

IMPERIAL

Early Career
Researcher Institute



Activate Mentoring Programme

Mentee Handbook 2025-26



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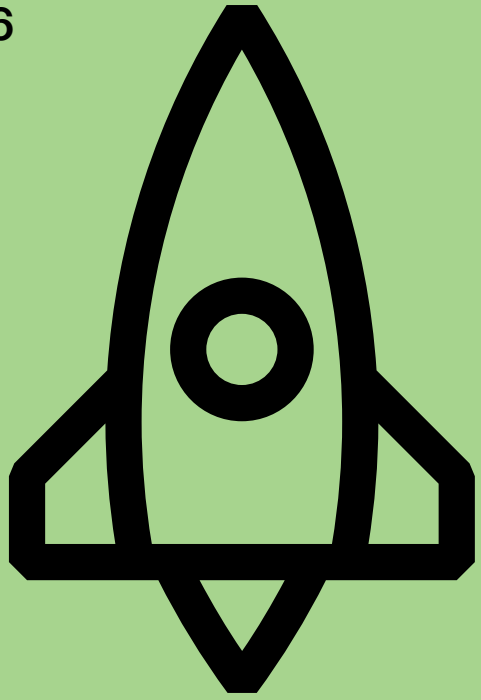
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01/ Welcome

Welcome to the Activate Mentoring Programme. We are delighted you are joining us.

Activate is a mentoring programme dedicated to supporting under-represented groups at Imperial. It seeks to improve experiences, increase retention, develop a peer community, support career development and create a deeper sense of belonging.

We're delighted to have you with us and look forward to supporting you on this journey.

/ About this Handbook

This handbook is here to support you during the Activate Mentoring Programme. It includes key information about the programme, expectations, important dates, course outlines, and how to provide feedback. You'll also find practical resources to help you support in your journey, navigate challenges, and access help from the programme team.

Each section is clearly broken down to make it easy to find what you need. Whether you're preparing for your first meeting or responding to a concern, this guide is designed to be a helpful companion throughout your mentoring journey.

/ Programme Aim

Activate aims to match mentees with mentors who have insight and understanding of the educational experience of under-represented groups of students, the challenges they face within education and navigating Imperial life.

/ We Value your Feedback

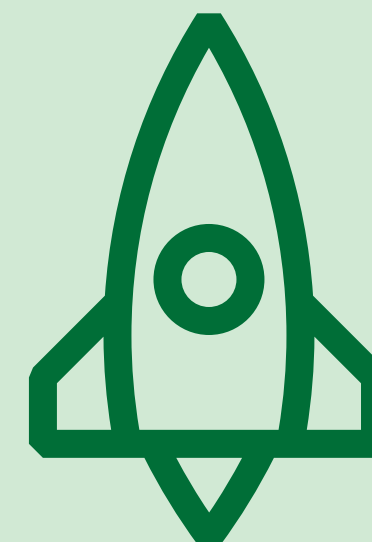
Your experience as a mentee helps shape the future of Activate. We welcome your thoughts, suggestions, and reflections throughout the year. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with the programme team — we're here to support you.

Programme Growth

2022–23: Launched for Black heritage students on Presidential Scholarships and Black PhD students.

2023–24: Expanded to include Minority Ethnic PhD students.

2024–25: Expanded to include Master's students receiving Imperial's scholarships for disabled students and Disabled PhD students.



**“I saw myself in my mentee,
going through things that
I’ve gone through, and really
felt empowered and proud
of myself and my mentee.”**

– Activate Mentor



02/ Starting your Mentoring Journey

/ Your First Mentoring Conversation: Aligning Expectations

Before your mentoring journey begins, we invite you to take part in a “Setting Expectations” meeting with your mentor. This first conversation is a chance to get to know each other, share your hopes for the partnership, and explore whether it feels like a good match. This meeting is designed to help you:

- Build rapport with your mentor
- Share your aspirations and goals
- Agree on how you’ll work together
- Create a safe and supportive space for open dialogue

If you have any concerns after this meeting, you can contact the Activate Mentoring Programme Coordinator at activate.mentoring@imperial.ac.uk

/ What You Might Want to Talk About

This is your space to express what you’re hoping to gain from mentoring. You might want to explore:

