Imperial College London

Collaborative Research Degree Precepts 2018-19

Precept 1: Interviewing

All prospective students must be interviewed before an offer of a place is made. Interviews may be conducted as a videoconference or teleconference if it is not possible for the candidate to visit the department. The Selection Panel must comprise at least two members of staff and will normally include the Director of Postgraduate Studies or nominee. Staff not experienced in student selection or recruitment should attend a relevant recruitment and selection workshop before participating in an interview. All staff involved in interviewing students must keep up to date with current legislation and the College's admission policies and policies to promote equal opportunities and widening participation.

The interview procedures for entry into joint and collaborative programmes should normally be the same as those which students applying directly to the College are subject to.

Guidance

- The College provides a number of training events focusing on recruitment, selection and equal opportunities.

Precept 2: Offers/Admission

Only appropriately qualified and prepared applicants should be accepted. No offers should be made unless a student can be provided with an environment which is supportive of their research achievement; this includes only appointing supervisors who have sufficient time to carry out their supervisory responsibilities satisfactorily as well as access to necessary facilities and equipment.

The admissions procedures for entry into joint and collaborative programmes should normally be the same as those which students applying directly to the College are subject to.

Guidance

- An outline of the admissions process is available in the Postgraduate Research Admissions Policy.
- The College's admission criteria for doctoral awards and MPhil can also be found in the Academic & Examination Regulations.
- Further guidance for handling special cases is available on the Registry website.

Precept 3: Supervision

New and/or inexperienced supervisors (who have not had primary responsibility for the supervision of a successful student), including inexperienced clinical supervisors and/or those acting as second (or co-) supervisors, must attend the "Introduction to Supervising PhD students at Imperial" workshop (or equivalent). Where Departments appoint new members of academic staff who have experience of supervising PhD students at other institution(s) it is the responsibility of the Department to determine a strategy for training/support. Depending on the individual's prior experience this may either be through attendance at the full day "Introduction to Supervising PhD students at Imperial" workshop or by completing the online version of the training. In selecting supervisors and supervisory teams, Departments are expected to comply with the requirements set out in the College's "Policy on Research

Degree Supervision". Departments are also expected to have in place effective mechanisms to monitor the completion of mandatory supervisor training by new and/or inexperienced supervisors.

Supervisors at the partner institution/organisation must normally have previous supervisory experience (primary responsibility for the supervision of a successful student) before taking on joint supervisory duties. However, if this is not possible, for example if the collaboration is with an industrial partner, then inexperienced supervisors must have undergone training and mentoring comparable to that expected at Imperial before taking on a joint supervisory role.

Guidance

- Students and supervisors should refer to the "Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor Partnership".
- The College is able to provide departments with a termly report of all supervisors who have completed the online version of Introduction to Supervising PhD Students.

Precept 4: Non-Imperial Staff who supervise

Departments must have mechanisms to ensure those supervisors working in industry or professional practice or a Partner Research Institution are aware of all College rules, regulations and procedures relating to research degree supervision. These supervisors should also be offered the opportunity to engage in developmental and other activities relating to the support of their research students.

Guidance

- Non-Imperial staff with supervisor roles should meet the criteria as laid out in Policy on Research Degree Supervision.
- Non-Imperial staff with supervisor roles should be directed to the "Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor Partnership". Commitments beyond the supervisory role should be taken into account when appointing non-Imperial supervisors. Departments should be confident that potential supervisors will be able to meet the requirements of the role before making an appointment. (See Precept 6 below).
- Non-Imperial supervisors should be directed to the workshop "Introduction to Supervising PhD Students at Imperial".

