Covid 19: Guidance for PGR Supervisors

Currently, PhD, MD(Res) and MPhil students continue to have access to laboratory facilities but should only come onto campus if they cannot undertake their research projects from home. It is noted that the amount of time students have to access research facilities is subject to departmental social distancing measures and rules.   All students who are not reliant on labs or other specialist facilities should continue to work remotely. If students cannot study in their accommodation or require additional support due to medical or physical conditions, the College will continue to provide study space which can be booked by students, through their Department. Subject to further Government restrictions, College Libraries will continue to remain open, as well as designated study spaces.

It is recognised that some students are not able to/do not wish to return to campus for laboratory-based research. Reasons for this include, current travel restrictions, concerns regarding infection rates in the population and fears about virus transmission in family and care settings.   In other circumstances, and particularly for Clinical Research Fellows, students may wish to return to the NHS to support the national effort.

The College position is that we need to:

- Support students that can return to campus/are currently on-campus, to work safely

- Support students who continue to work remotely, to stay connected and work effectively

- Support students who cannot travel/do not wish to come into campus, to be able to carry on with their research, where possible

- Support students who wish to return to the NHS to support the national effort.

The following check-list has been designed to assist supervisors in providing support to their PGR students. It provides information and guidance on the following:

- Supporting students who are returning/have returned to campus to carry out their research
- Supporting students who cannot travel/do not wish to come into campus, to be able to carry on with their research
- Information about the implications of taking an interruption of study
- Points to consider when supervising 1st, 2nd, 3rd year plus and students who are in the writing up phase of their PhD
- Guidance about:
    - Registration and milestone extensions and tuition fees
    - Stipend extensions
    - Remote supervision and remote PhD exams
    - Wellbeing
    - communications

Supporting students who are returning/have returned to campus to carry out their research
Discuss with your student(s) their research plan and whether this needs adjustment to account for Covid-19 impact.   In your discussions, think about the next 3 months, but also more long-term – up to 6 months. Also, consider your plans should there be further restrictions imposed by Government. Whilst rates of infection in London are high, regular testing is essential for all staff and students who are required to attend campus during the lockdown. Students are expected to take a test when they return to campus and minimise social contact until a negative test result has been confirmed. After that students should [book weekly tests](#) if they continue to attend campus. If students are returning to campus, it is essential that they take a weekly Covid-19 test which can be booked remotely through the College's testing service. You may find the following links helpful in providing reassurance to students about safety on-campus: • [Guidance on campus safety](#), including the [College's Code of Conduct](#) when attending campus • [Covid testing](#) and contact tracing

Supporting students who cannot travel/do not wish to come into campus, to be able to carry on with their research
Please listen to your students' concerns and acknowledge that it is not business as usual - some students may find it difficult to function as if it is. We know that travel restrictions are a cause for concern for some students – please see below helpful guidance: • [FAQs for students worried about their visa and immigration status](#) Discuss with your student(s) their research plan and whether this needs adjustment to account for any disruption plus also remote working. In your discussions, think about the next 3 months, but also more long-term – up to 6 months. Where it is not possible to develop a remote research plan, interruptions of study should be considered, but only as a last resort.   If Interruption of Study (IOS) is considered the best route for your student, and they agree, please ensure that the impact of taking an IOS is made clear – including the suspension of stipend payments as well as submission deadlines. It could also be the case that your student wishes to return to the NHS. If this is the case, then it may be appropriate to discuss use of IOS, but again the implications of this need to be made clear.

Interruptions of Study

If a student interrupts, PGR progression is paused – the "clock stops". This means:

- PhD milestones and PhD registration will pause and will resume once the IOS has finished. The thesis submission date will be adjusted for the period of time interrupted.

- Tuition fees will not be charged for the duration of the interruption

- Stipends will not be paid for the duration of the interruption

- There will be implications for student visas. Queries should be directed to the international student support (international@imperial.ac.uk) office before they proceed to interrupt

- Student ID cards will become inactive for the period of interruption, which will affect access to resources, including the Library.

