Welcome to the Supervisors’ Guidebook

Foreword from the Head of Strategy and Operations, Laura Lane

This document is for main and co-supervisors but assistant supervisors may also find it helpful. It is designed to bring together, in one single place, key information relating to student-supervisor partnerships.

This document provides a hard copy version of the content set out in the online Supervisors’ Guidebook.¹

It contains information about the recruitment of research degree students, the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and Imperial College London’s research degree milestones. There is also information which is designed to support the effective development of student-supervisor partnerships and the document sets out the College’s requirements for the continuing professional development of supervisors.

On behalf of the Graduate School, I would like to thank students and staff who helped to create the content of this document and the online version. Special thanks is extended to the Educational Development Unit, members of the Task and Finish Groups for the Student-Supervisor Partnership and Doctoral Student Well-being and to staff and students who appeared in the videos.

If anything is missing from this document, or the online Supervisors’ Guidebook that you feel should be added, please contact the Graduate School (graduate.school@imperial.ac.uk).

¹ www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/
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Chapter One
Welcome from the Vice-Provost (Research)

The landing page of the online Supervisors’ Guidebook contains a welcome video from Professor Nick Jennings, Vice-Provost (Research). In this video, Professor Jennings outlines the content of the Guidebook and comments on the important role of supervisors from a College perspective.

Professor Jennings is responsible for promoting, supporting and facilitating the College’s research performance and for leading on the delivery of the Research Strategy. He also holds a chair in Artificial Intelligence in the Departments of Computing and Electrical & Electronic Engineering. Before joining Imperial, Professor Jennings was the Regius Professor of Computer Science at the University of Southampton (where he is still a Visiting Professor) and the UK Government’s Chief Scientific Advisor for National Security.

Professor Jennings is an internationally recognised authority in the areas of artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, cybersecurity and agent-based computing. His research covers both the science and the engineering of intelligent systems. He has undertaken fundamental research on automated bargaining, mechanism design, trust and reputation, coalition formation, human-agent collectives and crowdsourcing. He has also pioneered the application of multi-agent technology; developing real-world systems in domains such as business process management, smart energy systems, sensor networks, disaster response, telecommunications, citizen science and defence.

A full transcript of the video is available at Appendix 1.

2  www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYJoxWPzfY&t=2s
Welcome from the Director of the Graduate School

The online Supervisors’ Guidebook also contains a short video from Professor Sue Gibson, Director of the Graduate School, who welcomes new supervisors and shares her top tips.1

Professor Gibson grew up in Lancashire and was educated at Darwen Vale High School. After studying Natural Sciences in Cambridge and obtaining a DPhil from Oxford on ‘Transition metal promoted oxidation and reduction reactions’, she spent a year at the ETH Zürich supported by a Royal Society Research Fellowship.

She began her independent research career at the University of Warwick in 1985 before moving with her research group to the College in 1990. She took a brief break from Imperial between 1998 and 2003 to occupy the Daniell Chair of Chemistry at King’s College London, and she enjoyed a three-year period of parental leave between 2010 and 2013.

Between 2007 and 2010, Professor Gibson served as the President of the Organic Division of the Royal Society of Chemistry and from 2011 to 2014 she chaired the RSC’s Awards Committee. In 2013 she was awarded an OBE for her services to Chemistry and Science Education.

In November 2013, Professor Gibson assumed the role of Director of the Graduate School at Imperial.

A full transcript of the video is available at Appendix 2.

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1 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/key-roles/
Chapter Two
Key roles

Your role

As a supervisor, your main role is to assist and support research students throughout their academic studies. It is an extremely important role within the College not only in terms of supporting research student progression but also in terms of the overall student experience. You may be appointed as a main supervisor or as a co-supervisor to one or more research students and it is important that you know what your role is in terms of supporting and supervising each individual student. With that in mind, the College has developed several helpful documents to support you.

Main supervisors should read the College’s document Roles and Responsibilities for the Main Supervisor.4

It is also important for each supervisor within a student’s supervisory team, whether that be the main supervisor, co-supervisor(s) or assistant supervisor(s), to understand their role in terms of supporting the student. Main supervisors are responsible for leading these discussions with the team and communicating the outcome to students. Defining the Roles and Responsibilities of Research Degree Supervisory Teams5 is a helpful document to facilitate those discussions – please note this document is yet to be considered by Committee and will be uploaded in due course.

Supervisors can expect to:

1. have a key role in recruiting research students;
2. induct students into a group;

5 Link will be inserted once Committee approval granted
3. help students to plan their research;
4. provide students with feedback on their written work and/or presentations;
5. help them to progress their academic studies;
6. hold regular tutorials and research/lab group meetings;
7. work with students to develop their research and professional skills;
8. ensure students have sufficient resources to implement the mutually agreed research plan;
9. help students to resolve difficulties they encounter and/or direct them to other staff who can assist;
10. provide students with career advice, noting however that some students may not wish to pursue an academic career and that the College has a dedicated Careers Service.\(^6\)

Additionally, all supervisors should:

- be familiar with policies and administrative procedures applicable to research degrees (see Chapter nine of this document);
- discuss, agree and identify with your student(s) mutual expectations and how you the partnership will be managed;
- be mindful of the pastoral and well-being needs of students and be ready to sign-post to other support services when necessary.

**Imperial Expectations\(^7\)**

Imperial Expectations guides the behaviour of all the College’s staff. Its seven statements shape the working lives of all of us. They show how we respect and support each other in achieving personal goals and the College’s strategic objectives. They directly impact on what it feels like to work at Imperial and they are a public statement for attracting new staff.

**Health and safety**

Main supervisors are responsible for all health and safety matters relating to their students’ research, although some of the day-to-day responsibilities may be devolved to co-supervisors or assistant supervisors. Main supervisors should ensure that relevant risk assessments have taken place and that students have received

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\(^6\) [www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/)

\(^7\) [www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/working-at-imperial/imperial-expectations/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/working-at-imperial/imperial-expectations/)
College guidance but additional faculty policies may apply. In particular, the latter applies to lone working and working out-of-hours.

Health and safety responsibilities of supervisors are detailed on the College’s Safety management webpages.\(^8\)

Supervisors also have an important role in terms of supporting student work-life balance and well-being which is covered in Chapter seven of this document.

**Duty of care and inclusivity**

It is important for all supervisors to champion inclusive working practices. An inclusive working environment should embrace the richness of diversity of backgrounds, culture, gender and perspectives of staff and students of the College.

More than 1,000 current Imperial students have declared a disability, a figure which is increasing each academic year. Additionally, it is worth noting that 65 per cent of impairments are unseen.

Imperial ascribes to the Social Model of Disability. Unlike the medical model, the Social Model is not solely concerned with what the body can or cannot do but focuses on the barriers that prevent disabled people from participating equally in society. The problem is not disabled people themselves, but the environmental, institutional and attitudinal barriers they face.

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Every member of College staff has a responsibility to:

- eliminate discrimination;
- anticipate need;
- make reasonable adjustments.

You can help students by:

- keeping alert to signs of disability;\(^9\)
- discussing with students the benefits of disclosure, if they have not already disclosed, so that they might be better supported;\(^10\)
- asking individual students about support and reasonable adjustments that could be made to help them better access their programme's teaching and learning;
- referring students to the departmental disability officer\(^11\) or to the College’s Disability Advisory Service\(^12\) for specialist advice and support.

Importantly, research students with physical or mental impairments, specific learning difficulties or those who have other specific needs may be entitled to special arrangements and/or reasonable adjustments so you are advised to get in touch with your department's disability officer for further information on how best to support them.

The College has a range of resources available which provide support, guidance and information for all staff about equality, diversity and disability issues. The College’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre\(^13\) can provide specialist advice.

Other key departmental roles

**Assistant supervisors (please note this section is subject to committee approval – autumn 2017)**

Postdocs play an important role in helping to supervise students on a day-to-day basis. Postdocs are staff who will, normally, have a PhD and be employed to undertake research. They will undertake a reasonable amount of teaching as part

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11 [www.imperial.ac.uk/disability-advisory-service/support/ddos/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/disability-advisory-service/support/ddos/)
12 [www.imperial.ac.uk/disability-advisory-service/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/disability-advisory-service/)
of their contract and will supervise PhD students. Many students see postdocs as their ‘go to person’ and as such, are an extremely valuable support for PhD students. Postdocs who supervise PhD students should be appointed as assistant supervisors and will form part of a student’s supervisory team.

In order to recognise the valuable contribution that postdocs make to the student-supervisor partnership, the College has developed a document covering the **Roles and Responsibilities for Assistant Supervisors**. Additionally, a **Framework for Assistant Supervisor Continuing Professional Development** has also been developed (see Chapter Eight).

The online *Supervisors’ Guidebook* contains a video from Dr Hari Arora who talks about his role as a postdoc in the Department of Bioengineering and the roles of the main and co-supervisor.

A full transcript of the video is available at Appendix 3.

**Director of Postgraduate Studies**

The Director of Postgraduate Studies (DPS) is responsible to the Head of Department for implementing postgraduate education policy as determined jointly in consultation with the Head of Department, senior officers of the department, departmental committees and staff-student committees.

Read the **Roles and Responsibilities for Director of Postgraduate Studies**.

**Postgraduate Tutor**

Your department will have at least one Postgraduate Tutor who has overall responsibility for the academic and pastoral care of postgraduate students. These experienced colleagues will be able to guide and support you in handling individual student problems or queries, and you should consult them if you are uncertain of how to proceed or would value a second opinion.

Postgraduate Tutors will normally have had a lot of experience supervising students and are a good source of information when tricky or unusual situations occur. They

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14 Link to be inserted once committee approval granted
15 Link to be inserted once committee approval granted
16 [www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/key-roles/work-with-postdocs/](www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/key-roles/work-with-postdocs/)
will have detailed knowledge of the structure of research programmes and will have
dealt with various support services in the College (Registry, Health Centre, Disability
Advisory Service etc.). They normally attend monthly Senior Tutor Forums where
current issues concerning students are discussed.

