

Supervisor Expectations

Supervisions are a key part of enabling undergraduates to realise their full academic potential. Except in those cases where supervisions are arranged on a Departmental or Faculty basis, College Directors of Studies are responsible for overseeing supervision arrangements; in all cases, Directors of Studies authorise payments for them.

The Colleges have agreed collectively the following guidance for supervisors, but any queries about individual students or individual College policy should be addressed to the student's Director of Studies or the Senior Tutor, or by using the 'supervisions@' address set up by each College.

This document is in three parts:

- **Part I** sets out the standards of education provision and behaviour expected of supervisors as they complete the work they have taken on. It also includes what you as a supervisor should expect from the students assigned to you.
- **Part II** deals with practicalities relating to the delivery and reporting of supervisions.
- **Part III** deals with the payment and employment status of supervisors.

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Part I

General summary of expectations

Supervisions are the core of the educational provision of the Cambridge Colleges, as a medium through which undergraduate students learn to work autonomously, to learn with and from others, to argue and to present arguments, to handle problems, to question their own assumptions, and to meet deadlines. They rely on mutual respect between supervisors and students.

The number and frequency of supervisions to be given, and the size of the group, must be agreed with the relevant Director of Studies (or other designated person in the case of departmentally arranged supervisions). You are expected to make your own arrangements for the locations of any supervisions, considering the availability of your students. Supervisions should be held in a suitable, accessible location which cannot be seen as intimate: a bed-sitting- room or private residence, as examples, are not appropriate venues. Teaching space is available in individual Colleges and in some Faculties and Departments: if you have any problem finding an appropriate place in which to supervise contact the Director(s) of Studies of the student(s) you are supervising.

Supervisors support students to thrive intellectually and prepare them to succeed in Tripos assessments. Your provision should be tailored to the needs of the students you supervise. As a supervisor, you determine and decide the best teaching for your students, and you should ensure that your preparation time is proportionate to the number of hours you will be teaching: if you find the work needed to prepare for and provide your supervisions excessive you should raise this with the relevant Director(s) of Studies.

Your commitment as a supervisor

If a student engages with the spirit of supervisions set out above, they may generally expect the following from you as a supervisor. You will

- teach in an appropriately sized group in which they have the opportunity to participate fully.
- schedule supervisions with a good and appropriate length (typically one hour) and will normally last the full scheduled time.
- be aware of the content of the course and will provide teaching that is relevant to it.
- set sufficient work, of a challenging but reasonable nature, within an appropriate time-frame.
- mark set work within a reasonable time frame (ordinarily in advance of the supervision and only if work has been handed in on time).
- give constructive feedback.
- respond to questions that they raise during the supervision.
- show consideration and respect (see “Expected behaviour and conduct of supervisors” below).
- provide your students with the opportunity to discuss in private with you any problems with the supervisions if they request it.
- respond in a reasonable timescale to all of their correspondence.

Expected behaviour and conduct of supervisors

You are expected to show professionalism, consideration and respect to your students, and to manage the work you perform. This includes:

- The University and the Colleges all have various codes of conduct relating to its members, including guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour. You should be mindful of these and note that you may be subject to one of a number of College policies and procedures relating to misconduct, bullying or harassment. Should a decision be made by a College to discontinue your services as an undergraduate supervisor as a result of the use of such a policy or procedure, [the College will share this decision with the University and the other Colleges](#).
- You should be mindful of your interactions and relationships with your students. For example, you should not consume alcohol during supervisions.
- If you feel there is any conflict of interest in supervising individual students, please contact the College Director of Studies. In particular, you should not have a close personal relationship, or a sexual encounter, with any students that you supervise. You also should not supervise any student with whom you have had a previous close personal relationship, or a previous sexual encounter.
- You should be clear to student(s) of the dates, times and locations of scheduled supervisions and provide sufficient notice. If you are unable to give your supervisions at the time(s) agreed with the student(s), you should wherever possible notify the student(s) who you are supervising no later than 1 hour prior to your agreed starting time. You should seek to rearrange supervision times with the undergraduate students being supervised. Please note that payment is made only for supervisions actually delivered, or for supervisions where students failed to attend and you had previously reported it (see “Exceptional reporting: missed sessions” below).
- In the case of incapacity likely to last for more than a few days, you should inform the relevant

Director(s) of Studies to discuss what arrangements to make to ensure the continuity of the students' supervision.

Your supervisee's commitment to you as a supervisor

For supervision teaching to work effectively as a key part of the Cambridge experience, a student is normally expected to:

- hand in all set work that you assign to them, completed to the best of their ability within the time-frame available, by the agreed deadlines.
- attend supervisions promptly, and give as much notice as possible to you of any unavoidable absence or delay.
- note and respond to the advice and guidance given by you on their work.
- engage pro-actively with questions and discussion during supervisions.
- show consideration and respect for the opinions of both you as their supervisor and other students.
- respond promptly to all correspondence from you.