Precept 5: Continuing professional development and support for students

All supervisors are expected to engage and participate in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities. All supervisors are expected to undertake CPD specifically related to PhD supervision which, in addition to the courses/workshops for new and/or inexperienced supervisors, involves participating in departmental "Focus on Best Practice in Supervision" workshops. These are Department-led workshops and Departments are therefore responsible for determining the cycle of participants and frequency of these workshops. Within this cycle it is expected that every supervisor will attend at least one workshop over a six year period. Similar to the mandatory training for new and/or inexperienced supervisors, Departments are expected to have in place effective mechanisms to monitor the engagement of supervisors in CPD activities. Departments and supervisors themselves are responsible for ensuring that they are fully aware of their role and responsibilities as a supervisor, as described in the College document "Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor Partnership".

Guidance

- Responsibilities for supervisors are outlined in the "Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor Partnership".
- The College provides induction and continuing professional development for supervisors.
- The Graduate School will be able to provide a list of all who attended the "Focus on Best Practice in Supervision" workshop.

- It is expected that supervisors should help their students to attend at least one conference to present a paper during their programme.
- Details of further support that should be accessible to research students are available on the Registry website.

Precept 6: Supervisory Arrangements

All students must have a supervisor who is identified as the main single point of contact and it must be made clear to the student who is their alternative contact if that individual is unavailable. The main supervisor must ensure that adequate contact with and support for their research student(s) is maintained throughout the research degree programme. Where a student has more than one supervisor, it is important that the student understands their respective roles.

All students must have appropriate supervisors at both Imperial and at the partner institution/organisation and there must always be a "lead supervisor" identified for each student studying a collaborative research degree. In most cases the lead supervisor will be an experienced member of Imperial College academic staff or, in the case of joint degrees, an experienced academic located at the institution/ organisation where the student first commences study.

Supervisors at the partner institution/organisation must normally have previous supervisory experience (primary responsibility for the supervision of a successful student) before taking on joint supervisory duties.

Clear lines of communication must be established and agreed between the student and supervisors at both locations.

Supervisors must maintain frequent (normally every 2 weeks) contact with students throughout the programme of study, whilst at Imperial and at the partner institution/organisation. The pattern and method of maintaining good communication must be agreed by students and their supervisors. Provision must be made for supervisors to visit the student while they are away from their respective institution.

Guidance

- Students may have only one supervisor or may have up to three but not more than three supervisors. Where a student has more than one supervisor, one of the supervisors shall be designated the main (previously known as principal or lead) supervisor.
- Details of further support that should be accessible to research students are available on the Registry website.
- Students who are unhappy with their supervisor are advised to talk to their Director of Postgraduate Studies in the first instance. Students can also discuss this with their departmental Postgraduate Tutor.
- Heads of Department are responsible for approving supervisor appointments and must confirm that proper supervision can be given for the expected duration of the programme.

Precept 7: Induction

Each department must have an induction day/programme for new students and must make provision for late arrivals, either in the form of a second induction day/programme or through arrangements whereby students meet individually with key staff to complete the induction programme. Students should be made aware of their responsibilities and entitlements (including financial) at early and/or appropriate stage in their research degree programme.

The induction programme for new students on collaborative programmes should include the procedures and requirements for their particular programme, including the timelines for completion of the various stages of the research degree and the professional skills development and English language requirements, and details of the relevant members of staff involved, both at Imperial and the partner institution.

Guidance

- The College holds a central induction for all research students at the South Kensington, Hammersmith and Silwood Park campuses every October during Welcome Week.
- In addition to the College events, departments are required to hold local inductions for their students.
- Departments must ensure that a comparable induction programme is organised for students registering after October.
- Supervisors are responsible for a significant part of the orientation process. More information is available in the guidance document "Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor Partnership".

Precept 8: Student Handbooks

Each department must have a postgraduate student handbook, either in hard or electronic copy which contains, but is not limited to, information listed in the College's guidelines for handbooks document.

Students on joint and collaborative programmes must receive the postgraduate student handbook of the departments in which they are based at Imperial and at the partner institution/organisation. Students must also receive supplementary information, agreed by both partners, which describes the specific arrangement s of the joint/collaborative programme.

