Introduction to the Informatics Graduate School

Nigel Topham and Alex Lascarides

Director, Deputy Director of Graduate School
What is the IGS?

- Large cohort of postgraduate research students
- Degrees: MScR, MRes, MPhil, PhD
- Academic and administrative staff (ISS)
- Information sources for postgraduate student

http://web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/student-services/igs
Information – Graduate School web pages

- Rich source of up-to-date info
- IGS people
  - Academic staff and their roles
  - Administrative and support staff
- Links to:
  - Introductory information
  - Year timelines
  - Annual reporting guidelines
  - Examination process
  - Programme change / withdrawal
  - Training & development
  - Fees & funding
  - Student support
  - Social events

http://web.inf.ed.ac.uk / infweb / student-services / igs
Graduate School staff and their roles

- **Director (Nigel Topham)**
  - Recruitment, selection and funding, with Institute PGR Selectors
  - Graduate School policy
  - College and University representation

- **Deputy Director (Alex Lascarides)**
  - Advice on: interruptions, suspensions, extensions, annual reviews, research relationships…
  - Networking events
  - Transskills and research training courses

- **Personal Tutor, PGR (Mike Fourman, Perdita Stevens)**
  - Mentoring and pastoral advice

- **ISS staff with IGS responsibilities, see:**
  [http://web.inf.ed.ac.uk](http://web.inf.ed.ac.uk) / infweb / student-services / igs / contact
The Community of Research Students

- 420 research students currently studying in Informatics
  - From 62 countries: 26.4% UK, 40.0% EU, 33.6% OS
  - Spread among 6 Institutes (20-70 in each)

- 100+ new this year, selected from 710 applicants
  - 97% full time, 3 % part time
  - 29% female, 70% male
  - 11% UK, 19% EU, 70% International

- 61 new PhD students, 4 new MScR students
  - starting Sept (47), Oct (8), Nov-Apr (10, so far)

- Plus 35 new students in Centres for Doctoral Training
  - 17 in Natural Language Processing (NLP)
  - 7 in Robotics & Autonomous Systems (6 more at Herriot Watt)
  - 11 in Biomedical Artificial Intelligence
Starting your PhD...

- Be bold – choose an exciting, challenging topic
- Develop your skills in parallel with your research
  - IAD courses (e.g., How to do an Inf PhD, 6/11/19)
  - VOX (e.g., Managing Res. Relationships, 4/11/19)
- Get to know other PhD students
  - Firbush (28-30/11/19)
  - Other social events advertised via email
- Seek outside interests - work/life balance
- Supervisors are human – learn to work with them
- Think about where you are going, and plan for your career
Be an effective PhD student ...

- PhD time is precious – manage it carefully
- Address problems; don’t let them fester
- Read extensively, widely and continuously
- Write early and often
- Plan your research around paper submissions
- Define small, measurable goals
- Get feedback from supervisors and colleagues about your plans
- Be rigorous in your work
- Learn from the best role models in research
- Take control of your own destiny…
- Read the *Researchers’ Handbook* (Bundy et al.)

http://web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/student-services/igs
→ phd → training-development → researchers-handbook
In case of problems

http://web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/student-services/igs/phd/student-support/resolving-problems

- Should you experience any problems during your research, there are a range of people that provide advice and support on both academic and non-academic issues.
  - Principal Supervisors
  - Assistant Supervisor(s)
  - Institute Directors
  - PGR Personal Tutors Michael Foreman or Perdita Stevens
  - Head of Graduate School
    • Nigel Topham - if your issue concerns admissions or your studentship
  - Deputy Head of Graduate School
    • Alex Lascarides - if your issue concerns anything else
  - Head of School (Jane Hillston)
  - Dean of Students (Anthony Maciocia)

- There can be special difficulties when, for instance, your Supervisor and Institute Director are the same person.
PGR Personal Tutors

A Personal Tutor for Research Students is an academic advisor, independent of the supervision team, who can be consulted by any research student in Informatics who needs advice when facing difficulties in their research that cannot be resolved through normal supervisory mechanisms.

Your PGR Personal Tutors are:

Prof Michael Fourman, Room IF 3.30                Prof Perdita Stevens, Room IF 5.05
Michael.Fourman@ed.ac.uk                        Perdita.Stevens@ed.ac.uk

They can offer advice on certain issues that students outside of supervision teams

• They can help point students to various forms of non-academic support and provide practical advice
• They liaise with the Deputy Director of the Informatics Graduate School to help resolve problems or difficulties that may arise during the course of PGR studies.
• When supervision problems arise, students can also directly contact their Director of Institute or the Deputy Director of the Informatics Graduate School.
Have fun with your research!