

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 four parts:

- **Part I** sets out your self-employed status and its related contract for services to the College(s).
- **Part II** 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 III** deals with practicalities relating to the delivery and reporting of supervisions.
- **Part IV** deals with payments for your services.

Part I

Your self-employed status and its related contract for services to the College(s)

You may be providing supervisions to students of one College, or to students of many Colleges. You may have been approached by a range of different people for your services, or you may have volunteered your time to provide supervisions, either to individual Colleges or to a Department of the University, which has then been taken up.

For most people who choose to supervise, you can decide how many supervisions you would like to provide and in what subject areas (or papers). The nature of the work and the Cambridge education provided to undergraduates is such that there is no guarantee from year-to-year of the need for you to supervise or any guarantee of a certain level of supervisions. Your personal control over whether, when, where and how you supervise means that your employment status is one of being a self-employed independent contractor ("freelance supervisor").

You should assume that you are a freelance supervisor and agree that you are providing your supervision services on a contract for services basis, for one or (separately) for many Colleges, even if these services are co-ordinated through a central point in a Department of the University. The consequences of being freelance are that you will be paid gross for your services and you will be responsible for your own income tax liability (see www.gov.uk/income-tax for advice).

The information included in other Parts of this document is written primarily for freelance supervisors. Where the information may be different for people who provide supervisions who are engaged formally as workers or employees (either solely for the provision of supervisions, or more likely as part of a wider set of duties), this is highlighted in the text.

Colleges engage employees and workers where there has been a demonstrable need for high-volume, long-term, and stable provision of teaching resource in particular subject areas, or where visa restrictions prevent an international student undertaking self-employed work.

Typically, employees are referred to as “College Teaching Officers” though each College adopts its own titles. Colleges also use their Fellows and other senior members for undergraduate supervisions, and each have their arrangements about how such work is recognised. Any such agreement supersedes the statement above about you agreeing to provide supervisions on a contract basis.

Part II

General standards

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 needs to be agreed with the relevant College Director(s) of Studies (or other designated person in the case of supervisions co-ordinated by a Department of the University).

Following that confirmation, you are expected to make your own arrangements for the dates, times and locations of any supervisions, in consultation with your students.

To guard against actual or alleged misconduct, 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 Departments if you so wish: 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 and most Departments provide a range of resources that you can access. As a supervisor, you determine and decide the best teaching for your students, and you are encouraged to take steps at your own discretion such that your preparation time is not excessive for the number of hours you will be teaching: a general guide is a maximum of 1.5 hours of preparation time for each 1 hour of contact time with students (for both you and your students).

If you are a student there is additional guidance about volumes of work in addition to your studies¹. In addition, supervisors holding a student visa have a restriction of no more than 20 hours of work a week. In all cases, students should not undertake supervision work if it will significantly affect their studies.

¹ See www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/graduate-study/your-student-status/working-while-you-study.

Your role 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, both of your choosing.
- mark any work you have set 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 “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.²
- respond in a reasonable timescale to all of their correspondence.

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. These are all more similar than they are different, but you should be mindful of these. Please note that if you are employed by the University or a student, you may be subject to the University’s disciplinary procedures, even for this private work.
- Should a decision be made by a College to discontinue your services as an undergraduate supervisor as a result of the use of such guidance, [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 relevant 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. You should also provide sufficient notice in the event of a cancellation of a supervision. In the case of incapacity likely to last for more than a few days, you should inform the relevant College Director(s) of Studies to discuss what arrangements to make to ensure the continuity of the students’ supervision.

² You are advised that such private conversations should be restricted to matters relating to your teaching; students with pastoral or other concerns should be directed to their College Director of Studies or Tutor or other University or College wellbeing support.

You have the right to provide a substitute teacher for any or all of your supervision commitments. You agree that any substitute teacher would have all of the requisite skills and will act under your direction, and that you remain responsible for the quality of the supervisions provided.³ We do appreciate that this is unlikely to be possible for some supervision sessions and it is more likely that 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).

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 package that provides generic introductory information about the Cambridge Supervision System is available at:

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

It is a requirement 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, which you can access free of charge:

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

³ In the event you would want to exercise the right of substitution, you must inform the College Director of Studies in advance. 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.

For supervisors employed in a College, the right of substitution is not applicable for that College.

