



PdOC guide to College Supervisions

Updated version of the Guideline written by former PdOC president Oliver Jones with help and input from the PdOC core group, Careers Service and CPPD.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
What is a supervision?	1
How do I find supervision opportunities?	2
How do I give feedback on my students?	2
Why should I supervise?	2
What about training?	3
Payment for supervisions	3

Introduction

This is a guide for PdOC members who are interested in gaining teaching experience in the Cambridge Colleges. This is only intended to be a short guide on the topic. If you decide to start supervising, the College you supervise for will provide further details. You can also find out about the fundamentals of supervising at Cambridge in the University's online training modules for supervisors in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and for supervisors in the Sciences. Further details on training to be a supervisor are given on page 3

What is a supervision?

Undergraduate courses at Cambridge contain the usual array of lectures, classes, practicals and seminars which are arranged by individual University faculties. Cambridge undergraduates also benefit from small-group teaching known as supervision, the Cambridge word for tutorial. Supervisions are arranged by the Colleges; for each subject, a Director of Studies (DoS) will contact supervisors to make arrangements on behalf of their undergraduates. A supervisor typically takes a group of one to six undergraduates for an hour-long tutorial, either once per week or per fortnight. This arrangement can be a one-off, but usually it lasts for longer, e.g. a whole term or the whole year. The DoS will advise the supervisor. The group focuses on work for a specific part of the whole course, usually an exam paper, often but not always related to lectures in the topic. A supervisor usually has a fair amount of experience in the field in question, i.e. a lecturer. Supervisions are pretty much unique to Cambridge and Oxford Collegiate Universities.

As the supervisor you set the content and pace. You will be expected to talk to students

about their departmental work and help them with any areas of their course they are having problems with. You'll offer students feedback on questions and essays you've set them. It is also usual to encourage the students to initiate discussion on or ask for further explanation of topics covered in the lecture course.

Many Departments/Faculties publish discipline-specific guidance for supervisors: check the relevant websites. The University's Centre for Personal and Professional Development offers online training modules for supervisors. These were developed primarily for research students who supervise undergraduates; much of what they contain will be helpful for postdocs, particularly those new to Cambridge. Follow the links from <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/cppd/online/>. These modules contain lots of links and further information; you can, however, expect to work through the main points in these modules in 20-25 minutes.

How do I find supervision opportunities?

A good starting point to find out about future opportunities is to talk to academics and fellow postdocs in your department about supervising opportunities as they are likely to be aware of current supervisions relevant to your specific expertise. To get a feel for supervision opportunities, it is first important to understand undergraduate course structure for the subjects you would be willing to teach

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses>. When you have identified a specific subject that you are interested in teaching, get in touch with the DoS for that subject stating who you are and what courses you would like to teach (and provide a CV). Each College appoints a DoS for each subject at the undergraduate level. The DoS is responsible for organising supervisions for each student in their college taking a particular course. You can find the email list for the DoSs for many subjects here: <https://lists.cam.ac.uk/mailman/listinfo>. Additionally, supervision openings are advertised on the weekly PdOC newsletter, so sign up for this!

How do I give feedback on my students?

Your DoS will tell you more about this but basically in the week prior to the end of each term you will be required to submit a short report on each of your students via CamCORS, the online supervision reporting system. This is accessible through any web browser at <http://www.camcors.cam.ac.uk/> and there is an online manual for supervisors with full details of how to use the system.

Why should I supervise?

It's no secret that supervisions are hard work. Although each one is only an hour long you'll also have to set and mark essays and questions and practice exams so your actual time per supervision is considerably longer. So why do it? Well, personally, I find supervising greatly enjoyable and rewarding. It helps you brush up on your skills and knowledge in a subject and really makes you think. Plus, if you plan to have a career in academia getting this sort of teaching experience is very useful.

Please keep in mind that your teaching will form an integral part of the students' experience at Cambridge. You will have an influence on how well they do in exams and they will remember you (possibly for the rest of their lives) so you need to do a good job. Don't take it lightly. The students will soon discover if you are not well prepared and they will complain. You may well need to read up on the subject area. Be prepared to

set and mark essays and other questions and lead discussions. Cambridge undergrads are amongst the best in the world so they will challenge you with what can be very, very tricky questions. More details of supervising can be found here:

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/committee/seniortutors/guidance/supervisors.pdf>

What about training?

It's a good idea to brush up on your teaching skills, even if you've taught before – and important to get some guidance if you haven't. In addition to publishing guidelines for supervisors, as mentioned above some briefings/training are organised by Departments and/or by DoSs: ask around. The University's online modules dealing with the fundamentals of supervising include information on reporting and getting paid using CamCORS (the online reporting system). The University co-ordinates some face-to-face training, too (usually 1.5 - 3 hours, depending on what you sign up for). This is geared to reviewing major principles and useful practices of teaching and learning in supervisions, including structuring supervisions, encouraging undergraduates to participate, and giving constructive feedback that helps them to progress. You can find out more about this by searching for 'supervising' in the University Training Booking System <http://www.training.cam.ac.uk/cppd/>.

Payment for supervisions

Payments are made at the end of each term. You can find pay rates for supervisors at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/committee/seniortutors/guide/entries/index.php?id=243>

Best regards and happy teaching.
The PdOC team