

Guidance for Supervisors

The Colleges are immensely grateful to supervisors for their contribution in teaching their students and helping them realise their full academic potential, and for the care taken over end-of-term reports on their progress. Except in those cases where supervisions are arranged on a departmental or Faculty basis, supervisors will already be in direct contact with a student's Director of Studies, who is responsible for overseeing supervision arrangements and authorising payment for them. The Colleges have collectively agreed 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 now set up by each College.

This document is in two parts.

- **Part I** deals with practicalities.
- **Part II** offers a general summary of what is expected of supervisors and of the students they supervise.

Part I

CamCORS

The online supervision reporting system, CamCORS, is accessible through any web browser at www.camcors.cam.ac.uk/, and there is an online manual for supervisors to which you are referred for full details of how to use the system at www.camcors.cam.ac.uk/docs/ and available in downloadable PDF format.

All supervisors will initially need to register to use CamCORS, but once registered will have their own identity within the system however many different Colleges they may be supervising for. If you have not already been registered please see the instructions for obtaining a CamCORS account at www.camcors.cam.ac.uk/register/

Once you have registered or been registered within the system you will receive a password from the University Computing Service which will enable you to access the system as a supervisor and which you must then change to something of your own choice.

Please note that:

- i. supervisor passwords are managed by the University Computing Service and not by Colleges
- ii. it is important for technical reasons that you change your password as you are asked to do when you first log on, as otherwise you are at risk of losing work if the request is repeated when you need to re-log on after a period of inactivity
- iii. if you are also a 'College user', e.g. in the role of Director of Studies or Tutor, you will be issued with a separate password for access to the College data by each College in which you have such a role.

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) and Tripos Part. 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.

IMPORTANT: CamCORS is now the routine method of supervision reporting for the Cambridge Colleges. If for some reason you are unable to use CamCORS you will need to arrange with the relevant College or Colleges to have the supervision report and claim forms sent to you.

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").

In case of any difficulty please contact the College for which you are supervising, preferably by email to the address given above.

Supervision reports: completion and return

Colleges ask that reports should reach the College office 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 sent in 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.

If there are grounds for concern or the work is unsatisfactory Colleges are grateful for as full a report as possible.

Supervision reports: confidentiality

Supervision reports should now take an 'open' form in which they may be directly communicated to and discussed with the student concerned. Apart from the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998, which will give students a right of access to their files under certain conditions, these reports are likely to become the basis of the new Progress Files with which universities will shortly be required to furnish their students. CamCORS has been designed with these needs in view and you may expect that the report you submit you will be seen by the student as well as by the Director of Studies and Tutor.

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).

Because of Data Protection provisions any communication in writing of information which you wish to be treated as confidential should include a clear statement to the effect that you do not consent to the release of that communication to the student concerned. In general, if you wish to transmit information or concerns to a Director of Studies or Tutor on a confidential basis you are asked to communicate with them directly, by telephone rather than by e-mail.

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.)

Other causes of concern:

Supervisors are often the first people to detect signs of stress, disturbance, or failure to make adequate progress, and Directors of Studies should be informed of any serious academic concerns as soon as possible: please do not wait until you submit the supervision report.

If you are more generally concerned about a student we would ask you to 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.

Claim forms:

Claim forms are no longer issued separately, unless specifically requested, since CamCORS constructs your claim form on the basis of the your own details and the reports you have submitted. Claiming payment is a separate action from submitting reports, and reports must be submitted and payment claimed before payment can be processed within the College. 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).

College contacts:

In many cases concerning individual students a supervisor's first point of contact will be with the Director of Studies in the relevant subject. Supervisors may also wish to make contact with a College office (which can of course if necessary forward messages to a particular Director of Studies) or with the Senior Tutor: this should normally be done through the Tutorial Office of the College concerned. The appropriate e-mail links are provided on CamCORS report forms.

Data Protection statement:

In accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 the Colleges wish to notify supervisors that the personal data supplied on their claim forms will be held on a database within each College and that the processing of this data will take place only for the proper purposes of the Colleges as educational institutions. Personal data supplied to CamCORS will also be held in a central database hosted on behalf of the Colleges by the University's Management Information Services Division.

PART II

General summary of expectations

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). Supervisions should be held in a suitable, reasonably central location which is not liable to be seen as too personal or intimate: a bed-sitting-room, for example, is not an appropriate venue. Teaching space is available in individual Colleges and in some Faculties and Departments: if you have any problem over finding an appropriate place in which to supervise contact the Director of Studies of the student or students you are supervising.

Supervisions are the core of the educational provision of the Cambridge Colleges, as a medium through which 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. Students are encouraged to expect the following from supervisions:

- as far as is practicable, a full hour of teaching (provided that they have done the work expected of them in preparation for the supervision)
- to be taught in a reasonably sized group in which they have the opportunity to participate fully
- guidance about how best to prepare for supervisions
- to be set reasonable amounts of work and to receive constructive feedback on it
- their work to have been marked, with advice for improvement, before the supervision where this is the usual arrangement in the subject
- teaching that is relevant to the course and helps them understand the subject
- discussion of their questions and problems, with constructive comment
- respect for their opinions, and questions to be dealt with thoroughly and effectively
- opportunities to discuss with the supervisor, in privacy and in full confidence, any problems they perceive in the quality, relevance, or dynamics of the supervisions they are receiving.

Students themselves may be expected to:

- complete the work set to the very best of their ability
- hand in work on time (and to ensure that they have agreed a deadline with the supervisor)
- turn up on time to every supervision
- contribute actively to the supervision and make their opinions known
- contact the supervisor in plenty of time if they are unable to make the supervision or complete the work set

Sources of further advice on supervising

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. Recent examination papers may be available from Faculty or Departmental offices, and collections of examination papers going back over many years are to be found in Faculty and College Libraries. Many Faculties and Departments now issue subject-specific guidance for supervisors, and you should check whether such a document is available in your subject. A good deal of this material is now available on the web.

More general advice is also available from the Centre for Personal and Professional Development, which runs courses for those new to supervising in Cambridge.