It is important that Postgraduate Tutors are informed promptly of any major personal
or academic problems with students, and in particular repeated absences. Except
in the case of familiar or straightforward interactions, you are advised to keep the
Postgraduate Tutor informed of difficult or challenging cases before taking action
with a student.

It is very important that you do not take certain matters into your own hands
e.g. in cases where a student wishes to lodge a complaint against a member of
staff, or reports financial issues or visa queries (also consult International Student
Support18). In fact, anything which is potentially controversial should be directed
to the Postgraduate Tutor.

When involving your Postgraduate Tutor there is guidance on how to manage
confidentiality19 and disclosure of student information that you should be aware
of which is set out in the online Personal Tutors’ Guide.20 Also, you should be
aware that your student may wish to go directly to their Postgraduate Tutor and
not consult with you.

The online Supervisors’ Guidebook contains a video of Professor
Paul Luckham, Postgraduate Tutor in the Department of
Chemical Engineering.21 In the video, Professor Luckham talks
about some of the issues facing research students at Imperial.

A full transcript of the video is available at Appendix 4.

Postgraduate Administrator

All departments will have an administrator who will be able to advise you on research
degree administrative processes. This person will be a key source of information
and help to you. You should find out who your Postgraduate Administrator is as
soon as you can.

18  www.imperial.ac.uk/study/international-students/
19  www.imperial.ac.uk/personal-tutors-guide/managing-the-relationship/confidentiality/
20  www.imperial.ac.uk/personal-tutors-guide/
21  www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/key-roles/senior-tutor/
Chapter Three
Student recruitment

Student recruitment

As a supervisor you will take part in College and departmental open days, other recruitment activities and will assist with advertising and promoting studentships. You will also take part in the recruitment of students. You should consult your department to find out what training is provided to support you in this process.

A decision to admit a student to a research programme should not be made unless:

- the student is motivated;
- the student is appropriately qualified;
- a research topic suitable for that student’s abilities and background is available;
- the necessary facilities and resources can be provided;
- proper supervision can be given throughout the duration of the programme.

Be ready to talk about how you manage your group and/or lab, colleagues involved with your research, how often students can expect to see you and opportunities for professional development and teaching. If possible, arrange for the student to visit so that they can develop a better understanding of how it works on a day-to-day basis. This will help to set expectations from the start. It is also good practice to allow them to talk to current students and staff within your group on an informal basis.
The College provides prospective research applicants with advice on what sorts of topics to discuss at interview.\textsuperscript{22} You are advised to familiarise yourself with the document when preparing to interview prospective students.

It is also important to think about how students view you. The online Supervisors’ Guidebook contains a video of three research students who share their views on what they consider to be the most valuable attributes in supervisors.\textsuperscript{23} A transcript of the video is available at Appendix 5.

**Research degree entrance requirements**

You should ensure that you are familiar with the College’s minimum and higher level academic and English language entrance requirements.

- College minimum entrance requirements\textsuperscript{24}
- College minimum English language requirements\textsuperscript{25}

The Graduate School asked Dr Timothy Constandinou, Department of Electrical & Electronic Engineering and winner of a President’s Award for Excellence in Research Degree Supervision, what his top tips are for the effective recruitment of research students. A transcript of the video\textsuperscript{26} is available at Appendix 6.

**Welcoming new research students**

In some cases, you may wish to make contact with your new student prior to enrolment to provide advice on general background reading and to encourage an initial literature survey on the research topic. You should also highlight the College’s Success Guide for postgraduate research students.\textsuperscript{27} Imperial’s Student Space\textsuperscript{28} also offers advice on social, well-being and practical issues which can impact on your student’s experience, as well as suggesting ways that students can get the most out of the College. You may wish to draw your student’s attention to these web resources.

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\textsuperscript{22} [www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/study/graduate-school/public/Guidance-for-Postgraduate-Research-Applicants---June-2017.pdf](www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/study/graduate-school/public/Guidance-for-Postgraduate-Research-Applicants---June-2017.pdf)
\textsuperscript{23} [www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/student-recruitment/](www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/student-recruitment/)
\textsuperscript{24} [www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/requirements/](www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/requirements/)
\textsuperscript{25} [www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/requirements/english/](www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/requirements/english/)
\textsuperscript{26} [www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/student-recruitment/](www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/student-recruitment/)
\textsuperscript{27} [www.imperial.ac.uk/students/success-guide/pgr/](www.imperial.ac.uk/students/success-guide/pgr/)
\textsuperscript{28} [www.imperial.ac.uk/student-space/](www.imperial.ac.uk/student-space/)
When your new student arrives, it is important that they understand what facilities are available to them both within the department and more widely across the College. A health and safety induction must form part of this introduction. You should also encourage your student(s) to attend the College’s and departmental welcome events. If your student starts outside the normal study period, please ensure they receive a full induction to your group and the department.

The Graduate School has some helpful information and a welcome video on its website.

29 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/student-welcome-and-orientation/
Chapter Four
Effective partnerships

Establishing rapport

Students should be able to discuss academic issues with you. To facilitate this, it is vital to establish early contact and begin developing professional rapport from the outset. This way students will be more likely to come to you as and when their needs arise. Although your role is not pastoral, students may also wish to make you aware of welfare issues they are facing. You are reminded that your department’s Postgraduate Tutor is here to help you with such issues.

Setting expectations

All student-supervisor partnerships are unique and how the partnership develops and is managed will vary. In most cases, but not all, a breakdown in the partnership occurs because neither party is clear about what is expected of them. Therefore, it is suggested that you meet your student(s) early on to discuss matters such as:

- the frequency of meetings;
- where meetings will take place;
- how quickly students can expect you to provide feedback on their work;
- your expectations of them;
- academic standards, milestones and deadlines;
- preferred methods of communication outside of the lab and in between meetings;
- how others within the lab or research group can help or be of assistance, for example, postdocs.

To assist you in setting these expectations, the College has developed a document called Mutual Expectations for the Student Supervisor Partnership. Subject to Committee approval, this document replaces the College’s Research Degree Codes of Practice. Topics set out in Mutual Expectations for the Student

30 Link will be added once Committee approval has been granted.
Supervisor Partnership should be discussed with your student(s) at the first available opportunity.

In this short video, Professor Holger Krapp from the Department of Bioengineering shared his views on setting expectations from the start and building rapport. Professor Krapp is a recipient of a President’s Award for Excellence in Research Degree Supervision. A transcript of the video is available at Appendix 7.

We also asked Dr Namrata Malhotra from Imperial College Business School to talk about the importance of establishing good relationships with students. A transcript of the video is available at Appendix 8.

We also asked students to talk about the importance of establishing effective partnerships. A transcript of the video is available at Appendix 9.

Setting boundaries

When talking through mutual expectations for how the student-supervisor partnership will work, you should also establish boundaries. When can a student see you? When will you not be available? What can you help with? Are students aware that there can be limits to confidentiality? Your role is to support and develop your student(s) through their research, not to solve all of their problems.

It is strongly recommended that you do not pass on personal phone numbers to your student(s).

31  www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/effective-partnerships/
32  www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/effective-partnerships/
33  www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/effective-partnerships/
**Personal relationships within the College**

Where a member of staff has a pre-existing relationship, or develops a relationship with a student during the course of study, such that there is a potential conflict of interest, especially with regard to the student’s assessment (which includes supervision), the member of staff and student must declare this in confidence to the Head of Department at the start of the course of study or at the point at which the relationship has started. The Head of Department will treat all such matters in confidence, and any staff member is welcome to seek advice, on an informal basis, from a senior member of Human Resources before discussing their situation with their Head of Department.

All members of the College with any staff management responsibilities are expected to ensure that relationships within their team and students remain professional at all times.

**Staff should be aware that a breach of this policy could lead to disciplinary action.**

**Meetings**

As a supervisor, you should meet regularly with your student(s), through one-to-ones, tutorials and group/lab meetings.

Group meetings are an important part of the development of research students, but many students feel worried or anxious about them because they may not have any results to show or they may have hit a brick wall with their research and worry about sharing this more widely. In such cases, a one-to-one with the student concerned may be a better approach.

If you notice that students are regularly failing to attend planned meetings with you, it is important to alert your Postgraduate Tutor. Additionally, as part of the College’s safeguarding approach, if you become concerned that an absent student may be vulnerable to engagement with extremist ideologies or to targeting by extremist organisations see the College’s Prevent Duty.

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34  [www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/contact-us/](www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/contact-us/)
35  [www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/secretariat/secretariat/what-we-do/prevent/](www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/secretariat/secretariat/what-we-do/prevent/)
We asked Professor Clare Lloyd, Vice-Dean (Institutional Affairs, Faculty of Medicine) to share her views on the management of labs and the different roles of staff within labs. Professor Lloyd is a recipient of a President’s Medal for Excellence in Research Degree Supervision.

A transcript of the video is available at Appendix 10.

Effective feedback and communication

The College’s Personal Tutors’ Guide has some helpful hints and tips on communication and effective conversations.

Providing students with effective feedback is an important skill for supervisors to develop. Students welcome regular feedback and support from their supervisors. But how can you deliver feedback in a constructive manner?

There is a wealth of advice on how to give feedback that students can actually make use of.

The following list, developed from Nicol’s (2010: 512–513) ‘General principles of good written feedback’, provides a useful summary:

- Understandable: expressed in a language that students will understand.
- Selective: commenting in reasonable detail on two or three things that the student can do something about.
- Specific: pointing to instances in the student’s work where the feedback applies.
- Contextualised: framed with reference to the learning outcomes and/or assessment criteria.
- Non-judgemental: descriptive rather than evaluative, focused on learning goals not just performance goals.
- Balanced: pointing out the positive as well as areas in need of improvement.

