

# University of Oxford

Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Divisional Office  
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*From the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division*

## **OXFORD UNIVERSITY COMPUTING LABORATORY Provision for Graduate Research Students**

The purpose of this statement is to indicate what a graduate research student might expect to be offered in the Computing Laboratory. It is expected that during a graduate's first term at Oxford, each graduate student and their supervisor will discuss the statement of provision, and the departmental Director of Graduate Studies will confirm to the Division that the statements of provision have been discussed with research students in their departments. The provision should be reviewed by the supervisor with the student at least once a year.

Further information and guidance about research degrees may be found in the University's *Notes of Guidance for Research Degrees* at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/guidance/index.shtml>

### **1. What arrangements will be put in place for supervising the graduate's work?**

You will have a named supervisor or supervisors, normally as indicated in your offer letter, who will have overall responsibility for the direction of your work on behalf of your department. Typically, you should expect to have meetings with your supervisor or a member of the supervisory team with a frequency of at least once every two weeks averaged across the year. The regularity of these meetings may be subject to variations according to the time of the year, and the stage you are at in your research programme.

As your first year progresses, if both you and your supervisor are content with it, the arrangement will become permanent; otherwise it will be changed. It will also be changed if it becomes clear that your interests are converging on a research topic that can be supervised more appropriately by another member of staff. In some cases joint supervision is arranged.

The close working relationship with your supervisor is likely to be the most important element during your research life in the department, and much of the first year will be spent on arriving at a good working relationship. The nature of this relationship will depend to a large extent on individual work patterns, but some useful guidelines can be found in the EPSRC booklet *Guide to Good Supervisory Practice* that will be in the folder given to you on your arrival. In spite of the range of styles of interaction between supervisor and research student, it is important that you meet on a regular basis.

You have also have been allocated an advisor: a member of staff of the Computing Laboratory with whom you may talk, as an alternative to your supervisor, about research or problems unrelated to work. Your advisor will probably be involved in monitoring your progress and may stand in if your supervisor is absent (for instance on sabbatical leave). Thus you should keep your

advisor informed of your interests and progress. Nearly everyone finds that the process of explaining their work clarifies it, and your explanation will benefit by your having to assume less background knowledge when explaining to your advisor.

If you find any aspect of your supervision unsatisfactory and you feel unable to discuss it with your supervisor, you should contact your advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies or the Head of Department.

The three university 'full' terms, Michaelmas, Hilary and Trinity, last eight weeks each. But terms simply set the periods during which formal instruction is given by way of lectures, seminars and tutorials. The university functions throughout the year: you will need to work in vacation as well as in term time (apart from reasonable breaks), when you are expected to remain in close contact with your supervisor.

The Division's Code of Practice on the Supervision of Graduate Research Students is available at:

<http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/intranet/teachingandlearning/graduateprog.html>

## **2. What induction arrangements will be made?**

You will have departmental induction before the beginning of your first term. The main induction to the department is provided at the start of Michaelmas Term. Other arrangements will be made for students starting at other times of the year. Your supervisor(s) will arrange more specialised induction subsequently.

## **3. What workspace will be provided?**

Workspace will be related to individual circumstances. If undertaking experimental work, you will be provided with bench space in a laboratory. If undertaking theoretical research, you will have shared office space.

As a research student in the Computing Laboratory you will be allocated your own desk and computer.

## **4. What IT support/ library facilities/ experimental facilities will be available?**

You will have access to the Computing Laboratory Technical Support Group, the Computing Laboratory Library (in addition to the RSL and other university libraries, and the centrally provided electronic resources) and experimental facilities are available as appropriate to the research topic. The provision of other resources specific to your project should be agreed with your supervisor as a part of the planning stages of the agreed project.

## **5. Which research seminars will be available?**

You will have access to the seminars that individual research groups or groups with common areas of interest organise for their own members and others. You will also have access to the other departmental seminars and colloquia.

A number of departmental seminars are held each term.

## **6. What access to research funds will be available?**

You will find that limited departmental funds are available to assist with attendance at conferences, in addition to any allocated funds via individual research group/supervisors.

Priority for funding is given to students who are attending a conference in order to present a peer-refereed paper. Students who have other sources of travel funding, notably students supported by research project funds, are encouraged to seek support from those sources before applying to the Laboratory.