Sources of further advice on supervising

An online training package which provides foundation (generic) information about the Cambridge Supervision System is available at:

<https://www.vle.cam.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=239022>

It is mandatory for postgraduates and postdocs new to supervising to read this online material. The Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning also provides workshops which expands on that material:

www.cctl.cam.ac.uk/programmes-workshops/supervising-undergraduates

Supervisors are naturally expected to familiarise themselves with the current requirements of the course or paper for which they are supervising and with the nature of the relevant examination papers or other forms of assessment.

Faculties and Departments should provide, as appropriate, the following resources for supervisors and students. These might be provided either on paper or electronically, for example via Moodle or on the web:

- course handbooks and/or lecture handouts.
- marking criteria and classing schemes.
- plagiarism statement and subject-specific guidance on referencing.
- agreed norms for numbers of supervisions and numbers of students persupervision.
- feedback from examiners' reports, as appropriate.
- problem sheets and answers if available.
- reading lists.
- past Tripos papers.
- the name and contact details of the Course Organisers and Departmental/Faculty teaching administrator.

Part II

Supervision reports: confidentiality

You are expected to provide a written assessment (report) relating to your students, normally on a termly basis. Supervision reports are normally released to students by their Director of Studies, so the advice contained within the report should be written with that expectation.

There may be occasions when supervisors wish to communicate with a Director of Studies or Tutor on a confidential basis, and Colleges will respect the confidentiality of any communication clearly marked as such (but this should not be the supervision report itself).

Supervision reports: CamCORS – the Cambridge Colleges' Online Reporting System for undergraduate supervisions

All supervision reporting and payment claims are made through the online supervision reporting system, CamCORS. All supervisors require a Raven account to access CamCORS. Links to request a Raven account, register for CamCORS or login to CamCORS are available at www.camcors.cam.ac.uk.

Once you have access to the system as a supervisor you can create report forms for the students you are supervising. You are urged to do this as early as possible in the term, as soon as the supervision arrangement is made. To create a report form you will need to know the student's CRSid (the first part of the email address). Once you have created a report form it will offer email links to the student, to the student's Director of Studies and Tutor, and to the person in the College responsible for dealing with supervision queries. If you wish you will be able to use the form to keep notes during the term: no text is visible to anyone else in the system until you submit the report.

Detailed guidance and further information on CamCORS can be found on this Moodle site: www.vle.cam.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=149511

In case of any difficulty, please contact the Tutorial Office of the College for which you are supervising, preferably by email (all Colleges have an email address in the form "supervisions@[college].cam.ac.uk").

Supervision reports: completion and return

Colleges ask that reports should be submitted at least a week before the end of each term. This is essential if they are to be used at end of term meetings with Directors of Studies and Tutors as the basis for a proper review of progress and for advice on vacation study. In the Easter Term they are important for discussion of course options for the following year, or in a few cases as part of the basis for an appeal.

The timing means, of course, that reports must often be submitted before the last supervisions of the term have taken place, and supervisors are strongly encouraged to notify Directors of Studies of any significant change or fresh concern arising after the report has been submitted.

Reports need not be long when work is satisfactory but should be detailed enough in all cases to give students a sense of particular strengths or weaknesses as well as any recommendations for further work and an indication of their overall level of performance. The fields to record a student's academic quality (Industry, Progress, Interest, Class) should always be completed where possible, as this information may be needed as evidence for Examination Access and Mitigation Committee applications. The content of the report should only provide information about the individual student's work, any other matters should be raised directly with the student's Director of Studies or Senior Tutor as appropriate.

If there are grounds for concern or the work is unsatisfactory Colleges are grateful for as full a report as possible (see also the 'Exceptional reporting' sections below).

Reports must be submitted before payment can be processed within Colleges. Colleges undertake to process supervision claims as speedily as possible. If there seems to be an unreasonable delay over payment contact the College, preferably via the "supervisions@" address (see above).

Exceptional reporting: missed sessions

Students are expected to attend every supervision arranged for them, or to give reasonable notice of illness or other necessary cause of absence. If a student fails to attend without such notice Colleges will pay for the missed session, but they do not expect to pay for more than one missed session unless they have been notified as soon as the first meeting has been missed. If a student fails to appear without warning you should ring or e-mail the Director of Studies or the Tutorial Office of the College concerned. (In CamCORS these email links will appear on the report form.)

Exceptional reporting: causes of concern

Supervisors are often the first people to detect signs of stress, disturbance, or failure to make adequate progress, and the Directors of Studies or Tutor should be informed of any serious academic concerns as soon as possible: please do not wait until you submit the supervision report. When submitting a report the 'College action?' checkbox can be used to alert the Director of Studies, Tutor, or Senior Tutor that you have grave concerns about a student. If you submit a report with the checkbox checked you should still approach the Director of Studies or Tutor as soon as possible with your concerns.

If you are more generally concerned about a student please urge them to see their Tutor or the College Nurse; and you should also feel free to contact the student's Tutor, or the Senior Tutor of the College, in confidence.