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36 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/effective-partnerships/
37 www.imperial.ac.uk/personal-tutors-guide/understanding-your-role/two-way-communication----------/having-effective-conversations/
Forward looking: suggesting how students might improve subsequent work.

Transferable: focused on processes, skills and self-regulatory processes not just on knowledge content.

Personal: referring to what is already known about the student and her or his previous work.”

Feedback as a dialogue

Especially at doctoral level we should shift our emphasis from thinking that feedback comes from the supervisor and consider it more as a conversation between the student and supervisor. This definition of what feedback is illustrates that shift:

“A dialogic process in which learners make sense of information from varied sources and use it to enhance the quality of their work or learning strategies” (Carless, 2015: 192).

This dialogic process can be achieved through introducing more opportunities for self-assessment. Pendleton’s rules is a feedback method that can guide you in achieving that conversation around feedback. It is widely used in clinical teaching but the conversation it generates makes the method applicable to any postgraduate discipline.

38 www.gp-training.net/training/educational_theory/feedback/pendleton.htm
Engaging students with feedback

Getting students to let you know in advance what they would like to discuss in terms of feedback and asking them what action they will take as a result of the feedback conversation can engage them more fully with feedback.

Giving your feedback ipsative qualities

Having regular contact with doctoral students and being able to see their work at various stages means you can take more of an ‘ipsative’ approach to assessment and feedback. Rather than using standardised criteria, ipsative feedback involves commenting on students’ progress; it recognises a student’s ‘personal best’ (Hughes, 2011). Ipsative feedback helps learners self-assess and become more self-reliant. It focuses on what the learner needs to do next rather than dwelling on the inadequacies of current performance. Ipsative feedback is thought to be more motivating to students and they are more likely to act on ipsative feedback than on highly critical feedback. Some steps to giving ipsative feedback are outlined in an article from The Guardian ‘Want to help students improve their work? Mark them on their progress’ (Hughes, 2014).

The Educational Development Unit also has a course about giving effective feedback which you can attend.39

References


39 www.imperial.ac.uk/personal-tutors-guide/developing-students/academic-development/
Chapter Five
Student lifecycle

Milestones

At the start of a student’s research degree, you should provide appropriate guidance about the nature of research, the standard expected, and about how to plan the programme to ensure that the normal expectation of submission of the thesis within three years will be met (and that in any event the thesis will be submitted no later than 48 months after commencement of study).

The following sections highlight the College’s research degree milestones and information about progression. However, your department may also have additional requirements for students to complete such as a research plan confirmation at three months or six-monthly reports. You are advised to check with your Director of Postgraduate Studies or Postgraduate Administrator if you are unsure.

The College’s milestones are:

1. Early stage assessment
2. Late stage review

Early stage assessment

Early Stage Assessment (ESA) is at 9 months for full-time students and 18 months for part-time students. Please read the Guidance for Early Stage Assessment 40 and download the Early Stage Assessment Form. 41

40 www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/milestones-for-pgr/
Early-Stage-Assessment-Guidance-Notes.pdf
41 www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/research-programmes/
When the outcome of this assessment is known, you should discuss it with your student, providing them with formal feedback on their performance. This is important not only to provide support and guidance to students to help them to progress with their research but also because students will be asked to comment on feedback they receive as part of the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).\footnote{www.heacademy.ac.uk/institutions/surveys/postgraduate-research-experience-survey}

The College uses the results of this survey to benchmark with other institutions. As part of this conversation you should also discuss further professional development opportunities both within the College and externally, for example, attendance at conferences.

There are also Professional skills attendance requirements and English language requirements for non-native speakers which need to be met by the ESA.

**Late stage review**

Late Stage Review (LSR) is at 18 to 24 months for full-time students or 30 to 36 months for part-time students.

By 24 months students must have a plan for completing their work and submitting the research. You should encourage your student(s) to produce written work which may often provide them with the basis for the preparation of their final thesis. Be prepared to read these and provide students with your feedback and make it clear when progress is inadequate or when standards fall below that which is expected.

You should read the *Guidance for Late Stage Review*\footnote{www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/milestones-for-pgr/Late-Stage-Review-Guidance-Notes.pdf} and download the *Late Stage Review Form*.\footnote{www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/research-programmes/}

Where students are experiencing difficulty with their English, you should require them to attend English classes and get support from the Centre for Academic English.\footnote{www.imperial.ac.uk/academic-english}

As part of the LSR, students are also required to complete a further two Graduate School Professional skills courses.

We asked students to comment on why they value the research degree milestones in this short video.\footnote{www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/student-lifecycle/} A transcript is available at Appendix 11.
Writing up and preparing for the viva

Full-time students are expected to submit their thesis for examination no later than 48 months after the initial date of registration. For part-time students this is no later than 72 months.

Supervisors are reminded that the Graduate School has a special Thesis Writing Retreat available to students who are due to submit within the next six months. When the student is beginning to prepare for the viva, you should direct them to the Graduate School’s online videos designed to help them prepare for the viva.

Nominating external examiners and exam entry

It is the student’s decision to enter for examination. They can do this by completing Part 1 of the Nomination of External Examiners and Exam Entry Form. Exam entry forms must be submitted by the student no later than 44 months from the initial date of registration.
Once Part 1 of the form is completed the main supervisor should complete Part 2 of the form which is nomination of external examiners. Once both parts are completed, the form should be sent to the Director of Postgraduate Studies, or other person specifically nominated for this role by the Head of Department.

**External study leave**

External Study Leave is defined as a period of time away from the College (minimum of two weeks) to undertake research which counts towards the degree registration. Ordinarily, this is either field work or a placement, but also covers split-PhDs. It will be recorded as an External Study Leave Milestone. Before taking a period of External Study Leave, supervisors and students are advised to check the terms and conditions of the student’s funding body which may stipulate restrictions on taking this type of leave and may impact on the stipend.

The College is required to notify the Home Office immediately if a student on a Tier 4 visa is taking a period of time away from the College. This will be reported to the Home Office as a Change of Study Location but will not impact on their visa status in the UK. Please read the Guidelines for PhD, MPhil, MD[Res] and EngD students wishing to take External Study Leave.\(^{50}\)

**Interruption of Studies**

An interruption is a period of time away from the College to undertake activities which do not directly contribute towards the degree registration. This should be recorded as an Interruption of Studies using the category Alternative Research/Internships. If a student wishes to take an interruption, you should discuss this as early as possible because there could be financial and visa implications for the student. If your student holds a Tier 4 visa, you should contact the International Student Support Office Immediately (international@imperial.ac.uk). Please read the Guidelines for Interruptions of Studies for PhD, MPhil, MD[Res] and EngD students.\(^{51}\)

Students may need to take an interruption away from their research for a variety of reasons including sickness or for mental health reasons. In both cases, you should refer your student to the College’s Health Centre\(^{52}\) and note that the student must be re-assessed before they return to the College.

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50 www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/attendance-requirements-for-pgr/Guidelines-for-External-Study-Leave.pdf

51 www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/attendance-requirements-for-pgr/Guidelines-for-IoS-for-Research-Students.pdf

52 www.imperialcollegehealthcentre.co.uk/
Professional development

The primary purpose of the Graduate School is to develop and deliver a world class, innovative and engaging provision, ensuring all postgraduate students are provided with excellent professional development training to complement their academic studies and providing the opportunity to develop skills for a range of careers. Informed by an External Advisory Board comprising industry representatives, and the newly established Annual Postgraduate Roundtable Debate which brings together colleagues from other UK higher education institutions (HEI), industry, Vitae, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and professional accrediting bodies, the Graduate School’s Professional skills development programme offers students the chance to develop skills which are of most value to many employers. Additionally, the Graduate School’s College-wide events provide opportunities for students from across all disciplines to network and engage in interdisciplinary discussions.

The Graduate School also has a role in supporting well-being and enhancing the postgraduate student experience and has a cohort building programme and a Doctoral student coaching programme to facilitate this.

The Professional skills development programme has recently been structured into the following new and stimulating ‘innovation’ areas:

- Writing for Success
- Perfecting Presentations
- Ensuring Integrity
- Information Landscape
- Maximising Management Skills
- Understanding Yourself and Others
- Successful Interactions
- Entrepreneurship
- Teaching

Each innovation area includes new, more advanced-level courses as well as basic-level skills training to accommodate more experienced research students and help others develop new skills and understanding. As well as face-to-face workshops, the Graduate School has introduced an extremely successful suite of webinars. The webinars cover a variety of subjects and enable students to access Graduate School courses anywhere in the world.

53 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/
54 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/cohort-building/
55 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/doctoral-student-coaching-programme/
56 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/professional-skills(doctoral)
As supervisor, you should have regular discussions with your student(s) about their professional development and work together to select courses which are of most use and benefit to each student.

**Students who teach**

The Graduate School’s programme also includes Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) training courses for students who teach. Attendance at these courses contributes towards the portfolio of work required to apply for Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. You should discuss training and opportunities within the department to teach with your student(s).

The Graduate School is also responsible for the College’s policy on GTA training, the GTA Framework, and the College’s central register of students who qualify to teach.

**Research skills**

As a supervisor, you are responsible for developing students’ research skills. These may include technical writing and presentation skills and critical and statistical analysis. You should provide opportunities for students to present to others whenever you can, for example at group meetings or departmental research seminars. There may also be other taught courses being delivered in the College which may be of benefit to the student.

You should also provide training in requisite techniques and ensure good practice in research data management and support students who wish to publish. Supervisors should also have good knowledge of issues around plagiarism and copyright. The Graduate School has an online course in plagiarism awareness and copyright which supervisors are free to enrol on if they wish.

