



Research Postgraduate Student Handbook

Last revised 2016

**Institute of Mathematics, Physics and
Computer Science (IMPACS)**

Research Postgraduate Student Handbook v. 2016: IMPACS
Edited by mis37

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Preface

This handbook is intended for all students studying research postgraduate courses in the Institute of Mathematics, Physics and Computer Science (IMPACS), which consists of the Departments of Mathematics, Physics and Computer Science. It has been prepared to help you understand how the departments are organised within IMPACS and, in accordance with the requirements of the University, to bring relevant rules and regulations to your attention.

Note that this material is in addition to:

- Academic regulations on the web (<http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/student/pg-issues/research/>) particularly the rules at <http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/regulations/>
- The Graduate School Documents and handbooks (<http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/docs-handbooks/>)

1. Research Supervision

In your chosen area of research, you will be studying the topic of interest within an established internationally-active research group and under the supervision of an academic member of staff active in the field. You should agree a programme of work with your supervisor(s), and provide periodic progress reports on your research. In addition you will be required to prepare a brief formal progress report at least once a year for submission to the University Research Student Monitoring Committees (see section 6). Your ultimate aim is to produce and defend a thesis detailing your contribution to the research, but in doing so you will have opportunity to develop research skills essential for a professional scientist. Your thesis is likely to be one of the most significant pieces of work that you will ever produce.

It is your responsibility to ensure that any problems regarding your research are drawn to the attention of your Supervisor.

You must provide adequate explanation for any failure to attend meetings or meet other commitments, so that appropriate guidance may be offered.

In consultation with your supervisor you should agree a schedule for progressing and submitting your thesis in a timely manner.

2. Research Degrees - Regulations

The University awards two higher degrees by research in IMPACS: the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and the Master of Philosophy (MPhil). A thesis for the Doctor of Philosophy must be a significant contribution to knowledge, worthy of publication and give evidence of the candidate's ability to undertake further research without supervision. Candidates for the Master of Philosophy undertake a research programme leading to the submission of a thesis which must include a critical review of the published work in the research area and give evidence of research ability; it must be a distinct contribution to scholarship in the candidate's field.

The duration of the periods of study for research degrees are set by the University in its Regulations governing higher degrees, which should be consulted for detailed information as the regulations can change. Time limits for registration and thesis submission depend on your year of registration and the terms specified for your admission to the degree course. You may find the rules for these degrees at <http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/student/pg-issues/research/>. If in doubt, consult your Director of Postgraduate Studies or the Academic Quality and Records Office (AQRO). The time limits applying to each student are those set out in the offer letter from the Postgraduate Office.

If your Supervisor tells you that your thesis is fit to be submitted for examination, this does not necessarily guarantee that it will pass; you do not need your supervisor's agreement to submit a thesis. You are responsible for finding out the correct submission procedure. The viva voce will be conducted according to University regulations: your supervisor will not be one of your examiners. The University has to conduct its examinations in a manner which is consistent with the concepts of integrity and impartiality, and also has to be seen by its students and by the outside world to do so; this makes it improper for the supervisor, who will have been intimately associated with the production of the thesis, to be associated with its examination. It is however University policy that your supervisor may be invited to attend the oral examination. If you wish your supervisor to attend you should make it known to the Chair of the Examining Board well before the viva. If your supervisor is present, it is also open to the Chair to exclude him or her from parts of the proceedings as appropriate: he/she attends in an advisory capacity and observer. The internal examiner will be a member of staff of the University who has an interest in your field of research.

Important: Between one and three months before you expect to submit (or resubmit) your thesis, you must remember to complete an "Intention to Submit" form.

3. Communication

In IMPACS we use **electronic mail** as the first means of communication with our students. **You should therefore log into the system regularly and read your e-mail.** If you make any arrangements (such as forwarding) which mean that your e-mail service may become unreliable, that is not an excuse for failure to respond.