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 III

Supervision reports: confidentiality

You should provide a written assessment (report) relating to your students, normally on a termly basis. Supervision reports are normally released to students by their College 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 College 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 in 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 <https://apps.casc.cam.ac.uk/ors>

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: <https://www.ois.cam.ac.uk/casc/camcors>

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") or the CamCORS helpdesk at help@casc.cam.ac.uk .

Supervision reports: completion and return

Colleges would like your reports to be submitted at least a week before the end of each term, for them to be used at end of term meetings with College Directors of Studies and Tutors. Your reports may also be used as evidence of student progress during the year for examination appeals.

You should aim to submit your reports by then, even if you have supervisions scheduled after that time. Should any significant change or fresh concern arising after the report has been submitted, you can always contact the relevant College Director of Studies separately.

The report template invites you to select indicators of the student's Industry, Progress, Level of Interest and Estimated Standard of Work and allows space for free text comments to identify specific points of strength or weakness. There is also a tickbox to indicate whether you have serious concerns about their academic progress. 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 College 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 need to be submitted before payment claims can be processed within individual Colleges. Concerns about late or non-payment of claims should be made directly to the relevant College, preferably via the "supervisions@" address (see above).

Exceptional reporting: missed sessions

Students are expected to attend every supervision arranged with 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 to ensure you are paid for the missed session. (These email links are provided on the report form in CamCORS.)

Exceptional reporting: non-academic causes of concern

Supervisors may be the first people to detect signs of stress, disturbance, or failure to make adequate progress. You should urge the student to seek support from their College Director of Studies or Tutor or other University or College wellbeing support, but you may instead contact their College Director of Studies or Tutor at your discretion.

Data Protection information

[This document](#) provides detailed information on how your personal data (contact details, bank details, payment claims) supplied through CamCORS is maintained and processed. It also sets out your responsibilities regarding the personal data of the students you supervise.

Part IV

In this section, details for payments for your services are described for freelance supervisors.

Alternative arrangements for those also employed by a College are included in italics.

Initial Payment for new supervisors

The intercollegiate University recognises that supervisors require an induction programme to prepare for supervising undergraduates, either because they are new to Cambridge and/or relatively inexperienced in undergraduate teaching. The University and Colleges have designed a programme which is a mixture of online and face-to-face initial orientation, typically provided by CCTL, as well as other preparation at their personal discretion. Very inexperienced supervisors, including postgraduate students and early career researchers are expected to spend some time engaging with this programme or equivalent preparation. All new supervisors will receive [an 'Initial Payment'](#) in recognition of this.

You do not need to apply for this payment: eligible supervisors are identified by the date they were given access to CamCORS and must submit at least one approved supervision report to qualify for the payment. Eligibility will be checked, and payments made, towards the end of January, April, July, and October each year. Payments will be sent either directly to supervisors using the bank details stored in CamCORS.

For new supervisors employed in a College, the Initial Payment may be made through your College payroll, depending on your payment preferences stored in CamCORS.

Payment rates for supervisions

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 agree to supervise and provide your services.

Payments made to freelance supervisors are on a self-employed basis for your services. You are paid gross and are responsible for your own income tax and national insurance implications (or other similar taxes for the services provided). CamCORS monitors the numbers of supervisions you have completed and records your payment claims for each College you provide supervisions for.

Payment mechanisms

You can review your payment claims in the MyCamCORS area of CamCORS, where you can download a "Payment Summary" (record of services provided) or "Payment Estimates" (list of invoices to Colleges). In both cases, the volume of work is displayed in "hours" (i.e. the quantum of one supervision) and "pay estimate" (the hypothetical income from the intercollegiate re-charge rates).

Colleges review your payment claims and will pay you directly, usually through BACS and using the bank details recorded in CamCORS. You should check with your College(s) about how they issue formal remittance documents.

For supervisors employed in a College, you will normally have options in CamCORS to be paid through the College payroll or to be paid directly, with options for different mechanisms to be used depending on the individual supervisions you have provided. You should seek guidance from your College about how to receive payment for supervisions to students of other Colleges.

Payments made through the College payroll will be managed through PAYE, with any income tax and national insurance contributions deducted at source and evidenced with a regular payroll payslip.

Dr Matthew Russell

Office of Intercollegiate Services

Last reviewed by the Senior Tutors' Committee: 24 May 2024