Supervisors should also be familiar with:

- Guidelines for Proper Scientific Conduct in Research
- Policy and Procedures for Investigations of Allegations of Scientific Misconduct

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57 [www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/professional-skills/doctoral/shortcourses/teaching/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/professional-skills/doctoral/shortcourses/teaching/)

58 [www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/gtas/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/gtas/)

59 [www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/professional-skills/doctoral/onlinecourses/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/professional-skills/doctoral/onlinecourses/)


61 [www.imperial.ac.uk/research-and-innovation/about-imperial-research/research-integrity/misconduct/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/research-and-innovation/about-imperial-research/research-integrity/misconduct/)
Chapter Six
Encouraging the development of student communities

Cohort building
In partnership with academics, students across the College and the Graduate Students’ Union, the Graduate School provides opportunities for students to meet each other at a variety of social and academic events, promoting interdisciplinary knowledge exchange, encouraging collaborations and creating supportive global research communities and peer groups.

Cohort building\(^{62}\) aims to enhance support for research students and help improve the research environment. Research students working in cohorts can improve their understanding and gain access to professional and personal development as well as pastoral care. There is a fund available to which students can apply for money available to support their event.

Coaching and 1-2-1 support
The Graduate School also offers a coaching programme\(^{63}\) to doctoral students with a focus on developing effective working relationships and self-development issues. Additionally, the Graduate School is able to offer dedicated one-to-one support for students who have particular challenges they would like extra support with, for example, presentation skills. If you think your student may benefit from 1-2-1 support, please ask them to get in touch with the Graduate School at graduate.school@imperial.ac.uk.

\(^{62}\) [www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/cohort-building/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/cohort-building/)

\(^{63}\) [www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/doctoral-student-coaching-programme/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/doctoral-student-coaching-programme/)
Extracurricular activities

Students should be encouraged to take part in the wide range of opportunities available to them, including Graduate School events and courses. Students should also be reminded that the Imperial College Union’s clubs and societies are also available to postgraduate students.

Information about these and more is available on the Making the most of your Imperial Experience webpages.64

The Enterprising Students webpages65 offer a range of opportunities for students interested in gaining entrepreneurship experience.

Outreach activities

There are a variety of extracurricular opportunities offered to postgraduates by the Outreach team.

Students can become a tutor or mentor (through the Pimlico Connection, IntoUniversity volunteer and Conversation Project schemes)66 or they can become an ambassador (through the President’s Ambassador scheme, Imperial School’s Ambassadors scheme and the Outreach Postgraduate Ambassador scheme).67

Imperial College Union

Imperial College Union also offers many valuable extracurricular opportunities for postgraduates, including:

- Clubs and societies68
- Volunteering and Community Connections69
- Academic Representation Network70
- Imperial Plus – a student development programme that recognises students’ volunteering efforts71

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64 www.imperial.ac.uk/students/new-students/undergraduates/making-the-most-of-your-imperial-experience/
65 www.imperial.ac.uk/students/enterprising-students/
67 www.imperial.ac.uk/be-inspired/student-recruitment-and-outreach/imperial-students-and-staff/volunteer/ambassador-schemes/presidents-ambassadors/
68 www.imperialcollegeunion.org/activities
69 www.imperialcollegeunion.org/social-action
70 www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/your-representatives/academic-representatives/overview
71 www.imperialcollegeunion.org/social-action/imperial-plus
Imperial Plus supports students to identify and articulate the skills and experiences gained through volunteering. All training workshops can be accessed by anybody recording their volunteer hours towards Imperial Plus. Postgraduate roles which can count towards the scheme are:

- Any elected roles with the Graduate Students’ Union
- Any volunteering through College schemes such as Pimlico Connections or President’s Ambassadors
- Hall seniors
- Any role through Community Connections

The Volunteer Certificate rewards the hours volunteered, from 25 up to 500 hours, and also gives access to all of the training workshops linked to the programme.

The Volunteer Accreditation offers students more scope to reflect on the skills they have developed during the hours they have spent volunteering in a more structured way.

Finally, once a year, volunteers are invited to apply to undertake a Volunteer Qualification, an Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM) Level 5 Award in the Management of Volunteers, a valuable leadership qualification for any career path they choose.

The Graduate Students’ Union

The Graduate Students’ Union (GSU) is the representative body within the Imperial College Union for the postgraduate community across all Imperial campuses. The GSU works alongside the Imperial College Union President to ensure that the requirements of postgraduate students are catered for. The GSU also ensures that postgraduates’ social and recreational needs are met and holds a number of events during the year.

We asked Dr Stefanos Zafeiriou from the Department of Computing and winner of a Student Academic Choice Award for Best Supervisor, to share his top tips in this short film.

A full transcript is available at Appendix 12.
Chapter Seven
Well-being and work-life balance

The pastoral care of students is not the primary function of a supervisor, but you should be aware of the issues and challenges affecting research students and how these can impact on their well-being and work-life balance. The Graduate School has developed an online course, 'Supporting the mental health and well-being of Imperial College doctoral students'. This course is available anytime via Blackboard. Further details about this course are available in Chapter eight of this Guidebook.

This Chapter provides links to services that can provide further help and assistance to research students. Additionally, you can also find important information about the provision available to support your own well-being and work-life balance.

As a reminder, if you have any concerns about the welfare of your student, you should consult with the Postgraduate Tutor in the first instance.

Zero tolerance to bullying and harassment

Imperial is committed to promoting a university environment where everyone is treated with respect and courtesy.

We all have our part to play in showing respect for others. This involves discouraging harassment, bullying and victimisation by making it clear that such behaviour is unacceptable, and supporting those who suffer from it and who are considering making a formal complaint.
We asked Dr Janet De Wilde, Head of Postgraduate Professional Development at Imperial College London, to talk about the power dynamics which can exist between supervisors and students, and the implications of this in terms of well-being.73

A transcript is available at Appendix 13.

Fighting depression

The Charlie Waller Memorial Trust74 has put together an e-learning package75 for non-specialist staff which is designed to support you to help students with mental health issues.

Well-being for students

Services offered by the Graduate School

The Graduate School delivers stress management workshops for PhD students in partnership with colleagues in the Student Counselling and Mental Health Advice Service.76 The Graduate School also provides a Doctoral student coaching programme and one-to-one development support for those who wish.77

Student Counselling and Mental Health Advice Service

The Student Counselling and Mental Health Advice Service78 has a student mental health adviser (SMHA) whose role is to provide support for students who may have had, or are experiencing moderate to severe mental health difficulties.

Students need to be referred by a member of College staff, with the student's permission, in order to be seen by the SMHA. The SMHA is unable to take self-referrals from students or their family and friends.

The Student Counselling and Mental Health Advice Service also delivers workshops on relaxation, self-esteem, procrastination and mindfulness.79

73 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/wellbeing/
74 www.cwmt.org.uk/
75 http://learning.cwmt.org.uk/
76 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/professional-skills/doctoral/shortcourses/understanding/
77 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/doctoral-student-coaching-programme/
78 www.imperial.ac.uk/counselling/
79 www.imperial.ac.uk/counselling/events-and-workshops/
**Crisis management**

Should an emergency occur at weekends or out-of-hours, supervisors should inform Security (+44 (0)20 759 48910 or internal x 4444) who in turn will involve the College Senior Tutor. Should the emergency occur in the lab then the department’s Health and Safety Manager and possibly the Building Manager should be consulted. Outside agencies such as the police or an ambulance should not be called directly by supervisors.

There may be a rare occasion when a student in crisis (and possibly suicidal) turns to you for help. During working hours you should inform the Postgraduate Tutor. You can also direct the student to relevant College services.\(^8\)

**Mental health-related crisis**

The College’s *Mental Health Difficulties Protocol*\(^1\) gives detailed and valuable advice on how to deal with a crisis situation where a student is suffering from severe mental health difficulties. It is important to listen to the student, give them support and inform them of the relevant services.

In the next video,\(^2\) Professor Denis Wright talks about his role within the College and some of the issues affecting PhD students.

A transcript is available at *Appendix 14*.

**Key contacts:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY CONTACTS</th>
<th>TELEPHONE</th>
<th>EMAIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Samaritans</td>
<td>116 123 (UK)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jo@samaritans.org">jo@samaritans.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Nightline</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7631 0101 (from 18.00 to 08.00)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:listening@nightline.org.uk">listening@nightline.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Chaplaincy</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7594 9600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If a student confides in you, you should be conscious that you may need to explain to the student that while an effort will be made to keep what they say confidential, this may not be possible if the student or someone else is at risk, or if the student’s

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8. [www.imperial.ac.uk/personal-tutors-guide/supporting-students/referring-your-students/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/personal-tutors-guide/supporting-students/referring-your-students/)
81. [www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/staff/personal-tutors-guide/public/MentalHealthDifficulties.pdf](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/staff/personal-tutors-guide/public/MentalHealthDifficulties.pdf)
82. [www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/wellbeing/wellbeing-students/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/wellbeing/wellbeing-students/)
behaviour is disruptive. Read more about managing confidentiality as a supervisor on the Personal Tutors’ Guide.

Other support services

Student Space
Student Space provides students with helpful information on maintaining a healthy work-life balance, about dealing with isolation, homesickness, stress, family issues, personal issues, identity and perfectionism, amongst other things. It has valuable information and support for students experiencing depression, low mood and for connecting suicidal students with services which can help them.

Sport Imperial
Sport Imperial is available to all students of the College. Their website provides further details of activities and events open to all.

Chaplaincy
The Chaplaincy offers tips for mindfulness meditation and other events which are open to staff and students.

Disability Advisory Service
The Disability Advisory Service provides confidential advice and support for all disabled students. Lots of students may experience difficulties which they don’t realise qualify for support. The Service provides advice for students with specific learning difficulties, enduring mental health and health conditions, autistic spectrum conditions, and sensory and physical impairments. They also advise other students seeking support or assessment for undiagnosed difficulties.

Staff within the Disability Advisory Service also provide information and guidance for staff within the College, as well as information for external disability practitioners.

