

Task and Finish Group for the Student Supervisor Partnership

Recommendation	Actions Taken
<p>To review and strengthen the role of Head of Department, Director of Postgraduate Studies, Postgraduate Tutor and Academic Mentor with respect to supporting the student-supervisor partnership.</p>	<p>New documentation for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on the departmental pastoral care of research students is still on-going. • Strengthened role of HoD and DPS as they are able to tailor Focus on Best Practice in Supervision workshops and decide participants.
<p>To review EDU's support for the student-supervisor partnership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New online supervisors' guidebook developed • New online mandatory course for new supervisors, "Introduction to Supervision at Imperial College London" • New online optional course, "supporting the mental health and wellbeing of Imperial College doctoral students." • All main and co supervisors required to attend Focus on Best Practice in Supervision workshop at least once every 6 years. • New Framework for the CPD of imperial college London supervisors • Updates to College induction templates and probation documentation for new lecturers to reflect new requirements.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendments to the Research degree Precepts to reflect new required approved by Postgraduate Research Quality Committee.
To review the supervisor student expectations document to promote mutual respect and successful collaboration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New document to replace the codes of practice for research degree supervisors and research degree students developed: <i>Mutual Expectations for the Student Supervisor Partnership</i> • New document - <i>Defining the roles within supervisory teams</i> • Roles and responsibilities document for the research degree main supervisor updated. • Amendments to Eligibility for Research Degree Supervision – now called <i>Policy on Research Degree Supervision</i>.
To share broadly examples of excellent student-supervisor partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good practice answers provided as part of the <i>Introduction to Supervision at Imperial College London</i> course will be collated on blackboard so that they can be shared with the community of supervisors. • Bank of examples of best practice shown on the supervisor website.
To recognise and celebrate the diversity of outstanding student-supervisor partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving forward, President Award recipients invited to speak about their experiences at the Education Away Day and as part of the EDU's Perspectives Series.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Graduate School will lead the College's submission for external awards which recognise excellence in research degree supervision such as the Times Higher Education Awards.
To review the role and valuable contribution postdocs make to supervision and to implement means of recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Assistant Supervisor roles and responsibilities document • New Assistant supervisor CPD Framework • New formal appointment process for Assistant Supervisors & Co-Supervisors to recognise their valuable contribution. • Amendments to the ESA and LSR documents to include recognition of Assistant Supervisors
To ensure the EPSRC and MRC Doctoral Prize Fellowships and the MRC Academic Clinical Lectureships are promoted more widely and that the College considers approaching donors to extend these models.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of case studies showing the benefit of these grants presented to Advancement with a view to securing donations. • Meeting with Secretary of Scholarships Committee has taken place. • Meeting will be scheduled with the Vice Provost (Advancement) and Vice Provost (Research) to take forward.

Task and Finish Group for Doctoral Student Wellbeing	
Recommendation	Actions Taken
In collaboration with the ICU, to explore the root causes of issues facing some PhD students before considering whether a PGR specific counselling programme should be developed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The College has participated in the HEFCE funded project: Exploring the Exploring the Wellbeing and Mental Health and Associate Support Services for Postgraduate Researchers. Note that the task and finish group for the student supervisor partnership will be reviewing the role of academic mentor and PG Tutor.
To raise supervisors' awareness of support services available to students, especially in the area of mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of welfare and pastoral care information in the Supervisors' Guidebook Development of a brand new optional course for supervisors called, <i>Supporting the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Imperial College London Doctoral Students</i>. Development of a new document to replace the College's Codes of Practice for Research Degree Supervisors and Research Degree Students: <i>Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor Partnership</i>.
To develop the PG Success Guide to reflect challenges faced by PG students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student focus group reviewed the content of the PG Success Guide and Student Space website and feedback was sent to the website owners for consideration.

Task and Finish Group for Research Culture and Community

Recommendation	Actions Taken
To explore what constitutes a vibrant, multidisciplinary research community from a student perspective	<p>Following feedback from students at focus group meetings the following has been established:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A <u>central College-wide Open Research Seminar Listings website</u>• A <u>brand new PhD Summer Showcase</u> has been launched.• <u>To celebrate success</u>, on a monthly basis, students who have been awarded their PhD are invited to attend a group photo shoot with the Graduate School. The photo and a congratulatory message is then posted on social media and featured in the Graduate School's newsletter.• <u>Provision of Transport for Silwood Park students</u> to attend Graduate School events which take place at the South Kensington Campus has been established.• A <u>brand new online resource</u> been developed to help PG student representatives, and any other interested parties, to <u>understand more about the College community and how the College works</u>.• A brand new <u>Graduate School blog</u> has been launched with PhD students invited to contribute articles.

