



**Imperial College
London**

**Faculty of Medicine
National Heart and Lung Institute**

Postgraduate Research Programmes

Student Handbook

2021-22

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1. College Introduction

Welcome to the College

Congratulations on joining Imperial College London, the only university in the UK to focus exclusively on science, medicine, engineering and business.

From Fleming's discovery of Penicillin to Gabor's invention of holography, Imperial has been changing the world for well over 100 years. You're now part of this prestigious community of discovery and we hope you will take this opportunity to make your own unique contribution.

We understand that this is a challenging time for our student community due to the impact of coronavirus and we are committed to providing you with the very best academic resources to enrich your experience. Information on teaching, learning, supervision, and services and facilities to support the wider student experience during the Covid-19 pandemic can be found on the College's webpages, alongside local information provided by your

Department and the Graduate School. We also provide a dedicated support network and a range of specialist support services to make sure you have access to the appropriate help, whether that's further training in an academic skill like writing your literature review or simply having someone to talk to.

You'll have access to an innovative range of professional development courses within our Graduate School throughout your time here, as well as opportunities to meet students from across the College at academic and social events.

We actively encourage you to seek out help when you need it and try to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Our choice of over 360 clubs, societies and projects is one of the largest of any UK university, making it easy to do something different with your downtime. Access to the gym and other sporting facilities will be dependent on government guidance. We are working to ensure that you have access to a variety of resources online to support your health and wellbeing if there are restrictions.

As one of the best universities in the world, we are committed to inspiring the next generation of scientists, engineers, clinicians and business leaders by continuing to share the wonder of what we do through public engagement events. Postgraduate students, alongside our academics and undergraduate students, make a significant contribution to events such as our annual Imperial Festival and our term-time Imperial Fringe events – if you're interested in getting involved then there will be opportunities for you to do so.



Our Principles

In 2012 the College and Imperial College Union agreed 'Our Principles' a series of commitments made between students and the College. The Principles are reviewed annually by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and changes recommended for Senate approval.

Imperial will provide through its staff:

- A world class education embedded in a research environment
- Advice, guidance and support
- The opportunity for students to contribute to the evaluation and development of programmes and services

Imperial will provide students with:

- Clear programme information and assessment criteria
- Clear and fair academic regulations, policies and procedures
- Details of full programme costs and financial support
- An appropriate and inclusive framework for study, learning and research

Imperial students should:

- Take responsibility for managing their own learning
- Engage with the College to review and enhance provision
- Respect, and contribute to, the Imperial community

The Imperial College Students' Union will:

- Support all students through the provision of independent academic and welfare assistance
- Encourage student participation in all aspects of the College
- Provide a range of clubs, societies, student-led projects and social activities throughout the year
- Represent the interests of students at local, national and international level



<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/our-principles/>

Doctoral Proposition

Imperial College London will:

Provide a world-class research programme

- focused on performing cutting-edge research that makes a significant contribution to the knowledge base
- throughout which internationally-acclaimed academics support, inspire and challenge you as you develop into an independent researcher
- in a vibrant and diverse community united by the aims of advancing the frontiers of science, technology, medicine and business, and addressing key economic and societal challenges

Provide innovative and effective professional development

- equipping you with skills to increase your research and personal effectiveness
- that gives you an insight into a wide range of career opportunities
- helping to ensure that you have the necessary attributes to excel in your chosen career

Deliver outstanding networking opportunities

- providing access to the elite international research community
- that arise from our extensive engagement with industry and business
- by organising a wide range of interdisciplinary meetings and social events within the College

Offer life-long membership of the Imperial community

- supporting you as a student and afterwards as an alumna/us
- enabling you to share your professional advice and experience with future students

Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor Partnership

The Graduate School has produced a list of minimum expectations that students and supervisors can expect from each other. It is designed to facilitate conversations to establish effective partnerships and the College requires that the document below is discussed at the first meeting between a main supervisor and a new student. It should be noted that this is not exhaustive and that the student and supervisor may wish to discuss and personalise each point to suit.

[Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student-Supervisor Partnership](#)

Welcome from the Graduate School



Welcome to Imperial College London and the Graduate School!

The Graduate School is responsible for the postgraduate experience at the College and we work closely with the Union and the Graduate Students' Union to ensure that when decisions are being made, which affect your time at Imperial, your voice is heard.

Another important aspect of our role is to offer you a free and exciting range of professional development opportunities which you can access wherever you are in the world.

Our team of tutors have a variety of research and other career experiences. We understand the importance of developing professional skills and our programmes will help you to progress in your academic studies and research and will prepare you for your future career. Whether you wish to pursue a career in academia, industry or something completely different, professional development training will improve your personal impact. You will also get to meet students from other Departments when attending our courses.

The Graduate School runs exciting competitions throughout the year which are an opportunity to broaden your knowledge as well as to meet other students and have fun. Our primary way to communicate to you will be through our monthly newsletter. However, do check our website, blog and social media platforms to keep up to date with all the latest activities available to you.

Finally, Imperial College is an extremely exciting, stimulating and diverse environment in which to work, to study and to research. Do make the most of all that the College and your programme has to offer.

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The Graduate School

You automatically become a member of the Graduate School when you register as a postgraduate student at Imperial.


The Graduate School has been established to support all postgraduate students at the College through:

- Training and development courses and retreats
- Networking activities, social and academic events to encourage cross-disciplinary interactions
- Forums to represent the views of postgraduate students throughout the College
- Coaching
- Research Degree Mediation

Professional skills courses

You can see the full range of free professional skills courses for postgraduate students on the Graduate School website:




 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/students/doctoral/professional-development/

All courses can be booked online.

Contact us

 Level 3, Sherfield Building, South Kensington Campus

 020 7594 1383

 graduate.school@imperial.ac.uk

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/>

Imperial Mobile app

Don't forget to download the free Imperial Mobile app for access to College information and services, including your programme timetable, College emails and a library catalogue search tool.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/students/online-services/mobile/

Welcome to Imperial app

The College has a Welcome to Imperial app which contains important information about campus operations, aspects of student life, a schedule of welcome activities and information about life in halls. All new students should download this guide to ensure they have the most up to date information and event schedule for the start of term.

You can download the App from the Apple or Google App Stores.

Imperial Success Guide

The Imperial Success Guide is an online resource with advice and tips on the transition to a research degree. More than just a study guide, it is packed with advice created especially for Imperial Research students, including information from across the College on support, health and well-being and ideas to help you make the most of London.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/students/success-guide/pgr/



Key Dates 2021-22

Term dates

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Autumn term: | 2 October 2021 - 17 December 2021 |
| Spring term: | 8 January 2022 - 25 March 2022 |
| Summer term: | 30 April 2022 – 1 July 2022 |

Closure dates

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Christmas/New year: | 24 December 2021 - 1 January 2022 (College reopens on 4 January 2022) |
|---------------------|--|

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Easter Holiday: | 13 April 2022 - 19 April 2022 (College reopens on 20 April 2022) |
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|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Early May Bank Holiday: | 2 May 2022 |
| Spring Bank Holiday: | 2 June 2022 |
| Platinum Jubilee Bank Holiday | 3 June 2022 |
| Summer Bank Holiday: | 29 August 2022 |

Key events

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Great Exhibition Road Festival: | 9 October 2021 – 15 October 2021 |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|

Location and Facilities

Imperial has a number of campuses in London and the South East. All have excellent travel links and are easily accessible via public transport.

Your main location(s) of study will be:

St Mary's Campus

Norfolk Place
London W2 1PG

Hammersmith Campus

Du Cane Road
London W12 0NN

Royal Brompton Campus

Dovehouse Street
London SW3 6LY

South Kensington Campus

Exhibition Road
London SW7 2AZ

Facilities

The Department's postgraduate office is located in room G211-G212 at the Guy Scadding Building, Royal Brompton campus. You can contact the team at nhlipgr.team@imperial.ac.uk

Shuttle bus

A free shuttle bus runs between our South Kensington, White City and Hammersmith Campuses on weekdays. Seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. You need to show your College ID card to board. You can download the timetable and check the latest service updates at:

 www.imperial.ac.uk/estates-facilities/travel/shuttle-bus/

Maps

Campus maps and travel directions are available at:

 www.imperial.ac.uk/visit/campuses/

Accessibility

Information about the accessibility of our South Kensington Campus is available online through the AccessAble access guides:

 www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/imperial-college-london

Smoke-Free Policy

All Imperial campuses and properties are smoke-free. This means that smoking by staff, students or visitors is not permitted on or within 20 metres of College land. The policy covers all College properties, including student accommodation and sports grounds.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/smoke-free-imperial/

SafeZone

SafeZone is a College app through which you can quickly and directly contact the Security team whenever you need them. Whether you're in an emergency situation, in need of First Aid or want to report an incident on campus, SafeZone allows you to be immediately put in touch with a member of our Security team and, at the touch of a button, can share your location and personal profile so that they can respond quickly and effectively to your specific needs. It also allows the entire College community to stay informed in the event of a major incident in London or wherever you may be in the world. Safezone also provides information on other services, such as real-time updates on the College shuttle bus.



SafeZone is optional to register for and is now available to download on the Apple and Android App stores. Visit www.imperial.ac.uk/estates-facilities/security/safezone/ for more details about SafeZone.

All existing phone numbers for the Security team are still operational. In the event of an emergency, you can still call 4444 from any internal College phone. In the event of a wider incident in London, you can now also call 0300 131 4444, Imperial's Emergency Recorded Message Line, which will point you in the direction of up-to-date information and advice.