- Academic progress
- Career planning
- Confidence and self-belief
- Navigating life at Imperial
- Building networks or accessing opportunities

A Dynamic Relationship

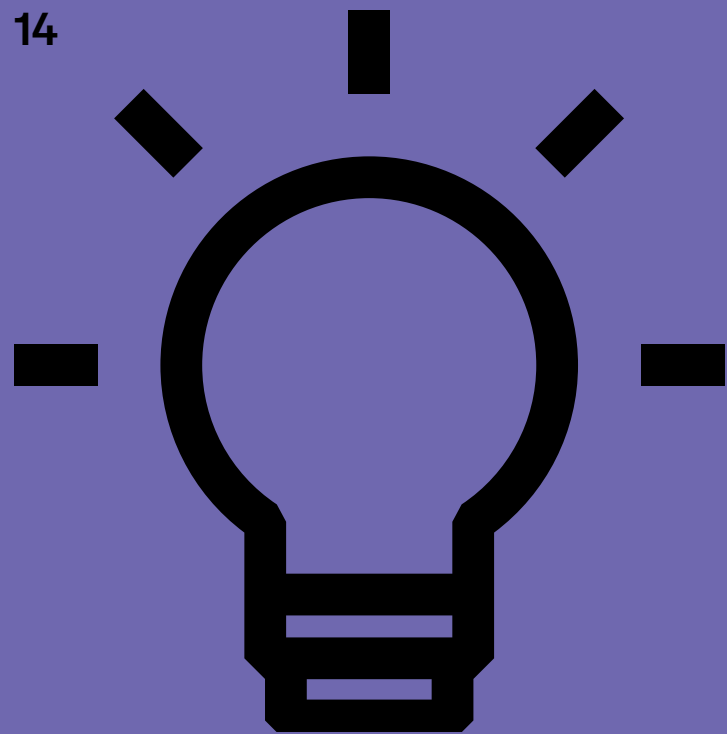
Mentoring is a relationship — and like any relationship, it can grow and change over time.

Activate mentoring partnerships typically last around six months.

You’re encouraged to revisit your expectations regularly throughout the partnership.

Take time to check in with each other to make sure the mentoring relationship continues to meet both of your needs.





Mentoring Meeting Essentials



/ Mentoring Meeting Essentials

To help your mentoring relationship run smoothly, it's helpful to agree on a few practical expectations early on. These can be used as a checklist to guide your first conversation and revisited as needed. You might choose to keep this in a shared document or visual format to make it easy to access and update.

/ Meeting Frequency & Format

- Aim to meet up to **6 times over a 6-month** period.
- Each meeting should last around **1 hour**.
- Meetings can be **in-person, remote, or hybrid** — whatever works best for both of you.

/ Questions to Discuss Together

- How often will you meet, and where?
- Will your meetings be remote, in-person, or hybrid?
- What's the best way to contact each other if plans change?
- What kind of support or check-ins do you expect between meetings?



/ Being Present and Prepared

- Arrive on time and ready to engage.
- Choose a quiet, comfortable space for your meetings.
- Respect each other's time and commitments.

/ Communication & Flexibility

- Let your mentor know as soon as possible if you need to reschedule or are running late.
- Agree on how you'll communicate between meetings (e.g. email, Teams, WhatsApp).
- Discuss what level of contact is appropriate outside of scheduled meetings.

/ Accessibility

- Share with your mentor if you have any access needs (e.g. captions, breaks, sensory preferences, neurodiverse-friendly formats).



/ Questions to Help Guide Your Conversation

Here are a few questions to reflect on and discuss with your mentor:

- What would help this partnership feel safe, supportive, and empowering for you?
- How can you both create a space where it feels okay to speak openly and honestly?
- What boundaries or preferences do you want to share — for example, topics that feel sensitive or off-limits?

/ Goal Setting & Reflection

- Would you like to set any short-term or long-term goals together?
- How will you track progress or reflect on what's working well?
- Would a shared document or journal help you stay on track?

/ Celebrating Milestones

- How would you like to acknowledge progress or celebrate achievements together?
- Could you plan a final meeting to reflect on your journey and celebrate what you've learned?



