

Handbook for supervisors of graduate students at Cambridge

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Institutional Policies and Expectations

What graduate research programmes are offered at Cambridge?

The University offers the following graduate research programmes:

Doctor of Philosophy

Doctor of Education

Doctor of Engineering

Doctor of Medicine

Master of Science

Master of Letters

Master of Philosophy (by dissertation and oral)

Certificate of Postgraduate Study

Further details of the programmes can be found here:

<http://www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses/qualifications>].

Students are expected to submit a dissertation (thesis) and undertake an oral (viva voce) examination. Content of a dissertation may differ by subject and level, but it is expected to include critical review, reworking of existing material providing the provenance of such material is clearly identified, and the results of the original investigation carried out during the course. In some cases it may also include submission of compositions or recorded work (e.g for a degree in Music).

There are strict time limits for completing and submitting dissertations. Students on a PhD, MSc or MLitt programme must submit their dissertation within 4 years (full-time) or 7 years (part-time). Deadlines for other degrees are set by Degree Committees.

The requirements for the degrees are as follows:

Doctorate (PhD, EDD, EngD, PhD by Special Regulations)

Doctoral degrees are awarded to those who have demonstrated all of the criteria below:

1. a significant contribution to the field of study through the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, connection of previously unrelated facts or the development of new theory or revision of older views;
2. submission of work of a quality in whole or in part of a standard to merit publication (whether or not subsequently published);
3. provides evidence of the acquisition of knowledge and a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry;

4. is of a quality and quantity to reflect three years of full-time postgraduate study/five years part-time study.

Master of Science/Master of Letters

The Master of Science or Master of Letters degrees are awarded to those who have demonstrated all of the criteria below:

- provides evidence of a useful contribution to the field of study;
- systematic understanding of knowledge and critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights in the field of study
- includes critical evaluation of current methodologies and wider research in the area of study;
- provides evidence of an understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry;
- submission of work of a quality and quantity expected for two years of full-time postgraduate research and study

Master of Philosophy (by dissertation and oral)

The Master of Philosophy degree is awarded to those who have demonstrated all of the criteria below:

1. provides evidence of a useful contribution to the field of study;
2. understanding of knowledge and critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights in the field of study
3. includes critical evaluation of current methodologies and wider research in the area of study;
4. provides evidence of an understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry;
5. submission of work of a quality and quantity expected for one year of full-time postgraduate research and study

Certificate of Postgraduate Study The requirements for CPGS programmes are defined by the programme-specific regulations, which can be found here <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/2016/chapter07-section25.html>

What are the rules?

As a supervisor, it is your responsibility to ensure you understand and comply with the regulations of the University set out in the [Codes of Practice](#).

<http://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/new-students/manage-your-student-information/graduate-students>

In addition, the Code may be supplemented by further information specific to your Faculty or Department, often in the form of a Course Handbook.

What is my role?

The work of research students at Cambridge is overseen by a supervisory team which consists of a minimum of two persons, the **principal supervisor** and the **advisor**.

Principal Supervisors

Detailed information on the responsibilities of supervisors is provided in the [Code of Practice](http://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/new-students/manage-your-student-information/graduate-students). <http://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/new-students/manage-your-student-information/graduate-students>

In brief:

- Establish the suitability of the research topic.
- Review applications and recommend applicants for admission.
- Fix a set of ground rules about frequency of meetings, work required in advance and ways of communicating.
- Inform your student of academic conventions and requirements.
 - Avoiding **plagiarism**: <http://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/>
 - Research integrity and good practice: <http://www.research-integrity.admin.cam.ac.uk/research-integrity>.
 - See also their useful checklist: <http://www.research-integrity.admin.cam.ac.uk/research-integrity/research-integrity-and-good-research-practice-checklist>
 - Health and safety: <http://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/welfare-and-wellbeing/health-and-safety>
 - Intellectual property: <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research-staff/employment-and-career-management/employment-and-career-management-scheme/researchers-employment-policies-and-protocols/intellectual-property-and-academic-freedom>
- Monitor progress against timetable / plan to ensure timely completion of study and submission by the deadline.
- Provide students with timely feedback; read and comment on draft chapters.
- **Report termly** on your students' progress through CGSRS.
- **Consider formal registration following the student's first year assessment. Guidance on the first year registration assessment can be found here [link to FYA pdf].**
- Consider applications for changes to students' circumstances.
- Assess your students' training needs and encourage their skill development <http://www.rdp.cam.ac.uk/>
- In the Sciences and Technology, **group research** may be the norm: supervisor, graduate students and postdoctoral researchers work alongside each other on a daily basis. In some cases, students may be supervised on a day-to-day basis by postdoctoral members of the team while the head of the team takes the formal role of the principal supervisor.