Changes due to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The College will keep you informed about any further changes that may affect you due to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19). The COVID-19 FAQs on the website are a repository of helpful information and the latest guidance can be found at:

 www.imperial.ac.uk/about/covid-19/students/

2. Introduction to the National Heart and Lung Institute (NHLI)

The National Heart and Lung Institute (NHLI) is a major department of Imperial College's Faculty of Medicine and is a leading international research centre for investigating the mechanisms underlying many chronic diseases within the cardiovascular and respiratory systems, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, hypertension, atherosclerosis and heart failure. The Institute continues to be highly respected for its powerful blend of first-rate academics, great facilities, effective teaching and productive collaborations, and indeed it was the highest ranked of all Imperial's medical departments in the last survey of research quality, the 2014 Research Excellence Framework. It was also awarded an Athena SWAN Silver Award in 2009, renewed in 2014 and 2017, in recognition of its support of equality and diversity in academia. The Institute currently holds a Bronze Award.

One of the largest heart and lung departments in the world, NHLI enjoys close links with the Royal Brompton and Harefield NHS Foundation Trust, which has two Biomedical Research Units (Cardiovascular and Respiratory), as well as the Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, the new Academic Health Sciences Centre and other hospitals across London. It also collaborates with other UK and international institutions, such as the MRC & Asthma UK Centre in Allergic Mechanisms of Asthma, the MRC & DH Centre of Environment and Health (both with King's College London), the Centre for Respiratory Infection, the British Heart Foundation Centre of Research Excellence in Cardiovascular Disease and the British Heart Foundation Cardiovascular Regenerative Medicine Centre.

NHLI's main aim is to advance research, development and education in cardiovascular and respiratory science through its two research divisions:

- Cardiovascular Science
- Respiratory Science

Information on the Heads of Division can be found here:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/nhli/about-us/structure-and-key-people/>

A full list of useful administrative and academic contacts is available here:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/nhli/about-us/contact-us/>

Welcome from the Director of Postgraduate Studies (Research)



I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the National Heart and Lung Institute (NHLI), Imperial College London.

NHLI is an international centre of excellence for basic, respiratory, vascular and cardiac sciences and is currently one of the largest within the Faculty of Medicine, which is the largest of the 4 Faculties, with laboratories and groups on 5 campuses.

While you are here you will be interacting with world leaders in their fields and will have the opportunity to conduct your research within a highly motivated environment. This will enable you to make important contacts and friendships which will last into your future career.

Within NHLI you will have access to an excellent network of support including supervisors, mentors, postgraduate tutors and of course the NHLI Postgraduate Research Office team, with whom you will be interacting a great deal.

Enjoy your time with us, make the most of it and remember that you will always be welcome to come back.

Professor Michael Lovett

Welcome from the Postgraduate Research Student Committee

We all know how difficult it can be to adjust to a new, foreign environment and how welcome help and advice is. The NHLI student committee has been established with this in mind. We will try to help students integrate into campus life. If you need help or advice, for example, regarding accommodation, settling in or getting to grips with what's expected of you, we hope to be able to help.

If you have any difficulties or questions, you can approach anyone from the committee, which has representatives from Respiratory and Cardiovascular Sciences, as well as representatives for all the main campuses.

We hope you enjoy your time at the NHLI and use this opportunity to not only work and learn but also socialise. We will be organising social events throughout the year and hope you will participate. We are also happy to advertise other interesting social events, if you are keen on organising any.

We represent your views to the rest of the College and therefore if there's an opinion you feel needs voicing please let us know. Moreover, you're very welcome to become involved in the committee itself. The more the merrier!

Who is who in NHLI

Head of Institute

Professor Edwin Chilvers

Respiratory Division Heads

Professor Jadwiga Wedzicha (clinical)
Professor Clare Lloyd (non-clinical)

Respiratory Section Heads

- Airways Disease
- Genomic and Environmental Medicine
- Inflammation, Repair & Development
- Respiratory Infections

Professor Sebastian Johnston
Professor Debbie Jarvis
Professor Sejal Saglani
Professor Peter Openshaw

Cardiovascular Division Heads

Professor Justin Mason (clinical)
Professor Jane Mitchell (non-clinical)

Cardiovascular Section Heads

- Cardiac Function
- Cardiac Respiratory Interface
- Cardiovascular Trials and Epidemiology
- Genetics and Imaging
- Vascular Science

Professor Kenneth MacLeod
Dr Vania Braga
Professor Darrel Francis
Professor Dudley Pennell
Professor Anna Randi

Director of Postgraduate Studies

Professor Michael Lovett

Deputy Director of Postgraduate Studies

Professor Uta Griesenbach

Director of Education (Taught Programmes)

Professor Louise Donnelly

Senior Welfare Tutor (PGT)

Dr Duncan Rogers

Senior Welfare Tutor (PGR)

Dr Charlotte Dean

Lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Professor Sara Rankin

Deputy Lead for Athena Swan

Dr Charlotte Dean

Institute Lead for Postdocs

Professor Miriam Moffatt

NHLI Postgraduate Tutors

- Royal Brompton Campus
- St Mary's Campus
- Hammersmith Campus

Professor Jenni Quint
Dr Omar Usmani
Prof Uta Griesenbach
Dr Fiona Culley
Dr Tristan Rodriguez
Dr Beata Wojciak-Stothard
Prof Peter Sever

Higher Degrees Research Committee (HDRC):

- Director of Postgraduate Studies (*Chair*)
- Deputy Director of Postgraduate Studies
- NHLI PGR Tutors
- NHLI Heads of Sections
- NHLI Divisional Representatives
- Education Manager
- NHLI Postgraduate Research Student Committee Representatives
- Postgraduate Research Coordinator

Postgraduate Research Student Committee:

Royal Brompton Campus

Lauren Headley
Julia Frankenberg Garcia
Xun Yuan

St Mary's Campus
Hammersmith Campus

Celia Diaz Nicieza
Rachel Walters
Salina Nicoleau
Anne-Marie Levins

Postgraduate Research Office:

- Postgraduate Research Coordinator Mr Tony Umelo
- Education Manager Dr Katerina Koutsantoni

Institute Administration:

- Institute Manager Ms Joanna O'Brien
- Hammersmith Division Manager Mr Matt Smith
- Royal Brompton Division Manager Mr Richard Mattin
- South Kensington Division Manager Ms Eleanor Tucker
- St Mary's Division Manager Ms Martha Hills-Cousins
- Research Manager Dr Alun Owen
- Education Manager Dr Katerina Koutsantoni
- Finance Manager Ms Laavannya Paramanathan
- Finance Administrator Ms Jacqui Simmonds

3. Departmental Procedures

Departmental Induction

Induction is held online twice in the academic year: once in October and once in April, through a Q & A session. All students will be enrolled on the NHLI's [Postgraduate Research Student Induction](#) course on Blackboard upon joining the programme so they can access information about the departmental induction process.

Professional Skills

All doctoral students are expected to complete 4 Graduate School Professional Development credits as part of their doctoral degree registration. In addition to this, all doctoral students must complete mandatory plagiarism awareness training by their Early Stage Assessment (ESA).

The Graduate School's Professional Development attendance requirement exists in order to ensure that all students receive a broad range of skills development training while at Imperial and have the opportunity to engage with students from outside their programme and in different departments.

See the Graduate School's website for details:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/students/doctoral/professional-development/attendance-requirement/>

Research Approvals

Projects Involving Patients/Clinical Material for which Ethical Approval is required

Prior to commencement of the project, the supervisor must ensure that:

- appropriate ethical permission has been obtained and this must be confirmed on the application form
- the consultants in charge of the overall care of the patients have given their consent to the study
- a suitably senior clinician is identified with whom the student can liaise
- the requirement for ethical permission is clearly explained to the student and that the appropriate clinical contacts have been established
- appropriate patient numbers are available for the study, as described in the guidelines on research projects involving clinical trials – please refer to Appendix C.

Projects Involving Animal Work for which Ethical Approval is required

Prior to commencement of the project, the supervisor must ensure that:

- appropriate animal models are available for the study, as described
- appropriate ethical approval in the form of a project licence has been procured/sought

Personal licences may be applied for during the project.

English Language Requirement

If you are not a native English speaker you must meet the College's English language requirements.

See the Admissions website for details:

 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/requirements/english/

For information on English language support available while you're here, please refer to the [Centre for Academic English](#).

Attendance and Absence

MD(Res) and PhD programmes of study follow the 52 week academic year and students must attend as such. Imperial College closure days can be found here: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/leave/college-closures/>

Annual leave is dependent on the student's status (e.g. Imperial or hospital staff and full-time students) and each student should discuss this at the start of their research degree with their supervisor.

All annual leave must be requested from and approved by the supervisor and students must provide adequate notice. You must inform your Supervisor if you are absent from the College for more than three days during term. If the absence is due to illness you must produce a medical certificate after seven days. In a case where the supervisor is not available, the student must contact their Section Manager or the Postgraduate Research administration team.

Postgraduate Research students should contact their supervisor for support and guidance if they are being impacted by personal circumstances in their research. This may include making a request under the Late case request process.

Postgraduate Research students undertaking taught elements of a doctoral programme of study (i.e. MRes) should also refer to the [mitigating circumstances policy and procedure](#).

The Registry will be informed of all student non-attendances as the College is obligated to report the non-attendance of students on Tier 4/Student Route visas to the Home Office.

Health and Safety Information

Keeping you safe is a top priority for us. We continue to be guided by the latest official government guidance. At Imperial, we also have some of the world's leading researchers of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic who are advising governments around the world on the most effective measures to take to protect people from the virus as well as developing and testing a new vaccine.

