NUFFIELD COLLEGE SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

Introduction

Every graduate student at Oxford has a College Adviser who is normally a senior academic member of the student’s College and who is expected to act as a focal point for an individual student’s relationship with the College, and to provide general academic or pastoral advice and assistance throughout the student’s course of study.¹

The exclusive social sciences focus of Nuffield College makes it possible for there to be a concentration of subject expertise within its Fellowship that covers broadly the interests and research topics of its students. It is, therefore, one of the unique characteristics of Nuffield that, instead of College Advisers, it appoints College supervisors who perform the duties of College Advisers described above, but who also have traditionally been expected to have a more substantive academic connection with their supervisees than that envisaged by the Conference of Colleges’ college adviser scheme.

Every Nuffield College student is thus assigned a College supervisor who is normally a permanent academic Fellow of the College (Governing Body Fellow) working in a field of research that, at least broadly, matches the student’s area of work. The College supervisor may be from the same University Department or Faculty as the student, but should not be the same person as the student’s University supervisor.

What is the role of the Nuffield College Supervisor?

The role of the Nuffield College supervisor is additional and auxiliary to that provided in the student’s Department or Faculty. The College supervisor is not expected to perform the role of the University supervisor(s) assigned by the student’s Department or Faculty, nor to be responsible for the overall direction of the student’s academic work. Rather the College supervisor is expected to act as a secondary source of academic advice and a point of reference for pastoral and academic-related support.

Within this context the key responsibilities of the Nuffield College supervisor are:

- To provide general help, support and advice to students on matters relating to their academic work and life in College and Oxford more broadly.
- To ensure that initial contact with their students is made as early as is practicable during their students’ first term in College.

¹ See Annex 1 for the role description of College Advisers provided by the Conference of Colleges and endorsed by all Colleges.
To keep in contact with their students at regular intervals throughout the year, and to meet formally (rather than socially) at least once a term (whether in person or through online media/phone) to discuss and advise on the students’ academic work, their plans and progress, and any issues affecting their academic life in College and Oxford (for example, funding issues, difficulties with the course or the University supervision, or other problems that may be affecting student progress and wellbeing).

To consider the student’s Nuffield termly report (and where appropriate the student’s University GSR report) and to provide their own termly report on the student’s academic progress. The termly student and College supervisor reports should normally be discussed with the student and should be focused around academic-related matters and possible academic support needs. Academic or academic-related issues arising from student reports may be brought by the College supervisors to the attention of the relevant subject Group of College Fellows for advice. Students may request access to their College supervisors’ reports.

To consult with the Senior Tutor if there are concerns about their students’ academic progress or their general wellbeing and to signpost the students to other sources of support available within the College and the University more broadly.

To maintain contact with their students until such time as they complete their studies (including during periods when the students might be away from Oxford e.g. on fieldwork trips).

Nuffield College supervisors are assigned following recommendations from the subject Groups admissions panels in consultation with the Group Chairs and Senior Tutor. The academic interests and courses of students are normally taken into account when College supervisors are assigned. Alternative College supervision arrangements can be made when a supervisor is on leave or where other circumstances arise that make a change necessary. In such cases, College supervisors and students should consult with the Senior Tutor in the first instance.

What is the role of students in Nuffield College Supervision?

The College supervisors are meant to be an extra source of academic and academic-related advice and pastoral support for Nuffield students, in addition to that provided by the students’ departments/faculties. Within this context Nuffield students can be expected:

- To proactively make contact with their College supervisors when they would like to seek their advice/support.
- To respond to meeting invitations from College supervisors and to arrange to meet at mutually convenient times (ideally at least once a term).
- To keep their College supervisors informed of their academic work and progress.
To provide a Nuffield Student Termly report to be considered and discussed with their College supervisors.

To maintain contact with their College supervisors until such time as they complete their studies, including during periods when they might be away from Oxford (e.g. on fieldwork trips).

Students should always feel free to consult and seek advice from the Senior Tutor, especially if they have concerns relating to general wellbeing matters, or wish to discuss their College or University supervision arrangements.

Examples of best practice in Nuffield College Supervision

The relationship between Nuffield students and College supervisors is flexible and adaptable to individual needs, circumstances, temperaments and patterns of working. Below are some examples of best practice for students and College supervisors to consider, depending on the individual case:

- College supervisors and students are encouraged to discuss a way of working together and to set clear expectations (e.g. frequency and type of meetings, ways of communicating) at the beginning of the supervisory relationship.