Task and Finish Group for Research Culture and Community

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Graduate School has also launched “<u>PhD Stories</u>”, short video clips of students who share their stories of success and how they have overcome challenges. • Revisions to the PRES questions relating to research culture and community are proposed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To add an additional question which asks students to comment on the extent to which their department provides opportunity for network with other researchers 2. To amend the words “research ambience” to “research environment” • The Graduate School will be developing short videos which promote the facilities available to students at all campuses in order to encourage students to visit other campuses. • To develop online community building, the Graduate School has launched a webinar programme to connect students based at hospital campuses and Silwood to the central programme.
<p>To adjust central cohort building funding to reflect the findings of the above, publicising this fund and the programme more widely</p> <p>&</p> <p>To review and strengthen guidelines on cohort building</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cohort building fund and criteria has been reviewed and re-branded as the Research Community Fund. Funds are available for student-led cohort building activities only • The cohort building website has been reviewed and re-launched

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Graduate School has developed a workshop on cohort building, the research community fund and developing communities of students which is part of PG Rep Training. • The Graduate School is hosted a cohort building re-launch event on the 24th May 2017. • The Graduate School submitted a proposal to Planning Round to increase the budget for the Research Community Fund from £20K to £30K. Unfortunately, this was not approved.
To explore how best to ensure that postgraduate students have physical space in which to meet other students and have greater interaction with other research groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A business case for the development of a postgraduate hub has been developed. • The business case is being presented to senior members of staff.
To review exit surveys/correspondence from College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of a Graduate School statement on how alumni can engage with the professional skills programme and networking events abroad such as the Global Fellows programmes has been developed and is sent to Graduands as part of the invitation to attend Graduation. • Opportunity for Alumni to engage with Graduate School activities is now circulated by the Alumni Office on a regular basis. • The use of the #ourimperial by Graduate School staff to celebrate and share information with the alumni population.

Task and Finish Group for Research Culture and Community

Recommendation	Actions Taken
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="1077 316 2047 384">• The provision of links to the website which feature PhD Stories and the Graduate School's blog have been shared with Advancement<li data-bbox="1077 432 2047 580">• The task and finish group also recommends that Departments continue to seek ways in which to celebrate student success at a departmental level and encourage and promote opportunities for students to engage with the wider College community.<li data-bbox="1077 639 2047 746">• Finally, the task and finish group agreed to strongly emphasise that PhD students make a fundamental contribution towards the College's REF submission and this should also be recognised by Departments.

Task and Finish Group for Prospective Student Information	
Recommendation	Actions Taken
<p>Departments are reminded of both the standard and higher level English language entry requirements for PhD students.</p> <p>&</p> <p>Departments are encouraged to consider applying the higher level English language entry requirement for PhD students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Task and Finish Group developed a communication to departments reminding them of the standard and higher level English language requirements. Departmental responses to this were discussed at the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee's (PRQC) Autumn 2016 meeting.
<p>The Graduate School continues to work with the Centre for Academic English to explore how best to embed English language within the PhD of non-native speakers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Graduate School and the Centre for Academic English (CfAE) now meet termly to discuss how best to continue to embed English language within the PhD. • A brand new writing retreat has been developed in partnership by the Graduate School and the CfAE. • There are 1-2-1s available from retreat tutors and time for students to write.
<p>Departments should be encouraged to consider introducing higher entry requirements for their PhD programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental responses to this recommendation was discussed at the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee's Autumn 2016 meeting.
<p>Departments and supervisors should be encouraged to review their websites noting that websites are a key source of information to prospective students. In particular, doctoral students wish to learn about how research groups function, key roles within in each group and the number of students in each</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospective students use websites to gather information to inform decisions about where to apply. Further, students as consumers are now protected by regulations stipulated by the Competition & Markets Authority (CMA). It is therefore important for departments, research groups and the College to ensure that

