

IMPERIAL

What Research Students and their Research Degree¹ Main Supervisor Might Mutually Expect from Each Other – Our mutual expectations

The document provides a suggested starter list of expectations that research students and their main supervisor might expect from each other. It is designed to facilitate conversations to establish effective partnerships and it is a requirement that the document is discussed at the first meeting between a main supervisor and a new student and re-visited prior to the Early-Stage Assessment and again by the Late-Stage Review. It is recommended that the document is discussed at other relevant points throughout the partnership, as needed.

It should be noted that this is not exhaustive, and that departments may have variations in roles and responsibilities; supervisors should be aware of any such variations and will feed this into their discussions with students. Further, it is recognised that supervisors may not always be best placed to meet all the expectations laid out in the document, but should be aware of who, in their department, can. Students and main supervisors are encouraged to discuss, tailor and personalise the document further to suit.

Finally, students and supervisors are reminded that Imperial's Values (Respect, Collaboration, Integrity, Excellent and Innovation) are designed to support effective student-supervisor partnerships and should be embedded in the way they work together: [Values and Behaviours | About | Imperial College London](#)

¹ PhD, MPhil, EngD and MD[Res]

IMPERIAL

Establishing our mutual expectations

This suggested starter list and any list research students and their main supervisor subsequently produce are designed to facilitate conversations to establish effective partnerships. They are not intended to be legally binding and not intended to form part of the student's contract with Imperial. **To maintain this clarity, it is recommended that this wording is copied over in all future and personalised iterations of the list, should they be made. It is also good practice for students and supervisors to make a record of their meetings to provide evidence of these discussions taking place.**

Academic Development

As your supervisor, I will:

1. Work with you to develop an appropriate project that you can deliver within the period of your studentship funding, ensuring that you have clear strategic aims and objectives, and an initial plan of work that will be reviewed throughout your project. I will work with you to ensure that you can progress to completion whether working remotely or on-campus.
2. Ensure you have adequate space and resources in which to carry out your research. If you are working remotely, I will discuss your local environment with you and will direct you to any appropriate sources of support. We can also explore your access to digital resources and remote access to laboratory equipment where appropriate.
3. Ensure you receive appropriate safety, research and technical skills training, relevant to your research, noting that these may be available through distance, blended or face-to-face delivery.
4. Provide you with guidance on how to access and critically review original literature and other sources of information. I will also help you to develop your writing and presentation skills.
5. Provide you with guidance on record keeping, including bibliographic and research data management, where appropriate.

As your student, I will:

- Work with you to understand what is required of me, taking responsibility for my progress. I will strive to display the initiative, commitment and work ethic required to successfully complete my project.
- Review my working environment and access to digital resources, alerting you to where there are potential shortfalls impacting on my ability to progress my research.
- Attend any safety, technical or research skills training required to progress my research.
- Read the key literature in my field, develop critical thinking skills, undertake training to develop my writing and presentation skills, and take responsibility for writing my thesis.
- Keep accurate records and notes of my research and progress.

IMPERIAL

6. Provide you with appropriate guidance about the nature of research, standards expected for each milestone and help you to plan your research so that you can submit your thesis on time. If your milestones and viva examinations take place remotely, I will explain how these will operate and refer you to Imperial's guidance on this.

Comply with Imperial's [Academic and Examination Regulations](#) and other Imperial procedures. I will work at a pace which is sufficient for me to make good progress with my research. I understand that where I have been advised that my work is unsatisfactory, I will need to take steps to bring my work up to the required standard.
7. Provide you with timely and regular constructive feedback on research progress and written work. I will also provide you with timely and constructive feedback on your milestone reports, thesis chapters and oral presentations. I will let you know if the standard of your work is below that which is expected by Imperial.

Actively seek guidance and feedback from you on my progress, including how and when I can expect to receive feedback on my oral presentations and written work.

Submit any drafts for feedback in a timely manner as per agreed deadlines.
8. Ensure that you receive an appropriate induction and Health and Safety training, relevant to your research and that you actively review and amend your working practices as required for your project.

Comply proactively with Imperial's Health and Safety requirements, including ensuring that appropriate risk assessments are in place, including before any new research activity is undertaken. I understand that maintaining safe working is a partnership between myself, my colleagues and supervisor(s) and the relevant safety staff.
9. Draw your attention to Imperial's Guidelines for Proper Scientific Conduct in Research and the Policy and Procedures for Investigation of Allegations of Scientific Misconduct.

Act in accordance with the Guidelines for Proper Scientific Conduct in Research and the Policy and Procedures for Investigation of Allegations of Scientific Misconduct
10. Help you interpret your Turnitin originality report for the ESA.

Submit a copy of my ESA to Turnitin for an originality check.
11. Discuss with you early on, any departmental/funder expectations for publishing and the established protocol for paper authorship, noting that the priority is for you to complete your research and submit your thesis for examination within the specified time-frame.

Listen to what is expected of me in terms of publishing but agree to talk to you if I am worried about meeting the requirements of my thesis whilst meeting departmental expectations to publish (where these are in place).

