Memorandum of Understanding

SRS Living Labs and the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability

# How to get the best out of your Living Lab (LL) Experience

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## Purpose of document

The purpose of this document is to set out a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability and the Researcher taking part in the Living Lab project and the named academic supervisor of the Researcher. The MoU will clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder and will need to be signed at the bottom of the document.

Everyone approaches a research project differently and it is up to you, as the researcher, to decide how you choose to organise your time and when you complete the different elements of that research.

## Background

At the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS), treating the University as a Living Lab means using our own academic and student research capabilities to solve social responsibility and sustainability issues relating to our infrastructure and practices.

## Purpose and scope

Collaborative Living Lab projects can provide answers and guidance for operations and professional services staff, real-life learning opportunities for students, and opportunities for research impact for academics.

We collaborate with researchers and students across the whole University curriculum, to encourage interdisciplinary research as a vehicle to embed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across university operations.

Living Labs offer you to opportunity to include experiential learning to your educational journey as well as enabling you to put the theories you have learnt into practise.

## Responsibilities under this MoU (Researcher)

### Deliverables:

* **Organising your time effectively and efficiently**. Do not expect your Living Lab supervisor to come up with a work plan/schedule for you to work to.
* **The quality of your work**.
* **Clear and consistent communication**. This is for your written work as well as your communications with your Living Lab supervisor.

## Responsibilities under this MoU (SRS Supervisor)

### What to expect from your Living Lab Supervisor

**Supervisors will provide approximately (delete as appropriate):**

\*Coursework assignment 3-5 hours of contact time\*

\*Dissertation (UG or PG) 8 to 10 hours of contact time\*

\*Other (as decided based on SRS project needs) use the hours above as a guide to establish right contact time for any other project that falls out with a assignment or dissertation.\*

**\*\*This time includes around time for meetings as well as email exchanges and/or other communication channels.\*\***

Work based LL supervisors have a corporate working style and schedule, which means they often have meetings scheduled in weeks or months in advanced that may not be changed. It is advisable to set a schedule of meetings at the start, as below.

**Important:** How the contact hours are organised will vary and will need to be discussed and agreed with your supervisor early on in the project process.

The supervisor and student are jointly responsible for organising supervisory meetings. At a minimum, the following meetings are suggested:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Meeting | Suggested coaching ‘Point of Contact’ – 15-30 mins | Suggested dates for supervisor meetings 15-60 mins (as required) |
| Introduction to the Living Lab project concept: You may have already had an introductory meeting with the SRS Project Coordinator for Sustainable Development Goals and Living Lab Projects, or with another colleague at SRS. This would/will be an exploratory meeting/call/email chain, where you discuss whether a work based Living Lab project is for you. |  |  |
| First discussion and refining of the research proposal. This will cover, broadly: the feasibility of the idea; possible sources of data and reading; research methods; resources; a plan or timetable; research ethics; risks and contingencies. This is a good meeting to invite the academic supervisor to, to offer advice on academic integrity of the plans and answer any questions the work-based supervisor may have. |  |  |
| Progress to date review meeting: discussion and elaboration of the dissertation proposal (this is not to review any chapters). This should be to discuss how you will expand upon your research question(s), the main theory or concept(s) you plan to use and the planned methodology and methods. By this stage, you should also have done a reasonable amount of literature review and be in a position to identify (some) of the most useful existing literature. |  |  |
| Progress to date review: progress, problem-solving, analytical approach, etc. |  |  |
| Progress to date review: this may involve discussion on how to fill remaining gaps in the work or how to improve analysis of data collected, etc. |  |  |
| Final meeting: discuss the final analysis or interpretation of data collected and/or to discuss feedback on section areas and recommendations for SRS to take forward i.e. next steps. Some discussion about other outputs requested in the Project Brief could be discussed e.g. preparing the presentation, training resource, or social media content etc. |  |  |
| Optional meeting/call/email chain: to review and agree the output discuss in the Project Brief e.g. the presentation, training resource, or social media content etc. |  |  |

**Important:** In addition to meetings with your work-based supervisor, you should also have a similar schedule set up with your academic supervisor to specifically discuss the project in relation to academic achievement and ensure it meets the criteria for your course, to discuss any issues that might arise and to generally keep in touch with each other.

## How we will work together

### The role of the Living Lab supervisor

The supervisor:

* Helps to focus the student towards the challenge area and ensure the work addresses the operational issue needing researched
* Helps to promote experiential learning through self-reflection and skills based targets
* Advises on relevant contacts/departments within the university and may send an email introduction for the student to take queries forward individually.
* May advise on relevant literature areas if aware of any, and if appropriate to achieve can suggest methodology and methods.
* Discusses student progress against the agreed plan.
* Where relevant, advises on ethical implications of the research.
* Reads and provides non-academic feedback on a draft up to 5000 words of the paper, or 50% of the final output.

**Important:** Work based supervisors are there to **advise** and make suggestions, **not** to teach/give detailed instructions.

Treat them as though they are your client. Ultimately the quality and the content of the living lab project is your responsibility and your final mark is your responsibility. Any academic concerns must be consulted with your academic supervisor. It may be possible to arrange a meeting between yourself, your academic supervisor and you Living Lab supervisor to address any serious concerns you have about your project progress

### What is **not** the responsibility of your work based supervisor:

* Proofreading
* Reading multiple drafts of your paper
* Setting your work schedule
* Chasing you for meetings/material
* Arranging surveys or interviews
* Sourcing data
* Setting up meetings with other contacts]

### When arranging meetings with your supervisor, please:

* **Be prepared for your meetings**. You have limited time with your supervisor so make the most of the time meeting time. Come with questions planned or an agenda and ensure you have completed any tasks your supervisor has set you.
* **Keep in mind your supervisor is in lockdown too**. They may have home/work obligations that mean working flexible hours, weekends or hours outside 9 to 5. Please be flexible when arranging meetings and when waiting for email responses.
* **Take into account any time differences** if you and your supervisor are located in different countries, you will have to find a mutually convenient time that doesn’t cause your supervisor to meet outside of their normal 9-5 work patterns for their time zone, unless they offer this as an option.
* **Some supervisors are supervising multiple students.** If you are working as a group project, you may be requested to always meet as group to avoid duplication of discussion. If you have a particular problem within the group, it may be more appropriate to speak to your academic supervisor.
* **Social Media and private messaging.** Please only use professional communication channels, such as university email, when communicating with your supervisor. Using social media to connect with your supervisor is not appropriate during you Living Lab project.