In certain cases, messages for students will be left in the Physical Sciences Post Room in the Physical Sciences building (Mathematics and Physics students) or the research group pigeon holes in the Computer Science Coffee Room (Computer Science students). **Important information is sent to the address you**

have provided. You must inform the University of any changes to either your address or phone number. You can do this on-line at <https://studentrecord.aber.ac.uk/en/login.php>

4. Attendance

If you are a **full-time** research postgraduate student you are expected to attend the University for a **minimum of 44 weeks** in each academic year of your registration period. The University recognises that students may need to undertake periods of fieldwork or data collection away from Aberystwyth. **Absences of more than 3 weeks must be approved at least two weeks in advance by the departmental Director of Postgraduate Studies on behalf of the Head of Department. Permission must be sought, AND GIVEN, before you arrange travel, and at least 2 weeks in advance."**

If you are a **part-time** research postgraduate student you should agree a schedule of attendance with your supervisor and departmental Director of Postgraduate Studies.

If you are an **Overseas/non EU** research postgraduate student, then in addition to your regular contacts with your supervisor(s), which are recorded in accordance with **UKVI regulations**, you are required to comply with attendance monitoring regulation as specified by the Compliance Office in AQRO. Any **absence from the University** must be agreed with your supervisor and reported to the IMPACS Academic operations Administrator:Research. This is in addition to the above rule regarding absences of more than 3 weeks.

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/international/compliance-information/yourresponsibilities/>

All IMPACS research students are allocated office space by their respective Head of Department. Students must not change rooms without authorisation. Rooms are primarily for study. Conversations with visitors to your room should be brief so as not to disturb the study of those sharing with you.

5. Sources of Funding

Aberystwyth Doctorate Scholarships (Aberdoc) Competition

Details below are for information ONLY. The details of the annual competition are usually announced each November, at <http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/postgrad/funding-fees/uk-eu/research-competition/>, with a deadline of 1st March. Existing first and second year PhD students who do not have full funding may be considered.

Aberystwyth University runs a doctoral (PhD) scholarship (Aberdoc) scheme offering a package of research, training and career development for full-time PhD students. These awards are tailored to enable students to develop the necessary skills required to meet their career choices and offer a breadth of development opportunities to enhance their research, teaching and transferable skills.

Students within the scheme will make an agreed contribution to the Institute and University as a condition of the PhD scholarship. Teaching is not the only option though. The career development contribution could involve research, editorial work, professional placements, or other personal development opportunities which are also of help to the Department concerned.

Competition for University Aberdoc Scholarships is based upon the quality of the applicant, the quality of their research proposal, the fit with the supervisor / department's research interests and an interview for all shortlisted candidates. Each department then ranks all candidates and makes recommendations to a university level board which makes the final decisions. Hence competition is very stiff and you are advised to discuss your application with your supervisor or proposed supervisor well in advance.

Conference travel

Many conferences offer grants for PhD students to attend, and some PhD scholarships come with money for travel (including Aberdoc). PhD students are also eligible to apply to the AU's Gooding Fund. Additionally, see Appendix A for details of the Research Student Travel Bursary.

6. Monitoring Procedure

Every research student is monitored annually in May/June; the only exception is that students who do not start in September will undertake their first year monitoring after nine months, before joining the May/June cycle. Further monitoring may be deemed necessary, for example in September if problems were identified in June. The monitoring process is based on a system of reports, by both you and your supervisor. These are considered by the Department before being forwarded to the University Research Monitoring Committee.

Monitoring includes assessment against an action plan agreed at the previous meeting. Satisfactory progress is required to permit progress to the following year of registration.

For PhD students, there is a probationary period of one academic year for full-time and two academic years for part-time candidates, unless an exemption has been approved under the appropriate regulations. The decision to allow students to proceed from the probationary term will be made upon recommendation to the University Research Monitoring Committee. In such cases the Department's recommendation is made on the basis of the submission of a written report of research progress and interview. **You are strongly encouraged to get feedback on your report from your supervisor before it is submitted.**

The interview will be conducted by an independent departmental committee, both to assess progress and to offer advice and encouragement.

First year reports must be submitted as follows:

For June monitoring – no later than 31st May; and

For September monitoring – no later than 31st August.

Second and third year students are also assessed annually around May/June.

7. Plagiarism and Unfair Practice

Unfair Practice includes more than just plagiarism.

You must be familiar with the **Academic Regulation on Unfair Practice**, which is available with the information about the rules governing examinations and assessment at <http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/regulations/contents/unfair-practice/>

As you see, it is important to indicate clearly in your own work where you have included the work of others. This could include reuse of designs and programs as well as copying or quoting text. Make sure you understand how to acknowledge the work of others in all your submissions. Ignorance of how to do this is not a valid defence.