- In the case of research students, and depending on circumstances (e.g. good research interests fit) and mutual agreement, College supervisors may undertake to read some of their students’ written work at appropriate points during the student’s course of study (e.g. ahead of a milestone such as transfer of status, or conference paper submission), and to provide feedback.

- In the case of students on taught masters courses, College supervisors and students may discuss issues such as selection of optional papers, dissertation topic, and examination preparation; written work can, of course, also be discussed, if agreed between the student and College supervisor.

- Some possible general topics for discussion at College supervision meetings (in addition to specific matters directly relating to the student’s academic work, progress, and wellbeing) are:
  - Applications for research funding
  - Advice on conference and seminar attendance
  - Professional development opportunities/job market advice/career plans
  - Advice on publications strategy
  - Advice on teaching opportunities

Further Information

For further information or clarification about the Nuffield College supervision guidelines, please contact the Senior Tutor (senior.tutor@nuffield.ox.ac.uk).
College Adviser in Graduate Colleges – role description

A  Role purpose

Every graduate student at Oxford has a College Adviser who, traditionally, has often been a senior academic member of their College and often a Fellow (although not necessarily a Governing Body Fellow). In light of the growth in the graduate student population a number of colleges are successfully diversifying the range of staff who are able to act as Advisers, to include, for example, Stipendiary Lecturers, JRFs, Staff Fellows (such as Bursars or Development Directors) or research members of the Common Room.

The role of the College Adviser is additional and complementary to that provided in the student’s department or faculty. The College Adviser is not expected to perform the role of the Department or Faculty Supervisor(s), or to be responsible for directing students’ academic work and should not be the same person. Rather, the intention is to provide a focal point for an individual student’s relationship with the College, and general academic or pastoral advice and assistance throughout the student’s course of study. There is no requirement for the Adviser to be from the same department, division or discipline as the student.²

Some colleges set a preferred maximum number of students per Adviser, and a small but growing number provide Adviser training or briefings, particularly where colleges are diversifying the pool of Advisers or where colleagues are new to the role.

NOTE
Throughout this document the term ‘College’ includes Permanent Private Halls.

Please see Annex A for more information about the recommendations included in the text below.

B  Key aspects of the role

1. Induction and welcome
   - Meet all full-time Advisees in first term of residence, as early as is feasible. For part-time students, this could be achieved by other means, e.g. email or video conferencing.
   - Establish a basis for future contact, bearing in mind the role purpose and the ‘College Advisee: guidance’ (which is expected to be disseminated to graduates in arrival packs).

Recommendaion 1 of the Conference of Colleges:
Each College should have an induction session (or sessions) to explain what range of academic, domestic, and pastoral/welfare support is available to graduate students in the College and the University and to encourage and facilitate integration into the College’s social and academic community. Such session(s) should be in line with the agreed University timetable for graduate induction in faculties and departments.

Recommendaion 2 of the Conference of Colleges:
Every student (including part-time students) should have a College Adviser, and the responsibilities and expectations of the Adviser and the Advisee should be clearly specified in order that both may understand what is expected of them. The Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor should ensure that an initial meeting between the Adviser and the Advisee takes place during the graduate’s first term. For part-time students, this could be achieved by other means, e.g. email or video conferencing.

¹ Please note that this document is intended for use in mixed colleges. An alternative version for use in graduate colleges can be found in the Key Documents folder in the Graduate Committee section of the Conference of Colleges website.
² Many colleges aim to find Advisers from a broadly cognate subject.
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2. Advisee meetings and contact

- Offer the opportunity to all full-time PGT students to meet at least once a term.
- Offer other students (including part-time) this opportunity at least once a year.
- Where meeting in person is not feasible, maintain email contact with advisees.
- Initiate contact directly or through the College Office, by, for example by sending an email, offering a date for Advisees to drop in, meet over lunch/dinner in Hall, at a seminar, a college event, college club/society, in the lab, or for drinks, etc.
- Encourage Advisees to make contact as and when they need advice or help, while also directing to other College Officers as necessary (for example, the Senior Tutor, College Academic Administrator/Registrar, College Welfare Officer/Chaplain, etc).

Recommendation 3 of the Conference of Colleges:
Each student on a taught graduate course should have the opportunity of meeting with his/her Adviser at least once a term. Other graduate students should have opportunities for meeting their Advisers on a regular basis as needed; it is expected that this would be not less than once a year. On occasions when the Adviser is unable to meet the Advisee, the Adviser should at least send the Advisee an e-mail inquiring of his or her progress and offering to meet if the Advisee feels this would be important.