You will be required to follow the safety requirements put in place on campus and in all College buildings (including halls) to ensure we keep the campuses and the Imperial community safe and to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, particularly in our ability to deliver your degree programme and to offer you a full student experience.

You can find the latest guidance on the measures we are taking for your safety, plus information about the healthcare support available to you at:

 www.imperial.ac.uk/about/covid-19/students/keeping-you-safe/

The College's Health and Safety Statement can be found at:

www.imperial.ac.uk/safety/safety-by-topic/safety-management/health-and-safety-policy-statement/

Your Departmental safety contact is:



Sue Francis



B183 (Basement), Guy Scadding Building, Royal Brompton Campus



020 7594 1029 **Mob:** 07566 950 823



s.francis@imperial.ac.uk

The College Safety Department

The Safety Department offers a range of specialist advice on all aspects of safety. This includes anything which you feel might affect you directly, or which may be associated with teaching, research or support service activities.

The College's activities range from the use of hazardous materials (biological, chemical and radiological substances) to field work, heavy or awkward lifting, driving, and working alone or late.

All College activities are covered by general health and safety regulations, but higher risk activities will have additional requirements.

The Safety Department helps departments and individuals ensure effective safety management systems are in place throughout the College to comply with specific legal requirements.

Sometimes the management systems fail, and an accident or a near-miss incident arises; it is important that we learn lessons from such situations to prevent recurrence and the Safety Department can support such investigations. All accidents and incidents should be reported online at:



www.imperial.ac.uk/safety

To report concerns or to ask for advice you should contact your programme director, academic supervisor or departmental safety officer in the first instance. You may also contact the Safety Department directly.

Occupational Health requirements

The College Occupational Health Service provides services to:

- protect health at work
- assess and advise on fitness for work
- ensure that health issues are effectively managed

The Service promotes and supports a culture where the physical and psychological health of staff, students and others involved in the College is respected, protected and improved whilst at work.



www.imperial.ac.uk/occupational-health

4. Research Students – Definitions, Registration and Funding

Full-Time Students

All full-time students follow full-time milestones, i.e. devote 80%-100% of their time to their research. The minimum registration for MPhil is 12 months and for PhD and MD(Res) it is 24 months. Full-time PhD students must submit their thesis for examination within 48 months of the date of the initial degree registration (i.e. within four years) while MD(Res) students must submit their thesis within 36 months. Full-time MPhil students must normally submit their thesis for examination within 24 months of the date of the initial degree registration.

Such students may include:

- Those who are self-funded
- Those who are on studentships and undertaking research on a full-time basis
- Staff of Imperial College London (e.g. Research Assistants, Clinical Research Fellows, Research Technicians, Statisticians) or NHS staff (from associated hospitals).

Full-time students have accompanying concessions such as eligibility for housing, Council Tax exemption, receipt of tax-free stipend (as applicable). These students will pay fees as Home/ (H) or Overseas (O) Students; the latter includes EU students.

Registration with NHLI

Upon starting, full-time students will be given form NHLI01. This form should be completed and returned to the NHLI Postgraduate Research team along with the documentation described in Appendix A. within two weeks of their start date.

Please note that registration with NHLI **must** be completed within one month of commencement of study and before the end of the calendar year. The student must submit a Research Proposal within four-six weeks of their start date. This research proposal must be the student's own work and describe studies to cover the entire duration of the intended degree.

Full-time students must complete the minimum Graduate School training requirement and attend the NHLI Postgraduate Induction.

Staff students with a College contract

Students with Imperial College London employment contracts who enrol on the NHLI PhD/ MD(Res) programme and will be self-funding their studies must ensure their contract covers the entirety of their research programme in order to remain eligible for fee remission (currently 2/3 off fees). Information is available on the College's [Discounts for College staff](#) page.

Students with staff contracts from Imperial College Healthcare and associated NHS Trusts who enrol on the NHLI PhD/ MD(Res) programme and will be self-funding their studies may be able for a fee discount through the Department (currently 1/3 off fees). Please refer to your Section Manager for details.

Part-Time Students

Students who are described as part-time follow **true part-time milestones**, i.e. devote 50%-79% of their time to their research. The minimum registration period is 48 months for PhD and MD(Res) and 24 months for MPhil. Students enrolled on PhD and MD(Res) programmes must submit their thesis for examination within 72 months of the date of the initial degree registration. MPhil students must normally submit their thesis for examination within 36 months of the date of the initial degree registration.

As above, such students may include:

- Those who are self-funded
- Staff of Imperial College London (e.g. Research Assistants, Clinical Research Fellows, Research Technicians, Statisticians) or NHS staff (from associated hospitals).

Registration with NHLI

Upon starting, part-time students will be given form NHLI01. This form should be completed and returned to the Postgraduate Administrator along with the documentation described in Appendix A. within two weeks of their start date. Please note that registration with NHLI **must** be completed within one month of commencement of study.

Employees in industry who wish to study towards a higher degree with Imperial College on a part-time basis must complete a [PRI form](#) as well as the NHLI registration form.

The student must submit a Research Proposal within four-six weeks of their start date. This research proposal must be the student's own work and describe studies to cover the entire duration of the intended degree.

Part-time students must complete the minimum Graduate School training requirement and attend the NHLI Postgraduate Induction.

Funded Students

It is the student's responsibility to inform the NHLI Postgraduate Research team and their relevant Division or Section Manager about details of their funding and any extension.

All stipend and consumables payments are set up and managed by the student's Section Manager, so it is important that they know who this is for their campus. Please refer to the [Research support](#) page on the NHLI website for contact details.

5. Doctoral Milestones & Departmental Requirements



<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/research-programmes/>

Six Monthly Reports

Each April and October, the student and their supervisor must complete a six-monthly progress report. The form for the 6-monthly report is in two parts and both parts can be submitted independently.

Students should also meet with their Mentor formally following their first and last six-monthly review.

- 6 months into the degree for MD(Res) and PhD students
- at 18 months for MD(Res) students
- at 30 months for PhD students

Students are responsible for submitting the second part of the 6-monthly form. If for any reason, a meeting to discuss the first section is not possible, the student must ensure that they submit their part regardless of the first section not being completed. However, both parts are required for review by the NHLI Tutors.

All forms must be completed and returned promptly to the PGR office (nhli.pgrteam@imperial.ac.uk)

Students can submit their completed part of the form in confidence where there is a problem, whilst the supervisor must discuss their comments with the student prior to return. The aim is to identify any problems at an early stage and to find solutions to them.

Feedback from 6-monthly progress reports

These 6-monthly reports are a written summary of progress meetings between the student and the supervisor where feedback would have been provided to the student on their progress. When they are submitted, the NHLI Postgraduate Research Office checks that everything appears in order, i.e. signatures from all parties, satisfactory progress of student, meetings with supervisors, level of satisfaction with supervisors, attendance at meetings and courses, etc.

If any significant issues have been highlighted, the matter will be followed-up by the Postgraduate Research Administrator, Education Manager or Director of Postgraduate Studies and the Postgraduate Tutors. If no issues have been highlighted, the reports will be placed on the student's record after review.

It is in the interest of both students and supervisors to ensure that these progress meetings and reports are undertaken.

Research Proposal Confirmation (RPC)

The research proposal, which must be written by the candidate with the supervisors' assistance, should be 2-4 pages (single-spaced) including figures (optional) with usually no more than 10 references and should be submitted electronically.

The purpose of this proposal is to allow assessment of the intrinsic scientific merit of the project and of the student's understanding of the project. It must, therefore, contain sufficient detail to allow a decision to be reached.

The research plan should be formulated on the basis of a two year MD(Res) or three year PhD programme of research. It should not just describe the work that would lead up to the Confirmation Review at 9 months.

The structure of the research plan should be as follows:

- a. **Title of the research and name of the student and supervisors**
- b. **Background to project:** The background should be a survey of the literature directly relevant to your work. It will involve placing your molecule or system of interest in the context of your field. It may involve work that has been carried out in the laboratory before you arrived. This section should also provide the information from which you have formulated your hypothesis. You should add a concluding paragraph which provides a clear, succinct statement of the hypothesis on which your work will be based (one or two sentences at most).
- c. **Hypothesis**
- d. **Aims:** The main goals of your research should be stated concisely, either as short sentences or bullet points.
- e. **Plan of Investigation:** Describe the methods that you will adopt in sufficient detail to allow both your understanding of them and their feasibility to be assessed. Detail whether these methods are currently available in the division/department/section or how they are to be established. Evidence of successful pilot work should be incorporated into this section and will be particularly noted.

Approval Process

The assessors will review the Research Proposal and complete an assessment report form confirming that:

- a. The candidate meets the required standard with reference to the following:
 - appropriately qualified
 - proficiency in spoken English
 - abilities and background suitable to undertake the research project
- b. The project and supervisor meet the required standards with reference to the following:
 - well-defined aims
 - appropriateness of the plan of investigation
 - comments on successful pilot work, if appropriate
 - well-identified project such that the candidate has scope to carry out their own research even though they may be working in a large team with complementary projects
 - if truly part-time, the fraction of time that the candidate will be able to devote to their studies
 - necessary space and facilities can be provided
 - sufficient funds are available for the expected duration of the programme. Where availability of funds has been confirmed by the signature of the supervisor/s, the liability for the provision of those funds will lie with the supervisor/s and not with the Institute
 - supervision can be given for the expected duration of the programme (suitability and experience of supervisor)

The assessors' reports will be made available to both student and supervisors.