Trust and Confidentiality

Trust is at the heart of a successful mentoring relationship. Your mentor is here to create a space that feels safe enough, respectful, and open — a space where you can share your thoughts, challenges, and aspirations with confidence.

/ Guidelines for a Supportive Mentoring Partnership

Here are some guidelines to support you in creating an environment that encourages a healthy, supportive mentoring partnership.

Building Trust and Open Dialogue

Activate mentors and mentees are expected to work together to build a foundation of trust which is essential for fostering **open and honest conversations. This mutual trust supports a safe and respectful mentoring relationship.

Confidentiality Guidelines

All mentoring conversations and meetings within the Activate programme are considered confidential. However, confidentiality may be broken under the following circumstances:

- **Mutual Agreement:** If both mentee and mentor agree that sharing relevant details with another member of Imperial staff would be beneficial for further support or advice.
- **Safeguarding Concerns:** If there are concerns related to safeguarding, confidentiality must be reconsidered.
- **Immediate Risk:** Mentors are not permitted to maintain confidentiality if there is a significant and immediate risk to the health and safety of the mentee or others.

/ Reflective Questions for Your Mentoring Partnership

To support a healthy and effective mentoring relationship, consider discussing and agreeing on the following:

▪ Ground Rules:

What ground-rules will you set for your partnership?

Think about boundaries, expectations, and how you'll work together.

▪ Facilitating Dialogue:

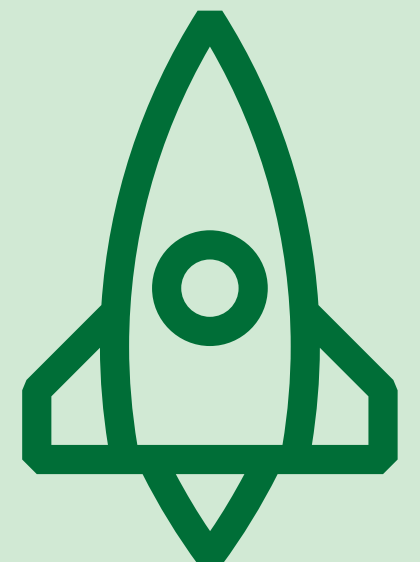
How will you facilitate open and honest dialogue?

Consider how you'll create a space that feels safe and inclusive for sharing.

▪ Navigating Discomfort:

How will you let each other know when you are not comfortable with a conversation?

Discuss ways to signal discomfort and how to respond respectfully.



/ Outcomes and Objectives for the Mentoring Partnership

During the Aligning Expectations meeting, the mentee is invited to share their aspirations for the mentoring partnership. These goals should be revisited at your first meeting and used to guide your ongoing conversations.

- How often will you check whether the partnership is fulfilling the needs and objectives of the mentee?

Consider setting regular check-ins to reflect on progress and adjust goals if needed.

Commitment to Action

Activate mentees are responsible for their own learning and for taking forward any actions agreed during mentoring meetings. Mentors may also agree to follow up on a task or explore a topic between meetings. Mentees are free to accept, counter-offer, or decline these suggestions.

- How will you follow up on actions agreed at your previous meeting?
- Think about how you'll track progress and hold each other accountable in a supportive way.



“Personally, I’ve grown in confidence and clarity, I now approach challenges with a more strategic mindset. The mentoring relationship also helped me articulate my goals more effectively and reminded me of the value of taking time before giving answers in some instances.”

– Activate Mentor



Imperial Values in Mentoring

**Respect****Collaboration****Excellence****Integrity****Innovation**

/ Embedding Imperial's Values in Mentoring

As part of the Activate Mentoring programme, both mentees and mentors are expected to uphold Imperial's core values. These values help create a respectful, inclusive, and empowering environment for everyone involved — whether in one-to-one meetings or group events.

/ What These Values Mean in Mentoring

1. Respect Each Other's Autonomy and Rights

Acknowledge that your mentoring partner is the expert in their own life. Support their choices and boundaries without judgment.

2. Value Differences

Appreciate and embrace cultural, personal, and professional differences. These enrich your conversations and broaden perspectives.

3. Be Open to Different Perspectives

Stay curious and non-defensive when your mentor shares a view or experience that's different from your own.

