

## Supervision guiding principles

### *Purpose*

- 👤 The guiding principles set out in this document aim to improve the work culture within academia and create an inclusive, diverse, and enjoyable space in which to carry out our research. They do not replace Imperial's institution-, faculty-, or departmental-level policies. Rather, these guiding principles are specific to the supervision and research activities that I, Jessica Williams, and any supervisee carry out.

### *Acknowledgements*

- 👤 I would like to thank the Global Biodiversity Change Group (led by Professor Tim Newbold) at University College London, with whom I helped to develop a set of guiding principles for their research group, and from which provided inspiration to create guiding principles for my own supervision and research activities. In addition, I thank them and Professor Chris Jackson (Imperial College London) for publishing their lab guiding principles and codes of conducts – much of the material below originates from these documents.
- 👤 This is a working document, and I welcome and value suggestions for improvements.

### *Inclusivity & Diversity*

- ☆ An inclusive and diverse work environment must be safe, secure and supportive for everyone, regardless of gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical disability, neurodiversity or mental health, physical appearance, body size, race, age, nationality, ethnicity, language or accent, religion, and marital or parental status. Diversity is a great strength of any research group and we want to ensure a supportive and open working environment for everyone.
- ☆ There is zero tolerance for any form of harassment, bullying or abuse. [Harassment](#) includes any unwanted behaviour, which you find offensive or which makes you feel intimidated or humiliated, and includes offensive verbal or written comments, sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of discussions, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention. Harassment is against the law when it is connected to one of the UK's [protected characteristics](#) (age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation). Sexist, racist, or exclusionary jokes are not appropriate at any time. [Bullying](#) is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. Anyone asked to stop any harassing, bullying or abusive behaviour is expected to comply immediately. Everyone is encouraged and supported to call out any bad behaviour they witness inside or outside of our group, if they feel comfortable doing so. You can also report concerns at any time to Jessica, or use the [reporting and support options](#) that Imperial College London provides.
- ☆ All communication, online or in person, should be appropriate for a professional audience, and be considerate of people from different cultural backgrounds. Sexual language and imagery are not appropriate at any time. Again, everyone is encouraged and supported to

call out (or raise their concerns) any communication that they, or anyone else in the group, may find offensive.

- ☆ Please be kind to others, and do not insult or put down others. Contribute to discussions in meetings with a constructive, positive approach. Be mindful of talking over others or interrupting when discussing in groups, and be willing to hear out the ideas of others.

### Work-life balance

- 📖 Sustained productivity and contribution to science can only be maintained with a healthy work-life balance. It is not always possible to stick to strict working hours, and indeed flexibility can be an advantage of working in science. Nevertheless, I don't personally and wouldn't expect anyone else regularly to work long hours during the week, nor to work at weekends, unless certain work requires an unusual schedule, which will be discussed and agreed in advance. Your working hours should include all aspects of being a researcher, including training/teaching, seminars, reading papers, attending meetings etc. You are not expected to complete any tasks (even non-research work) outside of your normal working hours.
- 📖 If possible, I will prioritise organising meetings between 10 am and 4 pm, but if different times work for you, please let me know and we can discuss separate arrangements.
- 📖 I would not expect anyone to respond to or complete requests for work outside of normal work hours, unless under exceptional circumstances, and by prior arrangement. You will not be compelled to respond to requests in the late afternoon or evening for work that needs completing by the following working day (this includes requests on Friday afternoons for work to be completed by the following Monday).
- 📖 It is essential to take holidays to maintain work-life balance, have a complete rest from work, and ensure good mental health. I strongly encourage everyone to take Imperial's full holiday allowance. This holiday allowance is a formal part of staff contracts, and is a sensible amount of holiday time also for PhD students. Taking a holiday of at least two weeks at some point each year is very beneficial, allowing plenty of time to unwind from work. Please notify me in advance of taking holiday. There are normally no constraints on when you take holiday, but please be mindful of important deadlines and supervision obligations. You should be completely detached from work during holiday, and so are not expected to remain in contact (making use of the out-of-office automatic email replies, and if necessary delegating an alternative point of contact).