It is important to note that this process is one of **approval** and **not a Pass/Fail** examination.

Research Proposals that are not approved at initial consideration may only require some modifications to be made in order for approval to be given at a later date. There is sometimes, but rarely, a need for the project to be entirely revised (see section on Resubmission below).

Resubmission

In cases where the assessors do not approve a Research Proposal, the student will normally have the opportunity to re-submit their document for approval. The request to re-submit will be given a timeline.

Early Stage Assessment

The purpose of the Early Stage Review (ESA) is to confirm that the student has a clear understanding of their field of research and the direction of their project, and has the potential to pursue research. Data presented at this stage may be minimal but should be indicative of the student's ability to perform.

The Early Stage Assessment process includes the submission of a written report no later than the end of month 8 from date of registration, the subsequent oral assessment, the English Test if required, re-submission of report or re-viva (if needed) and attendance at the Graduate School courses, all of which must be completed within 12 months from registration.

If a student underperforms at this stage, they may be reassessed within 2 months, and no longer than 12 months from initial registration. For PhD students, the consequences of poor performance include the option to downgrade registration to MPhil.

Written Report

The Written Report should be written by the student and should contain:

- a. Title page with word count, name and CID
- b. Abstract
- c. Background of the subject
- d. Hypothesis
- e. Methods
- f. Results obtained to date
- g. Discussion, including a statement on the originality of the project
- h. Outline of future work

All students are urged to read carefully through *Informal Notes on Requirements and Common Mistakes* (please refer to Appendix A). These are intended to indicate what should be included in the report and they provide a guideline for figures and legends as well as common errors to be avoided.

It is appreciated that at 9 months there may be little concrete data, but a clear protocol and techniques to be used should be well established. If there are any published or submitted papers or abstracts these should be included (these are not a pre-requisite for the report).

The report will be reviewed by two assessors; these would normally be the same assessors who undertook the initial Research Proposal review.

Subsequent to the submission of the ESA report, the student will then arrange an oral assessment with the assessors.

Oral assessment

The oral examination should take the form of a brief presentation by the student to the assessors (of 10-20 minutes, with the option of visual aids) followed by an assessment to review:

- Oral presentation skills
- Capacity for critical but constructive thinking
- Thorough understanding of the relevant academic discipline
- Competence in the relevant techniques
- Awareness of the associated literature
- Understanding of the hypothesis
- Research ability
- Published papers and abstracts
- Originality of the research
- PhD/MD(Res) potential

- Confirmation project is feasible within the remaining registration period (with thesis submission within 4 years)

The presentation should conclude with a slide outlining the timetable and future work for completion of the research.

If a student underperforms at this stage they may be reassessed within 2 months, and no longer than 12 months from initial registration. This should be discussed with the Director of Postgraduate Studies.

For PhD students, the consequences of poor performance include the option to downgrade registration to MPhil.

Prior to student progress being confirmed to year 2, all research students must have fulfilled their Graduate School requirement.

Submission of Documentation

1. An up-to-date curriculum vitae
2. A fully referenced report of 5,000 - 6,000 words (excluding references and figures, but including an abstract of about 400 words). Word count needs to be indicated on the first (i.e. Title) page.
3. A list of 20 seminars attended (this can include up to 5 sessions attended at Symposia but does not include internal lab meetings and departmental seminars i.e. work in progress seminars)
4. Documentary evidence of attendance at Graduate School Professional Development workshops (available on the Graduate School pages:
<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/>
These should amount to 2 credits.

All required documents are submitted electronically via Blackboard. The written report should additionally be submitted via Turnitin, the plagiarism detector software, portals for which are embedded in Blackboard. Guidance is available on the College pages:

[Turnitin Guidance for Students | Study | Imperial College London](#)

Late Stage Review

The purpose of the Late Stage Review (LSR) is to confirm that the student has comprehensive understanding of the research problem, has a critical awareness of the relevant literature on the subject and has a realistic research plan and schedule for completion within the registration period.

Within 18-21 months from their start date, each research student (MD(Res) and PhD) following full-time milestones (by 36-42 months for those following part-time milestones) is required to give an Oral Presentation to their assessors (the same assessors as for their Research Proposal and Early Stage Assessment) to ensure that good progress is being made with their research.

Students and supervisors are responsible for organising the LSR and therefore must ensure they liaise with the assessors in plenty of time to set a date for the oral presentation within the 18 to 21 months' window from the student's initial registration.

Importantly, students and supervisors should liaise with NHLI's Postgraduate Research Degrees Office should they encounter any delays or difficulties in arranging the LSR, so that it can help.

Students and supervisors must inform the Postgraduate Research Office of the confirmed date of the LSR. The feedback form for the LSR will then be provided to the assessors.

If a student underperforms at this stage they may be reassessed within 3 months, and no longer than 24 months from initial registration.

Written Report and Slides

The report summary must be fully referenced and no more than 4 pages in length (excluding references and figures). If there are any published or submitted papers these should be included. Minor changes to the slides may be made between submitting them to the Postgraduate Research Office and giving the Oral Presentation.

Oral Presentation

The presentation (about 30 minutes) should start by describing the progress which has been made and conclude with a plan of future work through to submission.

The presentation should be to an open group (e.g. Section, group meeting) followed by a private meeting if requested by student or assessors. Every effort must be made to have both assessors present but can be undertaken with assessors if the other cannot attend the meeting.

Exceptionally, if both assessors cannot attend an LSR oral assessment with an open group within the 18-21 month window, then a private assessment within the window with both assessors is possible.

Submission of Documentation

1. An up-to-date curriculum vitae
2. A fully referenced report of no more than 4 pages (excluding references and figures).
3. Any journal articles published or submitted for publication
4. Documentary evidence of attendance at Graduate School Professional Development workshops (available on the Graduate School pages: www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/)
These should amount to a further 2 credits.
5. Oral presentation PowerPoint slides

All required documents are submitted electronically via Blackboard

Interruption of Studies

It may happen that a personal emergency or other circumstance arises, which requires a student to interrupt their studies. It is vital that the student inform their supervisors immediately, and they in turn the Postgraduate Research Office, so that the student's registration and timeline can be suspended until they return

Interruption of Studies (IOS) should be put in place for any compassionate leave, maternity and paternity leave, personal emergency, lack of funding, etc. No fees are payable for such a period.

Please note that an interruption of studies is independent from any employment procedure carried out with Human Resources.

Note – only in exceptional circumstances can registrations be suspended retrospectively.

Upon returning to study following an IOS for health reasons, Registry will require a confirmation from a medical practitioner that the student is fit to return to their study. If a student has been off sick and has health-related concerns about their return to study, they should contact Occupational Health directly.

Information about applying for an Interruption of Studies and related guidance can be found at:

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/student-records-and-data/for-current-students/research-degrees/administration/>

6. Academic Support

Your Department has a system of academic and pastoral care in place to make sure you have access to the appropriate support throughout your time here. This includes:

The Role of the Director of Postgraduate Studies (Research)

The Director of Postgraduate Studies (DPS) has the same responsibilities as the Postgraduate Tutors (see section 12.2). In addition, the DPS has overall responsibility for the coordination and management of postgraduate research training within NHLI.

The DPS reports to the Graduate School and is the chair of NHLI's Higher Degrees Research Committee (HDRC).

The Role of Postgraduate Tutors

The Postgraduate Tutors are responsible for the overall smooth running of the Institute's postgraduate affairs. Along with the Heads of Sections, they form the NHLI's Higher Degrees Research Committee, chaired by the Director of Postgraduate Studies.

Their duties and responsibilities include the following:

- Pastoral and administrative responsibility on the Institutional level for all research students.
- The arrangement of induction sessions for research students.
- Ensuring that proper supervisory arrangements have been made for all research students.
- Monitoring the initial stages of each student's research and the arrangements for subsequent degree assessments.
- Acting as mediators in cases of dispute between a student and a supervisor.

In some of the larger Schools/Institutes/Departments the pastoral and administrative responsibilities of the Postgraduate Tutor are shared amongst two or more people or by the Postgraduate Tutor and the Director of Postgraduate Studies respectively. You can arrange to have a meeting with the postgraduate tutor at any time during your PhD/MD(Res). Students are also able to refer issues of a pastoral nature to the Senior Welfare Tutor (PGR), Dr Charlotte Dean (c.dean@imperial.ac.uk). Please note all meetings will remain completely confidential.

It is important that you contact the postgraduate tutor if:

- You are having problems with your supervisor, particularly if you feel that you are not being adequately supervised.
- You are in financial difficulty.
- You have problems outside of work that are affecting your ability to complete your PhD/MD(Res).
- You have health issues. Please remember the postgraduate tutor must be informed if you take more than a week off your studies through ill health.

The postgraduate tutor may be able to offer practical solutions to the problems you are experiencing; they can certainly offer advice and if necessary can act as a mediator between you and your supervisor.

Formal meetings with the postgraduate tutor

- You will meet some of the postgraduate tutors with other new postgraduate students at the induction session.
- After any of your 6-monthly progress reports you will have a meeting with the postgraduate tutor to discuss this report if there is any indication that you are having problems.

The Role of the Mentor

Each postgraduate research student within NHLI is entitled to a mentor at the start of their studies.

If an MD(Res) or PhD student is interested in having a mentor, they should contact NHLI's Career Development Coordinator. If the student already has an idea of who they would like as a mentor, please mention this when contacting Alex.

