

From: Nigel Topham <npt@staffmail.ed.ac.uk>  
Sent: 20 March 2020 19:55  
To: research-students@inf.ed.ac.uk; igs-supervisors@inf.ed.ac.uk  
Subject: Remote working for PGR students

Dear Research Students (and supervisors),

I am following up on the recent email you received from the University's Senior Vice Principal and the Vice Principal (Students), with some additional Informatics-specific advice on working remotely.

As you know, a local decision has been made to close the Informatics Forum, the Bayes Centre, and the Appleton Tower. The University's position is that we are "open for business". Activities such as research and teaching will continue, but our ways of working are adapting to greatly reduce the need for people to share the same physical space.

For the avoidance of doubt, it is School policy that research students should not come into the Forum to work.

I know that many of you have concerns about how this will impact your research, your funding, and your ability to interact with colleagues to discuss your work. I am also aware that the changes to our mode of working is placing significant stresses on us all. It is therefore vital that supervisors ensure they have a remote communication channel with each research student, and that they stay in regular contact with them.

Where possible, supervisors should set up collaborative virtual channels with their research teams, and have regular online meetings (I am sure many are doing this already).

You can interact online via Blackboard Collaborate. Either the supervisor or student can set up a Collaborate session via MyEd. Whoever you invite to your created session gets an automatic email with the relevant link. This allows you to see each other (via your webcam), talk to each other, and share screens and even jointly write on a whiteboard. The university is providing sessions on how to use Blackboard Collaborate on a frequent basis right now (check out "events" in myEd and register), and there are also online tutorials and hints and tips all accessible from here:

<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/ilts/collaborate-ultra-video-conferencing/>

This mode of working is likely to continue for a number of months, so we all need to work together to allow research activities to continue as best they can in the circumstances.

A number of specific questions have been raised by research students and these are documented on the IGS webpage here: <http://web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/student-services/igs/updates-and-faqs/covid-19-faqs>

Although most of us will be able to continue our work remotely, either in its original form or by adjusting our research plans, there will be some who face practical difficulties and some for whom the stress will have an impact on their ability to work. In the first instance please discuss your concerns with your supervisor, they are best-placed to advise and help. However, if your supervisor is unable to resolve your issue, you can also contact the Graduate School, myself, Alex Lascarides, or one of the postgraduate personal tutors (Perdita Stevens and Michael Fourman) for help.

It is also likely that our guidance for research students will evolve as the situation evolves. We therefore plan to put an FAQ on the IGS webpage early next week. We will send out details of this when it is ready, and will update it regularly.

With best wishes,  
Nigel