

## Remote Supervision Meetings – Guidance for Students and Supervisors

This guidance has been developed to support students and supervisors meeting for remote supervision and wider group meetings. It should be read in conjunction with the College's *Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor Partnership* document.

### Establish how your partnership will work

The College's *Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student-Supervisor Partnership* has been revised to reflect working in a remote research environment. All new research students and supervisors should discuss this at their first meeting. Returning students and supervisors should revisit this document to discuss any changes to the way in which their partnership will work in a remote setting.

You should discuss the frequency of your individual meetings together and agree the best way forward. Try to establish routine and have regular conversations about health and wellbeing.

Remote meetings are an intense experience and you will both need "downtime." You cannot easily read body language, you listen very intensely to each other and when remote meetings take place one after another, it can be very draining. Remote meetings may take place at home, or in a "safe" place which would not normally be utilised for work purposes. This can be difficult for some. Alternatively, the research environment in which students are working may not be suitable for sensitive discussions. This should also be taken into consideration when meeting.

Where possible, make sure you allow space for contemplation and reflection in-between meetings.

### Return to experimental research and revised research plans

For returning students, it is highly likely that you will need to discuss and agree a revised research plan. For new students starting at the College, the project may begin remotely. Students report that they are concerned about their productivity and motivation and that this is a key source of stress for them. You should work together to identify what can be achieved and progressed remotely and establish a plan for returning to experimental research. You should also discuss opportunities to undertake remote professional skills development, remote conferences and remote competitions.

It is good practice for returning students to log any disruption to their research as a result of covid-19.

It is also important to have a conversation about what additional resources, such as digital technology and software which might be needed to progress research in a remote environment. It should be noted that the College has a [laptop support fund](#) to help students who need to purchase a laptop for remote working.

## **Use remote meetings to develop and maintain a sense of connectedness and belonging**

It is recommended that there is opportunity to meet with others who are part of the wider research group(s)/lab group(s). This will help to develop an online community of support and access to other students and staff, such as postdocs, who play an important role in the overall research student experience at College. Find time for social discussions at the start/end of meetings. This will help to maintain rapport, build a sense of community within research groups and keep connectedness. There may also be opportunity to participate in online social events.

All members of the College should consider that online discussion groups may be inhibiting for some staff and students who do not have English as a first language, or who may simply not be familiar with some of the technology. A good way forward might be to establish ground rules for group meetings and for all to be reminded of the cultural context of metaphors, be accepting of colloquialisms used by some and to be respectful to all.

## **Careful with communication**

At the moment, everyone is feeling anxious and we are all working within a high degree of uncertainty. Please consider this when working together and in particular, when providing and receiving feedback.

## **Sources of support for students**

There are many examples of excellent student supervisor partnerships at the College, but sometimes, these can go wrong. If students have concerns, they can speak, in confidence, to their Departmental Senior Tutor (PGR) or to the Faculty Senior Tutor. There may also be members of professional services staff who can help. The [Student Support Zone](#) provides more information on Departmental support.

Outside academic Departments, there are [other sources of support available](#), such as the Student Counselling and Mental Health Service. The Union also provides support through its Student Union Advisor. Finally, the Graduate School has a dedicated postgraduate coaching [programme](#) designed to provide opportunity to talk to a qualified coach about any aspect of the research degree experience.

## **Sources of Support for students and supervisors**

Whilst the majority of research degree student supervisor partnerships work extremely well, there may be occasions where you find that you are both unhappy with your partnership. This can be for a variety of reasons, but quite often, there may be poor communication and/or misinterpretation of intention which leads to partnership breakdown.

The Graduate School, in partnership with Student Services and the College's accredited Mediators have launched a confidential [research degree mediation service](#), designed for use where other services and support have not worked yet and with a view to pre-empting a breakdown of the relationship and finding a way forward which works for you both.