

Guidance for Imperial and external supervisors of students at Partner Research Institutions

Introduction

1. The Partner Research Institutions (PRI) scheme for registration for the PhD of persons working in an approved PRI provides for each student to be guided jointly by an Imperial College London supervisor and by an external supervisor at the institution where the candidate is engaged in research.
2. The university believes that the scheme will result in the development of links and mutually beneficial co-operation between the research institution on the one hand and departments or divisions of Imperial on the other. It is anticipated that there will be a community of research interest between the external supervisor's laboratory and that of the department at Imperial.
3. A student registered under this scheme is required to comply with all regulations relating to the degree of PhD except in so far as special conditions apply to registration under this scheme.

Research Institution

4. A student registered under the scheme may carry out the major part, or the whole of the research, for the degree at the research centre concerned.
5. If the applicant is resident/working away from London, the institution/laboratory must nonetheless be so located as to make practicable compliance with the university's general academic regulations and the regular attendance at Imperial required as a condition for registration under the scheme.
6. The procedures concerning study leave apply to students registered under this scheme. Special approval must therefore be sought if the student requires absence from the institution for reasons relating to the research, for example to carry out fieldwork or to collect data elsewhere.
7. The Imperial supervisor is required to confirm that adequate facilities for research and guidance are available at the research institution. This means in part that the student should be working under or with several persons who themselves hold higher degrees or who have equivalent qualifications and experience.
8. Key principles in permitting students to research away from the university are:
 - a. regular and adequate access to Imperial supervision
 - b. availability of a suitably qualified local supervisor
 - c. adequate access to pastoral support

- d. critical mass of staff and students to provide academic and personal /social support so that a research student does not work in isolation
- e. adequacy and appropriateness of support facilities
- f. availability to attend Imperial for research training and interaction with peers.

9. Before approving new institutions to host registrations under this scheme, the university will need to inspect appropriate literature describing the facilities for research available at the particular institution. Literature may be provided in electronic form or through a url.

Supervision

10. The Imperial supervisor is expected to act as tutor to the student, including ensuring that the student undertakes a regular course of study at the university, providing instruction in research design and methodology and suggesting appropriate reading, and later advising on the presentation of results in the thesis. The role of a main supervisor is fully described in the document [Roles and Responsibilities Main Research Degree Supervisor](#).
11. The external supervisor will be expected to give on-the-spot advice and guidance on the technical and local aspects of the research and as far as practicable to maintain close contact with the Imperial supervisor in regard to its general strategy. The external supervisor should also advise the Imperial supervisor of any difficulties occurring in the student's research or changes in the latter's circumstances which may affect the research.

Course of study

12. The regulations for registration under this scheme require a student to pursue a regular course of study at the university. The course of study proposed should therefore be designed to ensure that the student attends regularly at Imperial and has regular contact throughout the period of registration not only with the Imperial supervisor but also with the relevant departments, Early Career Researcher Institute, and other members of Imperial, both staff and students.
13. The university requires that approximately 2 months per year is the minimum amount of time that a student registered under this scheme should spend at an Imperial campus.
14. Imperial would not wish to specify too precisely the general form the course of study should take as it will depend on individual circumstances. Although it need not necessarily include attendance at specific first degree or postgraduate courses, it should include some elements requiring formal participation by the student, such as attendance at lectures, tutorials, seminars and consultation with the main supervisor at Imperial. It may also include submission of critical essays or directed reading. The course work must continue throughout the period of registration although its form may change. The Early Career Researcher Institute offers professional skills development courses for research students and students registered under the PRI Scheme are required to participate in these.
15. The Head of the Research Institution is required to certify that the student will be able to attend at Imperial for the prescribed course of study.