The main role of the academic mentor is a pastoral one. It is not intended that the academic mentor should act in a supervisory role; rather, the role of academic mentor must remain separate from the role of supervisor. The idea of the academic mentor is to provide the student with an additional person with whom to consult informally.

The academic mentor must:

- be employed by Imperial College London
- be independent from the research group and section
- have supervision experience
- ideally have attended the supervision and mentoring workshops.

It would be helpful if the academic mentor had some knowledge of the area of research, but this is not crucial to the role.

If the mentor leaves Imperial College London during the course of the student's registration, a new mentor must be allocated as soon as possible.

It is important that the student's mentor is carefully chosen to be able to play an active and clear role during the period of research study in order that conflicts of interest might be prevented. Therefore a research student should not have a supervisor and a mentor who are related by marriage or who are partners.

NHLI provides mentoring workshops for both mentors and mentees and students are encouraged to attend the training.

Formal meetings between the student and their mentor

Students are able to contact and meet with their mentor at any point during their research degree. At a minimum, we recommend that formal meetings should be organised for a discussion of progress upon:

- Registration and/or submission of the first 6-monthly report
- Submission of the last 6-monthly report (30 months for PhD and 18 months for MD(Res) students)

The responsibility for mentee-mentor relationship sits with the mentee.

The Role of the Supervisor

- (i) Supervisors of postgraduate students (PhD and MD(Res)) are obligated to comply with all aspects of Imperial College London procedure. They must ensure that the compulsory reports at 4-6 weeks and every 6 months are completed in a professional and timely manner. Supervisors must also ensure that the PhD and MD(Res) Early Stage Review (ESA) is submitted within 8 (to be completed by 9) months from registration and that thesis submission is completed within the recommended 36 months, and not later than 48 months.
- (ii) Adequate supervision is difficult to define, but it is suggested that each supervisor will maintain regular contact with their students through tutorials, group meetings or at the bench and should set aside normally a minimum of one hour per week for consultation with them.
- (iii) Only individuals with an academic post within Imperial College London and funding in place for the duration of the student's registration are eligible to be primary supervisors. Individuals who do not hold an academic post at Imperial College London or with less duration of funding may be eligible to be secondary supervisors in some circumstances.
- (iv) Where the primary supervisor holds an Honorary contract, the secondary supervisor must be an Imperial College London employee and hold an academic post for the duration of the degree registration.
- (v) The College does not prescribe a limit but it is suggested that few academic staff would be likely to have more than six research students at any one time (i.e. perhaps two in each year of the postgraduate programme).
- (vi) Primary supervisors must have supervised PhD/MD(Res) students to successful and timely completion and must have attended:
 - a. the '**Supervising PhD Students**' core workshop run by the Centre for Educational Development and been a secondary supervisor.
 - b. Or the '**Introduction to Supervising PhD Students: A course for main and co-supervisors**' online workshop run by the Graduate School.Supervisors who do not meet these criteria will be obligated to attend the training course before the registration can be completed. Information about the availability of relevant training courses can be obtained from the Postgraduate Research Office.
- (vii) Supervisors will need to ensure that each student has been through an official NHLI induction process before registration can be approved by the Institute. Induction days are held twice a year by the NHLI Postgraduate Research Office and Tutors. If the student's registration does not coincide with these timings, the supervisor will need to arrange a meeting between themselves, the student and the NHLI Campus Postgraduate Tutor.
- (viii) Where the student and the supervisor are related either through marriage or family, the nature of the relationship must be declared and discussed with the Head of Institute and the Director of Postgraduate Studies, before registration can proceed.
- (ix) If the student wishes to be assigned a mentor, they should contact NHLI's Career Development Coordinator. The main role of the academic mentor is a pastoral one. It is not intended that the academic mentor should act in a supervisory role and the role of academic mentor must remain separate from the role of supervisor. The idea of the academic mentor is to provide the student with an additional person with whom to consult informally. The academic mentor must be employed by Imperial College London and must be independent from the research group and section. The mentor must have supervision experience and ideally have attended the Supervisor and Mentoring workshop. It would be helpful if the academic mentor had some knowledge of the area of research, but this is not crucial to the role. If the mentor leaves Imperial College London during the course of the student's registration a new mentor must be found as soon as possible.
- (x) In cases where it is considered appropriate for a student to be co-supervised by academic staff who are married to each other or who are partners, this relationship must be declared to the Director of Postgraduate Studies. It is important that the student's mentor is carefully chosen to be able to play an active and clear role during the period

of research study in order that conflicts of interest might be prevented. However, a research student should not have a supervisor and a mentor who are related by marriage or who are partners.

The Role of the Assessors

In addition to your postgraduate supervisors, you will have two assessors. These will be scientists in academia with the appropriate knowledge base and expertise to judge your progress and offer you advice on your research.

These two assessors will be appointed on behalf of the NHLI Higher Degrees Research Committee; one suggested by the supervisor and the other nominated on behalf of the HDRC. At least one must be from outside your supervisors' research group.

The assessors will review your Research Proposal (RPC), Early Stage Assessment (ESA) and Late Stage Review (LSR) milestones and make a recommendation as to whether a student should progress with their degree.

The final decision will be made by the Director of Postgraduate Studies.

The assessment reports will be made available to both student and supervisors.

7. Examination Procedures


My Imperial - Postgraduate Research Milestones

You will be able to upload and submit your exam entry form, thesis declaration form and thesis online, as well as view up-to-date information about your Early Stage Assessment, Late Stage Review and Viva Examination milestone status.

You will receive email notification when online access to Postgraduate Research Milestones is available to you. Access is via My Imperial using your College single sign-on.

 <https://my.imperial.ac.uk/>

There is a Step-by-step guidance to the Examination Entry form process and Thesis Submission process is available online at:

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/student-systems/student-records/student-journey/PGR-Manual---Students.pdf>

Vivas

Once you have submitted your thesis, the Registry will ensure that copies are provided to your examiners, in advance of your viva examination.

Your supervisor, or another member of staff in your department/division, will be responsible for organising the viva and making all the necessary arrangements.

When your viva has taken place, you may be informed of the outcome by the examiners. You may be asked to make some minor corrections to your thesis before submitting the final copies and being awarded your degree.

Please read the Success Guide for postgraduate research students for more advice on preparing for your viva:

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/success-guide/pgr/progression-and-feedback/thesis-submission-and-viva/preparing-for-your-viva/>

There is also dedicated guidance for students on preparing for a remote viva or other remote milestone assessments:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/remote-phd-supervision/>

Writing Up Period

At the end of the research period students may apply to transfer to Writing Up. There are two forms of writing up – Completing Research Status (CRS) and Writing Up Away from College (WUAC)

Research students may apply to register for Completing Research Status (CRS) for a maximum period of 12 months upon payment of a CRS registration fee of £200.00, normally covered by the Department.

To be eligible to register for CRS the student must have completed the minimum period of registration and completed all experimental and programming work. A formal CRS milestone must be completed to ensure the student has completed all substantive research and that during

the CRS period the student will be solely engaged in writing up the thesis. Students are expected to submit an Examination Entry Form no later than 4 months prior to their expected submission date.

The CRS registration cannot exceed 12 months and should usually follow immediately after the end of the student's normal registration period. Students will have access to all College facilities and be eligible for Council Tax exemption if they were registered as full-time students immediately prior to going on to CRS. At the end of the CRS period, the student is expected to submit their thesis.

Students can also apply to Write Up Away from College (WUAC). In this instance no admin fee is applied and students will retain VPN access, but no access to College buildings and facilities.

If circumstances demand that students need to be in attendance to finish experimentation beyond the expiry of their studentship or contract, this will involve fees and again must be discussed as soon as possible with their supervisor/s and the Postgraduate Research Office.

Please note students are not insured to work in the lab during the writing up period.

For more information, please refer to the College pages here:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/student-records-and-data/for-current-students/research-degrees/examination-information/completing-research-status/>

E-theses: Requesting an Embargo

In some cases, it may be necessary to delay the release of a thesis to the public by applying for an embargo.

If you decide that your thesis should have an embargo, discuss this with your supervisor and tick the appropriate box on the [Thesis declaration form](#)

Reasons for requesting an embargo include:

- You plan to publish your thesis
- To avoid invalidating a potential patent application, see [Intellectual Property](#)
- It contains commercially sensitive research or research with confidentiality obligations
- It contains information collected under the promise of confidentiality and anonymity e.g. patient information
- It shows evidence of animal experimentation and release to the public would pose a significant risk to the researchers involved or to Imperial staff and students
- It contains information of significance for national security

For further information please contact the Assessment Records team



<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/research-and-innovation/support-for-staff/scholarly-communication/open-access/theses/requesting-an-embargo/>


Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's thoughts, words, images or diagrams as though they were your own. Another form of plagiarism is self-plagiarism, which involves using your own prior work without acknowledging its reuse. Plagiarism may be intentional, by deliberately trying to use another person's work by disguising it or not citing the source, or unintentional where citation and/or referencing is incorrect.

Plagiarism is considered academic misconduct and must be avoided, with particular care on coursework, essays, reports and projects written in your own time but also in open and closed book written examinations.

Where plagiarism is detected in group work, members of that group may be deemed to have collective responsibility for the work submitted by that group and may be liable for any penalty imposed, proportionate to their contribution.

For further information, please see:

 www.imperial.ac.uk/student-records-and-data/for-current-students/undergraduate-and-taught-postgraduate/exams-assessments-and-regulations/plagiarism-academic-integrity--exam-offences/

TurnitinUK is an online text matching service which assists staff in detecting possible plagiarism. The system enables institutions and staff to compare students' work with a vast database of electronic sources. You will be expected to run your early stage assessment through the Turnitin software – your department will be able to give you further information about this process.

