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

- 483 research students currently studying in Informatics
  - From 69 countries: 25% UK, 39% EU, 36% OS
  - Spread among 6 Institutes (20-70 in each)
- 125+ new this year, selected from ~840 applicants
  - 97% full time, 3 % part time
  - 29% female, 69% male
  - 11% UK, 19% EU, 70% International
- 71 new PhD students, 5 new MScR students
  - starting Sept (48), Oct (11), Nov-Feb (17), plus Mar-Jul (7 expected)
- Plus 34 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.)

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→ phd → training-development → researchers-handbook
# In case of problems


Points of contact depend on the kind of issue (and who it may involve)

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<td>1.</td>
<td>Your Principal Supervisor</td>
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<td>Your Assistant Supervisor(s)</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Your Institute or CDT Director</td>
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| 4. | Head of Graduate School  
|   | • Nigel Topham |
| 5. | Personal Tutors for Research Students  
|   | • Michael Fourman or Perdita Stevens |
| 6. | Deputy Head of Graduate School  
|   | • Alex Lascarides |
| 7. | Head of School (Jane Hillston) |
| 8. | Dean of Students (Anthony Maciocia) |

- Normal points of contact are for general guidance
- If you have a sensitive issue to discuss you can contact **any** of the above, but we recommend talking first to **Deputy Head of Graduate School** or a **Personal Tutor**
Personal Tutors

- Independent academic advisors who can be consulted in case of difficulties that cannot be resolved through normal supervisory mechanisms

- Can offer advice on certain issues that students may not want / be able to discuss with their supervisors

- Liaison with the Dep. Director of the Informatics Graduate School

- Students may request a consultation with either male or female Personal Tutor if they have a gender preference

- May point students to various forms of non-academic counselling
Have fun with your research!