

Departmental Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor Partnership

This document has been adapted by the Department of Mechanical Engineering from the equivalent “[Mutual Expectations Student Supervisor Partnership](#)” document produced by the College. It provides a list of expectations that a research student and their main supervisor might reasonably have of each other, as well as the relevant support provided from the Department and College. This is not a set of rules but is designed to facilitate conversations to establish effective partnerships. It is recommended that the document is discussed at the first meeting between the main supervisor and the student and re-visited throughout their partnership. Students and main supervisors are encouraged to discuss, tailor and personalise this document further to suit their partnership. Comments and/or suggestions to this document are welcome; please email them to the PG Student Administrator and/or the PG Senior Tutor.

It must be noted that this document and any subsequent changes and additions implemented by the supervisor and the student are not intended to be legally binding and do not form part of the student’s contract with the College. Moreover, this document is not intended to be used as a tick-box exercise, nor solely used to assess the performance of a PhD student or a supervisor (i.e. meeting all expectations laid out in this document does not guarantee a successful PhD and/or supervision, and not meeting an expectation does not equate to sub-standard performance of a student or their supervisor). It is also recognised that supervisors may not always be best placed to meet all the expectations laid out in the document, but should be aware of who can, so that they can refer the student appropriately. To maintain this clarity, it is recommended that this wording is copied over in all future and personalised iterations of the document, should they be made.

Further information from the College on the student-supervisor partnership is available from the Graduate School website (both links below include the College “Mutual Expectations Student Supervisor Partnership” document mentioned above, from which this document was adapted):

- Doctoral Students: [Effective Student-Supervisor Partnerships](#);
- [Supervisor’s guide: Effective Partnerships](#) (this also includes the College “Role and Responsibilities Research Degree Supervisor” document).

	As your Supervisor, I will...	As your Student, I will...	As your Department and working together with College, we will...
	Academic development		
1. Project direction	Work with you to develop an appropriate project that you can deliver within the period of your studentship, with clear strategic aims and objectives, and with a workplan that will be reviewed throughout your project.	Work with you to understand what is required of me, taking responsibility for my progress. I will strive to display the initiative, commitment and work ethic required to progress and successfully complete my project.	Provide you a Departmental network of support (led by the Director of Research for academic issues, the Senior Tutor PGR for pastoral issues and the Student Wellbeing Advisor for wellbeing issues). Review your project direction (including strategic aims and objectives, progress, and workplan) at the Early Stage Assessment (ESA) and Late Stage Review (LSR).
2. Working environment	Ensure you have adequate space and resources in which to carry out your research.	Review my working environment and access to resources, alerting you to where there are potential shortfalls impacting on my ability to progress my research.	Work with your supervisor to provide you a desk space and an appropriate computer. Maintain experimental labs and computational resources that you may use as appropriate. Ensure that your workplace is safe and inclusive, and strive to address any safety or inclusivity concerns you may raise.
3. Training	Ensure you receive appropriate safety, research and technical skills training, relevant to your research, noting that these may be available through distance, blended or face-to-face delivery.	Attend, reflect upon, and make use of any safety, technical or research skills training required to progress my research. Proactively reflect on my training needs, look for appropriate training opportunities, and discuss these with you.	Provide you with training opportunities on technical and research skills, through the Graduate School . Provide you with safety and technical training to use experimental and computational equipment, as appropriate for your research project.
4. Literature and communication skills	Provide you with guidance on how to access and critically review original literature and other sources of information. I will also help you to develop your writing and presentation skills.	Read the key literature in my field, develop critical thinking skills, undertake training to develop my writing and presentation skills. Take responsibility for writing my ESA, LSR and thesis.	Give you access to existing literature through the Library and other resources. Provide you with opportunities to receive formal training on written and oral communication skills through the Graduate School and the Centre for Academic English .

