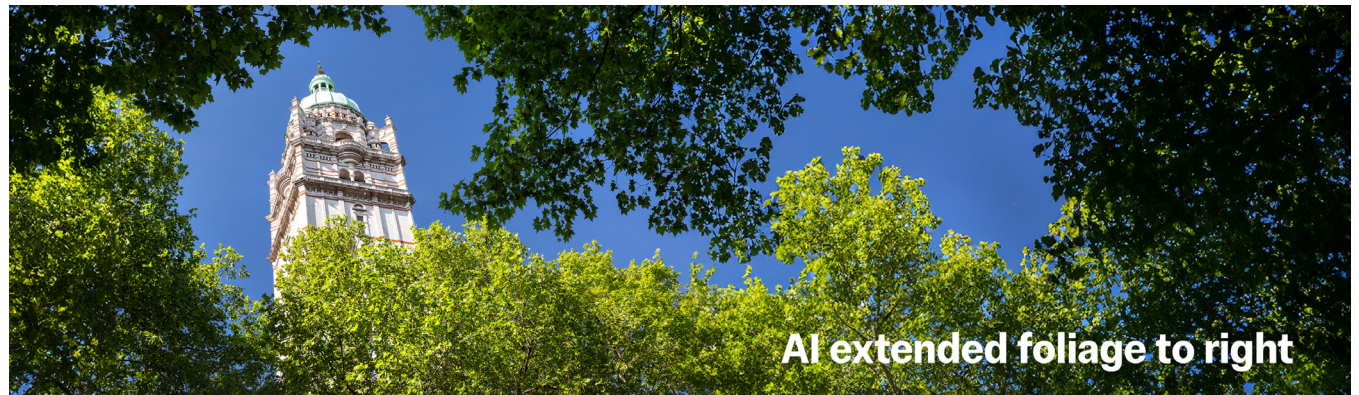
To mitigate risks related to misrepresentation, ethical concerns, or potential misuse, it is recommended not to use AI-generated images that depict people, either realistic or abstract.

Abstract and conceptual use only

Limit AI imagery to abstract designs, backgrounds, or non-human elements. These uses align with ethical standards and reduce the chance of creating misleading or culturally insensitive content. An example could be an abstract creation based on an actual research image or visualisation. (this would always need to be captioned as such)

Supplementing existing photos

AI tools may be used as an enhancement within applications like Adobe Photoshop to remove unwanted objects or expand the background of an image for editorial purposes.



Photography pages: Imperial.ac.uk/Photography