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/ict/self-service/teaching-learning/turnitin/>

The Graduate School, in conjunction with the Library, has developed a mandatory online plagiarism awareness course which needs to be completed before your Early Stage Assessment. It aims to equip Imperial PhD students with a working knowledge of the concept of plagiarism and how to avoid it. This enables students to use and share information ethically, with academic integrity and in accordance with Imperial College's [Examination & Assessment: Academic Integrity Policy](#).

There is guidance from the College about Plagiarism in Theses in the document below:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/study/graduate-school/public/staff-pages/turnitin--phd-milestones/Plagiarism-issues-in-theses.pdf>

Collusion

This is the term used for work that has been conducted by more than one individual, in contravention of the assessment brief. Where it is alleged that there has been collusion, all parties will be investigated under the Academic Misconduct procedure.

You should note that whilst the College encourages students to support each other in their studies you should be careful to ensure that you do not exceed any assessment brief with regards to individual work, acknowledge the contributions of others in your work, and do not leave yourself open to allegations that you have supplied answers to enable another student to commit academic misconduct.

Dishonest practice

This is the most serious category under the procedure. Examples of dishonest practice include bribery, contact cheating (buying work from an essay mill or other individual to submit as your own), attempting to access exam papers before the exam, making a false claim for mitigating circumstances or providing fraudulent evidence, falsifying documentation or signatures in relation to assessment.

8. College Policies and Procedures

Regulations for Students


All registered students of the College are subject to the Regulations for Students, the College Academic and Examination Regulations and such other regulations that the College may approve from time to time.

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/regulations/>

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/terms-and-conditions/>


Unsatisfactory Progress

Unfortunately, sometimes students struggle to make satisfactory progress in their study or their engagement with their studies falls below our expectations. The College has a process to identify and support students by reaffirming these expectations with an action plan. The full details of this process and the appeals procedure (Annex 1 to *General Regulations for Students*) relating to it can be found at:

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/complaints-appeals-and-discipline/>


Academic Integrity

You are expected to conduct all aspects of your academic life in a professional manner. A full explanation of academic integrity, including information on the College's approach to plagiarism is available on the College website:

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/student-records-and-data/for-current-students/undergraduate-and-taught-postgraduate/exams-assessments-and-regulations/plagiarism-academic-integrity--exam-offences/>


Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures

As has been highlighted under the Academic Integrity section, it is important that you learn how to properly attribute and acknowledge the work, data and ideas of others. Plagiarism is scientific misconduct, and students whose assessments can be shown to contain plagiarism are subject to penalties as outlined in the College's Misconduct Policy and Procedures.

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/complaints-appeals-and-discipline/>

Appeal Procedures

We have rigorous regulations in place to ensure assessments are conducted with fairness and consistency, claims for mitigating circumstances have been considered reasonably and in line with the regulations of the College, and that the decisions of the Boards of Examiners maintain the integrity of our academic awards. In the event that you believe that you have grounds to appeal these decisions, we have laid out clear and consistent procedures through which appeals can be investigated and considered:


 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/complaints-appeals-and-discipline/>

Student Complaints

The College strives to ensure that all students are well supported in their studies and receive a good experience of their programme and the wider College activities. If you feel that your experience has not lived up to these expectations the College has an agreed Students Complaints process through which your concern can be investigated and considered.

If you have any concerns about your experience at the College and have been unable to address these informally, you should contact Student Complaints who can provide advice about what is the appropriate way to seek to resolve this at:

 student.complaints@imperial.ac.uk

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/complaints-appeals-and-discipline/>

Student Disciplinary Procedure

The College has the right to investigate any allegation of misconduct against a student and may take disciplinary action where it decides, on the balance of probabilities, that a breach of discipline has been committed. The general principles of the Student Disciplinary Procedure are available on the College website:

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/secretariat/college-governance/charters/ordinances/students/>

Copyright

Copyright is an automatic right given to creators that allows them to control who copies, adapts, translates and makes public their work. Unless you have the copyright holder's permission, you cannot do these things unless permitted by law or licence.

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/library/learning-support/copyright-guidance/>

The Graduate School provides training on Copyright:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/students/doctoral/professional-development/research-integrity/copyright-for-researchers-online-course/>

Intellectual Property Rights Policy

For further guidance on the College's Intellectual Property Rights Policy is available on the College website:

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/research-and-innovation/research-office/ip/ip-policy/>

Further information about the Imperial Enterprise Lab can be found at:

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/enterprising-students/>

 <https://www.imperialenterpriselab.com/advice/experts-in-residence/>

The Graduate School provides training on Intellectual Property:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/students/doctoral/professional-development/research-integrity/intellectual-property-online-course/>

Use of IT Facilities

View the Conditions of Use of IT Facilities:

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/ict/self-service/computers-printing/staff-computers/conditions-of-use-for-it-facilities/>

Employment During Studies

If you are studying full time, the College recommends that you do not work part-time during term time. If this is unavoidable we advise you to work no more than 10–15 hours per week, which should be principally at weekends and not within normal College working hours.

Working in excess of these hours could impact adversely on your studies or health.

If you are here on a Tier 4/Student Route visa you can work no more than 20 hours a week during term time. Some sponsors may not permit you to take up work outside your studies and others may specify a limit.

If you are considering part-time work during term time you are strongly advised to discuss this issue with your supervisor or Senior Tutor (PGR). If you are on a Tier 4/Student Route visa you should also seek advice from the International Student Support team regarding visa limitations on employment.


Please note that these rules also apply to your work as a GTA.

[Framework for Graduate Teaching Assistants](#)

The College's examination boards will not normally consider as mitigating circumstances any negative impact that part-time work during term-time may have had on your performance in examinations or in other assessed work. Examinations or vivas cannot be rescheduled to accommodate your part-time working arrangements.

Study Leave

If you plan to carry out research away from College for a period of 2 weeks or more as part of your PhD student registration, your department can approve study leave using the External study leave form (which is then submitted by your department to the Registry Records Team for recording). Study leave is normally pursued either as a placement under the supervision of a third party organisation (placements are managed by your department and are subject to College Placement Learning Policy, Good Practice under the College's overall off-site working protocols) or fieldwork managed by your department under off-site working protocols. Contact your departmental postgraduate administrator for further guidance if you and your supervisor wish to have study leave considered.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/student-records-and-data/for-current-students/research-degrees/administration/

Ethics

The College has an overall Ethics code which sets out key behaviours which the College expects of all its members in order to facilitate a leading academic community which demonstrates integrity in all its activities, and which manages relationships with third parties appropriately. These behaviours include honesty, fairness and transparency. The Code is intended to provide a starting point to help members of the College identify and tackle ethical issues faced in the course of their activities. It also describes routes available for members of the College community to escalate ethical concerns where appropriate.



www.imperial.ac.uk/research-ethics-committee

Good Research Conduct

Imperial College London is committed to undertaking research of the highest international quality within an intellectually challenging and inspiring environment, to extending the frontiers of research within and beyond existing research disciplines, and to bringing together research expertise within and beyond the College to address the science challenges of today and the future. The College's achievements in research are underpinned by the quality and expertise of the individuals within it, and the pages in the link below define the standards of research governance and integrity essential to the College's reputation and success.



www.imperial.ac.uk/research-and-innovation/about-imperial-research/research-integrity/

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

All staff and students who work with personal data are responsible for complying with GDPR. The College will provide support and guidance, but you do have a personal responsibility to comply.

In line with the above please see the College's privacy notice for students which form part of the terms and conditions of registration with the College.



www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/admissions/Privacy-Notice-for-Students-and-Pro prospective-Students.pdf

9. Animal Research

Understanding the basic biology of infections, injuries and chronic diseases is an essential step in finding new treatments and cures. From cancer to malaria and war wounds to heart disease, research using animals forms an important element of Imperial's work.

The College believes that the use of animals in research is vital to improve human and animal health and welfare. Animals may only be used in research programmes where their use is shown to be necessary for developing new treatments and making medical advances.

Imperial is committed to ensuring that, in cases where this research is deemed essential, all animals in the College's care are treated with full respect, and that all staff and students involved with this work show due consideration at every level.

For more information please see:



www.imperial.ac.uk/research-and-innovation/about-imperial-research/research-integrity/animal-research/

10. Wellbeing and Support

Student Support Zone

Student Support Zone has lots of information about the resources available at Imperial and beyond to help you to stay healthy and happy. It's a great place to start when you're looking for some support – it covers advice about housing and money, health, wellbeing and maintaining a good work-life balance, and provides the details of who you can contact if you need some extra support.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/student-support-zone

Departmental Support and Faculty Senior Tutors

Your Department has a system of academic and pastoral care in place to make sure you have access to the appropriate support throughout your time here.

The Department's Senior Tutor (PGR), Dr Charlotte Dean, can offer pastoral support and advice. You can arrange to have a meeting with them at any time – what you discuss will be completely confidential.

If necessary, they will direct you to an appropriate source of support.

 Dr Charlotte Dean
 c.dean@imperial.ac.uk

Postgraduate Coaching and Research Degree Mediation

As well as professional development opportunities, the Graduate School has a dedicated coaching programme designed to help you through challenging times. The **Postgraduate student coaching programme** has been established to provide an opportunity to talk, independently from your academic department, about challenges you may be experiencing during the course of your studies. The programme primarily focuses on building effective working relationships and there may be other self-development issues that you can explore with a trained coach.

