

# Guidance for Postgraduate Research Applicants

**CHOOSING A RESEARCH PROJECT AND SUPERVISOR THAT BEST FITS YOUR SCIENTIFIC INTERESTS IS FUNDAMENTAL WHEN THINKING ABOUT WHERE TO APPLY TO STUDY FOR A RESEARCH DEGREE.**

Once you have discussed the research project with your supervisor, you may wish to discuss other aspects of Imperial and supervision which will contribute to your overall experience.

*This document is intended to help you explore what it is like to carry out research at Imperial College London in your chosen research field and suggests topics you may wish to discuss with your proposed supervisor when you visit the College.*

As well as meeting with your proposed supervisor, it is highly recommended that you ask to have a tour of the lab or group office, meet existing students and other research group members.

If you haven't studied at Imperial College previously, it may be a good idea to spend some time on campus to get a feel for it and its surrounding areas; the library, Union, sports centre, places to eat and shop etc.



## *Expectations and supervisory style*

The relationship with your supervisor plays a crucial part in the successful completion of your research. It is important, therefore, that you to determine what level of supervision your prospective supervisor can offer you before you start your research degree. For example, you may wish to ask, how many other research students they are supervising, how often you can expect to meet with them and what is the preferred method of communication outside of face-to-face meetings? You could also ask what role postdocs and other members of the research group play, are there journal clubs and/or regular meetings with members of the research group, does the research group interact with other labs/groups in the College and other external research groups?

Discussing these topics with your prospective supervisor will give you a sense of what it will be like to work in the lab and/or research group and whether this will suit you.



## *Meeting existing students & research group members*

If you are able to visit the lab and/or research group you may wish to ask members what it is like to work in that particular group to get a sense of how it is run and the different areas of expertise and techniques that other members bring to the group. It is also important to find out about work-life balance and how the group takes time out to relax together socially.

Some of the most valuable information about what it is like to work in a particular research group is acquired through speaking with current students.

## *Resources*

In addition to discussing your access to equipment and consumables and other resources which you will need in order to carry out your research, you may wish to ask your supervisor what funding is available for conferences, publications and other research expenses you may have and what opportunities, internal and external, you would have to present your work at the College and externally.



## *Progression through the research programme*



It is recommended that you talk to your supervisor about key milestones you will be expected to achieve during the research programme.

## *Opportunities for technical training*

It is important to keep in mind your future career and academic goals, and looking for a supervisor that can help you to achieve these goals is crucial. Ask questions that will give you a better sense of what opportunities for technical training might be available to you. It is also important to know what opportunities you will have to meet other students and colleagues in other research groups in the College in order to stimulate, challenge and inspire you.

You may wish to ask what sort of training will be provided to you by the supervisor and members of the research group.

## *Opportunities for Professional Development*

In order to make the most of the wide range of professional development activities available to you at College, it is important to find out how your supervisor will support you in terms of attendance at the Graduate School's professional development courses, events and your participation in other College activities.

It is also important to discuss what opportunities you will have to develop your written and oral presentation skills (e.g. publications and conferences) and what opportunities you will have to network with other students and research groups in College.



## **Support**

Each department will have a set of procedures in place should you encounter any problems/challenges during the course of your study. You may wish to ask your supervisor what support mechanisms are in place in case of problems, medical or otherwise any mentoring support which might be available to you. Outside of the research group, the College has a number of support services available to students so if you have a specific requirement or need, you should ask about what support is available to you, for example, what support is available to support students with Dyslexia?

## **Teaching**

You may wish to ask your supervisor about opportunities to teach. The Graduate School's programme also includes Graduate Teaching Assistant training courses which contribute towards the portfolio of work required to apply for Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy.



## **Non-Native speakers**

The Centre for Academic English offers a range of free courses at all levels to help international research students communicate their research as accurately and professionally as possible. The Centre's provision also includes courses that focus on enhancing students' ability to present their work in the wider academic community, particularly in relation to publications and conferences.

If you are an international student, you should ask your supervisor about the support available to you.

***The Graduate School wishes you all the best in finding a program and a supervisor that will be a great match to your skills, personality and assist you in your career goals and aspirations.***