The following simple guidelines are intended to help you avoid straying from legitimate and desirable co-operation into the area of plagiarism:

- append a bibliography to your work listing all the sources you have used, including electronic ones;
- surround all direct quotations with inverted commas, and cite the precise source (including page numbers, or the URL and the date you accessed it if the source is on the Web) either in a footnote or in parentheses directly after the quotation;
- use quotations sparingly and make sure that the bulk of the work is in your own words;
- even if you don't use direct quotations, important ideas should still be credited;
- it is important to credit earlier publications even by yourself or your supervisor appropriately, and not to reproduce text verbatim without identifying it as a quote, even if it is your own earlier work;
- It is your responsibility to ensure that all co-authors and research supervisors are aware of the content of any work that you seek to publish or disseminate in any way;
- remember that it is your own original input that gives a piece of work merit;

Whatever sources you have used, the structure and presentation of the argument should be your own. If you are using electronic sources, don't cut and paste sections into your work. If you are using books or papers, put them aside when you actually sit down to write. In this way you won't be tempted to copy material that you don't understand, or be at risk of unintentionally copying more material than a brief quotation, or of

accidentally leaving quotations unmarked. Including someone else's work in your own is readily detectable because the style will be different.

Keep a sense of proportion, and exercise common sense and judgement. For example, it is not necessary to attribute to a source statements which have passed into the public domain and become commonplace.

It is usually unnecessary to attribute lecture material, though again you should avoid quoting copiously, and you should never rely wholly on lecture notes.

If in doubt, make sure that you properly quote and cite material in order to avoid any suspicion that you are trying to cheat and ask for advice if you are not sure.

8. Regulations for the Use of Equipment

The two major research resources within the University are the Library and the Computing facilities. All students are required to abide by the rules laid out by Information Services at:

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/regulations/contents/student/regulations/regulations-5/>

In addition, students are expected to abide by such further conditions concerning the use of the resources as the Institute or its constituent Departments may impose. In particular, you may only use software/applications if they are very clearly within the suppliers usage conditions and appropriate licences are in place.

If, in the opinion of your Head of Department, your use of the resources contravenes any University rules, or is in breach of any rules promulgated by the Department, your access to the resources may be summarily withdrawn.

Before starting on your project you must attend a short induction course on health and safety, coordinated by the Institute Director of Infrastructure. Student and supervisor must then carry out a risk assessment of the project. It is your responsibility to ensure that the appropriate form, confirming that a risk assessment has been carried out, is signed by both you and your supervisor and lodged with the departmental Safety Officer. Any changes in working practice that could alter the risk assessment at any stage throughout the project must be discussed with your supervisor and the Safety Officer before being implemented and a new risk assessment form submitted.

Fire Safety Information: *please take time to make yourself familiar with the fire escapes and evacuation procedures.* Details are displayed at convenient locations throughout the Institute buildings. Anyone discovering a fire should sound the alarm and summon the Fire Brigade. Dial **222** from any internal phone located in most staff offices and public terminal rooms. In the event of a fire, make your way out of the building, quietly and without running, by the nearest available exit. For non-emergency situations, you can contact AU security on 2649.

SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED ANYWHERE IN OR NEAR UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS

9. Student Support

9.1. The University Student Support System

The University Welfare System provides support and advisory services for all students:

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/student-support>

If you have special needs, wish to be evaluated, or just find out more about their services, it is a good idea to make an appointment with them.

9.2. Careers Office

The university operates an excellent Careers service. We suggest you consult with them to obtain the best advice on further study and/or your future career.

9.3. Supervisors

Each student taking a research degree involving the Departments of Mathematics and Physics or Computer Science is assigned a member of staff as a supervisor and a second member of staff to act as second

supervisor. The main role of the first supervisor is to help guide the research as described in Section 1, but they can also be a first point of call for advice on non-academic problems, such as difficulties arising through illness, personal problems, financial worries, accommodation problems etc. Such problems often require specialised help and your supervisor will often be able to put you in touch with specialised counsellors.

There may be occasions on which you would prefer to deal with someone other than your supervisors. If this happens, you should feel free to approach your departmental Director of Postgraduate Studies.