Task and Finish Group for Prospective Student Information

Recommendation	Actions Taken
<p>group. It is important to note that students as consumers are protected by regulations stipulated by the Competition & Markets Authority.</p>	<p>websites are current and up to date. The College has a number of groups which are currently reviewing what the College is required to provide at the application stage, offer stage and acceptance stage and what information should be presented on websites. Being mindful of this work and to avoid duplication of effort and information, the Task and Finish Group agreed that it was not best placed to take forward this recommendation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A template proforma for PhD programmes which provides high level information about research programmes available at College has been developed.
<p>A list of suggested questions for prospective students to ask at interview is developed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Task and Finish Group has developed a set of topics which prospective students may wish to ask at interview. • The Task and Finish Group reviewed the letters and correspondence prospective students and offer holders receive from College. It found that although departments send a welcome letter to new students, the College does not. Quite often, the first communication students are sent by College is a fee invoice. Given the College is currently clarifying what information should be provided to prospective students, offer holders and new students, the Task and Finish Group agreed that it would not make any recommendations in this area but would review the position in a year's time. Instead, the Graduate School would continue to send a welcome e-newsletter to new students at the start of term

Task and Finish Group for Prospective Student Information

Recommendation

Actions Taken

and would link to the new starters' website from their website in order to capture students who start outside the usual start of term.

Task and Finish Group for PhD Milestones	
Recommendation	Actions Taken
The College requirement to complete a Research Plan Confirmation should be removed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The amendment to the examination regulations was approved at the May 2016 meeting of the PRQC and at the June 2016 meeting of the Senate.
The Early Stage Assessment at 9 months should be kept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The task and finish group noted this recommendation and did not make any further changes although it was agreed that the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee would be asked to clarify what exactly is required of the student at the 9 month stage. For example, should the written work be submitted at 9 months, or should the assessment itself take place at 9 months in which case the written work would need to be submitted prior to 9 months. Clarity is needed. The same applies to the LSR.
To review the ESA so that there is greater use of conversion to MPhil and honourable exit where appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The task and finish group considered how best to support students through this process and revised Section C of the ESA and LSR forms to facilitate greater discussion between students and supervisors about research progress and the outcome of assessment. The task and finish group noted that not all students have sufficient data for the award of MPhil at the ESA stage and most will not have enough data even by 12 months after which point, funding will cease. With that in mind, the task and finish group agreed that Departments should make this clear to students at the start of the PhD.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For those students who leave with an MPhil, the task and finish group suggest that departments find opportunities to celebrate the achievement, perhaps by using short profiles which promote honourable exit. • The task and finish group also agreed that Directors of Postgraduate Studies should be supportive of supervisors whose students exit via MPhil. Students who leave with no award should be supported through the process and their achievements celebrated.
<p>ESA to be reviewed so that there is improved discussion between students and supervisors with respect to research progress and professional skills development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ESA form and guidance was revised to facilitate improved discussion between supervisors and their students. There is now a requirement for students and/or departments to append a record of professional skills courses, other technical training and any other development activities undertaken by a student to the ESA form prior to the milestone assessment. The task and finish group also agreed that this information should be updated and appended to the LSR form. • Section C of the ESA and LSR forms have been amended to contain specific questions relating to the professional development of students and to encourage supervisors to use the milestones as an opportunity to provide students with formal feedback. Both the supervisor and the student are required to sign this section of the form.

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Recommendation	Actions Taken
Extend the time in which students have to complete Graduate School professional skills courses from four by ESA to two by ESA and two by LSR.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Graduate School's Postgraduate Professional Development Committee (PPDC) approved a change to the Professional Skills Statement of Policy, requiring students to complete two courses by the ESA and a further two by the LSR. The amended policy statement was approved by the PRQC on 10 May 2016 and the June meeting of Senate. The change will take effect for the 2016-17 session.
The Late Stage Review should remain in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The task and finish group noted that the Working Party agreed that the timing of the LSR was appropriate and that the LSR should remain in place. It did not make any further changes.
The Completing Research Status should remain in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The task and finish group noted that the Working Party agreed that the Completing Research Status was appropriate and should remain in place. It did not make any further changes.
To encourage greater engagement from supervisors with respect to milestones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As previously stated, both the ESA and LSR forms and guidance have been revised to facilitate improved discussion between supervisors and their students. Following the outcome of the ESA or LSR assessment, supervisors are invited to discuss the outcome of the assessment, plans for research progress and to have a discussion about professional development with their students. This should be seen as an opportunity to provide students with formal feedback and the wording on the forms has been adjusted to reflect this.