## **7. What formal graduate skills training will be provided?**

You will have the opportunity to attend a variety of skills training sessions offered by the Department as appropriate to the different stages of your graduate career:

*Teaching & Learning seminar* - research students are expected to attend the half-day training session run by the Laboratory in October. This was developed in collaboration with The Institute for the Advancement of University Learning and is devoted to teaching methods in computer science. It has been found useful in particular by those wishing to assist with the Department's demonstrating and tuition.

*Class Teaching seminar* – research students wishing to assist with class teaching, either tutoring classes or marking work submitted for classes, must have attended a seminar on Class Teaching. These seminars are offered in both Michaelmas and Hilary Terms.

*Presentation Skills Seminar* - this will cover the art of making verbal scientific presentations. All students are expected to attend, as this will provide you with an introduction to an essential research skill.

*Student Conference* - usually held in Michaelmas Term and organised by students. All second-year students are expected to submit a two-page abstract, and all newly arrived PRS students are required to attend. A programme of abstracts and posters is selected for presentation, and a prize given to the best presentation.

*Self-Assessment* – each term students are asked to complete an online report. This report helps to make you aware of, and evaluate your progress. It will assist your management of information and may well provide your first record of project management. Such skills will ultimately benefit your career, so it is wise to acquire them early. The report is read by your supervisor, your college tutor and the Director of Graduate Studies.

The MPLS Division also organises courses and career planning events, details of which are emailed to students via their departments. Information about transferable skills training is provided in the division's WebLearn site

<http://www.weblearn.ox.ac.uk/site/mathspphys/gradstudents/>

Information about divisional training and other courses offered across the University is also available through the Skills Portal at

<http://www.skillsportal.ox.ac.uk>

This site provides information about transferable skills development for research students and research staff at Oxford University, and includes a searchable database of skills training opportunities, links to articles on subjects such as project management, teaching and career planning, and message boards for asking questions and discussing issues with other researchers. An online Personal Development Planning System also is available through the Skills Portal.

First year research students are also expected to take four courses (MSc., advanced undergraduate, or reading) and to submit the assignments for these courses. Your choice of courses and the method of assessment (if different from the default for that course) are to be decided in discussion with your supervisor. Any proposal for partial or complete exemption from the coursework requirement must be justified and supported by your supervisor and is subject to approval by the Director of Graduate Studies. Details of courses currently available on the taught MSc can be found here:

<http://web.comlab.ox.ac.uk/teaching/MSCinCS/MichaelmasTerm/>

<http://web.comlab.ox.ac.uk/teaching/MSCinCS/HilaryTerm/>

<http://web.comlab.ox.ac.uk/teaching/MSCinCS/TrinityTerm/>

## **8. What opportunities will be available for developing and practising teaching skills (for second and third year graduates)?**

The University has established a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), which will support the development of research students who wish to follow an academic career, including training in teaching skills. The Department joined the CETL in October 2007.

Research students who have attended the Teaching & Learning Seminar may demonstrate for practical sessions; those who have attended a Class Teaching Seminar may provide some tuition on the undergraduate and MSc classes run by the Department. Your supervisor must give permission for you to undertake the amount of teaching work you propose to do.

## **9. What arrangements for accommodation, meals and social facilities, will be made, on a year round basis?**

### **Department:**

Kitchen facilities are available on each floor of the Computing Laboratory and there is a cafeteria in the Department of Engineering Science. Research students can use the common room on the ground floor and also the basement social area. These facilities encourage interaction between research groups in the department.

Departmental seminars and colloquia bring research students together with academic and other research staff in the department to hear about on-going research, and provide an opportunity for networking and socialising. In particular, every week in term you are expected to attend ‘Cakes’ talks in the common room and you are expected, once a year, to give a seminar on your work at these talks.

**College:**

There is an extensive framework of support for graduates within each college. Your college will allocate to you a College Advisor from among its Senior Members, usually in a cognate subject, who will arrange to see you from time to time and whom you may contact for additional advice and support on academic and other matters. In college you may also approach the Tutor for Graduates and/or the Senior Tutor for advice. The Tutor for Graduates is a fellow of the college with particular responsibility for the interests and welfare of graduate students. In some colleges, the Senior Tutor will also have the role of Tutor for Graduates. Each college will also have other named individuals who can offer individual advice. Please see individual college websites for further details about all aspects of college provision.

**Central:**

The University also has a professionally staffed confidential Student Counselling Service which offers assistance with personal, emotional, social and academic problems. Details can be found here:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/shw/counserv.shtml>

The University also has a Careers Service:

<http://www/careers.ox.ac.uk>

If you have any queries about your department’s statement of provision please contact: The Director of Graduate Studies in your department, or the departmental Graduate Office.