

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

RESEARCH DEGREE SUPERVISOR

This document outlines the typical duties expected of the post holder. The descriptions of the post cannot be exhaustive and the post-holder may be required to undertake other duties, normally these will be broadly in line with the listed key responsibilities. Roles and responsibilities may also be subject to change.

For information on the role of the “main supervisor” and the “co-supervisor” please see the *Eligibility for Research Degree Supervision* document, available at the following link:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/policiesandprocedures/examinationassessment>

Summary of post:

The key role of a research degree supervisor is to assist and support a student throughout their academic studies.

Duties and Key Responsibilities:

- Ensuring compliance with all College policies and regulations, including the key policies and procedures relating to supervision and examination.
- Being familiar with the following key document:
 - [The QAA Quality Code for Higher Education](#) in particular chapter B11 Research Degrees.
- To take part in College and departmental open days and recruitment activities and, where appropriate assist with advertising and promotion of studentships within their department
- To take part in the recruitment and selection of research degree students for which appropriate training will be needed.

A decision to admit a student to a research programme should not be made unless a department¹ is confident that:

- (a) The student is appropriately qualified;
- (b) A research topic suitable for that student’s abilities and background is available;

¹ The word “department,” which is used throughout this document may refer to Imperial College Schools, Centres, Divisions or Institutions, as appropriate.

- (c) The necessary facilities (e.g. computing, laboratory, adequate funding for consumables and training) can be provided;
 - (d) Proper supervision can be given for the expected duration of the programme.
- To ensure when conducting interviews with applicants for research degrees, that departmental regulations and procedures are followed and that the department is compliant with Precept One of the College's research degree Precepts.

[Note: To ensure that these requirements are met the Head of Department confirms on the appropriate form that the proposed supervision arrangements conform to the College criteria for the supervision of research students. For part-time students the supervisor will include, on the form, whether the student will be working virtually full-time on his or her research, and thus required to meet the milestones for full-time students, or if the student will not be able to devote more than two days per week to the research and thus governed by the milestones for part-time students. In many cases it is possible, when making offers of admission, to indicate the likely research area and/or supervisor, and if so, it is preferable to provide this information.]

- In some cases, supervisors may make contact with their students before enrolment at College to advise on general background reading and to encourage an initial literature survey on the research topic.
- At the beginning of the student's research the supervisor will give details of the facilities available in the Department and any regulations or constraints governing their use. Supervisors are encouraged to ensure that their students attend the departmental Induction programme, including those students who commence their study outside of the normal period.
- In the initial period, supervisors will give appropriate guidance about the nature of research and the standard expected, and about how to plan the programme so as to ensure that the normal expectation of submission of the thesis within three years may be met (and that in any event the thesis will be submitted no later than 44 months after commencement of study). Students are expected to complete a research plan within the first six to twelve weeks of study and supervisors will advise on this.
- Ensuring that students are informed of the milestones they must complete in order to progress with their studies, e.g. Early Stage Assessment (ESA) and Late Stage Review (LSR) for direct entry students.
- Where appropriate supervisors will encourage students to produce written work, which may often provide a basis for the preparation of the final thesis; supervisors should read thesis drafts and other written work produced by their students; they should return such work with constructive criticism and in reasonable time (good practice would be within 2 weeks). The supervisor will impress upon students the need to complete and submit work by agreed deadlines. By twenty four months they will draw up with each research student a plan for completing the research and submitting the thesis by the end of the third year.