83 www.imperial.ac.uk/personal-tutors-guide/managing-the-relationship/confidentiality/
84 www.imperial.ac.uk/student-space/
85 www.imperial.ac.uk/sport
86 www.imperial.ac.uk/chaplaincy/
87 www.imperial.ac.uk/disability-advisory-service/
International Student Support\textsuperscript{88}

The International Student Support Service provides help and guidance on student visas and delivers activities which support the international student experience at Imperial.

Student Hub\textsuperscript{89}

The Student Hub provides comprehensive information, run by knowledgeable staff, about university services available to students.

Support for non-native speaking students

The Centre for Academic English (CfAE)\textsuperscript{90} offers a range of free courses at all levels to help international PhD students communicate their research as accurately and professionally as possible. The Centre’s provision also includes courses that focus on enhancing students’ ability to present their work in the wider academic community, particularly in relation to publications and conference papers.

All new postgraduate research students who are not native English speakers must fulfil the Imperial College London Postgraduate English Requirement (PGR)\textsuperscript{91} as soon as possible after fully registering onto their PhD programme. This requirement is separate from, and in addition to, meeting the College entry requirements (IELTS, TOEFL, etc.). Students are assessed by the Centre, and, based on the outcome of this assessment, particular writing classes may either be required or recommended. For those students who are required to attend classes, a further assessment at the ESA stage is conducted in order to ascertain their progress and whether they still need more support with their writing from the CfAE.

English language courses and consultations offered by the CfAE include:

- Technical speaking courses
- More general listening and speaking courses
- Every day, social English and writing mechanics workshops
- One-to-one consultations.

The Graduate School filmed Dr Julie King, Director of the Centre for Academic English, speaking about the provision available to non-native speaking students.\textsuperscript{92}

A transcript is available at Appendix 15.

\textsuperscript{88} www.imperial.ac.uk/study/international-students/
\textsuperscript{89} www.imperial.ac.uk/student-hub/
\textsuperscript{90} www.imperial.ac.uk/academic-english
\textsuperscript{91} www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/requirements/english/
\textsuperscript{92} www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/wellbeing/wellbeing-students/
Alcohol and drugs

Your student, or a friend of theirs, might disclose substance misuse to you or you might spot signs yourself.

Signs of substance misuse (e.g. alcohol dependency, the abuse of prescribed drugs and the use of illegal drugs) include:

- Worsening health
- Missing tutorials, being absent from the lab or office
- Consistently achieving less than expected
- Deteriorating concentration, lack of judgement, inability to make decisions
- Unpredictable or inappropriate behaviour
- Relationship problems
- Worsening appearance – looking tired, messy etc.
- Not admitting to the negative issues associated with substance misuse
- Problems with money

(Thanks to Reading University for the source material for these points.)

What should you do?

If a student discloses to you, listen to the student’s concerns and help them to find the right sources of support and guidance.93

If you suspect there might be a problem, contact the student and ask them to meet with you to explore whether they are OK. You might need to chase them up. At this meeting you might explain the benefits of seeking help and refer them to relevant sources of support and guidance.

Do not hesitate to seek advice from your Postgraduate Tutor, the Student Counselling and Mental Health Advice Service or the Health Centre. You can do this without referring to the student by name. Student Space’s drugs and alcohol webpages94 are also useful. You may also wish to consult the Student Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy.95

93 www.imperial.ac.uk/personal-tutors-guide/supporting-students/referring-your-students/
94 www.imperial.ac.uk/student-space/pause/drugs-and-alcohol/
95 www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/current-students/public/
Student-Alcohol-and-Substance-misuse-policy.pdf
Other sources of support online include:

- NHS Choices – Drugs addiction: getting help
- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Frank – offering friendly and confidential drugs advice

Harassment, bullying and victimisation

The College’s Harassment, Bullying and Victimisation Policy on these issues frames them unequivocally as serious matters which are not acceptable and must be dealt with firmly. These behaviours can happen between students and between a student and a staff member.

There can be a gradation, starting with unpleasant and rude behaviour, going through to very serious and even criminal behaviour and anyone investigating a case will need to determine where on the spectrum the problem stands. The policy indicates that if a student feels harassed, bullied or victimised, he or she should seek advice immediately, either from the Imperial College Union Advice Centre or from someone such as a Postgraduate Tutor.

If you are involved in one of these cases as a supervisor, the first thing to do is listen and be supportive. The student is likely to be hurt, vulnerable and anxious.

Investigations may be carried out by a Head of Department or another senior member of College staff, depending on the circumstances. Even if a case is investigated, mediation is the preferred way of dealing with the outcome, but disciplinary measures will be used if necessary.

Health

All students are encouraged to register with a local NHS doctor (GP) as soon as possible. Information on finding a doctor can be found on the Student Space website.

If you notice a change in a student’s physical appearance that might suggest that they are unwell, you are encouraged to have a confidential conversation with them based on the Student Space website.

96 www.nhs.uk/livewell/drugs/pages/drugtreatment.aspx
97 www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/
98 www.talktofrank.com/
99 www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/procedures/harassment-bullying-and-victimisation/
100 www.imperialcollegeunion.org/advice
101 www.imperial.ac.uk/student-space/here-for-you/find-a-doctor/
on your observations. For example, you could say, “I notice that you look unusually tired. Are you feeling OK?”

If a student is absent and does not respond to an email enquiring as to their well-being and whereabouts, advise your Postgraduate Tutor.

**Relationships and family**

Problems at home or within relationships can put great pressure on students and distract them from their work. The most helpful thing you can do is listen, without making assumptions, and give the student time and space to air their concerns. Then ask them what they want to do about the issue, if anything, and how you could be of assistance, to avoid falling into the trap of giving your student your solution to their problem.

You should not share any information about an Imperial student outside the College, without their explicit written consent.

- Imperial Student Space has advice on bereavement[^102] and family issues[^103] and
- Stand Alone[^104] has specific advice for students who have no contact with their families.
- The National Union of Students (NUS)[^105] has advice for students who are also carers.

Imperial can offer a range of support to those students having spent at least three months in local authority care, which may include foster care, or living in a residential care home. You can access further information on the range of support available on the Care leavers webpages.[^106]

**Sexual assault**

Students who may have been the victim of a sexual assault might choose to approach their supervisor for advice, guidance or continued support.

The *Checklist for members of staff who are informed by students of sexual assaults[^107]* is designed to help you to guide students in the immediate and subsequent steps that can be taken and other support students may wish to be made aware of.

[^102]: www.imperial.ac.uk/student-space/pause/bereavement/
[^103]: www.imperial.ac.uk/student-space/pause/family-issues/
[^104]: standalone.org.uk/students/
[^106]: www.imperial.ac.uk/study/ug/why-imperial/supportive-environment/care-leavers/
[^107]: www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/staff/personal-tutors-guide/public/Sexual-assault-staff-checklist-Final.pdf
In such cases you might find it useful to seek guidance and support from your Postgraduate Tutor.

Transition and culture shock

Settling into life at Imperial can be challenging for any student and may be even more so for those also getting used to life in the UK. The following links to ideas and resources should be useful when supporting your student(s) with this process.

- Insight into managing culture shock[^108]
- Details of social activities offered by International Student Support[^109]
- Listings of numerous clubs, societies and social opportunities offered by the Imperial College Union[^110]
- Advice from Student Space on coping with isolation, loneliness[^111] and homesickness[^112]
- Advice on adopting culturally inclusive teaching practices[^113]

[^109]: www.imperial.ac.uk/study/international-students/international-student-experience/
[^110]: www.imperialcollegeunion.org/activities
[^111]: www.imperial.ac.uk/student-space/pause/isolation-and-loneliness/
[^112]: www.imperial.ac.uk/student-space/pause/homesickness/
[^113]: www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/2/2402/7_Steps_to_Adopting_Culturally_Inclusive_Teaching_Practices__1_.pdf
Well-being for supervisors

As a member of staff at Imperial College London, you are entitled to a range of well-being services. The College provides workshops and mental health awareness training, advice and counselling, coaching and stress management workshops as well as information on keeping healthy whilst you are at work.

Human Resources provide a list of helpful resources available to staff:

- Occupational Health provide helpful information for staff around well-being, resilience and dealing with workplace stress.

- The College has over 200 Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) who are trained to listen non-judgementally and guide you to sources of help and support.

- The College provides Confidential Care which is the College’s employee assistance provider. Staff can talk to a professional for advice on a wide range of work and life issues including debt and financial management, legal and tax advice, consumer and citizen rights, finding child and elder care, and everyday matters. You can also speak or arrange to meet with a qualified counsellor to talk through personal problems in complete confidence. Couples counselling is available for staff with relationship problems.

- The Coaching Academy is also available to supervisors of the College. Staff who wish to undertake coaching can have up to four individual sessions with a coach.

- Sport Imperial also has a range of resources, activities and events which staff are able to attend.

- Staff Supporters are existing members of staff who are part of a trained network of volunteers which provide confidential and positive assistance to all Imperial staff when they need information, guidance and support. Staff Supporters have received bespoke training and are able to provide confidential assistance on a range of issues, from queries about career advice or flexible working, to concerns about the behaviour of a colleague.

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114 www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/working-at-imperial/health-safety-and-wellbeing/
115 www.imperial.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/resilience-and-stress/
116 www.imperial.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/mental-health/
117 www.imperial.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/advice-and-support/
118 www.imperial.ac.uk/staff-development/development-options/talent-development/coaching-at-imperial/
119 www.imperial.ac.uk/sport/
120 www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/working-at-imperial/supporters/
Supervisors who themselves need to talk over a crisis situation can contact Confidential Care on 0800 085 4764.

You are encouraged to maintain a healthy work-life balance. The advice offered to students can also be applied to staff in terms of good practice.

**Non-native speaking supervisors**

Non-native speaker members of staff are welcome to attend courses at the Centre for Academic English. The Centre offers one-to-one consultations for academic staff who may wish to focus on specific language issues such as aspects of their pronunciation or their writing style for research publication. The Centre can also help staff who seek support in identifying and dealing with their students’ writing issues and offering their students strategies for improvement.