### Notifying one another of planned time off

**The supervisor and student need to agree when supervisory meetings will be held and should notify one another of any absences due to work obligations or time off at the earliest opportunity.** Both sides should be made aware of absences of more than 3 working days duration, at least two weeks prior to the planned time off. This is to ensure that both student and supervisor can plan use of their time most effectively.

### Reading drafts

It is not the responsibility of the work based supervisor to read the words or chapters of a piece of a project/assignment or dissertation. Communication about the project’s progress should be thought of as reporting back about progress and findings. The work based supervisor can provide feedback on the researcher’s work on this basis and provide guidance on opportunities for improvement, though this will not involve advice on academic improvement as that would be a discussion with your academic supervisor.

### Response times\*

A **three working-day rule** normally\* applies to correspondence between supervisors and students, i.e. supervisors should respond to student emails within three working days (Monday to Friday). Please be aware that some requests by students cannot be responded to fully within 3 working days, such as providing feedback on text. In these cases, the supervisor is expected to respond by email within 3 working days to indicate when feedback will be provided, and this should, in any case, not be a period of more than seven working days (unless notified absence due to work or time off has already been indicated to the student, in which case the leave days are added to the seven working days in working out the maximum response time by the supervisor).

\***Please note** that due to Covid-19 and lockdown measures, many supervisors will have additional pressures on their home working environment, including potentially balancing childcare duties and additional work obligations. Please be reasonable in any requests and notify your academic supervisor in the first instance, or the Programme Director if you have and concerns around lack of communication from your work based supervisor.

## Funding

There is no funding available while taking part in a Living Lab, however, your School may have some funding related to research costs, such as travel or printing

## Disputes

It is recognised that, due to the work based non-standard nature of this educational experience, difficulties may arise. Where serious difficulties are identified during this Living Lab project they should be discussed among the three parties with reference to the agreed Memorandum of Understanding and the relevant procedures of School or College to advise, if required.

**Complaints or concerns should be raised as early as possible to ensure that they are dealt with in a timely manner. Ideally, you should discuss any issues with your supervisor in the first instance.**

In the first instance, if there are issues try to resolve these with your work based supervisors, but if you feel unsatisfied with the solution, you can also raise these with your academic supervisor, who can take this forward with the SRS Project Coordinator for Sustainable Development Goals and Living Lab Projects, Vanessa McCorquodale on Microsoft Teams or by university email at [Vanessa.McCorquodale@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Vanessa.McCorquodale@ed.ac.uk)

## Neural diversity and additional support

As a researcher (staff of student) at the University of Edinburgh and you have a disability, learning difference or health condition that may impact on your studies, please make contact with the Student Disability Service, to discuss your support needs.

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service>

At SRS we celebrate neural diversity, so when you take part in a Living Lab with us, do talk to your supervisor about any preferred ways of working that might make your learning experience easier and more rewarding. We are happy to listen to any strategies that you’ve learnt so far, or help you find new ones, that work for you.

Please use our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion form below to let us know if you would like to have a conversation about learning support at the start of the Living Lab project.

## Wellbeing

Your wellbeing is really important to us and the university. It’s normal to meet challenges while you are studying with us, but it is also normal to have brought challenges with you and we want you to feel fully supported during you time with us. Here are some additional resources that you can reach out to for additional advice and support:

* COVID 19 [www.ed.ac.uk/news/covid-19/current-students](https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/covid-19/current-students)
* Advice Place [www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/support\_and\_advice/the\_advice\_place](https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/support_and_advice/the_advice_place/)
* Chaplaincy [www.ed.ac.uk/chaplaincy](https://www.ed.ac.uk/chaplaincy)
* Wellbeing Centre [www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/health-and-wellbeing-centre](https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/health-and-wellbeing-centre)

Please also use our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion form below, to let us know if you would like to have a conversation about well-being support. We all experience stress in different ways and have different triggers, so having a conversation at the start of the project to identify any points when you are likely to feel additional stress or overwhelmed is a really good way to try and reduce the impact of those times. However, if you start to struggle at any stage of the project, speak to us as early as you can and we can work with you and your academic supervisor to find the best path forward.

## Signatures

### Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability

Name:

Role in this project:

Date:

Signature: (electronic version)

### Researcher

Full name:

Which College are you a part of?

School:

Degree programme name:

Undergraduate, Postgraduate or Research staff:

Date:

Signature: (electronic version)

### Academic Supervisor name:

Which College are you a part of?

School:

Name:

Role in this project:

Date:

Signature: (electronic version)

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability is committed to equality of opportunity for all staff and students, and promoting a culture of inclusivity. In order to improve engagement and widen participation, we would like to better understand our audience.

Read our [anti-racism statement](https://www.ed.ac.uk/sustainability/news/2020/anti-racism-statement) to learn more about how we are tackling systemic racism.

**What is your gender identity?**

**What is your ethnic origin?**

**What is your nationality?**

**Do you have a disability?**

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

**Do you have any mental health difficulties you would like us to know about?**

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

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