

Minimum Expectations of a Primary Supervisor

This document gives guidance to academic staff on the minimum expectations of their role as a **Primary Supervisor** of a postgraduate student. It is acknowledged that many supervisors provide support well beyond the minimum expectations.

When the student arrives in the Department...

New postgraduate students should be **welcomed** in person to the Department by their supervisor.

The student should be clear on the location of their office, have an appropriate personal computer, a **CSRid** and access to the University IT network, and are able to access their University **email**.

The student should be aware of key staff and colleagues who can support them administratively and facilitate their research. Supervisors must know their responsibilities to their own students.

Academic supervision and pastoral care...

Termly reports on the student's progress, uploaded to *CamSIS*, are **obligatory**. The reports must be **candid**. These reports are the primary source of information when evaluating applications for examination allowances or in cases of dispute.

Inform the Education Administrator and/or college tutor **without delay** if any concerns arise regarding the **student's health or well-being**.

Supervisors **meet with students** at least weekly during term in the first year of study, reducing to fortnightly during term in the second year as the student becomes more independent, and further reducing to monthly in the final (third) year as writing up their thesis becomes the primary focus. Supervision meetings typically last for one hour so that an adequate depth of conversation can be achieved. The student can bring along a written agenda for each meeting and keep notes for their records.

In line with University guidance, meetings between supervisors and students should be undertaken **in person** unless there are specific circumstances why this cannot take place.

All students are required to have at least one **Advisor**. Supervisors should assist students in identifying and approaching potential advisors soon after arrival and inform the Education Team when the advisor is confirmed.

An effective means of **communication** should be established with the student as soon as possible; for example, making clear the frequency and timings of meetings, and making sure that the student knows how to make contact at other times. Supervisors should be aware that some students will not expect to make the first approach to set up a meeting, and instead will expect the supervisor to take the initiative. Supervisors are advised to make firm appointments for students, and to be alert to the possibility of misunderstandings if the student does not make contact regularly.

Supervisors should respond promptly and appropriately to requests from students to meet, and to provide **feedback and commentary** on work at various stage of its development. If a supervisor is away from Cambridge for an extended period, they should ensure that their students and the Education Team are made aware and informed of alternative supervisory arrangements.

Early in their student's studies, supervisors should identify any **training** needs the student requires to undertake the research and refer them to the relevant technical experts or training courses.

It is often helpful for students to have a clear, written **timeline** for project milestones and deliverables, including preparation of the first year report and the final thesis. Progress should be monitored against the agreed timeline with appropriate action taken without delay if the student does not keep in contact or progress is inadequate.

Offer advice on further study or **careers** and respond promptly to reasonable requests for **references** from students.

Preparing for studies involving data collection...

Students should be made aware of their responsibilities for the ethical conduct of their research, and the appropriate process of **ethical review** (NHS or University) where necessary. They should also have **information governance** and **data security** training

If students are working with the **NHS**, clinical populations or clinical data, they should seek advice on the need for a **Research Passport**. The Education Team can assist with preparation and submission of applications.

There should be adequate **funding** in place for any studies in which the student is involved before the study begins.

Writing and publishing...

Students should be encouraged to **publish** and **present** their work.

Ownership of **intellectual property rights** and **data**, as well as **authorship** and the order of authors should be discussion openly at the outset of a study and subsequently honoured. Make sure that **funders** are properly acknowledged.

Read and comment on draft chapters of the **thesis**. Supervisors often want to see draft chapters at an early stage so that the student has the opportunity to incorporate any feedback into subsequent writing.