CM-CDT: guidance on pastoral support for students

1. Introduction

This document contains guidance on the various ways in which the CM-CDT can help its students to find appropriate pastoral support whenever they need it. Students experiencing any kind of difficulty, as well as staff or students who have concerns about the wellbeing of any CM-CDT student, are encouraged to contact the CM-CDT at any time. We promise to treat all such situations with tact and, wherever possible, in confidence.

Each CM-CDT student is registered at one of the CM-CDT’s three partner universities – their ‘home university’ – and nothing in this guidance is intended to replace or override the support mechanisms that their home university offers.

The next section offers more specific information on some of the ways in which the CM-CDT can help to support its students. It also suggests actions that students, supervisors, and Directors of Postgraduate Studies can take to maximise the level of useful support that the CM-CDT can give.

2. Guidance on pastoral support for CM-CDT students

(a) Many difficulties can be resolved by informal discussion between the student and their supervisor and/or second supervisor, supplemented where appropriate by contact with pastoral support services at the student’s home university. We encourage any students experiencing difficulties to explore this option in the first instance. In addition to these sources of support, the CM-CDT has nominated pastoral contacts at each of the three partner universities (https://cm-cdt.supa.ac.uk/contact/support.php): any CM-CDT student is welcome to talk to any of them, in confidence, at any time. The CM-CDT office staff and the Operations Director are also always available to discuss with students, again in confidence, any difficulties they may be experiencing – please don’t hesitate to get in touch.

(b) Sometimes, e.g. in cases of difficulties with physical or mental health, it may be necessary for a student to take a period of leave from their studies. In such cases it is important that the CM-CDT office is involved in the discussions, in order to ensure that any suspension of stipend payments and registration can be managed appropriately and in the student’s best interests. We encourage prompt contact from the student themselves, their supervisor or second supervisor, or the local Director of Postgraduate Studies regarding any matter of this sort.

(c) In a small number of cases the best resolution turns out to be a change of supervisory arrangements. In such cases the CM-CDT can provide support and advice to the student, and can also liaise with potential alternative supervisors at all three of the partner institutions. Again, early contact – from the student, a member of the current supervisory team, or the local Director of Postgraduate Studies – is recommended in order to maximise the usefulness and timeliness of the support that can be provided.

(d) Sometimes, especially in cases of mental health difficulties, a student may not always be able or willing to request support themselves. With this in mind, we encourage any student or supervisor who has any concerns regarding the welfare of a student in the CM-CDT to get in touch with one of the CM-CDT pastoral contacts, the CM-CDT office, or the Operations Director. Depending on the circumstances, grounds for such concerns might include uncharacteristic lack of response to emails, persistent absence, or apparent low mood. We know from experience that timely contact from a relevant member of staff can sometimes help prevent a small problem from developing into a big one.