Data Protection information

[This document](#) provides detailed information on how your personal data supplied from your CamCORS claim forms is maintained and processed, and the data you manage of students you supervise.

Part III

Initial Payment for new supervisors

The intercollegiate University recognises that supervisors require preparation at the outset to take on the role of supervising undergraduates. This will include utilising the resources detailed above, as well as other orientation exercises at your personal discretion. All new supervisors will receive [an 'Initial Payment'](#) in recognition of those tasks.

All new supervisors from Michaelmas Term 2023 onwards, regardless of employment status, are eligible for this payment. New supervisors do not need to apply for the Initial Payment: those eligible for the Initial Payment will be identified by the date they were given access to CamCORS, and the submission of at least one approved and processed supervision report. Each supervisor will only be eligible for the Initial Payment once, regardless of gaps in supervising, attending further training later in their career, or changes to teaching curriculums.

The process of checking eligibility and making payments will be run towards the end of January, April, July, and October each year. Eligible supervisors will either receive the payment in their bank account directly from the Office of Intercollegiate Services or via their College, depending on the supervisor's default payment method set on CamCORS. College Tutorial Offices will be informed when a payment run is made.

Payment rates for freelance supervisors

The rate of payment per supervision for freelance supervisors is set by the Colleges individually. This is typically derived from the ['intercollegiate re-charge rates'](#), which are used between Colleges when their employed staff or Fellows offer their supervision services to other Colleges. You will need to contact each College you supervise for if you wish to confirm what your payment rate is, when you arrange to supervise.

Employment status and making claims for payments

For most supervisors, the nature of the work and your control over when, where and how you supervise means that your employment status is one of being a self-employed worker ("freelance supervisor"). In principle, you have the right to provide a substitute teacher for any or all of your supervision commitments.¹ **It is more likely, however, if you find yourself not able or wanting to deliver the supervisions personally that you will instead contact the College(s) and withdraw your services (and, if you wish, recommend alternative supervisors), and in most cases this would be the preferred option.**

You should assume (unless the College has made it clear otherwise, e.g. you are on a student visa and therefore must be provided with a "worker's agreement" before supervising) that you are a freelance supervisor and that you are providing your supervision services on a contract basis, for one or many Colleges. Should you be providing substantial numbers of supervisions (>50 or more annually) for a single College, you may wish to discuss with that individual College whether a more formal worker or employee arrangement is appropriate.

¹ In the very unlikely event you would want to exercise this right, you must inform the Director of Studies [in advance](#) if you employ substitute teachers. Please note that you retain responsibility for (i) ensuring they are paid by you for their work, (ii) ensuring any substitute teacher is appropriately qualified to provide supervisions and (iii) submitting any required reports on your behalf and that of any substitute teacher (they cannot submit separate reports), and (iv) providing appropriate records to demonstrate your adherence to these responsibilities on request. Please note that you also retain responsibility for the conduct of any substitute teacher.

Supervisions delivered on a freelance basis

Payments made to freelance supervisors are paid gross and you are responsible for your own income tax implications. CamCORS monitors the numbers of supervisions you have completed and constructs your claim forms for each College you provide supervisions for. In CamCORS, you should tick one or other of the “Pay me by BACS” or “Pay me by cheque” options.

Supervisions delivered as an obligation of being a Fellow, or contractually employed by the College

Some supervisions, however, are provided by people that a College may elect as a Fellow or employ formally, either specifically for supervisions or as part of a wider role in the College. These include:

- a) International postgraduate students who are studying in Cambridge on a student visa, where **exceptionally** they are provided with a “worker’s agreement” as their visa conditions do not permit them to undertake self-employed work.
- b) College Teaching Officers or Lecturers (or Associate CTOs or Lecturers, or Teaching Associates), who would normally have a long-term formal employment with the College for the delivery of undergraduate teaching (most likely as well as other responsibilities).
- c) Other College Fellows, who may provide supervisions as part of the responsibilities of the office of Fellow of the College.

The holders of such roles are personally obliged to provide the supervisions to fulfil their obligations to their employing College and they do not have the right of substitution.

If a supervisor in one of these roles where they are employed by a College (College A) supervises the students of another College (College B), it is necessary for the supervisor to determine and agree with their College whether:

- the supervisions for College B are part of their supervision stint or quota for College A, in which case College A is providing the services of its Fellow or employee to College B and must be remunerated for it. The supervisor should tick “Pay my College” in CamCORS for these reports and are then paid by their College in line with College policies and procedures;² or
- the supervisions for College B are entirely independent and additional to any obligations to College A, in which case this is a separate arrangement with College B. The supervisor would normally act as a “freelance supervisor” in these circumstances, and should tick “Pay me by BACS/Cheque” in CamCORS for these reports.

Supervision payments would normally be channelled through the College’s payroll system (and PAYE, with any income tax and national insurance contributions deducted at source and evidenced with a regular payroll payslip).

Malcolm Millbrook

Office of Intercollegiate Services

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² This will **always** be the case for international postgraduate students on a student visa.