Advisors

Advisors are appointed by the department or faculty. They need not be in exactly the same research area as the student and supervisor, nor necessarily in the same department or faculty, but should be able to bring sufficient expertise to the team. Detailed information on

the responsibilities and mutual expectations of supervisors and advisors is provided in the Code of Practice.

In brief:

- Act as a second point of contact for academic advice for the student;
- Be available to read work and discuss progress as reasonably agreed with the student;
- Provide supervisory cover in the absence of the principal supervisor.
- Participate in the formal assessment of progress and registration exercises but, in the case of a PhD student, they would not normally be appointed the internal examiner for the student's thesis.
- Students for the MPhil by Dissertation will have a Supervisor but might not have an Advisor.

What do I absolutely need to know?

First, read the **University Codes of Practice**.

Both the Code of Practice for Research Students and the Code of Practice for Students on the MPhil by Advanced Study and MRes (for students on MPhils with taught elements and MRes programmes) set out the mutual expectations and responsibilities of research students and their supervisors from the Institution's perspective.

Q: how do the CoP sections on what is expected of research students, and what students can expect of their Principal Supervisor and Advisors resonate with your practice?

Q: can you use these sections as a starting point for establishing your supervisions ground rules?

Both sets of documents provide quite a general overview meant to address a whole range of very diverse disciplines with different styles of research. You may refer to your Departments/faculties own graduate handbook, which often provides more discipline specific guidance. However, it must be stressed that it is the University regulations as set out in the Code of Practice that are the ones to follow. If in doubt, consult your Department Graduate Administrator.

Equality and Diversity and Unconscious or Implicit Bias

The University of Cambridge is committed to equality of opportunity and to a proactive and inclusive approach to equality, which supports and encourages all under-represented groups, promotes an inclusive culture, and values diversity. Online training is highly recommended for new supervisors:

<http://www.equality.admin.cam.ac.uk/training/equality-diversity-online-training>

In addition, it is also important to be aware of our **unconscious or implicit bias** and the impact it may have on your practices, for instance on the students' admissions process.

This online training module introduces implicit bias. It will give you the opportunity to think about situations where your own unconscious bias might affect your ability to make objective decisions or judgements.

<http://www.equality.admin.cam.ac.uk/training-overview/understanding-unconscious-implicit-bias>

How do I report on students' progress?

CamSIS: <https://www.camsis.cam.ac.uk/academics> is Cambridge's comprehensive system for handling student information, records and transactions. It is the official repository of the student's record from application all the way through to graduation, and is the sole source of official University and College transcripts.

It is also the source of the statutory governmental reports that secure the University's funding

Report termly on your students' progress through CGSRS. CGSRS is the online supervision reporting system at the University of Cambridge. You are required to report termly on your students' progress through CGSRS and at any time that you have concerns about your student's progress.

In order to access CGSRS you are required to login via CamSIS Self Service.

Guidance on completing reports can be found here: <https://www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/information-supervisors/cambridge-graduate-supervision-reporting-system-cgsrs>. Supervisors are encouraged to give an honest appraisal of the student's progress but to do so in a factual manner that can serve positively and provide useful feedback.

Reports, once submitted, are available to the student. They are also read by the director of graduate education, the degree committee, the College and Student Registry, who all take an interest in the student's progress.