### Mental health

- 🧠 Academia can place a [considerable burden on our mental health](#). The elevated rates of mental health issues in academia compared to the wider population have a number of causes, including low pay and insecure contracts, the perception that you alone are responsible for delivering your work, the uncertainty that key pieces of research will deliver results, and the widely held perception that success in academia can only be achieved by working very long hours.
- 🧠 I encourage everyone to make their mental health a top priority. Sometimes it is better to step away from work than to get stuck in an unproductive cycle. You should always feel completely safe in speaking out if you have worries about your work or anything else. I aim

to build a collaborative group, and create a support network to help anyone with research issues. You don't have to battle through with a problem by yourself – science is a collaborative enterprise! If, for any reason, you don't feel comfortable speaking to me or anyone else in the group, Imperial has a range of different support mechanisms in place for [staff](#) and [students](#). There is also a information from the Faculty of Natural Sciences on [well-being support](#). Post-docs should all have a mentor who can give independent advice, and PhD students should have an advisor who is independent of the core supervisory.

- 🗣️ If you need further support, please do register at a local GP surgery who can assist you, and/or seek support and advice from a charitable organisation (e.g., in the UK, among other charities, we have the Samaritans, who you can call for free any time on 116 123, and CALM are available to chat 5pm-midnight on the phone or on webchat – <https://www.thecalmzone.net/>). There are also useful resources available via the charity Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk/>.

#### Supervisor <> supervisee expectations

- 🗣️ Comments on work
  - I will always try to comment on any work I receive within 2 weeks. Where student projects have a tight deadline, I normally aim for 1 week. During very busy spells, I may have to stretch these deadlines, but I will normally consult with you first. As a general rule, I hope that others will abide by the 2-week guideline for providing comments. When sending work to external authors or reviewers, please allow them at least 2 weeks to return comments, and ideally 4 weeks if there is no hurry. Everyone is very busy in academia and tight deadlines may contribute to the feeling of being overwhelmed. Everyone is encouraged to share their work for feedback within the group, at Imperial more broadly, and at external conferences. The benefits of sharing ideas and research almost always outweigh the costs (e.g., the risk of an idea being 'scooped').
- 🗣️ Publishing and open access
  - Where funding permits, we will publish our papers under gold open access. We follow as much as possible the ICMJE criteria for determining authorship on papers (i.e., to be an author on a paper you should have done all of the following: 1. Made substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; 2. Drafted the paper or revised it critically for important intellectual content; 3. Approved the final version to be published; and 4. Agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved).
  - We will always aim to publish papers produced, as such it is key to keep track of all data and code used to produce work, and ensure that is accessible even if you have moved on from Imperial.
- 🗣️ Communications
  - We will communicate primarily by email and Microsoft Teams. All communications should be polite, respectful, and constructive at all times. Please be mindful that written communications can easily be misinterpreted by the recipient.

- Please try to avoid sending communications before 8 am or after 6 pm, or at weekends. Email clients normally allow you to delay the sending of messages until a specified time, although it is easy to forget and to send a message accidentally. You are never expected to respond immediately to messages sent outside work hours (or indeed in work hours if you are focusing on something else!). I will normally try to respond to most emails within one or two working days.
- In meetings, please be respectful of people's time, and offer your full attention (please don't use meetings to complete unrelated tasks). In video calls with people working at home, please be aware that you are entering someone's personal living space – inappropriate or hurtful comments about cleanliness, décor, other people, infants, breastfeeding or pets that may be visible are not acceptable. You should always feel free to keep your camera off in calls if you prefer.
- 🗣 Meetings
  - I aim to meet with every supervisee 1:1 at least fortnightly (except when I am travelling or on holiday). This allows me to stay up to date with everyone's work and to help you to identify research issues as quickly as possible.
  - You are welcome to join Cris Banks-Leite's lab group meetings on Thursdays 14.30-15.30pm. Sometimes someone will present some aspect of their work, other times we discuss a paper, else we have a more general catch up. You are strongly encouraged to attend and occasionally present at these meetings to help us collaborate and interact together. We will try to accommodate remote participation at meetings wherever possible.
- 🗣 Field / conferences
  - We conduct ourselves in the field and at conferences as representatives of Imperial, and we strive to maintain these guiding principles in all settings. We understand that other countries have different laws and customs, for example LGBTQ+, clothing rules for women, and alcohol consumption. We recognise it is important to discuss this before sending anyone to other regions for their personal safety and security while away. We will discuss any concerns about personal safety while on fieldwork or at conferences prior to your departure, and make sure that appropriate mitigation measures are in place (e.g., a buddy system for walking around at night).

#### Wider departmental activities

- 🗣 Snack & Yak
  - 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month, 12pm in GMC
- 🗣 Health and well-being
  - Yoga, Tuesdays 12-1, Unit A
  - Zumba, Wednesdays, 5-6pm Unit A