3. Progress monitoring

- Monitor advisees’ progress, by reviewing and where appropriate discussing their University supervision reports, and by being available for consultation, either in person or by email.
- Discuss with students any problems or difficulties they may be experiencing in their Department or Faculty and/or with their supervisor.
- As appropriate, comment positively on students’ progress, and achievements: Advisers are not there only to monitor students’ progress and pick up problems.
- Consult the Senior Tutor if there are concerns about the student’s academic progress and if a student appears to be experiencing difficulties with their academic work.
- Participate, as appropriate to the college’s local circumstances, in annual progress reviews.

Recommendation 4 of the Conference of Colleges:
College Advisers should keep abreast of their Advisees’ academic progress at regular intervals. Colleges should ensure that they have a process in place by which the Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor or Academic Administrator is able to monitor that Advisers are so doing and take action if not.

Recommendation 6 of the Conference of Colleges:
Each student (including those beyond fee liability) should have the opportunity to participate in an annual progress review where their academic progress is discussed and they may raise issues of concern to them. (For full-time students, the term ‘annual progress review’ is used to mean a meeting of a formal nature that takes place once each year, when a student has the opportunity to discuss their academic progress, and other issues, with an appropriate college officer; for part-time students, this could be achieved by other means, e.g. email or video conferencing.) (Exception: All Souls, given that all its members are Fellows of the College)

Recommendation 9 of the Conference of Colleges:
The Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor should take appropriate action when problems regarding University academic provision are identified by Advisers, flagged on GSR, or raised by other means. This may include meeting the student and/or Adviser, contacting the University Supervisor or department, or bringing issues raised to the attention of a College committee or University authorities. Problems relating to departmental teaching provision should be raised with the departmental or faculty Graduate Studies Committee. Records should be kept of actions taken in response to problems, and of any communications to University departments/faculties or other offices.
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4. **Problem-solving, advice and pastoral support**

- Offer advice (where and if possible) on academic-related matters such as applications for research funding, conferences and seminar attendance, publication and career plans.\(^3\)
- Provide pastoral support, including on health, financial, personal or coping issues, and direct students to appropriate persons/services for assistance.
- Refer students, as necessary, to the appropriate College/University resources.\(^4\)

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<tr>
<th>Recommendation 8 of the Conference of Colleges:</th>
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<td>Each College should make available to its graduate students the opportunity to raise a sensitive issue (whether pertaining to university or college matters) confidentially with a senior member of the College, and graduate students should be notified clearly of how to avail themselves of this opportunity.</td>
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\(^3\) Further information on resources for students can be found at the Student Gateway; Careers Service; [Insert url for your own College’s landing page for College/PG financial support]. College Advisers would not normally be expected to provide academic references, as others are better placed to do so. They might provide a reference for other purposes, such as Junior Deanship, or a character reference.

\(^4\) [Insert url for your own College’s landing page for welfare/support resources]; University Health & Welfare Services.
For inclusion in arrival packs

College Advisee: guidance

Every graduate student at Oxford has a College Adviser. This is often a senior academic member of the College such as a Fellow, but in many cases a wide range of staff act as Advisers such as other teaching staff, Junior Research Fellows, Senior Staff Fellows or research members of the Common Room.

Your College Adviser can:

- provide pastoral support, for example on health, personal or coping issues, and/or direct you to appropriate persons for assistance;
- monitor your progress, by discussing your University supervision reports and by being available for consultation, either in person or by email;
- discuss with you any problems or difficulties you may be experiencing in your Department or Faculty, and/or with your supervisor;
- consult the Senior Tutor if there are concerns about your academic progress and if you appear to be experiencing difficulties with your academic work;
- offer guidance on sources of support available within the College and University.

In addition your College Adviser may be able to offer you advice on academic-related matters such as: applications for research funding, conferences and seminar attendance, publication and career plans. Your College Adviser is not expected to perform the role of your Department or Faculty Supervisor(s), and is not responsible for directing your academic work or for giving detailed academic guidance. Your college adviser will not necessarily, therefore, be from your department or subject area.

You will first meet your College Adviser during your first term, and you are encouraged to contact your College Adviser as and when you need advice or help. (You should also feel free to consult other College officers as necessary: see below.)

Your College Adviser may be changed during periods of sabbatical or other academic leave. Should there be reasons for you to seek a change of Adviser, you should contact your Senior Tutor.