- Supervisors will ensure that students are made aware when progress is inadequate or when standards of work fall below those generally expected and, in appropriate cases, will report such occurrences to the Department's Postgraduate Tutor, and/or Director of Postgraduate Studies.
- Where students are experiencing difficulty with their English, supervisors will require them to attend English classes. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring their students receive adequate English language support. Supervisors will also ensure that non-native English speakers (except those exempt), including Research Assistants and Clinical Research Fellows, are aware that in order to progress with a PhD, they must undertake a test at the Early Stage Assessment (ESA) stage (8 months) / Transfer Stage and Late Stage Review (LSR). If they fail, continued improvement would be required until a satisfactory report from the Centre for Academic English prompted departmental sign off for competency in English.
- In accordance with procedures, supervisors will ensure that reports are made on all students during their period of registration with the College and will also prepare any additional reports required by funding bodies.
- Ensuring proper records are kept with regard to student progress
- Advising on the appointment of the ESA and LSR assessment if requested by the Director of Postgraduate Study (DPS).
- Supervisors will complete as appropriate the examination entry form, including nominating examiners for the viva.
- Supervisors will maintain regular contact with their students through tutorials, group meetings or at the bench. They should set aside normally a minimum of one hour per week (on average) for consultation with them.
- Supervisors must be familiar with and keep update with current College rules regulations and procedures regarding the supervision of students
- Ensuring the proper use of policies such as interruption of studies, etc.
- Supervisors must be aware of and draw students' attention to the College's Code of Practice for students and supervisors available at the following link:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/codesofpractice>

and of the expectations for students and supervisors available at:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/graduateschool/qualityassurance/phdstudentsandsupervisors>

- Supervisors must ensure they are acting in compliance with the College's precepts for research degree programmes:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/qualityassurance/aprovalandreview/researchreviewandapproval/postgraduateresearchprecept/currentprecepts>

- Supervisors should be responsible for helping to develop their students' skills in technical writing, oral presentation, problem definition, statistical data analysis and critical literature review. This may be by recommendation of appropriate training courses both within and externally to Imperial.
- Supervisors may recommend, where appropriate and especially in the first year, attendance at taught academic classes, which may be undergraduate lectures, part of Master's level programme or a special course for research students.
- Supervisors should also ensure that instruction in requisite techniques, e.g. equipment design, is arranged if necessary. They will also advise and monitor attendance of the Graduate School's Professional Skills Development Training Programmes.
- Supervisors must be aware of the Graduate School guidelines outlining training that falls within their remit available at the following link:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/graduateschool/staff>

- Supervisors will arrange, as appropriate, for their students to talk about their work to staff and/or group seminars, and to have practice in oral presentations.
- Supervisors should ensure their students are aware of opportunities for conference attendance and other appropriate fora for presenting, intellectual development and networking
- Supervisors must be aware of their student's skills development and career-related needs and help them achieve their potential in consultation with the Departmental Careers Advisor and College's Careers Service.
- Supervisors must carry out their responsibilities in terms of the health and safety of their students available at the following link:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/safety/policies/organisationandarrangements/supervisorsofpostgrads>

- Supervisors should be aware of arrangements for welfare and pastoral support and refer students where appropriate.
- Supervisors will give guidance on the systematic recording of data or theoretical calculations and the importance of keeping and maintaining a clear record of all that has been undertaken.
- Supervisors will ensure the long term storage of student data following completion of studies

- Supervisors will go over their students' data and be reassured of its quality and integrity.
- Supervisors will guide students on the relevant use of library facilities, including approaching original literature and sources with a critical attitude and will give guidance on matters related to copyright and on avoiding plagiarism.
- Normally, supervisors will encourage their students to publish, singly or jointly, the results of the research as they emerge and are suitable for publication. Individual departments may have local guidelines for publications in specific areas.
- Supervisors will ensure and encourage students to fulfil the requirements of their funders and of any doctoral training centres that the student is part of.
- In those cases where students are encouraged to undertake further research, as research assistants, supervisors will make every effort to ensure that such employment does not jeopardise the ability of the students to complete their research, and to submit their theses, within the normal College timescale.
- Promoting the College's on-line surveys to obtain feedback on the College from students
- Writing references for students, past and present.
- Supervisors will ensure that students are aware of the College Guidelines for Proper Scientific Conduct in Research, available at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/secretariat/policiesandpublications/otherpolicies/properscientificconduct

and the Policy and Procedures for Investigation of Allegations of Scientific Misconduct, available at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/secretariat/governance/charterandstatutes.

- Supervisors for students on MRes programmes must also refer to the Code of Practice for MRes students. The Code is available to download at the following link:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/graduateschool/qualityassurance/codesofpractice>

- To act in accordance with the [Imperial Expectations](#).

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