4. Create a Supportive, Inclusive Space

Foster a safe environment where both of you feel heard, respected, and free to be yourselves.

/ Reflective Questions

- How will you embed these values in your mentoring partnership?
- How will you make sure your conversations are respectful and inclusive?
- What steps will you take if you notice a value is not being upheld in your mentoring partnership?
- How will you reflect on your own biases and assumptions throughout the mentoring journey?

These questions can be used as prompts during your first meeting or revisited throughout your partnership.



“My mentoring partnership went well. My mentor was accommodating of my busy schedule and was flexible in meeting in person, online or just by email. She shared a lot of her experiences which was really helpful.”

– Activate Mentee



03/ Mentee Training & Key Dates



Mandatory Training for All Mentees

/ Course Information for Mentees

Activate Mentoring is a flagship programme and all mentors are required to complete the mandatory training every two years. Please also visit the annually updated training, as the useful links and key Imperial contacts are updated.

Introduction to Mentoring for Mentees

This course sets the scene for the Activate mentoring programme, outlining the structure of mentoring sessions and takes you through the Aligning Expectations document. It is mandatory for all Activate Mentees and you are not able to progress as an Activate mentee without having completed the course.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Outline the role of a mentor and mentee
2. Define the key stages of mentoring
3. Identify skills and practice for effective mentoring relationships
4. Explore resources for signposting
5. Prepare to share and clarify expectations with your mentor

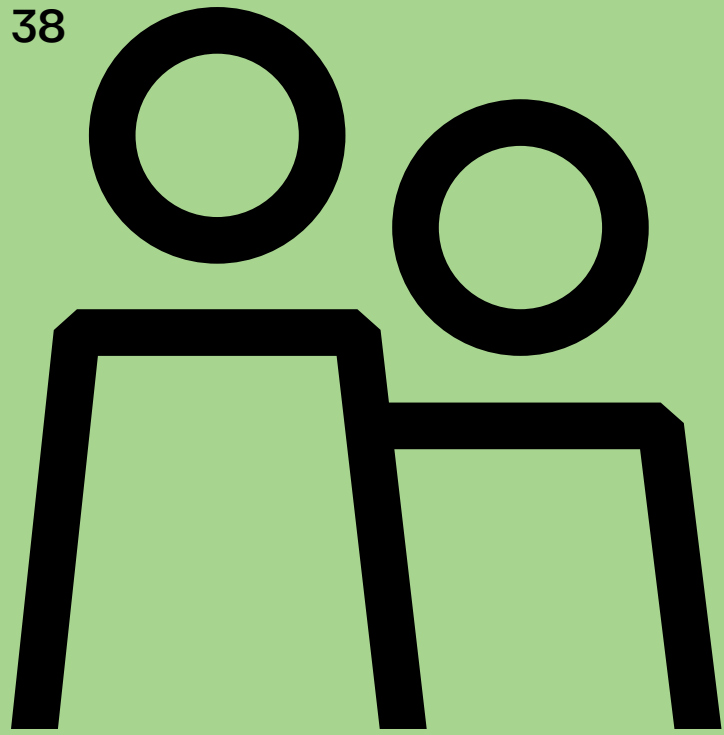
Access to course will be emailed to you directly.

When you complete the course, the Activate Programme team will automatically receive an email confirming your course completion.



Key Dates

Date	Time	Topic	Mode
Mid-November 2025 (before you start your first session)	In your own pace (1 hour)	Online Course: Introduction to Mentoring for Mentees	Mandatory refresher Self-paced Online
19 November 2025	12pm – 2pm (2 hours)	Welcome Celebration: Mentors & Mentees Cohort	170 Queen’s Gate, In-Person South Kensington Campus
28 January 2025	6:30pm – 7:30pm (1 hour)	Personal and Professional Development Discussion 1	Live and Interactive via MS Teams
5 March 2026/ or 17 March 2026	12pm – 1pm 1pm – 2pm	Mentee Check-in Activity	Pick 1 Option – Live and Interactive via MS Teams
Date and time tbc April/ May 2026	1 hour	Personal and Professional Development Discussion 2	Live and Interactive via MS Teams
Date tbc	1-2 Hours	Social Activity: Mentees & Mentors	In-Person, Location TBC
24 June 2026	5pm – 8pm	End of Programme Celebration Reception: Mentors & Mentees Cohort	170 Queen’s Gate, In-Person South Kensington Campus



04/ Mentee's Resources and Toolkit

“As a person with a disability, mentoring made me feel less alone. We discussed our shared challenges and way to overcome them or even just to feel solidarity. It made me feel that my challenges were surmountable and not barriers as they felt as first..”