Read more about interruptions here: guidance and the interruption of studies form.

PhD Progression and timeline: Points to consider	
1st year	Some 1st year students will not have been on campus yet, nor met you/other members of their group in person. Please review the wellbeing section of this document for information to help support your students to "stay connected."
2nd year	These students would have already experienced considerable disruption and would have spent most of their 1st year in lockdown. They may have missed opportunities to learn experimental/computational skills directly from senior researchers in their group, so they may feel anxious about impeded progress. Consider using the Late Stage Review (LSR) as a point to discuss expectations and adjusting these to facilitate submission.
3rd year +	Like 2nd year students, these students would have already experienced considerable disruption. They may have missed opportunities to learn experimental/computational skills directly from senior researchers in their group, so they may feel anxious about impeded progress. Discuss with your students their thesis plan, adapt and clarify expectations to facilitate submission.
Writing-up	It is possible to apply for a thesis deadline extension if needed. Thesis extension form and guidance
General guidance: applicable to all students	
Prospective PhD students	Consider whether starting the PhD remotely is feasible, if not whether to postpone PhD registration.

Automatic PhD registration extensions, milestones and tuition fees	**Registration extension**: All affected research students, except those who are in their Writing Up Phase of their PhD or those currently interrupted, are entitled to an automatic registration extension period – currently up to 6 months - to cover disruption experienced between the period 16 March 2020 until 30 September 2020. Students should find that their milestones and registration extensions have been updated in My Imperial. **Milestone extension**: PhD milestones are also automatically adjusted to reflect the same period of disruption. Students may find the [following FAQs helpful](#). See also [guidance regarding doctoral assessment and examinations affected by Covid](#) **Tuition Fees**: If fees associated with registration extensions are not covered by external funders, students will not be charged additional fees for this period of automatic extension.
Stipend Extensions	More information about the College's process to [support eligible UKRI funded students is available here](#). [The College's scheme to support all other funded eligible students is available here](#). Self-funded students experiencing financial hardship should seek support from the [student support fund](#) which has been reviewed in light of the pandemic.
Remote Supervision	The [mutual expectations document](#) has been revised to take account of remote working – please use this document when discussing how your partnership will work. The College has also developed guidance on [remote supervision meetings](#). You may also find the [UK Council for Graduate Education's Guide to online supervision](#) helpful.
Remote PhD exams	See [Guidance for students on Remote Exams](#)
PGR wellbeing	**Support services/pastoral care:** The [Student Support Zone](#) remains a key source of support for students, as do Senior Tutors (PGR) and the [Faculty Senior Tutors.](#) **Maintaining Productivity:** [Maintaining productivity and working without a lab](#) [Professional skills training opportunities](#), all of which are running remotely.

	Coaching: The [Postgraduate coaching](#) programme is available to all PGR students who wish to talk independently from their academic department about matters affecting any aspect of their programme. **Staying connected**: Staying connected is also a key concern for PGRs. As well as your supervision and research group activities, there are other ways to help students stay connected. For example, College-level PGR events such as the [4Cs Science Communication Competition](#) and the [PGR Research Community Fund](#) (which can be used for activities which take place remotely). The Graduate School can also deliver cohort training opportunities for your department – please get in touch if you would like the School to arrange training (graduate.school@imperial.ac.uk) **Remote working environment**: If your student does not have a suitable remote place to work, they can book study space on campus through their department. Talk to your Director of PG studies to find out what arrangements your department has in place to support this. In addition, the College's Libraries are open to students who wish to access quiet study space. **Concerns about living in private accommodation:** [Private housing and covid-19](#)
PGR Communications	Please remind your students to read the Graduate School's monthly newsletter which is one of the main routes by which the College communicates with students, coupled with the College's Covid-19 emails which go to staff and students. There are also [dedicated FAQs for PGR students](#) in relation to Covid