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/community-support/coaching/>

The School also provides support for students and supervisors who are finding their partnership difficult. The confidential and non-judgemental research degree mediation programme is designed to support students and supervisors to work through challenges they may be experiencing, to find ways to move forward and work together more effectively.

[Research Degree Mediation](#)

Advice Services

The tutor system is complemented by a College-wide network of advice and support. This includes a number of specialist services.

Careers Service

The Careers Service has strong links to your Department and you will have a named Careers Consultant and Placement and Internship Adviser who will run both group sessions and

individual meetings within your Department. You can arrange to meet with your linked Careers Consultant or Placement and Internship Adviser either in your Department or centrally at the South Kensington Campus on Level 5, Sherfield Building where the Careers Service is based.

Visit the Career Service's website to:

- Book a careers appointment
- Find resources and advice on successful career planning

 www.imperial.ac.uk/careers


Student Counselling and Mental Health

The Student Counselling and Mental Health Advice Service offers short-term counselling to all registered students. The service is free and confidential. Counsellors are available at the South Kensington, Hammersmith and Silwood Park Campuses.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/counselling/

Financial support and tuition fees

If you've got any questions about student financial support (loans, scholarships and research council studentships, US and Canadian loans) then contact the Student Financial Support team:


 020 7594 9014

 student.funding@imperial.ac.uk

If you suddenly find yourself in financial difficulties or experience an unexpected change in circumstances, you may be eligible to apply for emergency financial help through the Student Support Fund. The Fund offers a one-off payment of up to £2,000 to cover such emergencies as last-minute accommodation and travel necessities, equipment and childcare. It does not have to be repaid.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/students/fees-and-funding/financial-assistance/student-support-fund/

For tuition fees queries, contact the Tuition Fees team:

 020 7594 8011

 tuition.fees@imperial.ac.uk

Imperial College Union Advice Centre


Imperial College Union runs the Advice Centre independently of the College with advisers on hand to provide free, confidential, independent advice on a wide range of welfare issues including housing, money and debt, employment and consumer rights, and personal safety.


 www.imperialcollegeunion.org/advice

Student Hub

The Student Hub represents a single point of contact for all key administrative information and support. The Student Hub team can help you with enquiries about:

- Accommodation (including checking contracts for private accommodation)
- Admissions
- International student enquiries
- Research degrees
- Student financial support
- Student records
- Tuition fees

 Level 3, Sherfield Building, South Kensington Campus

 020 7594 9444

 student.hub@imperial.ac.uk


 www.imperial.ac.uk/student-hub

Accommodation

Imperial offers a wide range of accommodation to suit a range of budgets and in a variety of locations.

The Student Hub team can help you find the right place to live, whether it's the College accommodation or private accommodation.

 Level 3, Sherfield Building, South Kensington Campus

 020 7594 9444

 student.hub@imperial.ac.uk

 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/campus-life/accommodation/

Health Services

NHS Health Centre and finding a doctor

Even if you're fit and healthy we recommend that you register with a local doctor (GP) as soon as you arrive in London. For help finding your nearest GP see the Student Space website:

 www.imperial.ac.uk/student-support-zone/your-health/doctor-and-dentist/

There is the Imperial College Health Centre on our South Kensington Campus which you may visit during clinic hours if you're feeling unwell. Students living within the practice catchment area are encouraged to register with the Centre.

 www.imperialcollegehealthcentre.co.uk/

Disability Support


Disability Advisory Service

The Disability Advisory Service provides confidential advice and support for all disabled students and students with specific learning difficulties.

If you think you may have dyslexia or another specific learning difficulty but have never been formally assessed, the Disability Advisory Service offers initial screening appointments.

disabilities@imperial.ac.uk

 Room 566, Level 5, Sherfield Building, South Kensington Campus

 020 7594 9755

 disabilities@imperial.ac.uk

 www.imperial.ac.uk/disability-advisory-service

Departmental Disability Officers

Departmental Disability Officers are the first point of contact within your department. They can apply for additional exam arrangements on your behalf, and will facilitate support within your Department.

Your departmental disability officer is:

 Dr Duncan Rogers

 duncan.rogers@imperial.ac.uk

More information on Departmental Disability Officers is available at:

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/disability-advisory-service/about-us/departmental-disabilityofficers/>


More information on procedures for the consideration of additional exam arrangements in respect of disability is available at:

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/exam-arrangements-and-re-sits/Exam-arrangements-in-respect-of-disability.pdf>

Library and IT

Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)

If you're having problems with technology (including computers, laptops and mobile devices), you can get help from ICT's Service Desk.

 020 7594 9000

 <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/ict/contact-ict-service-desk/>

Software shop

The Software shop offers a variety of general and subject specific software programs and packages for free or at a discounted price for Imperial students.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/ict/self-service/computers-printing/devices-and-software/

Library services

The Central Library at South Kensington is open around the clock for study space pretty much all year. Make sure you find out who your departmental librarian is as they'll be able to help you find resources for your subject area. Also, don't forget to check out the Library's range of training workshops and our other campus libraries for access to specialist medicine and life sciences resources. Alongside these physical spaces and resources, the Library provides over 300,000 electronic books, journals and databases available both on and off campus and a free document delivery service to help you source books and articles from around the UK and the rest of the world. In order to keep you safe many of our services are operating remotely and we will be controlling the numbers who can visit our libraries. Services may be slightly reduced but you can keep up to date with the latest developments on our website and on Twitter @imperiallibrary.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/library/

Religious Support

The Chaplaincy Multi-faith Centre has chaplains from many different religions, as well as prayer rooms and information on places of worship. In addition, it runs meditation classes and mindfulness workshops for stress management.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/chaplaincy/

Support for International Students

English language support

The Centre for Academic English provides free in-session English courses for international students while they are studying. These include classes and workshops on academic language, social language, the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, 1-1 consultations with a tutor to work on a piece of academic writing or an oral presentation, self-study resources in the VLE Blackboard, and the Conversation Project, which partners students with a native-speaker volunteer to practise social and conversational English.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/academic-english

International Student Support team

Students from outside the UK make up around half of our student population, so our International Student Support team offers year-round support to help our international students settle into Imperial life. This includes UK visa and immigration advice and trips to different places of interest.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/international-students/


11. Student Administration

The Student Records Administration Team are responsible for the administration and maintenance of the student records for all students studying at the College. This includes enrolments, programme transfers, interruption of studies, withdrawals and processing of examination entry for research degree students. The team also use this information to fulfil reporting duties to the Student Loans Company, Transport for London and the UKVI, as well as other external bodies.

The Team is responsible for the processing of student results and awards on the student record system as well as the production and distribution of academic transcripts and certificates of award.


The Student Administration Team produce a variety of standard document requests for both current and previous students including council tax letters, standard statements of attendance and confirmation of degree letters.

Student Records

 +44 (0)20 7594 7268

 student.records@imperial.ac.uk

Degree certificates

 +44 (0)20 7594 7267

 certificates@imperial.ac.uk

12. Work-life Balance

The pace and intensity of study at Imperial can be demanding so it's important to find time for outside interests.

Imperial College Union

The Union's range of 380+ student-led clubs, societies and projects is one of the largest of any UK university, opening up lots of ways for you to enjoy your downtime.

 www.imperialcollegeunion.org/about-us

Graduate Students' Union

The Graduate Students' Union is the postgraduate arm of Imperial College Union. The GSU works alongside the Imperial College Union President to ensure that the requirements of postgraduate students are catered for. It also organises a number of academic and social events during the year.

Move Imperial

Imperial College has a wide range of sports and activities on offer that cater for all standards and abilities. We have a recreational activity offer, competitive sports teams and an elite sport programme. We are dedicated to ensuring we have a diverse, inclusive and exciting offer for all.

More information about Imperial student memberships and updates to our services can be found at:

 www.imperial.ac.uk/ethos/memberships/students/

With an annual fee of £20 you will get use of the gym and swimming facilities on our campuses.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/sport

We have a huge collection of online resources, home workout videos, healthy recipes and playlists available to all as part of our **MoveFromHome** campaign, more information can be found at:

 www.imperial.ac.uk/sport/movefromhome/

13. Student feedback and representation

Feedback from Students

The College and Union is committed to continually improving your education and wider experience and a key part of this is your feedback. Feedback is thoroughly discussed by your student representatives and staff.

You can submit feedback about your experience on the programme as follows: through:

- To the department through your Student Representatives (please see section below)
- To the Faculty of Medicine through the 'Meet your Reps' meetings chaired by the Deputy Director of the Graduate School
- To the College through the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), held bi-annually.

Student Representation

Student Representatives are recruited from every department to gather feedback from students to discuss with staff. More information about the role, and instructions on how to become an academic representative, are available on the Imperial College Union website.

 www-d7.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/your-representatives/representation/academic-representation-network

The NHLI Postgraduate Research Student Committee consists of the following students:

| | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Chair | Julia Frankenberg Garcia | Royal Brompton, GSB |
| | Celia Diaz Nicieza | St Mary's |
| | Anne-Marie Levins | Hammersmith |
| | Clara Domingo Sabugo | Royal Brompton, GSB |
| | Lauren Headley | Royal Brompton, GSB |
| | Xun Yuan | Royal Brompton |
| | Rachel Walters | Hammersmith |
| | Salina Nicoleau | Hammersmith |

Staff-Student Committee

Staff-Student Committees are designed to strengthen understanding and improve the flow of communication between staff and students and, through open dialogue, promote high standards of education and training, in a co-operative and constructive atmosphere. College good practice guidelines for staff-student committees are available here:

 www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/student-feedback/

14. Student Surveys

Your feedback is important to your department, the College and Imperial College Union.