– Activate Mentee



Support Beyond Mentoring

/ Looking After Your Wellbeing

Your wellbeing matters. At Imperial, the wellbeing of both students and staff is a top priority. While your mentor is not a counsellor or mental health professional, they can play a valuable role in supporting you — especially by noticing when you might need extra help and guiding you toward the right resources.

If you're facing challenges with your wellbeing, here are some steps you can take:

- Reach out to **Activate Programme Team** for advice and support via email activate.mentoring@imperial.ac.uk
- Visit the [Student Support Zone](#), which offers a wide range of wellbeing resources
- Seek guidance from Imperial's **Student Support Services**

Confidentiality and Safety

Your conversations with your mentor are treated with respect and confidentiality. However, if there is a significant and immediate risk to your safety or the safety of others, your mentor may need to break confidentiality to seek appropriate help. This is always done with care and in line with safeguarding responsibilities.



Inclusion and Community Networks

Postgraduate students and staff at Imperial have access to supportive networks that promote inclusion and belonging:

- [Imperial As One](#): A network supporting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff and postgraduate students. Offers events, peer support, and advocacy.
- [AbleImperial](#): A network for disabled staff and postgraduate students, focused on accessibility, inclusion, and community.

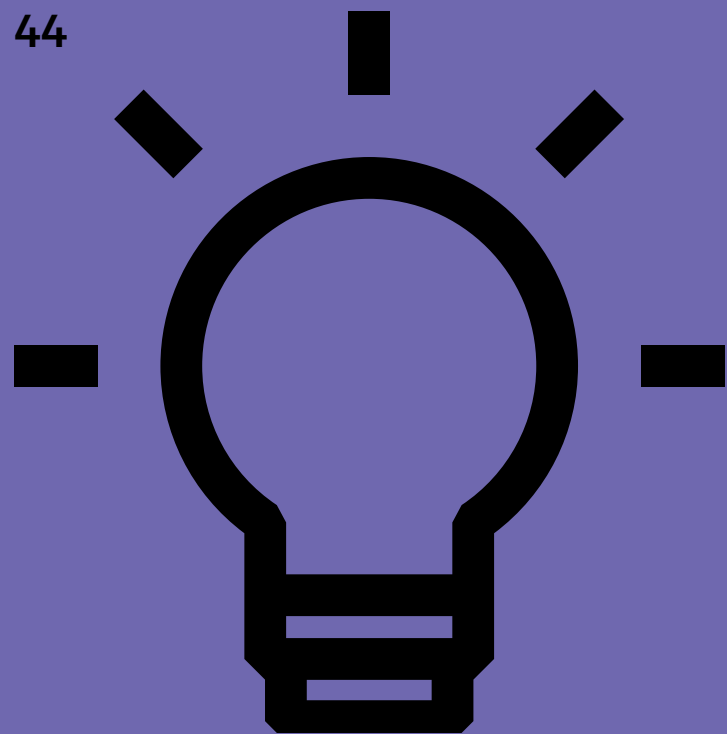
Study Skills and Disability Support

- [Disability Advisory Service](#): Offers one-to-one support, adjustments, and advice for disabled students.
- [Student Support Zone](#): A central hub for wellbeing, academic support, and guidance.

Ongoing Signposting

Your mentor will receive regular updates and resources throughout the Activate Mentoring Programme. If something comes up during your conversations, they may share relevant support services to help you feel more connected and supported.

You're encouraged to explore these resources and reach out for help whenever you need it.



When Changes are needed to Your Partnership



Navigating Changes in the Mentoring Partnership

Mentoring is a journey built on trust, open communication, and mutual respect. As you grow and evolve, it's natural that your needs within the partnership may shift. Sometimes, a change in the mentoring relationship can help ensure it continues to feel supportive, empowering, and aligned with your goals.