If you have problems accessing CGSRS or some of the details contained on your interface are incorrect, contact the [CGSRS Helpdesk \(csrs.help@admin.cam.ac.uk\)](mailto:csrs.help@admin.cam.ac.uk)

To arrange for access to CamSIS:

- (i) Arrange for a Raven account: <https://help.uis.cam.ac.uk/user-accounts-security/accounts-passwords/raven>
- (ii) Notify your Degree Committee who will then liaise with Student Registry to arrange your access.

How do I review applications for changes to circumstances?

- Provide a commentary on any applications for changes to circumstances
- During your students' time at Cambridge, they may need to apply for a change in their circumstances, such as intermission or permission to work away. Applications are submitted through an online system and will be forwarded to you for comment as part of the review process. The final decision on applications is made by the Student Registry on behalf of the Board of Graduate Studies. You can find out more about

changes to circumstances here [link to <http://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/graduate-study/your-student-status>]

I need some help!

- Your first port of call is in your **Department**: colleagues, the Course Administrator, the Director of Graduate Education and the **Degree Committee** will be able to advise you.
- For questions regarding current students, Emma Rixon at the Student Registry can also be contacted: Emma.Rixon@admin.cam.ac.uk
- For questions regarding recruitment and admission, please e-mail the Graduate Admissions Office Graduate.Admissions@admin.cam.ac.uk,

My student needs some help!

- **Academic University-Wide Support** Student services provided by the University can be a valuable resource to you as a supervisor. They provide a range of services that you may wish to redirect your students to, or provide support that is not covered by your role as a supervisor.
- **Academic Language support for international students** As supervisor / academic adviser your duty is to support the academic development of your students' work. However, this is often hindered by a lack of understanding of academic conventions and inadequate academic English.

Through ADTIS (Academic Development and Training for International Students), the University Language Centre supports international students with the demands of academic work by focusing on helping them to improve their communication and language skills. The ADTIS Online Courseware for your students is freely available (via Raven) <http://www.langcen.cam.ac.uk/lc/adtis/adtis-online-courseware.html>

For additional personal support, you might point them to this page <http://www.langcen.cam.ac.uk/lc/adtis/in-sessional.html>

See also their advising and coaching <http://www.langcen.cam.ac.uk/lc/adtis/in-sessional.html>

University of Cambridge Statement on Proofreading

http://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/proofreading_2016.pdf

Clarity on what is meant by **plagiarism**: <http://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/>

Researcher Development Programme Encourage your students to develop the skills needed to become a professional researcher: <http://www.rdp.cam.ac.uk/>

For a useful overview also see: <http://www.gradschl.lifesci.cam.ac.uk/GSLSRD>

The Cambridge Researcher Development Framework (CamRDF) helps to prepare students in fifteen competencies that will be valued by both academic and non-academic employers in an increasingly interdisciplinary and international context.

There are many different training providers across the University, and while this means that there is a wealth of personal development opportunities available to you, it can also make it quite confusing to find what you need!

<http://www.rdp.cam.ac.uk/researcher-development-hub>

Pastoral Support

As supervisor / adviser your duties to the students pivot on academic advice. However, students may also seek your support in time of personal crisis. Whilst boundaries are often thin and permeable and difficult to separate, you are strongly advised to limit your role to providing academic advice and guidance and to contact the student's college graduate tutor to support the student. You can find out more details about the graduate tutors' role here [link to: <http://www.seniortutors.admin.cam.ac.uk/>]. You can find details of a student's graduate tutor on CamSIS.

Counselling Service: <http://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/>

Disability Resource Centre: <http://www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk/>

Support for International Students: <https://www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/>

Careers Service: <http://www.careers.cam.ac.uk/>

Students' Unions' Advice Service: <http://www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk/>

Student recruitment:

For questions regarding recruitment, please e-mail the Graduate Admission Office Graduate.Admissions@admin.cam.ac.uk,

For an overview of funding opportunities available to students, please see: <http://www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/finance/funding>

Top tips for supervisors

- Manage expectations: ensure your students have a clear understanding of what you expect from them and what they can expect of you.
- Don't panic: don't be afraid to refer to colleagues or other sources of advice if you have concerns about your student or your supervisory responsibilities.

Training for new supervisors of graduate students

Information held here: <https://www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/information-supervisors/training-and-professional-development>