5. Record keeping, reference management, & research data management	Provide you with guidance on record keeping, including reference and research data management, where appropriate.	Keep accurate, thorough, and organised records and notes of my research and progress. Make good use of the reference and research data management software, training and facilities provided by the College.	Provide you with software, training and facilities for reference management and research data management .
6. Progress, milestones, and examinations			
6.1. On research progress	Provide you with appropriate guidance about the nature of research and standards expected for each milestone, and help you to plan your research so that you can submit your thesis on time.	Comply with the College's Academic and Examination Regulations and other College procedures. I will work at a pace which is sufficient for me to make good progress with my research.	Offer you advice and resources to excel during your PhD, through the Imperial Success Guide for Doctoral Students .
6.2. On milestones	Encourage you to plan your work so that you adhere to milestone deadlines (e.g. ESA, LRS, and thesis submission). Advise on your readiness to meet milestones and support you to achieve a good outcome in these.	Recognise that I am the primary person responsible for driving my PhD project forwards, ensuring that its progress is on track and submitting my thesis in time. Initiate the discussions on milestones and strive to keep them on track. Understand that the nature of research makes it impossible to guarantee that milestones will be met within a pre-established timeframe.	Help you in navigating the timeline of your PhD and its milestones (through the PhD Student Handbook and PG Administrator, supported by the Director of Research and Senior Tutors if needed). Remind you of upcoming (and overdue) milestones, via the PG Administrator. Help you (via the Directors of Research and/or Senior Tutors PGR) resolve any major disagreements regarding choice of examiners, target submission date, etc.
6.3. On examinations	Identify suitable examiners for your viva and discuss these with you before appointing them. Help you in preparing for examinations, e.g. by discussing possible questions and how to address them.	Proactively prepare myself for examinations, e.g. by identifying possible questions and how to address them, and discuss this with you.	

7. Feedback			
7.1. On progress and student / supervisor partnership	Provide you with timely and regular constructive feedback (this can be verbal during regular meetings or written, for example through 6-monthly research forms) on research progress and our partnership, and constructively discuss my feedback with you. Proactively act on the feedback you provided me.	Provide you with timely and regular constructive feedback (this can be verbal during regular meetings or written, for example through 6-monthly research forms) on our partnership, and constructively discuss my feedback with you. Proactively act on the feedback you provided me.	Provide you and your supervisor with structured opportunities to share feedback, e.g. through the 6-monthly research assessment forms. The Senior Tutors (PGR) will provide you support if you are experiencing any issues regarding feedback (or lack thereof). The Directors of Research can provide you further support if you are experiencing any issues regarding standards of the work and progress.
7.2. On the standards of research work	Discuss with you, in a timely and constructive manner, any concerns I may have with the standards of your research, and work with you to address these as appropriate.	I understand that, where I have been advised that my work is unsatisfactory, I will need to take steps to bring my work up to the required standard, taking onboard your advice in this respect.	
7.3. On written work and oral presentations	Provide you with constructive feedback (preferably within a fortnight, and within a month unless mutually agreed otherwise) on presentations, reports, papers, or thesis chapters that you prepare.	Proactively initiate the discussion regarding how and when I can expect to receive feedback on my oral presentations and written work. Actively implement your guidance and feedback in the present and any subsequent work I prepare.	Provide you with training opportunities for communication skills and appropriate feedback (including on 1:1 basis as required) on the use of English language in sections of presentations and papers for external dissemination, through the Centre for Academic English (and the Graduate School where applicable).
	We will jointly discuss and agree (i) when the Student will provide work for the Supervisor to review, (ii) the level of readiness of the work (e.g. outline, rough draft, polished version), (iii) when the Supervisor will provide feedback to the Student, and (iv) the format of the feedback (e.g. verbal or written). These arrangements will evolve throughout the PhD, as the Student becomes more experienced and, therefore, more independent.		
8. Inductions and Health & Safety	Ensure that you receive an appropriate induction and Health and Safety training as relevant to your research, and that you actively review and amend your working practices as required for your project.	Comply proactively with the College’s Health and Safety requirements, including ensuring that appropriate risk assessments are in place, including before any new research activity is undertaken. I understand that maintaining safe working is a partnership between myself, my colleagues and supervisor(s) and the relevant safety and technical staff.	Provide you with an induction at the beginning of your PhD, and provide you with Health and Safety training as required for your research.