Checking In Regularly

It's helpful to have informal check-ins throughout your mentoring journey. These conversations are a chance to reflect together on how things are going. They should feel open, respectful, and free of judgment.

You might ask:

- Is the partnership meeting your needs?
- Are expectations being met on both sides?

If concerns arise, take time to reflect together. Here are some prompts to guide that conversation:

- How will you approach a conversation about changing the partnership?
- How will you recognise when a change is needed — and support that decision?

Requesting a Change

If an informal conversation doesn't resolve the issue, either the mentor or mentee can request a change by contacting the Activate Mentoring Programme Coordinator:

activate.mentoring@imperial.ac.uk

This process is confidential and designed to support both parties.

Raising Concerns or Complaints

We want all participants to feel safe and supported. If you have a concern about your mentoring partnership:

You can raise it confidentially with the Activate Programme Coordinator.

If you wish to make a formal complaint, you can follow the **Activate Mentoring Programme Complaints Procedure** (included at the end of this handbook)





Sharing Your Feedback

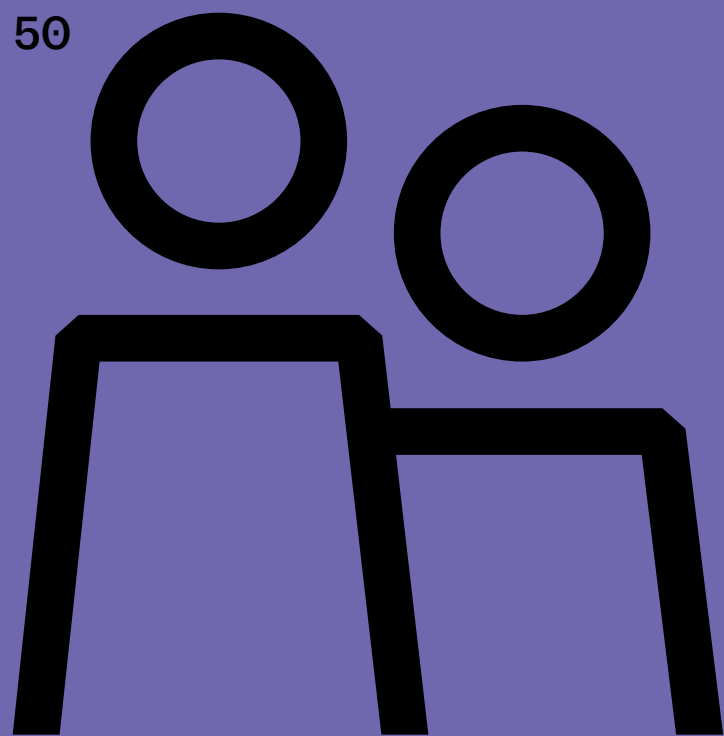
The Activate Mentoring Programme is designed to support both mentors and mentees — and your feedback plays a key role in helping us improve and evolve.

You'll be invited to share formal feedback at different stages of the programme:

- After your Introduction to Mentoring training (before your partnership begins)
- During the mentoring programme
- Toward the end of the programme

This helps us understand the impact of the training and mentoring experience, and shape future iterations of the programme.

You're also welcome to share insights, ideas, or reflections at any point. Whether it's a suggestion, a moment of learning, or a challenge you've faced — we value your voice.



Book 1 to 1 Support with Activate Mentoring Coordinator

As part of your mentoring journey this year, you can book a 30-minute one-to-one session with the Activate Mentoring Coordinator for ongoing support. These sessions are designed to give you space to reflect, share what's going well, explore any challenges, and receive guidance on how to navigate your mentoring experience.

Whether you're looking for reassurance, clarity, or simply a sounding board, these sessions are here to support you. They run from **December through to July**, and you can book a slot at any point during the programme.

You're welcome to book these sessions as and when you need them throughout the year.

[Book your one-to-one 30 minute slot.](#)



Complaints Procedure

01/ The Scope

When to Use This Procedure

Mentoring partnerships are built on trust and open communication. Throughout your time together, mentors and mentees are encouraged to regularly check in to make sure the relationship is working well. If challenges arise and can't be resolved informally, you can raise your concern with the **Activate Mentoring Programme Coordinator**.