We also asked Dr Julie King, Director of the Centre for Academic English, to explain the provision available to non-native speaking supervisors.

A transcript is available at Appendix 16.
Chapter Eight
Continuing professional development for supervisors

Main and co-supervisors

The College requires all new supervisors to complete a mandatory course called ‘Introduction to PhD supervision’ which is available either as a face-to-face workshop or an online version, depending on your experience. When you start at the College, you should discuss which course you should complete with your line manager.

Continuing professional development (CPD) is an important part of employment at Imperial College London and supervisors are encouraged to take a range of development courses. All supervisors are expected to undergo CPD specifically related to supervision, which in addition to the training courses for new supervisors
described above, involves taking part in departmental ‘Focus on best practice in supervision’ workshops.

Read full details of Imperial’s *Framework for the Support and Development of Imperial College London Supervisors*.

- Access the online course ‘Introduction to PhD supervision’ – coming soon
- Access the Graduate School’s online course for supervisors in ‘Supporting the mental health and well-being of Imperial College doctoral students’ – coming soon
- Access other CPD provision delivered by the Educational Development Unit which supports the development of supervisors

**Assistant Supervisors**

A new roles and responsibilities document, together with a support and development framework is currently being developed by the College. More information will be available here in due course.

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123 [www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/educational-development/workshops/introduction-to/](www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/educational-development/workshops/introduction-to/)
Chapter Nine
Key documents and useful links

The following set of links provide you with key documentation relating to the student – supervisor partnership:

Doctoral Proposition
www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/about-us/doctoral-proposition/

External Study Leave Form
www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/attendance-requirements-for-pgr/External-Study-Leave-Form.docx

Guidance for Early Stage Assessment
www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/milestones-for-pgr/
Early-Stage-Assessment-Guidance-Notes.pdf

Guidelines for External Study Leave
www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/attendance-requirements-for-pgr/Guidelines-for-External-Study-Leave.pdf

Guidelines for Interruptions of Studies

Guidance for Late Stage Review
www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/milestones-for-pgr/
Late-Stage-Review-Guidance-Notes.pdf
Guidance for Postgraduate Research Applicants
www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/study/graduate-school/public/

Minimum entrance requirements
www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/requirements/pgacademic/
www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/requirements/english/

Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor Partnership – coming soon

Nomination of External Examiners and Exam Entry Form
www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/
registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/external-examiners-for-pgr/
Nomination-of-examiners-and-exam-entry-form.doc

Online Supervisors’ Guidebook
www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/supervisors-guidebook/

Policy on Research Degree Supervision – coming soon

Proper Scientific Conduct

Quality Assurance Agency’s UK Quality Code for Higher Education
www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code

Research Degree Precepts
www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/
registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/codes-of-practice-for-research-degrees/Research-Degree-Precepts.pdf

Roles and Responsibilities for the Main Supervisor
www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/

Roles and Responsibilities for Assistant Supervisors – coming soon

Roles and Responsibilities for Director of Postgraduate Studies
www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/
Other useful links

Careers Service
www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/

Centre for Academic English
www.imperial.ac.uk/academic-english

Chaplaincy
www.imperial.ac.uk/chaplaincy/

Disability Advisory Service
www.imperial.ac.uk/disability-advisory-service/

Educational Development Unit
www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/educational-development/

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre
www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/about-us/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-centre/

Graduate School
www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/

Imperial College Union
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/

Imperial Expectations
www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/working-at-imperial/imperial-expectations/

International Student Support
www.imperial.ac.uk/study/international-students/

Personal Tutors’ Guide
www.imperial.ac.uk/personal-tutors-guide/

PGR Success Guide
www.imperial.ac.uk/students/success-guide/pgr/

Safety Department
www.imperial.ac.uk/safety

Student Counselling and Mental Health Advice
www.imperial.ac.uk/counselling/
Student Hub
www.imperial.ac.uk/student-hub/

Student Space
www.imperial.ac.uk/student-space/
Appendices

Appendix 1

Transcript of Video
Professor Nick Jennings – Vice-Provost (Research)

**N:** My name’s Nick Jennings and I’m the Vice-Provost for Research here at Imperial College London.

**What is the purpose of the Supervisors’ Guidebook?**

**N:** This guide brings together all the information you need to know about being a supervisor of a PhD student here at Imperial College. It defines your role, all the steps and processes that the students need to go through, the actions that you need to take to help them with their progress, to be able to help them with their well-being and to really make the best of them as PhD students.

**Please comment on the important role of the supervisor from a College perspective.**

**N:** Supervising PhD students is one of the key roles we perform as academics, it really is central to getting the most out of the PhD experience both for us as staff and for the students themselves. It’s fundamental to the way the student works and the success of their PhD process and it’s really important that they leave Imperial having done the best possible PhD they can.

**What are your top tips for supervisors?**

**N:** My tops tips for supervisors are to really ensure you can get the best possible students that you can, make sure that you give them the freedom to explore a whole variety of different topics, don’t reign them in, give them flexibility to try lots of things and encourage them finally to talk to everyone about their research – so to fellow scientists, PhD students, to members of the public, to school kids, everyone you can think of.
Appendix 2

Transcript of Video
Professor Sue Gibson, Director of the Graduate School

S: My name’s Sue Gibson and I’m currently the Director of the Graduate School at Imperial College. I’m also a Professor in the Department of Chemistry and in that role I’ve had the privilege of supervising over 40 Imperial College PhD students.

What are your top three tips for supervisors?

S: Top three tips for supervision would be communicate, communicate and communicate. First of all, it’s really important to communicate your experience, your knowledge and your passion for your subject area. Time and time again students tell us that they really appreciate the deep understanding and expertise of Imperial College supervisors and of course passion is contagious and students really warm to that. Secondly, communication also involves listening so make every opportunity to listen to your students, to encourage them to share their research ideas, to encourage them to share their passions and to take the time to ensure that they’re not concerned about anything. Too frequently, research students worry about things which to us as supervisors seem relatively straightforward, they worry that their thesis is not going to plan and that their research is not good enough whilst again, we as supervisors know that this is really very high quality students. So just taking the time to reassure or encourage sooner rather than later is a good policy. Finally, the third communication is as those research results start to flow, you and your student who have worked together as a team to generate them so you and your student should work together to communicate those research results and of course that’s a wonderful experience to do that together.

My final word is to wish you every success in your supervision of Imperial PhD students. We all know that these students are very special people and it’s an absolute privilege to work with them, good luck.
Appendix 3

Transcript of Video
Dr Hari Arora, Research Fellow, Department of Bioengineering

H: My name is Hari Arora and I’m a research fellow in the Department of Bioengineering.

Describe the different roles of staff who supervise students.

H: Your role can change depending on whether you are the primary supervisor, the secondary supervisor or an expert within the group. My role has changed depending on whether I was a postdoc, from those times, to now when I’m actually a PI leading a group.

So as a primary supervisor, your role tends to be more on the organisational side, it’s not just about the science, but there are a lot of hard deadlines which you have to meet and make sure that the students are aware of this, but equally, there’s the pastoral side, looking after their well-being and making sure that they feel comfortable in what they’re doing and always feeling quite happy with what they are doing.

As a secondary supervisor your role can be a bit more technical, providing a soundboard, a second opinion on various technical matters. Whether you are just associated with the project in a similar group, again this tends to be more of a technical support role. So you find that a lot of postdocs in the group tend to be more hands-on in the lab whereas you as a supervisor can’t always do this. Even though you feel like you could, a lot of the times you have to stand back and this is where the support from your postdocs can be invaluable.

What are your top tips for new supervisors?

H: I think the first key thing for supervisors to think about when it comes to their PhD student is to be sure in your own mind what the project is about. If you’re clear in what the goals are, this will firstly help you when it comes to recruitment in terms of hiring the correct person with the correct and complementary skills for the project. Equally, having a good firm grasp of what the project is about will help you to sell the idea and to get the students more interested and engaged in the project and this is key because if they are interested, they’ll be more driven and this will help them in the long-term in terms of pushing the project forward. The other things are some students will thrive with the new freedom that you would associate with a PhD project when compared with an undergraduate project and some will be a bit lost. So sometimes having a good structure to the early parts of the PhD can help. This might be a completely new field to them so getting a bit of confidence early is key as this will help them to say yes I can produce data, yes I can do this project and that will set them on a good footing moving forward.
Appendix 4

Transcript of Video
Professor Paul Luckham, Senior Tutor (Postgraduate)

P: My name is Professor Paul Luckham and I am the Senior Tutor (Postgraduate) in the Department of Chemical Engineering.

Please explain the role of the Senior Tutor (Postgraduate).

P: Well my role as the Senior Tutor (Postgraduate) in the Department has two roles really. Firstly, there is the formal role. I'm involved in the induction of new PhD students, at the beginning of term we organise a reception for new postgrad students, PhD and MScs, so I'm involved in that. I explain to them what they are likely to be doing in their time in the Department, I'm on the Postgraduate Studies Committee, I organise the Postgraduate Staff Student Committee, which after a bit organises itself and then I also organise the social events for the postgraduate students in the Department. So that's the formal role. Then there's, if you like, an informal role which is to a large extent more important which is where certain issues may arise for the students and that might be health issues, financial issues, problems communicating with their supervisor, perhaps, problems seeing the supervisor and then the student comes along and talks to me. A lot of the time I just listen, actually, and the student seems to find that just talking over the problem just helps, but then if there is something I can do then I either point the student in the direction of professional people who can help or with the student's permission, I may go and speak to the supervisor of the student and see if we can help resolve what the issues are.

Can supervisors come to you for help?

P: The supervisor might have found that the student has got some problem, maybe the student confided in the supervisor and the supervisor just wants to talk to you and then you can again point the supervisor in the direction of professional people in the College who can help the student, usually it's a problem for the student. Sometimes, the supervisor hasn't seen the student for a while and is concerned about their welfare, quite what they're up to and so then between the two of us, we try and track the student down and find out what the issues are. Sometimes, the supervisor realises there is a problem that the student hasn't confided in them so then I again, ask if the student would like to come and see me, see if we can see what the issues are.