16. The course of study should be designed not only to meet the requirements of maintaining contact with the university as specified above but also to increase the student's background knowledge in the general field of the research. For this latter purpose a student may also be required to attend lectures and seminars outside of Imperial.
17. Registration under this scheme will only be approved if the proposed course of study meets these requirements.
18. The Early Stage Assessment and Late Stage Review must take place at an Imperial campus in the UK.
19. The examiners may test the candidate at the oral examination on the background acquired as a result of the prescribed course of study.

Application for admission and enrolment

20. All students seeking PhD registration under this scheme are advised to contact a potential supervisor before making a formal application. Students then need [to submit an application for admission online](#).
21. The application for admission will be considered by the department and the form PRI/A must be returned by the department to the Registry when accepting a student under this scheme. Where a formal offer of admission is made, the student must accept this in writing before enrolment and registration particulars can be processed.
22. Students commencing research at the start of the academic session must complete enrolment formalities promptly. Registration opens from early September and should be completed by the end of the first week of term. Students commencing research at any other time must complete enrolment formalities within a month of accepting the offer of admission in writing.

Minimum period of study and tuition fees

23. The minimum period of study is determined by the university taking into account the proportion of time which the student will be devoting to the research. Each application is considered on its individual merits, but, generally, the minimum prescribed period of study for the PhD will be at least three years for full time students and at least four years for part time students.
24. A student is required to pay tuition fees at the prescribed rate throughout the course of study.
25. Normally students registering under the PRI Scheme will enrol with Imperial as part-time students and will thus be liable for tuition fees at the part-time rate.
26. Exceptionally, providing the Head of the Research Institution is in agreement, students registering under the PRI Scheme may enrol with Imperial as full-time students in which case they shall be liable for tuition fees at the full-time rate.

Amendment of particulars/assessment and review of registration

27. A student's progress during PhD registration is formally monitored at two key stages after the date of initial registration: (i) at 12 months for full-time students and at 24 months for part-time students

(Early Stage Assessment) and (ii) 24 months for full-time students and 48 months for part-time students (Late Stage Review).

28. If, before completing the prescribed course of study, the student ceases to be engaged in research at the centre specified in the application for registration, the registration as a candidate for the PhD shall cease unless the student makes a fresh application for approval to continue the research in the same field at another Research Institution.
29. If, before completing the prescribed course of study, the student ceases to be engaged on the field of research specified in the application, the registration as a candidate for the PhD shall cease unless the student applies for approval to continue registration with an amended field of research. Approval may be subject to an extension of the period of prescribed study.

Availability of thesis

30. The [*Regulations for the awards of MPhil and PhD degrees*](#) require that the candidate will at the time of entry to the examination sign a declaration concerning third party copyright and availability in libraries of the thesis, if successful, and the electronic publication of the thesis and the inclusion of the abstract of the thesis in published lists.
31. A candidate may apply at the time of registration or thereafter to retain personally the right to grant access to the thesis and to withhold the abstract of the thesis from publication for a limited period and, in any case, not exceeding two years from the date of award of the degree. This requires approval from the university and before such approval is given a candidate is required to give the reasons for seeking to restrict access for a specified period.

Document Control

Document title:	Guidance for Imperial and external supervisor of students at Partner Research Institutions	
Version:	1.4	Date: January 2025
Location:	R:\7.Quality Assurance \3. Policy Framework\8. Collaborative Provision\Collaborative Provision\Guidance Note for Supervisors of Students at PRIs	
Initially approved by and date:	Senate December 2012	
Version approved by and date:	n/a	
Version effective from:	October 2024	
Originator:	Assistant Registrar (Partnerships, Monitoring and Evaluation)	
Contact for queries:	Assistant Registrar (Partnerships, Monitoring and Evaluation)	
Cross References:	General Regulations Regulations for the awards of MPhil and PhD degrees Roles and responsibilities main research degree supervisor	
Notes and latest changes:	Formatting changes made on 9 March 2016 (version 1.2) Updated links June 2022 (version 1.3) January 2025 – updated to new brand standard. Updated references from Graduate School to Early Career Researcher Institute	