Further information

This guidance focuses specifically on the role of your College Adviser. Your College Adviser will be able to direct you to relevant sources of advice and support, which you should feel free to consult as necessary. These might include (but are not limited to):

- College Chaplain or Welfare Fellow
- Common Room President or Common Room Welfare Officers
- College Counsellor
- College Nurse or GP
- College Senior Tutor or Academic Administrator
- College/Tutorial Office or equivalent
- College Bursary or equivalent
- Financial Aid/Student Hardship Officer

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5 College Advisers would not normally be expected to provide academic references, as others are better placed to do so. They might provide a reference for other purposes, such as Junior Deanship, or a character reference.
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ANNEX A – Recommendations of Conference of Colleges:

Colleges are asked every year to report on their graduate (and undergraduate) academic provision against a series of recommendations. These recommendations (set out in full below) are considered on an annual basis by the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee (of Graduate Committee and the Senior Tutors’ Committee) and then endorsed on annual basis by Graduate Committee and the STC, and on a three-yearly cycle by Conference.

(Recommendations 1-4, 6, 8, and 9 are cited in the College Adviser Role Description above, but are repeated here so that the full set of recommendations can be viewed in one place and separately disseminated as needed)

A. INDUCTION

1. Each College should have an induction session (or sessions) to explain what range of academic, domestic, and pastoral/welfare support is available to graduate students in the College and the University and to encourage and facilitate integration into the College’s social and academic community. Such session(s) should be in line with the agreed University timetable for graduate induction in faculties and departments.

B. COLLEGE ADVISERS

2. Every student (including part-time students) should have a College Adviser, and the responsibilities and expectations of the Adviser and the Advisee should be clearly specified in order that both may understand what is expected of them. The Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor should ensure that an initial meeting between the Adviser and the Advisee takes place during the graduate’s first term. For part-time students, this could be achieved by other means, e.g. email or video conferencing.

3. Each student on a taught graduate course should have the opportunity of meeting with their Adviser at least once a term. Other graduate students should have opportunities for meeting their Advisers on a regular basis as needed; it is expected that this would be not less than once a year. On occasions when the Adviser is unable to meet the Advisee, the Adviser should at least send the Advisee an e-mail inquiring of their progress and offering to meet if the Advisee feels this would be important.

4. College Advisers should keep abreast of their Advisees’ academic progress at regular intervals. Colleges should ensure that they have a process in place by which the Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor or Academic Administrator is able to monitor that Advisers are so doing and take action if not.

C. ACADEMIC PROGRESS

5. Colleges should ensure that those responsible for academic and pastoral welfare work in collaboration with the complementary support services and with academic departments/faculties to support student development and achievement. The relevant support services include, but are not limited to, the Disability Advisory Service, the Student Counselling Service and the Careers Service.

6. Each student (including those beyond fee liability) should have the opportunity to participate in an annual progress review where their academic progress is discussed and they may raise issues of concern to them. (For full-time students, the term ‘annual progress review’ is used to mean a meeting of a formal nature that takes place once each year, when a student has the opportunity to discuss their academic progress, and other issues, with an appropriate college officer; for part-time students, this could be achieved by other means, e.g. email or video conferencing.) (Exception: All Souls, given that all its members are Fellows of the College)
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7. All colleges should, in partnership with their graduate common rooms, provide some enriching academic-related activities accessible to all graduate students.

D. FEEDBACK AND ENGAGEMENT

8. Each College should make available to its graduate students the opportunity to raise a sensitive issue (whether pertaining to university or college matters) confidentially with a senior member of the College, and graduate students should be notified clearly of how to avail themselves of this opportunity.

9. The Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor should take appropriate action when problems regarding University academic provision are identified by Advisers, flagged on GSS, or raised by other means. This may include meeting the student and/or Adviser, contacting the University Supervisor or department, or bringing issues raised to the attention of a College committee or University authorities. Problems relating to departmental teaching provision should be raised with the departmental or faculty Graduate Studies Committee. Records should be kept of actions taken in response to problems, and of any communications to University departments/faculties or other offices.

10. There should be a formal mechanism within each College for graduate students to give feedback on College provision. This mechanism should be well-publicised. Student feedback should be collated, reviewed and acted upon via the appropriate channels, which may include College committees when issues of general significance arise. Colleges should report back to students, or to a representative of the student body, that action has been taken in response to feedback received, giving details if appropriate.

(Exception: All Souls, given that all its members are Fellows of the College).

11. Colleges should have a written complaints procedure set out clearly in terms accessible to graduate students in accordance with the latest guidance from the OIA.

12. Colleges should ensure that graduate students are represented on College Governing Bodies and other relevant committees, including committees which consider academic policy.

13. Every College should keep full records of its graduate students, to include (i) reports from University Supervisors and any from College Advisers; (ii) details of the course being taken or completed, marks achieved, thesis topic, current status, funding sources, and financial guarantees, etc. The records should include details of actions taken in response to problems.