What do you see the role of supervisor is in terms of supporting research students?

P: I think most research groups, kind of act as a family really. When I first came here, my first two PhD students were actually older than I and I was then in the position
of being their brother. Obviously as time’s gone on I’m no longer like their brother but more like a parent and I think if supervisors have that, it’s a bit like a family where if you like, you’re like a big brother or parent or sister for that matter then that helps set a good relationship between the student and the supervisor. Obviously the supervisor knows the technical area of what the student’s doing better than the student in the first instance but I think if you can get something like a family atmosphere then that works well. That’s what I’ve tried to do in my time here and I think that works quite well.

I think it’s important to recognise that just like in a family individual members of a family are different and that’s also true for PhD students. Some people are organised, some people aren’t, some people are messy and stuff’s everywhere and people work in different ways and I think one issue that I had was that some students really treat you too respectfully and really hang on every word, everything you say is right and they don’t challenge you and so that can be a cultural issue and so that is something important to recognise that people are different and you’ve got to try and get the best out of people, irrespective of how they work. It might be different from the way you work and that can be a little difficult when you’re starting off to appreciate that.
Appendix 5

Transcript of Video
Ahmed Shamso, Zaynab Jawad, and Yu (Steven) Xia

A: My name is Ahmed Shamso and I am a second-year PhD student in the Department of Materials and I’m also the Graduate Students’ Union President.

Z: My name is Zaynab Jawad, I’m a surgical trainee and I’m also doing my PhD in the Department of Materials.

S: My name is Yu (Steven) Xia and I’m a second-year PhD student in the Department of Mechanical Engineering.

What are the attributes you most value in supervisors?

A: I really value supervisors who are able to spare time for their students so that they can discuss their progression and who are able to make the student feel comfortable of his/her progress and provide them with feedback for the next milestone. Also it’s very important that the supervisor knows that students are different in their strengths and weaknesses. Also regular meetings with the supervisor is something that is valuable and it helps to stimulate progression even [when] there are negative results from the student.

Z: It’s really important for the supervisor to be someone you can approach, someone approachable, so you feel you can ask them any question and you don’t feel stupid asking even the simplest question. Also I think it’s important to have someone who is available to give their time so even if they are busy, away on a conference, that they are someone who you can email, and they’ll respond to your email and arrange feedback or arrange a meeting with you.

S: The most I value in my supervisor is that they can also provide some feedback to my questions and they can help me when I make some problems.
Appendix 6

Transcript of Video
Dr Timothy Constantinou, Department of Electrical & Electronic Engineering

**T:** My name is Tim Constantinou and I work in the Department of Electrical & Electronic Engineering.

**What do you look for when recruiting a new research student?**

**T:** When I recruit new research students I look for three things, I look that they are curious, they have courage and character, if you like, the three Cs.

When I interview a new PhD candidate, obviously the first thing I look for is academic excellence, they obviously need to have motivation and I can see this through kind of have they done their homework, do they know about my research, have they come prepared, and then I normally ask them to give me an example of their work. A large volume of their work, so to provide me with something like a Master’s thesis, final year project /report and there I can see their attention to detail and also what their writing skills are like.

The next thing I look for is having a “can do” attitude. Nobody wants a student that comes back to you every week and says, “it can’t be done, it can’t be done, help, help, help”. You want them to come back and tell you why it can’t be done and to propose solutions and finally I find that personality is very important, especially within a multidisciplinary environment interpersonal skills are very important. I check these by actually after having the first part of the academic interview, I invite the candidate to meet my whole research group, to meet everybody and then I meet up with my team and listen to everybody’s opinion. I find that that’s very insightful.
Appendix 7

Transcript of Video
Professor Holger Krapp, Department of Bioengineering

H: My name is Professor Holger Krapp and I am working in the Department of Bioengineering. We are interested in my group to understand the principles of biological sensory motor control.

How do you build rapport with your students?

H: One of the most important things certainly is to integrate the students into the work group as soon as possible. Well obviously it also includes introducing them to other colleagues in the Department, to support staff, very importantly as well, and make them in a way feel at home. The atmosphere in the lab that is created not only by yourself as supervisor but very clearly by the team and it is maintained at a level that they feel very comfortable with. That allows them to grow confidence and actually with a very good attitude all together during their work in the lab. They will be more motivated and way more efficient in taking on their projects. And when trying to integrate the students it will be very important to take into account that many students have different cultural backgrounds, they have different personalities and you should pay attention to that and ensure that the integration process is arranged in a smooth way.

Do you have any advice for other supervisors in terms of setting mutual expectations from the start of the relationship?

H: There should be scheduled lab meetings, ideally weekly, and in addition, lab meetings with the whole group and try and see the student in the lab and give them hands-on advice or actually help them out if they have some technical issues if need be. So this is something that will really grow the relationship between the student and the supervisor as well and they will actually understand that you have a clear interest in their research project. Besides the supervision and your own commitment, it’s always good to have for the new student a contact in the lab they can approach for any questions on a day-to-day basis. Now altogether of course, it’s very important to discuss with the student, or let them know what your availability schedule is so to speak. They need to know about your work rhythm, they need to know about when you might not be available because you are away at conferences or you are away for other reasons for a couple of days. That will, if it’s properly explained, make them understand, that there other commitments that you need to look after as well.
What are your top tips for supervisors?

H: There’s one really important point, and that is flexibility. So PhD students have their own personality and they live under certain personal circumstances so that means you really have to take that into account and basically interact with them accordingly. So leadership is also about social competence and that is a very important requirement for successful PhD supervision. Well then obviously we have got one final point to make and that is leading by example so you and your research group, if you manage to interact with new students in an appropriate way and make them feel at home as I mentioned earlier, then there’s a very good chance of turning this into a very good experience for yourself and for the student.
Appendix 8

Transcript of Video
Dr Namrata Malhotra, Imperial College Business School

N: I'm Dr Namrata Malhotra, I'm Associate Professor in Strategy in the Business School at Imperial College.

How do you establish good working relationships with your research students?

N: I think it's about setting the terms of engagement right from the beginning but being open, I would say to adapt it as you go along because there's a lot that becomes clear about the student, their comfort level, you know with different approaches and also how your interaction can be improved with them. And also different stages of research require a different approach, so what I am learning is to be as flexible and adaptable but having said that, I would also say that, there are some things which are non-negotiable and to be clear about that. For example, in the social sciences especially, writing is the most challenging or in qualitative work, writing is the most challenging and I would always encourage students to start early and just get into the habit of writing and sometimes it's difficult to, you know, make them realise that right from the beginning. There's some things that are just so foundational and so important that's it's important to keep re-iterating those as we go along.

How do you encourage your students to develop and engage with other research communities in the College?

N: I think that's very specific to the topic. So I would say that within the Business School we have our own different forums and opportunities for students for example to attend seminars and we have just also just introduced something called monthly paper development workshops so if students feel brave enough and it's a great opportunity for students to present their work and get feedback from faculty, wider than just their supervisory committee.

We do encourage students and I think it's vital for them to experience being out there presenting their work, listening to peoples' work at conferences and workshops which are wonderful opportunities and also with conferences there are conferences which are much more developmentally focussed for PhD students so it's less daunting for them you know to even present work that's at a very nascent stage and then there are others where you need better developed papers.
What are your top tips for supervisors?

N: I’m learning, I should say, that the healthiest approach to navigate this journey, which is quite a chunk of time, where things can change, both for the supervisor and the student, plus new things come to light you know about both in the relationship and I think the best thing is to be adaptable and flexible but at the core lies open communication because I often find that any kind of complications arise because of gaps in communication and that applies to both sides and you know both sides need to be open and honest and up front with each other and for the supervisor in particular to make the student feel comfortable to express if they are facing any challenges and to be also very sympathetic and understanding if they are facing any issues in their personal lives that could be health or anything else that could be accommodated because often not making progress could be code for a lot of underlying things that are going on for the student.
Appendix 9

Transcript of Video
Ahmed Shamso, Zaynab Jawad, and Yu (Steven) Xia

A: My name is Ahmed Shamso and I am a second-year PhD student in the Department of Materials and I’m also the Graduate Students’ Union President.

Z: My name is Zaynab Jawad, I’m a surgical trainee and I’m also doing my PhD in the Department of Materials.

S: My name is Yu (Steven) Xia and I’m a second-year PhD in the Department of Mechanical Engineering.

Why is it important that you have a good working relationship with your supervisor?

S: It’s very important that as a student I have a good working relationship with my supervisor because he is an experienced person, he has extensive experience not only in the academic and progression side but also on the personal side. It’s very important to interact with the supervisor for his or her constructive criticism, for professional input or general advice.

Z: Yes, I think it’s important to have a good working relationship with your supervisor because you want to be able to have discussions with them about any problems you have with it and it’s a long time, three years or more working with them so it’s important to have that good relationship and maintain that along the way.

A: I also think it’s important to keep a good working relationship between the supervisors and myself because it can help me make progress on my research for my PhD and avoid being lost or losing confidence during this long four-year journey.

How can supervisors work with you to achieve a good working relationship?

A: There should be a certain set of mutual expectations between the supervisor and student so that they can maintain it and also good communication is very important even if the student hasn’t, doesn’t have very good results to present to you, to present to the supervisor. So the supervisor he has got a lot of experience so any feedback from him is an added value to the student. It’s also very good that the supervisor appreciate the fact that the PhD life is a long journey and there will be ups and downs, boring times, interesting times, good and bad results and it’s very good that the supervisor is always there with the student, healing the downs, encouraging, supporting and also celebrating.

S: The supervisors and I, we can meet regularly, like once a week or every two weeks and he or she can give me the feedback to my questions and another thing I think
that can improve the relationship is to organise some social events like going
to a restaurant together or having some sports etc. so I think on both sides that
can improve the relationship.

