

University of Oxford

Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Divisional Office
9 Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PD



From the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division

OXFORD UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

Provision for Graduate Research Students 2020-21

The purpose of this statement is to indicate what a graduate research student might expect to be offered in the Department of Computer Science. 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 supervisor will confirm to the departmental DGS the individual provision as it applies to that student. The provision should be reviewed by the supervisor with the student at least once a year.

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 a fortnight 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 Department of Computer Science 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, the Graduate Studies Administrator 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 (you are entitled to 8 weeks’ vacation each year), when you are expected to remain in close contact with your supervisor.

Please see here for further information on supervision:

<http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/study/currentpostgraduates/information-for-postgraduate-research-students/supervision>

2. What induction arrangements will be made?

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) may 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 Department of Computer Science you will be allocated your own desk and computer or laptop. IT support contact all students and supervisors before arrival to check out what requirements they may have to ensure equipment will have a suitable processing capacity.

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

You will have access to the Department of Computer Science IT Support Team, the Department of Computer Science 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 training and seminars will be available?

For research students a range of courses are available. Departments provide a mixture of formal research training sessions and informal training through working with your supervisor or in your research group. Some of these courses may be assessed. The Division is developing further cross-disciplinary provision for key research skills, to share research training expertise and skills across the Division. You can see the Department's training strategy guide here:

<http://www.cs.ox.ac.uk/teaching/dphil/Trainingstrategy.html>

The Graduate Academic Programme identifies a need to provide advanced courses in core techniques, e.g. in (non-linear) mathematical modelling, computer programming, and data analysis), in addition to courses introducing the specific area of research. Research seminars are available within individual research groups; department research groups; across the Division and in other Divisions

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 and the student conference is held each year.

6. What access to research funds will be available?

Each student has a travel fund of up to £2000 for the duration of their studies, to assist with attendance at conferences, in addition to any 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 are required to seek support from other sources such as college, supervisor and conference organiser as well as applying to the Department.

7. What formal graduate skills training will be provided?

The Graduate Academic Programme brings together all the training available to graduate research students in MPLS, which means that you have access to a very large number of courses. These include academic courses, research, teaching, transferable skills and career development training. With access to all these courses you and your supervisor are able to tailor a training programme to suit your individual needs and interests.

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:

Class Teaching & Learning seminar - research students are expected to attend the online training session run by the Department 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.

Practical Demonstrating seminar – research students wishing to assist with demonstrating must attend the online training session run by the Department in October each year.

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.

Oxford Computer Science Conference - usually held in Trinity Term and organised by students. All second-year students are encouraged to submit an abstract, and all first year PRS students are expected to attend. A programme of abstracts and posters is selected for presentation, and prizes awarded for the best presentation, poster and abstract. A Conference dinner is organized giving you the opportunity to meet students working in other research groups.

Self-Assessment – Students are asked to complete an online report reflecting on your progress each term. 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 should follow on from a supervision meeting where you have discussed your progress and next steps with your supervisor. 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. These skills are taught in the context of the students' own current interests and needs. The Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR) allows students to reflect on their development and progress, and to record skills training needs and training attended.

Information about transferable skills training, and courses provided by your department, and the other departments in MPLS can be found at:

<http://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/study/currentpostgraduates/information-for-postgraduate-research-students/training-and-professional-development>

A list of courses is also available in the Division's skills training handbook. These courses are organized by the MPLS Division and make up part of the MPLS Graduate Academic Programme (GAP)

First year research students are also expected to attend at least one course from the taught MSc in Computer Science and to submit the assignment for these courses. Courses will be chosen in discussion with your supervisor to broaden your research interests. Details of courses available can be found at:

<http://www.cs.ox.ac.uk/teaching/MSCinCS/>

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

The department provides training in teaching skills, and there are opportunities to take part in teaching activities in the department, such as undergraduate/MSc classes, practical demonstrating, and tutorial teaching in colleges.

Research students must complete the department's seminars on Class Teaching and Learning and/or Practical Demonstrating in order to undertake teaching in 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 Department of Computer Science and there is a cafeteria in the Department of Engineering Science and in the Department of Physics. Research students can use the common room on the ground floor and also the atrium. 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.

College:

Many colleges will be able to provide you with at least one year's accommodation. Generally speaking your college will provide meals throughout the year, but provision will vary from college to college, especially during vacations, and you will need to familiarise yourself with your college's detailed arrangements. In addition there are usually self-catering facilities available in graduate accommodation. You will be a member of the Middle Common Room, or equivalent, of your college, which is the main social centre for graduates. The MCR provides a common room and usually organises a programme of social events throughout the year. The college will also provide a bar, some computing facilities and a library, and may often have dedicated funds for research (conference and field grants). It also represents the interests of its members to the college through an elected Committee or through elected representatives to College Committees. Again, details will vary from college to college. Graduates are also welcome to participate in all other social and sporting activities of the college. Please see individual college websites for further details about all aspects of college provision.

Central:

Graduate Research Students may become members of the University Club in Mansfield Road, and participate in the range of sporting activities provided by the University.

10. What arrangements are in place for pastoral and welfare support?

Department:

Within the Department, your supervisor, Director of Graduate Studies and Graduate Studies Administrator are all available to offer support. The Graduate Joint Consultative Committee provides a channel through which graduate students' views and concerns can be brought to the attention of the department. Graduate student representatives are also invited to attend the Faculty of Computer Science meetings. The University Counselling Service is also invited to talk during induction week so that students are aware of help that is available should they need it. Students are allocated a "buddy" from the current 2nd year students as an extra person to talk to and contact in case of any problems and to help students to settle into the department and Oxford more easily.

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. The University also has a professionally staffed confidential Student Counselling Service which offers assistance with personal, emotional, social and academic problems.

Central:

The University provides a Student Counselling Service:

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/counselling>

and Careers Service: <http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/>

If you have any queries about your department's statement of provision please contact the Graduate Studies Administrator or the Director of Graduate Studies.

(Updated September 2020)