This complaints procedure is here to support you if:

- You're unhappy with the training or support provided
- You have concerns about the wider development activities offered through the programme
- You're experiencing issues within your mentoring partnership (unless the concern involves serious matters listed below)
- You have feedback or concerns about how the programme is being run

What This Procedure Does Not Cover

This process does not apply to concerns where an Activate mentee or mentor wishes to raise concern or a complaint which relates to :

- Safeguarding
- Bullying or harassment
- Sexual violence, harassment, or misconduct
- Racial discrimination or harassment
- Any issue covered by the Equality Act 2010

If your concern relates to any of the above, please speak confidentially with the **Head of Strategy and Operations (Early Career Researcher Institute)**. They will guide you to the appropriate College procedure.

If there is a significant and immediate risk to someone's safety, confidentiality will be broken to ensure appropriate support and protection.

Depending on the situation, the following College procedures may apply:

- Student Complaints Procedure (Ordinance E3)
- Student Disciplinary Procedures (Ordinance E2)
- Staff Ordinances

If alumni are involved, advice will be sought from the Director of Advancement



02/ The Principles

Principles of the Complaints Procedure

The Activate Mentoring Programme is committed to creating a safe, fair, and inclusive environment for everyone involved. These principles guide how complaints are handled:

1. No Penalty for Raising a Concern: The College's position is that no student or member of staff should be discriminated against or in any way penalised for raising a complaint and the same principle applies to this procedure.

2. Accessibility and Adjustments :Where an Activate mentee or mentor believes that they should receive reasonable adjustments to this procedure on the grounds of disability, this should be clearly stated in their submission, including the reasons for requesting the adjustment and suggestions of what this may mean in practice i.e. extended deadlines.

3. Timely and Positive Resolution: Every effort will be made to ensure complaints and concerns raised through this procedure are handled quickly and efficiently with a view to seeking a positive outcome for all concerned.

4. Confidentiality and Safety: All complaints will be handled in confidence unless there is a significant and immediate risk to the health and safety of the mentee, mentor or of others. Where this is the case, the complainant will be informed that confidentiality will be broken.

03/ The Process

The Activate Mentoring Programme uses a Stage One: Local Resolution approach. This means that concerns are addressed informally and directly wherever possible.

Step 1: Raising a Concern

If you're a mentee or mentor and wish to make a complaint, you should contact:

Chris Harris: Associate Director of Strategy and Operations (Early Career Researcher Institute) c.harris@imperial.ac.uk

It's recommended that you raise your concern within 15 days of becoming aware of the issue.

Step 2: Receiving a Response

Chris Harris, The Associate Director of Strategy and Operations (Early Career Researcher Institute) will consider your complaint and aim to provide a written response (via email) within 10 working days.

Where appropriate, the response will also be shared with student.complaints@imperial.ac.uk to ensure a record is kept.

Step 3: What the Response Will Include

The response will report:

- Outline how the issue has been considered, or provide information on how it will be addressed
- Where relevant, inform the mentee or mentor of the next steps and the expected timeframes for those actions
- Provide details on how the mentee or mentor can escalate the complaint within the College if they are dissatisfied with the outcome

04/ Raising a Complaint with the College

If a mentee or mentor remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the Activate Mentoring Programme Complaints Procedure, they may escalate their concern through one of the College's formal procedures.

As part of the written response to the Stage One: Local Resolution process, the : Associate Director of Strategy and Operations (Early Career Researcher Institute) will provide guidance on which College procedure is most appropriate for the concern raised.