9. Scientific conduct	Draw your attention to the College’s Guidelines for Proper Scientific Conduct in Research and the Policy and Procedures for Investigation of Allegations of Scientific Misconduct.	Act in accordance with the Guidelines for Proper Scientific Conduct in Research and the Policy and Procedures for Investigation of Allegations of Scientific Misconduct.	Provide you access to information about Research Integrity at Imperial College and related guidelines and procedures.
10. Turnitin originality report at the ESA	Remind you to submit the ESA report to Turnitin and discuss any issues arising from the Turnitin originality report if/as required.	Submit a copy of my ESA to Turnitin for an originality check, reflect on the originality report, and discuss it with you.	Ensure that an independent assessor checks your ESA Turnitin originality report and confirms (via your ESA form) whether or not it is compliant with the College’s regulations on avoiding plagiarism.
	Managing our Partnership		
11. Student/ supervisor interactions			
11.1. Meetings	Be available to you, normally for at least one hour per fortnight (excluding during holidays or other time off work), for individual meetings, group meetings or lab meetings.	Be on time and be prepared for our meetings, seminars and any other arranged activities. Strive to become more independent as I progress in my PhD.	Provide you with the means to keep records of your meetings if you choose to do so (current best practises include a deck of slides stored in a shared folder, e.g. OneDrive or Teams, or a OneNote shared book).
	For our meetings, we will agree on the scheduling arrangement (scheduled or impromptu), platform (e.g. in-person vs. remote), type (e.g. group vs. individual), and the preparation needed; best practise in the Department is to have regular weekly scheduled in-person individual meetings, although this might vary according to the joint preference of the student and supervisor. We will also discuss how the Student should best keep a record of our meetings, discussions and decisions.		Senior Tutors (PGR) will provide you support if you are experiencing any issues regarding meetings with your supervisor.
11.2. Other interactions	We will discuss and agree on how best to interact with each-other outside our meetings, including (i) preferred platforms (e.g. email, MS Teams, pop-up at your office) and (ii) preferred and any restricted hours. We appreciate that our working hours might be different, and that neither of us is obliged to respond to enquiries outside our usual working hours.		Senior Tutors (PGR) will provide support in cases where the student or supervisor perceives the timing and manner of communication to be unreasonable.

12. Absences			
12.1. If unavailable	Let you know if I become unavailable for our previously-agreed arrangements, with good notice whenever possible, and as soon as possible if otherwise.		Ensure that you have at least one additional supervisor (2 nd supervisor) who you may contact for help when the main supervisor is not available, as well as at other times as appropriate.
	Nominate a suitably qualified colleague who can discuss your work with you if I will be unavailable for a period longer than one month.		
12.2. Interruption of Studies (IoS)	Discuss with you the possibility for an IoS if you will be unavailable to work on your PhD for a period of over one month.	Discuss with you if I need to be absent for over a month, with as much notice as possible. Discuss a potential IoS with Senior Tutors PGR if I am considering this option.	Guide you (through College webpages , the PhD Student Handbook, and support from the Senior Tutors PGR and PG Administrator) through your options and procedures in case you are considering to take/ could benefit from taking an IoS.
	Discuss and mutually agree on the level and type of contact (if any) to be had during an IoS.		
13. Building a successful student /supervisor partnership	During our interactions, we will both build trust and confidence with each-other to enable an effective and respectful partnership. If I am concerned about our partnership, I will raise this with you first and work constructively with you to identify solutions. If needed, I will seek help within the Department.		Highlight and promote the College’s strategy and commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion for all staff and students. Provide a network to support (led by the Senior Tutors PGR and Directors of Research) if any concerns with the student/supervisor partnership arise. Provide guidance (for students and for supervisors) on how to successfully manage the student/supervisor partnership. Refer you to the Graduate School mediation process if any issues cannot be solved within the Department.
	I will acknowledge the risks of power imbalance and will strive to uphold the highest standard in our partnership.		
14. Scope of supervision	Ensure you receive appropriate supervision for the duration of your research degree. Highlight opportunities and gaps in your research and help you to exploit your strengths and overcome your weaknesses to complete a successful PhD. Support and mentor your professional development.	Recognise that your primary role is not to dictate but rather to advise, guide and oversee my research. Recognise that a PhD thesis is by its very nature an individual piece of work for which I must take full ownership.	

15. Research collaborations	Introduce you to other staff and students who will be directly involved with your research experience at College. I will make it clear what their role is and what support you can expect from each person.	Work collaboratively with colleagues involved in my research, and in the lab and office. Approach my second supervisor at least once every three months to discuss my project.	Assign you a second supervisor, and additional supervisor(s) if appropriate, whom you should meet to discuss your project at least once every three months. Provide you a network of support within the Department, including a PhD Student Representative in your research group, and describe their roles in the PhD Student Handbook.
16. Teaching and supervision	Guide you so that the risk of any teaching or supervision that you carry out in jeopardising your ability to complete your research or submit your thesis on time is minimised.	Discuss with you any opportunities to teach, before accepting them. Be helpful to other colleagues in the research group, lab or office, and help you supervising MEng/MSc students if they are doing projects related to my PhD.	Provide you with opportunities to teach as appropriate, and with the required training. Pay you for your participation in teaching-related activities as required.
17. Participating in College activities	Celebrate your achievements and encourage you to get involved with the wider College community, including by presenting your research progress.	Take steps to share the findings of my research with the wider College community and develop my own networks outside my immediate research group.	Provide you with opportunities to share your research findings and develop your own network through, for example, the Graduate School, Graduate Students' Union and the Imperial College Union.
	Supporting good health and wellbeing		
18. Work-life balance and wellbeing	Encourage you to maintain a healthy work- life balance and good wellbeing. Respect your time off work, and your preferred and restricted hours for contact (as detailed in Point 11.2). I will appreciate that your working hours might be different from mine; therefore, while I may send one-way communication such as emails and Teams chat outside your working hours, I will not expect an immediate reply and will not call you directly unless in an emergency.	Do my best to look after myself and maintain a healthy work-life balance.	Provide you with a Departmental network of support (led by the Student Wellbeing Advisor and Senior Tutors PGR) if you experience work-life balance or wellbeing issues. Provide you guidance on wellbeing through the College's Student Support Zone and the Graduate School .