Z: The beginning of the PhD is a nice time to get to know the student and to be able
to make some plans for the project. I mean every student is different and like
Steven said as well, the social aspect is really important.
Appendix 10

Transcript of Video
Professor Clare Lloyd, Vice-Dean (Institutional Affairs, Faculty of Medicine)

C: I’m Clare Lloyd and I work in the National Heart and Lung Institute, within the Faculty of Medicine.

What makes a supportive environment within a lab?

C: I think it’s a number of things but definitely having a good relationship with your supervisors is really important for the student and also within the rest of the group, often lab groups are composed of multiple types of staff so there may be technicians, postdocs as well as students and also in medicine we have quite a lot of clinical fellows. So I think for students it’s important to know who everybody is and what projects they are working on. Very often when students start in my lab, I ask them to have a talk with all the rest of the team so they know what their project is and also what types of techniques they’re working on.

Describe some of the roles within the lab and how they interact with research students.

C: There are multiple different sizes of labs but I think in most labs we have a mixture of students, postdocs and also technicians so technical staff and certainly the technicians may well be responsible for the smooth running of the lab and particularly health and safety so they often do the health and safety inductions and maybe introduce the student to processes within the lab, where things are and how the lab is run safely and efficiently, making sure everything is tidy and runs well. Postdocs are obviously a bit more autonomous, they generally have much more experience and so certainly in my lab, I generally pair a student up with a postdoc so that then they have somebody who knows their project well and who can help them on a day-to-day basis and certainly that’s good for the postdoc in that they get experience in supervision but it’s also really good for the student because they have somebody with whom they can ask questions of all the time and also it’s a different, less formal relationship than with the supervisor.

What are your tips for running lab meetings?

C: I think it’s very important to generate the kind of environment where everybody within the group feels able to talk and say their piece. So we generally have a relatively informal group meeting where students can practise their presentations, maybe for external meetings, but also present their data really regularly. I think it’s very important for students to get used to presenting their
data, even off the cuff, so not having a well-rehearsed presentation because sometimes that’s important later on.

C: Also we really encourage our students to ask questions, sometimes they are very reticent in lab meetings or at seminars but it’s a really important skill to develop not only in their PhD but also in their later scientific careers to be able to ask questions at external meetings.
Appendix 11

Transcript of Video
Ahmed Shamso, Zaynab Jawad, and Yu (Steven) Xia

A: My name is Ahmed Shamso and I am a second-year PhD student in the Department of Materials and I’m also the Graduate Students’ Union President.

Z: My name is Zaynab Jawad, I'm a surgical trainee and I'm also doing my PhD in the Department of Materials.

S: My name is Yu (Steven) Xia and I'm a second-year PhD in the Department of Mechanical Engineering.

What do you find most valuable in terms of the PhD milestones?

A: I find the PhD milestones are very helpful in the sense that they not only help me to celebrate my achievements but also to sit back and have a think about the supervisor’s feedback for future directions.

Z: I think the PhD milestones are a good time to reflect on the whole PhD, where you are at those times, how the process works and interacting with your supervisor, giving them your project and getting feedback and just understanding that whole process.

S: And I also think that the benefits of the PhD milestones is that it can give supervisors and myself some short-term goals to work together on and you can put some necessary pressure to make progress with the PhD.
Appendix 12

Transcript of Video  
Dr Stefanos Zafeiriou, Department of Computing

S: My name is Dr Stefanos Zafeiriou and I am with the Department of Computing.

What are your top tips for supervisors?

S: The supervisor has always got to be on top of the research, the supervisor always has to have a clear plan regarding the research pathway of the student and finally, the supervisor has to always facilitate collaboration between students rather than competition.
Appendix 13

Transcript of Video
Dr Janet De Wilde, Head of Postgraduate Professional Development

J: My name is Janet De Wilde and I am Head of Postgraduate Professional Development and I work in the Graduate School.

Please comment on how students consider their supervisor to be in a position of authority.

J: Students do consider their supervisor to be in a position of authority, I'm very aware of this because I run the developing assertiveness course and we have 250 students take this each year, so this is many students and every time this power difference comes up and students really look up to their supervisors and this is further exacerbated by cultural differences, gender differences and some students really feel they depend on their supervisors for their future career so that power imbalance is really apparent from those workshops.

What are the implications of this?

J: The implications of this is that the students don’t feel able to act as themselves or behave as themselves, they become very passive and they agree to most things and they are too, maybe afraid, not assertive enough to say, “I can’t take this on” so they over-commit and they take on a lot of work so one of the consequences is that they become very stressed.

What can supervisors do to overcome this and build effective working relationships?

J: For supervisors to overcome this and build effective working relationships could really work at this as a partnership and one way to do this is to use active listening techniques and really ask supportive questions and really understand from the students what commitments they’ve got, what they can take on and what they can actually deliver and hopefully by that partnership it can reduce stress levels.

What are your top tips for supervisors?

J: Active listening, partnership and say well done throughout the process. A lot of students feel that they don’t get recognition for the work done during the PhD.
Appendix 14

Transcript of Video
Professor Denis Wright

What would you advise supervisors to do in challenging situations?

D: Often the most complex welfare and academic cases concern research students where for various reasons communication between the student and their primary supervisor has broken down. Myself and others can act as arbitrators to provide solutions to such problems including, for example, the provision of additional supervisory support where a PhD programme has developed into new areas.

How are students and staff supported when things go wrong?

D: Early intervention is ideal, don’t delay in seeking advice and support.

How are students supported upon return to the College following a period of absence?

D: This will depend on the reason for interruption. Each student should have an agreed care pathway. This might include for example, a phase return to experimental work after an injury.

What are the current issues affecting research students?

D: I don’t think these have changed much in recent years, at least internal issues, students may be worried about finance, again it’s important that they seek advice and support early as it can take time to get financial support, although short-term loans are usually available in a few days via the student support fund. It’s also important that students address their life-work balance, don’t spend all hours in the lab, just because you can. It usually doesn’t improve your research and may indeed be detrimental to it.

Do you have any top tips for supervisors?

D: As a PhD supervisor myself, my top tips would be first, the admission process and particularly the interview is key. Ideally students should also visit the lab and talk to other students. Appointing in haste is often a recipe for problems in the future. All students are different, having a single approach to supervision may not work well for all. Be prepared to be flexible. Research group or lab meetings should be something that students look forward to and not be regarded as a chore or worse, with dread. Not being too long or too late in the day certainly helps.
Appendix 15

Transcript of Video
Dr Julie King, Director of the Centre for Academic English

J: My name is Julie King and I’m the Director of the Centre for Academic English.

Please describe the support and services available to research students who are non-native speakers.

J: At the Centre for Academic English, we offer a range of courses, workshops and consultations to PhD students and we hope that we support them from the beginning of their thesis right to the day they submit. So we have a very specific provision around writing which is called the Postgraduate English Requirement and we offer, we actually assess all international students when they arrive at Imperial to what their level of proficiency is in academic discourse is and on the basis of those assessments we encourage students to attend classes. So we have classes that are geared towards students who are still struggling maybe with grammar and beginning to write complex texts and then we move them up towards the ESA point, helping them produce longer texts, paragraphs that are cohesive and coherent and then beyond the ESA we give students support with advanced academic writing so really getting into the nitty-gritty of complex sophisticated academic writing as well as helping students with publications that they may want to do in the wider context of academic journals.

With the Graduate School, we also have support right at the end of the thesis with the Writing Retreat where we take a group of students, international and home students away actually for a couple of days where we support them fully with the writing of their thesis because that can also be a vulnerable time for students when they're trying to do their work.

We also support PhD students with academic speaking so we help them with any speaking needs throughout the PhD which may be based around the ESA so preparing for that assessment. We help them simply with explaining their research, defining their research, negotiating perhaps with colleagues in a team and we also help them with presentations at conferences so learning how to communicate effectively.

We also then have general courses based around listening [and] speaking and if PhD students want to join those, we have grammar workshops which are called writing mechanics workshops where students can come along if they have worries about a particular grammatical functions and the last thing we offer are one-to-one consultations where students can come along with a piece of writing or with a presentation that they are planning to do at a conference and we will...
give them an hour to sit down and work through any particular problems that they may have in either of those areas.

So we hope that we give enough support from the beginning starting the thesis to the end of the thesis in any way that’s related to English language.
Appendix 16

Transcript of Video
Dr Julie King, Director of the Centre for Academic English

J: My name is Julie King and I’m the Director of the Centre for Academic English.

Please describe the support and services available to staff and supervisors who are non-native speakers.

J: We also support academic staff and academic supervisors if they have worries or concerns around any aspect of academic language or also maybe everyday language as well. We do have general English courses that are at three different levels of proficiency which are just geared at helping people communicate effectively, mostly with spoken English. We also have a specific writing course for academic staff which is again just to help them get their science on paper and help them communicate their science effectively. All academic members of staff are welcome to join our classes for listening and speaking. Sometimes they like to come along to practise particular pronunciation. Academic staff actually and supervisors come to us mostly for the one-two-one consultations that we offer usually when they’re trying to write up an article for publication, often they just want us to look over it to see if the writing is the style of the journal, that it will actually get published and that it communicates their science effectively. Other academics have come to us, supervisors again, in terms of looking at their own communicative ability, if they’re getting their ideas across effectively to their students and slightly to the side of it they also come to us for advice about lecturing and teaching so again how to break down their science into little chunks that then can be communicated clearly to students.

So we try and help academic staff in a range of ways. A new thing we are just doing now which again might be of interest to supervisors is actually supporting academic staff with the assessment of student work. Obviously academic staff are interested in the academic content but may struggle a little bit with how to deal with the language that students are producing within those assignments so at the moment we are working with a couple of departments around supporting academic staff with student assessment and again we are happy for anyone to come and see us or contact us with any language-related concern and if we can help, we will.