Guidance

- The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team provide a checklist, templates and standard text for inclusion in departmental handbooks

Precept 9: Research Student Communities

Departments must make provision to allow research students to interact with their peers and should facilitate the existence of a collegial/scholarly community.

Each joint/collaborative programme must facilitate cohort building activities and events.

Guidance

- The Graduate School provides guidance on cohort building and information on how students can apply for the research community fund, a fund which is designed to support student-led research community development.

Precept 10: Pastoral Care Network

Departments must make provision for a research student pastoral care network, led and managed by the PG Tutor. Departments are free to choose which model to use, but the model should be clearly communicated to students. Examples may include, cohort building, mentoring, or a buddy scheme.

Guidance

Departments are free to decide which support network / model they would like to adopt in their department subject to the following:

- The network should involve individuals who will support the PG Tutor in their role. The individuals should be the "eyes and ears" of the PG Tutor and should raise concerns with the

PG Tutor, when these arise. The purpose of this system is to ensure that the role of PG Tutor is pro-active rather than reactive and that a network of support and community is developed within departments.

- Members of the network should meet regularly but informally with students. Existing departmental events, seminars and group meetings could be utilised for this purpose.
- Models may include the following but departments are free to propose their own:
    a) A network of Deputy PG Tutors, each assigned to a group of students
    b) A mentoring scheme
    c) Cohort building
    d) Buddy scheme for PhD students – buddies could be postdocs or PhD students in their later years
    e) PG student reps who regularly meet with the PG Tutor

Precept 11: Research & Professional Skills Development

All students must be made aware of the Graduate School's Professional Skills Statement of Policy and Attendance requirement during their induction. All students should be supported in completing this requirement. Furthermore, all students should have the opportunity to engage in further activities and training to enhance their research and professional skills and receive careers advice.

Students on joint and collaborative programmes must complete the Graduate School's Professional Skills Development requirement, unless an alternative approach is agreed by the Postgraduate Professional Development Committee.

Guidance

- Further details of the Graduate School's Professional Skills Courses are available on the Graduate School website.

Precept 12: Management/Organisation

Each department must have a Postgraduate Committee (with a minimum composition of 3 members including the Director of Postgraduate Studies and Postgraduate Tutor) chaired usually by the Director of Postgraduate Studies, to oversee the format and quality of the higher degree programme including recruitment, admissions, induction, registration, progression, assessment, student feedback, complaints, training, proposal of external examiners, submission and completion rates. The Committee must report to the Head of Department and meet regularly. There should be a written record kept of all meetings which is accessible to the staff and study body.

Each joint/collaborative programme must have a Joint Management Committee (e.g. EngD Boards, Joint PhD Academic Boards etc.) which meets at least annually to review procedures, student progress, good practice etc.

Guidance

- Imperial College and Imperial College Union have produced Good Practice Guidelines for Staff-Student Committees.

Precept 13: Assessments/Appeals and Complaints

Assessment procedures and the mechanisms for complaints and appeals should be clearly communicated to research students, supervisors and examiners. Students and supervisors should have a clear and mutually understood mechanism to raise concerns at a departmental level.

All students on joint and collaborative programmes are subject to the same assessment procedures as programmes based solely at the College unless an alternative approach is agreed by the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee and QAEC/Senate, as appropriate.

Departments at the partner institution/organisation must have a suitable protocol which should include directions to staff and students about the appropriate channels for raising particular concerns, complaints and appeals. There must also be appropriate disciplinary procedures in place. Students on joint and collaborative programmes, including those programmes with industrial partners, must be made aware of the protocol at both institutions. It must also be made clear to the students which procedures they should follow and when.

Guidance

- Assessment procedures are available on the Registry website.
- Appeals information for students is available on the Registry website.
- Procedures for handling student complaints and appeals are available on the Registry website.