There are a variety of ways to give your feedback on your Imperial experience. Last academic year, the College asked students to take part in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). This is a national survey that helps us to compare how we are doing against other institutions, to make changes that will improve what we do in future and to keep doing the things that are valued by our students. The results of the 2021 survey are published online (link below). PRES is run bi-annually at the College.

The Student Experience Survey (SES) is an opportunity to give your views on your experience beyond the lecture theatres or labs. This survey will cover a range of College services and the Imperial College Union.

All surveys are confidential and the more students that take part the more representative the results so please take a few minutes to give your views.

The Union's "You Said, We Did" campaign shows you some of the changes made as a result of survey feedback:

 <https://www-d7.imperialcollegeunion.org/you-said-we-did>

The Union's response to surveys can be found here:

 www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/your-representatives/responses

If you would like to know more about any of these surveys or see the results from previous surveys, please visit:

 www.imperial.ac.uk/students/academic-support/student-surveys/pg-student-surveys/


For further information on surveys, please contact the Registry's Surveys Team at:

 surveys.registrysupport@imperial.ac.uk


15. Personal Development Opportunities for Research Degree Students

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA)

Many research students across the College are involved with teaching, supervision and assessment (in the form of marking) of both undergraduate and Master's level students. Working as a GTA provides research students with an opportunity to broaden their experience at Imperial College, and develop further skills. These include learning to teach, convey complex technical concepts, writing/communication skills, etc. Furthermore, research students may find that acting as a GTA helps improve their own technical abilities (both theoretical and practical), enables them to broaden their knowledge base, and gain communication and task management experience. When considering a career in academia, teaching experience is important and GTA work allows building up a teaching portfolio and even becoming aware of one's own teaching style.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/tools-and-reference/quality-assurance-enhancement/roles-and-responsibilities/

 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/students/doctoral/gta/framework-/

 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/students/doctoral/gta/teaching-opportunities/

Imperial Outreach

The Outreach team at Imperial has been established for over a decade. It is responsible for delivering a wide range of exciting and inspiring activities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The team's focus is on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) learning and progression to higher education including access to medicine and support for post-16 student choices.

The team work with schools, colleges and community organisations across the Greater London area to raise aspirations, change perceptions, support teaching staff and stimulate interest in STEM subjects from primary through to A-Level education, as part of Imperial's widening participation and outreach agenda.

As part of the team's commitment to the Office For Fair Access (OFFA), they have a specially targeted portfolio of activities that form part of the College's Access Agreement to ensure that every academically talented pupil has the opportunity for support, regardless of their background or situation.

Outreach Postgraduate Ambassador (OPA)

The Outreach Postgraduate Ambassador (OPA) scheme provides an opportunity for you to work with local schools to inspire a young audience to consider studying science, technology, engineering, mathematics and business subjects.

Some activities will draw on your subject expertise, giving you the chance to communicate your research in a way that is suitable for a school age audience. Other opportunities may be more generally focused on your experience of higher education through talks about student life for sixth form students or mock interview sessions for potential applicants.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/be-inspired/volunteering/outreach-student-ambassadors/

Professional Skills Development Programme

The Graduate School at Imperial provides an internationally renowned and award winning Professional Development Programme for Postgraduate Research and Postgraduate Taught students.

Funders of doctoral programmes, including governments, industry and research councils expect that you spend time on your professional development (RCUK, 2013), and developing generic research, personal and professional development is an important part of your postgraduate training.

Our Professional Development Programme offers you support in your study and research, as well as the opportunity to develop knowledge, attributes, and skills relevant to your Master's or Doctorate and your future career whether inside or outside academia. These development opportunities can improve your ability to undertake focused and successful research, present your work to a variety of audiences, and enhance your overall experience at College. Postgraduate alumni, academics and employers have noted the value of the programme.

We work across College with academic and support departments, alumni, students and externals to enable and enhance joined up opportunities. This has a social benefit, fostering networking and collaboration, as our courses, events and activities provide fora for students to interact with others from different departments and divisions.

The Postgraduate Development Unit (PDU) ensures that the Programme is educationally relevant, developing new initiatives and safeguarding quality and relevance. Our Programme is underpinned by educational research focused on the postgraduate student experience.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/students/

16. And finally

Alumni Services

When you graduate you will be part of a lifelong community of over 190,000 alumni, with access to a range of alumni benefits including:

- discounts on further study at the College and at Imperial College Business School
- alumni email service
- networking events
- access to the Library and online resources
- access to the full range of careers support offered to current students for up to three years after you graduate
- access to our Alumni Visitor Centre at the South Kensington Campus, with free W-iFi, complimentary drinks, newspapers and magazines, and daytime left luggage facility

Visit the Alumni website to find out more about your new community, including case studies of other alumni and a directory of local alumni groups in countries across the world.

 www.imperial.ac.uk/alumni/

Appendix A: Informal Notes on Requirements and Common Mistakes

The following informal guidelines are intended to indicate what should be included in the 9-month Confirmation Review report together with common errors to be avoided.

Abstract

This should be on one side of A4 and summarise the work performed so far together with a brief introduction and discussion (2-3 sentences for each). It should be like an abstract you would submit to a conference.

Background

The background should be a survey of the literature directly relevant to your work. It will involve placing your molecule or system of interest in the context of your field. It may involve work that has been carried out in the laboratory before you arrived. This section will probably contain the majority of your references since you are citing work from other groups in order to underline the importance of your own work in the field.

At the end of this section, it should be possible to make a clear statement of the hypothesis on which your work is based and the aims of your research. This is a vital part of the assessment and should follow on logically from the background section. The hypothesis should be succinct and will be much easier to follow if it is not swamped by background. The aims should be brief and to the point; no more than two or three sentences (or bullet points).

Materials and Methods

This should be a relatively short section, comparable to the equivalent section in a paper. Refer extensively to papers/textbooks that describe the methods that you use rather than describing, in detail, a commonly-used technique, such as Western blotting. Obviously, if you have introduced critical modifications to a protocol, these should be detailed. It is also acceptable to refer to “manufacturer’s instructions” but it is preferable to qualify this with an original reference. For your final thesis, this section will need to be considerably more extensive and detailed.

Results

The results section should illustrate the fact that you have the necessary ability and experience to perform experiments. There should be several figures or pictures illustrating primary data, which at this stage of your project may be largely establishing assays rather than extensive novel results. Obviously, summary diagrams are useful but the primary data are of paramount importance. These figures should be clearly labelled. They should have a figure number: Figure 1, Figure 2 etc., a title and a comprehensive legend. It should not be necessary to refer constantly back and forth from text to figure to understand the figure. Thus, a figure legend requires a very brief description of what the figure is, how the experiment was performed, a comprehensive key to any abbreviations used in the figure and some indication of the results. The figure legend is also an excellent place to describe problems with the results; aberrant bands on a gel, non-specific bands/blobs, etc.

Discussion

The discussion should be brief and summarise the main achievements of your work so far, with an interpretation of the novel data if there are any. In order to interpret experiments fully, it may be necessary to discuss the experiments you plan to do to complete certain features. This approach is fine, but bear in mind that the last section “Future Work” should still be a separate section. If this involves a certain amount of repetition, then so be it.

Future work

This is a critical part of your assessment as it illustrates the fact that you understand what data are required for a doctoral research degree and whether you have enough time to complete the necessary work. It is never possible to do all the work you might wish to, so this section also underlines your ability to prioritise and focus on your studies. This should be a concise statement of experiments that are required to complete sections of work and bring them up to the level required

for a doctoral research degree. For these purposes, bullet points are probably easier to follow. However, do not make them too terse.

For example:

1.

RIGHT

To complete the sequence of clone p154, I will need to PCR the 2 x 500bp pieces and directly sequence them in both directions. I can then derive the full-length coding sequence.

WRONG

I will sequence the clone.

2.

RIGHT

For characterisation of the monoclonal antibody I have produced, I will continue with the resetting assays/FACS analysis but use blocking antibodies such as X, Y and Z together with the irrelevant control antibodies A and B. This will indicate which epitopes my antibody binds to.

WRONG

I will characterise the antibody.

Statement of Originality

A brief statement giving details of the parts of your work that are novel or novel methods you have used to study a problem. Negative data represent an original contribution, provided sufficient controls have been performed. It is always more difficult to prove negative data than positive data.

Overall Comments

Although no one expects English of the quality of Thomas Hardy, the document is still a test of your ability to write well and clearly. The same is true of spelling. Occasional spelling mistakes are forgivable but two or three per page is unacceptable. With the high quality of "spell-check" programs, there is little excuse for inaccurate spelling. Colloquial expressions should not be used. This is a serious scientific document and should be written as such.

Figures should appear in the order in which they are cited. The reader should not have to scramble five pages forward to find Figure 1 and five pages backwards to find Figure 2 when they are mentioned in the text. Obviously, this is not always possible. However, the general rule is that the first time you mention a figure in the text, the figure should be on that page or the page immediately following it.

Always check your references to ensure that they do indeed provide the evidence you need. If you just copy them from somebody else's thesis, you will inevitably end up with a situation in which mistakes are both replicated and amplified. They presumably copied them from somebody else and so on. By the time you copy it, the reference will be completely unrecognisable from the original.

Follow these fairly simple guidelines and you should be fine. Bear in mind, however, that there is very little substitute for good experimentation. Research Degrees are experimental, so do the experiments and get good quality data!