Students with special needs should make these known to the Special Needs Coordinator.

If you are unhappy with your supervisor(s) you should contact your departmental Director of Postgraduate Studies in the first instance (or the Institute Director of Postgraduate Studies if your supervisor is the Director of Postgraduate Studies).

9.4. Staff-student Consultative Committee and the RSCC

Staff-Student Consultative Committees exist to encourage liaison between the academic staff of the Institute and the student body. These Committees can play a role in shaping the Institute policy through their elected members. Postgraduate and undergraduate students are given the opportunity to appoint representative(s) to their Committee early in the session.

If you have any suggestions or comments, constructive or otherwise, you should contact your representative so that the matter may be brought up at the next meeting. The Committees normally meet once each Semester.

Any matters that cannot be dealt with within IMPACS can be taken to the University's Research Students Consultative Committee (RSCC) by a departmental representative.

9.5. The University Appeals and Complaints Procedure

The Departments always try to do their best to resolve any problems that students may experience, but if you feel that you have been treated unfairly in any way, you have the right to complain.

The University Appeals and Complaints Procedure is described in an Appendix to the Rules and Regulations for students, and is available at <http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/regulations/>.

Complaints: One of the general principles of that procedure is: *"Disputes should be resolved at the lowest level possible in the procedure. In the interests of harmonious relationships informal procedures should, so far as is reasonably practicable, be exhausted prior to entering the formal procedure."*

If you are unhappy with any aspect of your course or the university's provision, you may follow the University Complaints Procedure. Under this procedure you should seek to raise the problem at the lowest possible level, and resolve it informally, but if this is not possible it can be taken to a formal stage. If you have problems within the department, you should go to your supervisor in the first instance or your departmental Director of Postgraduate Studies. The matter will be referred to your Head of Department and if it cannot be resolved, or if you wish to take it further, it will be referred to the Institute Director of Postgraduate Studies and then the Institute Director and/or the Head of the Graduate School.

Appeals: You will be informed of the University Appeal Procedures when you receive your PhD result or if you are prevented from progressing from one year of study to the next. If you have valid appeal grounds, an independent panel will consider your appeal. You may wish to seek advice from your supervisor, or other departmental or Institute staff, or from the Students' Union.

10. Getting the most out of your time with us

10.1. Study Practice and Academic Skills

Student Support can provide advice on study practice and academic skills:

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/student-support/study-skills/>

You will also be required to attend courses and training in both the general skills required for research work and specialist courses relevant to your specific area of study. There may also be conferences or workshops of direct relevance for your work, and you should discuss potential meetings with your supervisor.

Visiting speakers give seminars at various times of the year. The talks are an *essential* part of research training and students are expected to attend *all* seminars in the broader area of their research.

You are also expected to take part in the Continuing Professional Development process (CPD) for research students. CPD is a normal part of professional working life, and engaging with this process as a routine part of your postgraduate work will help you achieve your potential both academically and personally. It will give you experience of a professional process which you are likely to encounter throughout your future career.

10.2. International English Centre

The International English Centre (<http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/international-english/>) provides English language courses throughout the year. The courses are accredited by the British Council.

10.3. The Postgraduate Centre

In 2013, Aberystwyth University opened a dedicated study and seminar space for postgraduate students. It is located in the Llandinam building.

10.4. Other Services

Your general handbook gives you information about the facilities provided by the Student Union, the Student Support Office, the Careers service etc. Students who get the most out of University life are usually also those who put in the most. If you have any problems, remember that staff in the Institute care about you. Come and talk to us and we'll do our best to help.

11. Relevant Contact Details

All Research Administration queries should be directed to mis37@aber.ac.uk, in the first instance;

