

Hi all,

Thank you to those who came along to our town hall meeting recently. We received some really good feedback and hope it was helpful to those who attended. Below is a summary of what was discussed.

- The session began with a summary of the recent Mental Health training which was completed by 11 of our PGR students. Details of these students will be shared once IGS have updated their website with a new page relating to mental health and wellbeing. The school is very grateful to those students who took time out of their own busy schedules to undertake this training.
- Mary Cryan (Deputy Head of the Graduate School) wanted to focus part of the meeting on office etiquette and how a policy based on office etiquette could benefit all of our PGR cohort when students begin to return to the office. Various suggestions were suggested to the group and these will be considered when drafting the policy:
 - Do not leave any personal belongings
 - Anonymous reporting system
 - Responsible use of kitchens.
 - Smells in office, clothes, food, unclean desks
 - No long meetings in shared offices
- New PGR Shared Desk Policy: As of September 2020 a new shared desk policy was implemented in the school (<https://web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/admin/policies/student-desk-allocation-policy>). Some students raised some questions relating to this:
 - What will happen if shared offices are full, will there be other offices available to use?
 - Yes students would have access to hot desks if necessary (these spaces have not been identified yet). General office capacity pre-covid, was generally at 40% occupancy, at its highest, so we do not see this as being a big problem.
 - What will happen if students 'claim a desk' in a shared office?
 - This should be part of the etiquette rules of using the space. Claiming a desk in an office will not be allowed. IGS will be open to feedback as to how best to deal with this.
 - Self-managed desktops are available for new student but these will only be for home use. Cases can be made for a permanent desk if a student's personal situation warrants this and it is approved by the school.
 - Monitors will be available on all shared desks.
 - In some cases students were given a desk in an office that was not shared. This was due to them arriving and needing a desk before the shared desks were fully implemented. Going forward these offices will likely transition to shared desk offices.
- Potential Informatics Computing Society: Many years ago the school had a PGR computing society and the school wondered if this is something the current students would like to revive. A few discussion points on this topic are below:
 - This group would help to arrange PGR events.
 - Potentially using funds from the school and EUSA to help with student led initiatives.
 - A comp society could be a better way to collate proposals from students for events and student trips.

- The onus to get this started would be on the current PGR cohort but IGS are happy to provide support if needed.
- Any volunteers should email Mary Cryan or Patrick Hudson.
- Factors impacting PGR progress: Recently the school's completion rates have dropped, meaning that students are taking longer than usual to complete their PhD programmes. A survey was sent to students to look at why this might be happening and the top reasons can be seen below:
 - Lack of structure of working in the forum/ office, not having the ability to chat with fellow students and colleagues to discuss their research.
 - Structure of environment/ resources
 - Stress and anxiety
 - Worries about family members.
 - Disengaged with current research topic.
 - All of these are important factors and the school will look at ways they can help. The main source of improvement will inevitably come with the further reopening of the forum and Bayes and a return to more normal working conditions.
- Thesis writing event
 - A new thesis writing event will begin this week and information relating to this will be sent out to students.
- Q&A
 - SSLC - Student Staff Liaison Committee met recently and minutes for this meeting can be found below:
 - <https://web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/student-services/igs/phd/student-support/sslc-pgr-town-hall>
 - Currently there is work taking place in the forum to install cooling beams on the 4th and 5th floor to help with the heat in some offices. The work will be on-going throughout the summer. If this is to impact you directly IGS or the schools facilities team will be in touch to let you know what action you need to take, if any. If you have any questions about the work please feel free to get in touch with Patrick Hudson directly.
 - All PGR students can apply for access to their office space if they feel that their reasons to do so are essential. The process is relatively quick and if approved access will be added to your student card. If you would like more information on this process please feel free to get in touch with IGS or facilities@inf@ed.ac.uk and you can find out more about the process at the following link: <https://restricted.web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/informatics-covid-19-updates/re-opening-school-informatics/returning-to-the-campus-info-and-policies>