19. Annual leave (holidays)	Encourage you to take annual leave, and discuss with you appropriate timings to do so. Approve your holiday requests unless there is a strong and valid reason related to your PhD not to do so.	Take annual leave. Requests for annual leave will be made with you in good time, and at a time which is appropriate to my research, noting that my funder may have specific requirements.	Make it clear that all research degree students, including international students with a Student Visa, are entitled and encouraged to take a minimum of 30 days to a maximum of 40 days per year (including public holidays and College closure days) of annual leave (pro rata for part-time students).
20. Illness or personal issues	Appreciate that there may be times when, due to illness, family, or other personal circumstances, when your availability to work is adversely affected and we will need to make reasonable adjustments to our arrangements; I will be supportive and understanding of the potential impact of such circumstances on your work and well-being. Inform you if I am unable to attend College activities due to illness or other personal circumstances.		Provide you with a Departmental network of support (led by the Student Wellbeing Advisor and Senior Tutors PGR) if you experience difficult personal circumstances. Help you (via the Senior Tutors PGR and PG Administrator) navigating your options in case you need an Interruption of Studies due to illness or personal circumstances. Provide you guidance on how to access health support in case of illness, through the College's Student Support Zone .
	Point you in the direction of further help and support to suit the nature of your illness or personal circumstance.	Inform the Department's Senior Tutor (PGR) if I am away from College (except on holiday leave) for more than one month.	
21. Financial hardship	If you are experiencing financial hardship, I shall be flexible and sympathetic and point you towards potential sources of support such as the Student Support Fund.	If I am experiencing financial hardship, I will search for and read the guidance on the available support within College, and I will reach out for support.	Help you (via the Senior Tutors PGR) in identifying suitable support options within the College if you are experiencing financial hardship, including the Student Financial Support Fund.
	Professional development		
22. Opportunities to talk about research	Encourage you to take appropriate opportunities to talk about your research within the Department, College or externally.	Take the opportunity to share the findings of my research and practise my communication skills with my research group and Department, within College, and with the wider community.	Encourage and support any Departmental events led by PhD students to promote networking and exchange of research ideas.

23. Conferences	<p>Provide you with the opportunity to attend and, depending on the progress of your PhD, present in, at least one national and one international conference or event during your PhD study. I will support you in the preparation of your presentation.</p> <p>Clearly acknowledge your contribution if I include your work in any of my presentations.</p>	<p>Make the most of opportunities to share the findings of my research at external conferences and events, which can help me develop my own professional network.</p> <p>Support you in the preparation of presentations that might include the work I have done under your supervision.</p>	<p>Provide you with opportunities to receive formal training on technical presentation skills, through the Graduate School and the Centre for Academic English.</p> <p>Provide you opportunities (for example through the Imperial College Trust fund) to apply for funding to attend conferences, if your project cannot cover the associated costs.</p>
24. Publications	<p>Encourage you to publish your work in relevant journals wherever possible. Support you in the writing process and discuss with you the relevant publication routes.</p>	<p>Understand that I would normally be expected to write journal papers during the course of my PhD.</p>	<p>Provide you with opportunities to receive formal training on writing research papers, through the Graduate School and the Centre for Academic English.</p>
25. General professional development and plagiarism training	<p>Support your professional development by discussing with you your attendance at Graduate School courses, including completion of the compulsory online plagiarism awareness course.</p>	<p>Discuss my professional development with you and complete the required number of Graduate School Professional Skills courses and compulsory online plagiarism awareness course. I understand that the thesis must be all my own work and that all quotations from other sources, whether published or unpublished, must be properly acknowledged.</p>	<p>Provide you with appropriate training opportunities (through the Graduate School) to develop your Professional Skills, including the compulsory online plagiarism awareness course.</p>