IMPACS Responsibilities		Room	e-mail	Ext.
Institute Director	Prof Qiang Shen	L1-B48	qqs	2424
Institute Manager and Special Needs Coordinator	Mr Dave Smith	L1-B46	dhs	2446
Director of Postgraduate Studies	Dr Daniel Burgarth	MP1.09	dkb3	2757
Director of Research	Prof Reyer Zwiggelaar	L1-B61	rrz	8691
Director of Infrastructure	Mr Dave Price	L1-B59	dap	2428
Academic Operations Administrator: Research	Miss Michelle Symes	L1-B49	mis37	2232
Computer Science Responsibilities		Room	e-mail	Ext.
Head of Department	Dr Bernie Tiddeman	L1-B43	bpt	1777
Department Director of Research Postgraduate Studies	Dr Myra Wilson	L1-C52	mxw	2928
Mature Students' Tutor	Dr Edel Sherratt	MP1.40	eds	2448
International Students' Tutor	Dr Fred Labrosse	MP1.03	ffl	2388
Staff/Student Committee	Dr Mark Neal	MP1.42	mjn	2449
IS and Library Representative	Dr Jun He	L1-E33	jqh	1787
Academic Operations Assistant: MSc	Mrs Margaret Walker	L1-B50	zzy	1921
Student Experience Assistant	Miss Jess Gittins Miss Saoirse Morgan	L1-B50	jcg2 srm15	2424
Maths Responsibilities		Room	e-mail	Ext.
Head of Department	Prof Simon Cox	MP4.04	sxc	2764
Department Director of Postgraduate Studies	Dr Daniel Burgarth	MP4.02	dkb3	2757
Staff/Student Committee	Dr Rob Douglas	MP4.24	rsd	2756
IS and Library Representative	Dr Kim Kenobi	MP4.17	kik10	2767
Student Experience Assistant	Miss Sioned Newman	MP2.47	san14	2802
Physics Responsibilities		Room	e-mail	Ext.
Head of Department	Prof Andrew Evans	MP2.49	dne	2800
Department Director of Postgraduate Studies	Dr Huw Morgan	MP1.09	hum2	2810
Staff/Student Committee	Dr Chris Finlayson	MP2.10	cef2	2818
IS and Library Representative	Dr Heather McCreddie	MP3.08	hem18	8624
Student Experience Assistant	Miss Sioned Newman	MP2.47	san14	2802

Appendix A

Research Student Travel Bursary

The Research Student Travel Bursary scheme is designed to enable PhD students and supervisors to plan ahead for expenditure associated with travel to conferences or workshops for presentation of refereed papers.

Each PhD student can apply for a nominal allowance of £700 covering the duration of his/her studies, in addition to travel funds that may be available from their funding source. Planning of expenditure within this budget should be part of your annual review process. Note that this is not an automatic entitlement as each trip or other expenditure must be applied for and approved in advance by the departmental Director of Postgraduate Studies upon confirmation of fund balances; in no sense are you "owed" any unspent portion of the allowance.

In exceptional circumstances, and with strong justification, grants may be made in excess of the £700 total. In these cases a written justification must be submitted to the Director of Post Graduate Studies for consideration before being submitted for confirmation by the Institute Manager via the Academic Operations Administrator: Research.

Policy Statement

1. All travel grants need to be approved in advance of the proposed trip by the Director of Postgraduate Studies.
2. Travel grant applications will be considered favourably where you (a) are within your prescribed period of study; (b) are not requesting a grant of more than £700, unless presenting a refereed paper at a significant international meeting outside Europe; (c) have applied for or secured funding from other sources (e.g. supervisor's research grant, university, conference organiser); (d) have not previously been awarded a travel grant.
3. Applications may be rejected if you have previously been awarded grants totalling more than £700.
4. All other requests will be considered on a case by case basis, taking into account travel grants previously awarded and available funds.
5. PhD students beyond the normal period of study will not normally be considered eligible for a grant.
6. All papers or posters must clearly indicate an affiliation to the Department of Computer Science at Aberystwyth University.
7. You are expected to take advantage of all available cheap fares and other discounts. In addition (a) only early registration fees will be reimbursed; (b) membership fees may be reimbursed where this allows a discount on registration fees greater than the cost of the membership; (c) page charges will not be reimbursed; (d) conference banquets or other social events will not be reimbursed.

Applying for a Research Student Travel Grant

Applications should be submitted initially by email to the departmental Director of Postgraduate Studies. Before you apply, you must have:

- confirmed or estimated all the costs relating to the request;
- obtained quotes from Corporate Contract Suppliers such as Key Travel (whether or not you take up the quote);
- a statement of support from your supervisor;
- details of any supporting funding you are likely to receive.

You should submit all paperwork to Academic Operations Administrator: Research for confirmation of fund balances before placing any orders or bookings. For speed this can be done via email.