Precept 14: Early Stage Assessment

Assessment of students' research ability to determine whether registration for the PhD degree can continue will involve a confirmation examination held in the 9th month (18 months for part-time students) after the date of initial registration. This is to be assessed by at least one independent assessor but normally two. Assessors can only be selected by the Director of Postgraduate Studies, Postgraduate Tutor or Postgraduate Committee, who can choose to ask for suggestions from the supervisor. Where a student fails the confirmation examination, written feedback should be provided to the student (with a copy to Registry) within one month of the examination date. Students who have been asked to re-submit must do so by 11 months of initial registration. Any decision* to transfer to the MPhil degree must be made within one year of the date of registration. A student can also be required to withdraw from the College.

All students on joint and collaborative programmes are subject to the same assessment procedures as programmes based solely at the College unless an alternative approach is agreed by the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) and QAEC/Senate, as appropriate.

Guidance

- Further information about the Early Stage Assessment is available in the Early Stage Assessment guidance notes.
- Early Stage Assessment Form

Precept 15: Late Stage Review

A further review of a student's research ability will be undertaken between 18 and 24 months (between 30 and 36 months for part-time students) after the date of initial registration. The form of review will be determined by the student's department and must be clearly communicated to students. Where a student fails to satisfy the assessors at this stage, written feedback should be provided within one month of the review date. Students who have been asked to re-submit* should do so within 3 months of their initial Late Stage Review.

* A student can also be required to withdraw from the College.

All students on joint and collaborative programmes are subject to the same assessment procedures as programmes based solely at the College unless an alternative approach is agreed by the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee and QAEC/Senate, as appropriate.

Guidance

- Further information about the Late Stage Review is available in the Late Stage Review guidance notes.
- Late Stage Review Form

Precept 16: Writing Up Stage

All students who have not submitted their thesis within their 36 month registration period (or equivalent) will be subject to a monitoring point at 36 months to ensure that they have a realistic plan for submitting the thesis within 48 months (or equivalent) of their start date. By 36 months, students should submit a timetable of remaining work to be done in order to complete the thesis within the required time. A key outcome of the monitoring point at 36 months is to confirm whether the student will enter the completing research period or whether they will be writing up away from the College.*

* A student who still has experimental work to perform at this stage cannot move into the completing research period and will continue to pay full fees.

All students on joint and collaborative programmes are subject to the same assessment procedures as programmes based solely at the College unless an alternative approach is agreed by the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee and QAEC/Senate, as appropriate.

Precept 17: Student Representation

Each department should have a staff/student committee in which postgraduate research students are represented to discuss postgraduate issues. This can be the Postgraduate Committee [Precept 11] or a separate forum. A meeting including student representatives should normally take place at least three times per year. There should be a written record kept of all meetings and this should be made accessible to students and staff.

Suitable mechanisms must exist at both partner institutions/organisations for obtaining feedback on the programme from supervisors and from students at appropriate intervals during the programme. Academic partner institutions/ organisations must offer students on joint and collaborative programmes the opportunity for representation on postgraduate academic forums whenever possible.

Guidance

- Further information can be found in the Staff-Student Committees Good Practice Guidelines.

Precept 18: Evaluation

Regular evaluation of the department’s research programme(s) should be carried out internally. All stakeholders should have the opportunity to provide their feedback (and in confidence if appropriate). Evaluations should be considered openly and the results communicated appropriately with any decisions made by the department to implement (or not) any changes resulting from this feedback communicated clearly to all stakeholders.

Joint and collaborative programmes are subject to the same review and evaluation mechanisms as programmes based solely at the College.

Guidance

- Every six months departments must give their students the opportunity to submit a confidential report on their experience on the programme.
- For quality assurance purposes the responses from the student surveys are considered as part of the regular and periodic review of departmental research degree training.

- The College takes part in the HEA's national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) on a biennial basis. Departments and Faculties are expected to complete an action plan and comment on their PRES results annually.

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