Task and Finish Group for PhD Milestones	
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Encourage Departments to review their milestone criteria and guidelines especially with respect to the LSR.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,400 students completed the world class research supervision student survey in 2014-15. As part of the survey, students were asked to comment on the LSR milestone and provide feedback on this. Some students reported that they had found the LSR milestone criteria and guidelines to be unclear. Therefore, departments were asked to review the LSR milestone criteria ahead of the 2017-18 session.
Ensure Departments agree milestone assessment criteria and guidelines for inter-departmental students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The task and finish group discussed the importance of ensuring that interdepartmental students are clear about which department's milestone assessment criteria they are subject to right from the start of their PhD. The task and finish group agreed that departments must ensure that students know that they are subject to their home department's regulations and milestones. As a minimum, this information should be found in PG Handbooks. Further, where students have supervisors in different departments, or Faculties, it is vitally important that there is regular communication between the supervisors to ensure that information being passed to students is clear and correct and that there are no conflicting expectations.
That the Graduate School continues to develop new and more challenging professional skills courses that embed development within the research environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Graduate School expanded its provision to include more advanced level professional skills workshops. Workshops have been divided into three levels, each more challenging than the previous.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Graduate School has established links with industry to provide students with opportunity to embed learning within the research environment. For example, the Graduate School has delivered professional skills courses in industry locations. • The Graduate School has developed the MARS programme which allows completion of professional skills to count towards Chartered status of professional bodies.
That students have complete choice of the professional skills programme by removing the underpinning, consolidating completing and enriching stages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As of 2015-16, the Graduate School's Postgraduate Professional Development Committee removed previous restrictions, and students are now free to choose from across the entire range of courses.
That the Graduate School continues to develop more interactive and immersive courses with a range of delivery modes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Graduate School continues to develop its portfolio of online courses • A brand new webinar series has also been developed.
That the Graduate School develops a programme of coaching and individual / small group provision for students who require it, embedding, where appropriate, resilience development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Graduate School's doctoral student coaching programme has now launched. • The Graduate School also provides small group / individual support for students who require it • The Graduate School has embedded resilience training into its programme of courses

Task and Finish Group for PhD Milestones	
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That Departments consider making taught course programme timetables across College visible to PhD students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The task and finish group has established that all staff and students are able to request read only access to taught course timetables and view these via the College's timetabling software. Following discussion at the ESA or LSR, or even at other points during the PhD, the supervisor and student may determine that technical or other training might be helpful to the student. Should there be an appropriate course delivered elsewhere in College, the task and finish group agreed that the supervisor should contact the department delivering the course to see if capacity would permit an additional attendee. Reference to this is included in the revised ESA and LSR guidance.
The Graduate School explores ways in which to keep supervisors informed of their students' professional skills development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is now a requirement for a record of completed professional skills development courses to be appended to the ESA and LSR forms and to ensure supervisors are informed of courses being undertaken by their students.

Task and Finish Group for PhD Milestones

Recommendation

Actions Taken

As a result of the work of the task and finish group, the Registry's Student Records team will now provide PG administrators and departments with a report setting out details of when viva examinations have taken place and the dates that theses have been submitted. Additionally, the Student Records team will provide training to departmental staff who wish to use the College's ICA Dashboard to find these dates themselves.

It was also reported to the task and finish group that a number of departments have recently appointed academic mentors to be independent assessors of milestone assessments. Whilst this is perfectly fine, departments are reminded that it is not good practice to appoint members of staff who provide pastoral care to students as independent assessors of those same students due to potential conflicts of interest. The role of mentor will be explored further by the student supervisor partnership task and finish group

Finally, the task and finish group recommend that new supervisors receive training on the ESA and LSR, if they do not do so already

Task and Finish Group for Interruption of Studies

Recommendation	Actions Taken
<p>To address concerns surrounding general practice relating to interruption of studies, including funding at departmental, Faculty and College level and explore how these might be addressed.</p> <p>&</p> <p>To develop good practice guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The task and finish developed new guidelines for research students wishing to take interruptions providing clarity of process, improved information about categories of interruptions and when these should be applied. • The task and finish group developed a new set of guidelines for students wishing to take external study leave. • The task and finish group also developed of a new set of guidelines to clarify the process for late submission of theses. • Finally, as part of its consideration of funding issues surrounding interruptions of studies, the task and finish group developed a discussion paper which sets out variation in financial support. This has been discussed at the Disability Action Committee and highlighted to senior staff of the College.