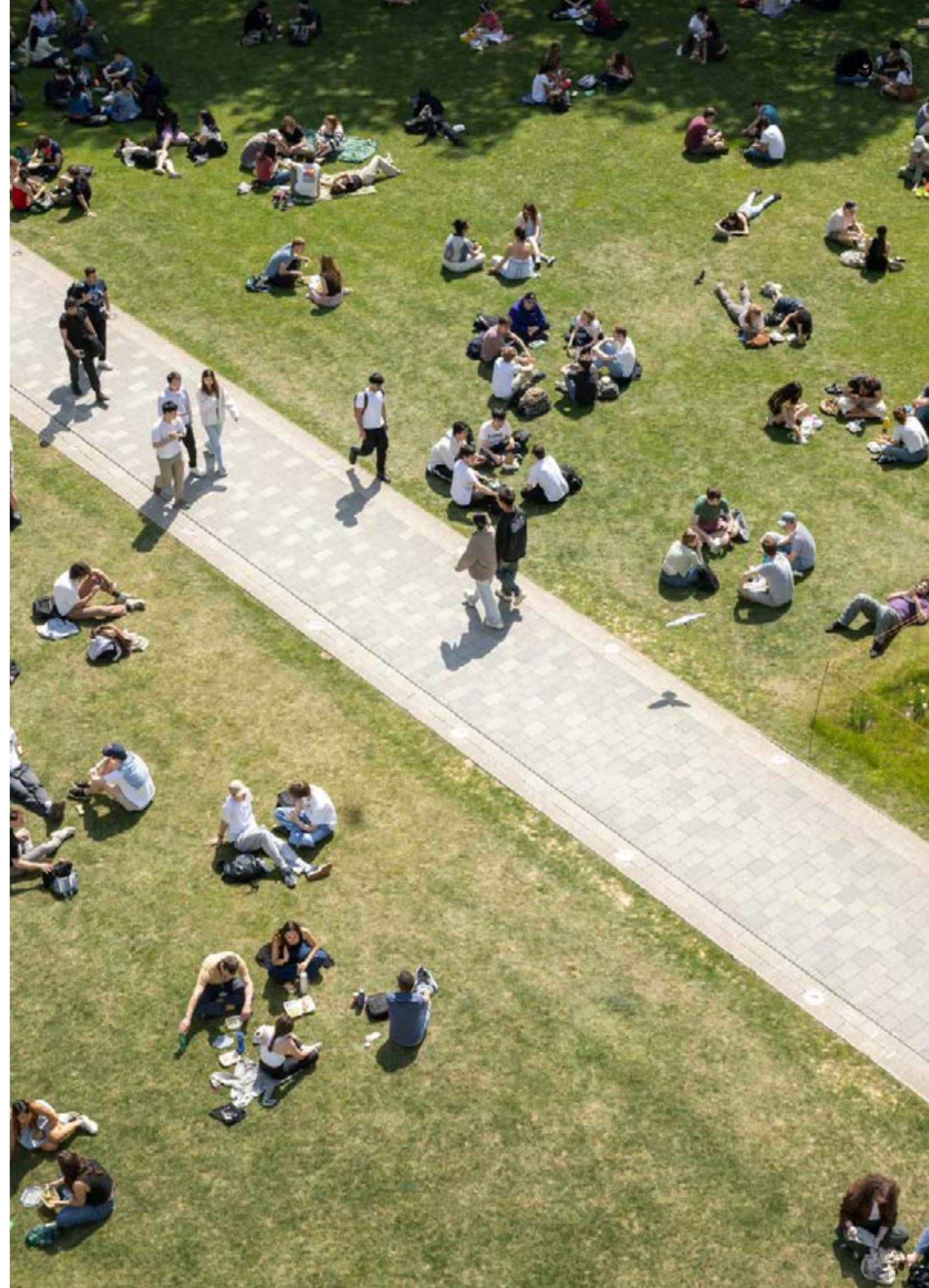


05/ Support Available

For Activate mentees wishing to make a complaint are advised to seek support from the [Imperial College Union Advice Centre](#). Activate mentees can also seek support from their Departmental Senior Tutor and/or the Faculty Senior Tutors.

For Activate mentors (who are PhD students) wishing to make a complaint are advised to seek support from the [Imperial College Union Advice Centre](#). Activate mentees can also seek support from their Departmental Senior Tutor and/or the Faculty Senior Tutors.

Additional Support: Activate mentees and mentors are also reminded that the [Report and Support tool](#), allows students to disclose unwelcome behaviours such as bullying, harassment, sexual violence, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, racial discrimination and more. Reports can be made anonymously through this tool.



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Early Career
Researcher Institute

For any enquiries contact:

activate.mentoring@imperial.ac.uk