I will also draw your attention to relevant training provided by the Graduate School (and elsewhere) to help support you: [Research Communication | Imperial students | Imperial College London](#).

IMPERIAL

Managing our Partnership

As your supervisor, I will:

12. Be available to you, normally for at least one hour every one or two weeks (on average), and endeavour, where necessary for your research and/or working preferences to meet 1-2-1. Other interactions may take the form of individual meetings (tutorials), group meetings or lab meetings. We will agree the most suitable platform for communication platform for each meeting type.
13. When I know that I will be unavailable, I will work with you to identify a suitably qualified member of academic staff who can discuss your work with you.
14. During our meetings, I will work with you to build trust and enable an effective and respectful partnership. I confirm that I am familiar with Imperial's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
15. Ensure you receive appropriate supervision for the duration of your research degree.
16. Introduce you to (remotely or in-person) other staff and students who will be involved with your supervision and wider research experience at Imperial. I will make it clear what their role is and what support you can expect from each person.
17. Ensure that any teaching or supervision that you carry out does not jeopardise your ability to complete your research or submit your thesis on time.
18. Celebrate your achievements and encourage you to get involved with the wider Imperial community, including by presenting your research progress, and to engage with the Graduate School and the Imperial College Union. Many activities, events and competitions are being held remotely. In addition, I will support you if you wish to participate in extra-curricular activities offered by the Graduate School and Imperial College Union ([We are Imperial College Union | Imperial College Union](#))

As your student, I will:

Be on time and be prepared for meetings (tutorials), seminars and any other arranged activities.

During our supervisory meetings, I will build trust and confidence to enable an effective and respectful partnership. I confirm that I am aware of Imperial's commitment to ensuring equality and inclusion for all staff and students. I understand that if I am concerned about our partnership, I can raise this with you, the Department's Senior Tutor (PGR) or with the Director of Postgraduate Studies.

Recognise that your primary role is not to dictate but rather to advise, guide and oversee my research.

Work collaboratively with colleagues in person or remotely in my lab or office.

Understand that I may be expected to teach or supervise undergraduate and/or master's students and help other colleagues in the lab or office.

Take steps to share the findings of my research with the wider Imperial community and develop my own networks outside my immediate research group.

IMPERIAL

Supporting Good Health and Wellbeing

As your supervisor, I will:

19. Encourage you to maintain a healthy work- life balance and good wellbeing. In a remote environment, it is especially important to take regular breaks and exercise. The Imperial Student Support Zone offers help and tips in this regard: [Student Support Zone | Imperial students | Imperial College London](#)
20. Encourage you to take holiday leave, in line with Imperial's [Research Degree Student Leave Policy](#). In accordance with the rules laid down by the Research Councils, students are entitled to up to eight weeks holiday leave, each year, including students with Tier 4 visas.
21. Appreciate that there may be times when you or members of your immediate family are unwell and during those times, I will be supportive of you taking appropriate action to get your needs met or those of your family I will make suitable reasonable adjustments according to your difficulties and will point you in the direction of further help and support to suit nature of your illness or personal circumstance.
22. If you are experiencing financial hardship, I shall be flexible and sympathetic and point you towards potential sources of support such as the Student Support Fund. In addition, I understand that you may need to supplement your stipend by taking paid part-time work.

As your student, I will:

Do my best to look after myself and maintain a healthy work-life balance. I am aware that I can access support outside my Department through information provided on the Student Support Zone website and through the Graduate School.

Take holiday leave in line with the Imperial's [Research Degree Student Leave Policy](#). Requests for holiday leave will be made with you in good time, and at a time which is appropriate to my research, noting that my funder may have specific requirements.

Inform you if I am unable to attend Imperial activities (in-person or remotely) due to illness or other personal circumstance and will inform the Department's Senior Tutor (PGR) if I am away from Imperial for more than three days. I understand that I will need to provide a medical certificate if the illness extends beyond seven days.

Professional Development

As your supervisor, I will support your professional development by:

23. Providing you with regular opportunities to talk about your research to other staff and students and to have practice in oral presentations, e.g. in journal clubs or local seminars.
24. Providing you with the opportunity to present at conferences and other external development activities, either in person or remotely. I will also work with you to help identify conferences relevant to your field of research.

As your student, I will:

Take the opportunity to share the findings of my research with the wider Imperial community.

Take the opportunity to share the findings of my research externally, which can help me develop my own professional network

IMPERIAL

25. Encouraging you to publish your work, where appropriate, and working with you to identify journals relevant to your field of research.

26. Working with you to identify at least 4 professional development courses (provided by the Graduate School) you should look to complete, in addition to the compulsory online plagiarism awareness course.

27. Encouraging you to explore your future career aspirations inside and outside of academia.

Understand that I would normally be expected to write papers during the course of my research.

Discuss my professional development with you and complete the required number of [Graduate School Professional Skills courses](#) and compulsory [online plagiarism awareness course](#). I understand that the thesis must be all my own work and that all quotations from other sources, whether published or unpublished, must be properly acknowledged.

Date approved by PRQC: 22 May 2024