

PhD Student Handbook 2015–2016

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1 Introduction

Welcome to the Department of Computing. We hope that you will find the next three years studying for your PhD degree stimulating and enjoyable. Research work can form the basis of a very rewarding career and a successful PhD is the ideal way of starting out. Computing is one of the most rapidly developing disciplines with numerous opportunities for innovative and original work. The Department is pre-eminent in many branches of computing.

The following notes have been put together to assist you in planning and organising your work and to introduce you to the facilities available. We hope you find them useful and that you will be able to play your full part as a member of the academic community. If, at any time, you have any doubts or queries feel free to raise them with the appropriate person.

Detailed arrangements are subject to frequent changes, often introduced by the College Registry and Graduate School. For up-to-date information please consult the Department's PhD web pages:

<http://www.doc.ic.ac.uk/research/phd/phdmatters>

Any expanding scientific discipline looks to its PhD students to provide a rich source of new ideas. We are sure that you will enjoy your time here and will contribute substantially to developing the subject.

2 You and your Supervisor

The primary responsibility for organising your research work lies with you. However it is your supervisor's responsibility to guide your research, point you in interesting directions, monitor your progress and generally provide moral and technical support. Supervisors differ in their methods but you should normally expect to see your supervisor at least once a fortnight. Feel free to contact him or her at any time if you have a problem or are unsure how to proceed.

You will find that you can obtain the most benefit from meetings with your supervisor if you prepare some material for him or her to read or formulate some specific questions you would like to discuss.

Early on in your career as a PhD student your supervisor should appoint a 2nd supervisor. Please remind them to do so. The role of the 2nd supervisor is to give help when your supervisor is unavailable and generally to keep in touch with your progress.

PhD students are a vital part of a flourishing research community. You should do your best to participate as fully as possible in the academic life of the Department. You will find that informal discussions with your colleagues play a large part in your education.

You should work hard to build up a good relationship with your supervisor but it does occasionally happen that you find it impossible to work together. Or your research may lead you into avenues that are outside your supervisor's areas of interest. In such circumstances a change of supervisor is appropriate and can sometimes be arranged. Discuss it first with your supervisor if you can, and then involve the Postgraduate Tutor and any other potential new supervisors.

3 Postgraduate Tutor

The Postgraduate Tutor is responsible for the overall running of the Department's PhD programme and for providing pastoral support for research students. He is available to discuss any matter, personal

or academic, in confidence. RAs registered for a PhD requiring pastoral support may also contact the Department's RA mentor, Professor Stephen Muggleton.

4 Mentor

In addition to the supervisor, 2nd supervisor and the Postgraduate Tutor, every PhD student has a *mentor* whom they can consult. In the Department of Computing, there is one mentor per year-group. If the mentor of your year-group is also your supervisor or 2nd supervisor, then your mentor will be the mentor of one of the other year-groups.

The role of your mentor is that of a trusted advisor who can provide counsel, encouragement and career advice, and generally take an interest in your development. The mentor is independent of your supervisors and takes no responsibility for performance or assessment of your progress. Mentors may also organise social and other events for their year-group. Where students need more pastoral support the mentor may refer them to the Postgraduate Tutor.

5 Timetable for a PhD

It is difficult to set out a fixed timetable for PhD work as there are so many variables and variations but, however it is structured, it is essential that some planned programme of work be followed. Failure to complete a PhD is often not due to lack of talent, but more to do with a failure to plan work sensibly and tackle the more mundane activities, such as writing up.

The College and the Department impose certain formal milestones, which are outlined here. The Department strongly advises students to plan for completion of the PhD by month 36. If you are worried about your progress, talk to your supervisors, mentor or the Postgraduate Tutor.

Here is general outline:

Year 1

- Familiarisation with the research area, reading papers, identifying problem areas, formulating tentative solutions/advances.
- At the end of your first year you should have identified quite closely the area you wish to work in and have developed some ideas on which your thesis could be based.

Year 2

- Carrying out the bulk of your research or innovative work. Developing solutions, establishing primary results, writing implementations or applications. Drafting substantial parts of your thesis.
- By the middle of your second year you should know what your thesis will contain. You should be able to draw up a realistic plan for the remaining time, and demonstrate that you can complete everything, including writing up, by the end of your third year.

Year 3

- Completing your research and writing up. Even if you have been very successful in accumulating material the final production of your thesis is going to need at least four months of dedicated effort.

- Writing up your thesis is a substantial task. It always takes longer than you imagine and can be a daunting and depressing activity if you leave it all to the last moment. It is vitally important that you get into the habit of writing things down as you go along. This will help to clarify and communicate your ideas and build up a file of material that can be incorporated into your final thesis. If you enter the third year without such a source your chances of successfully writing up are very low. You will find that once you start to try and write down ideas you thought were fully worked out, clarification or expansion is required; the sooner you discover this the better.

6 Formal milestones

Besides wanting all research students to obtain the maximum benefit from their studies, the Department and the College come under considerable external pressure to ensure that PhDs are completed in their allotted time. For these and many other reasons there is a formal review procedure and deadlines for all research students. The deadlines are listed below. For EPSRC-funded students the College has an obligation to report annually to EPSRC on progress. The studentship can be withdrawn if that report is not satisfactory.

The following procedures were introduced in January 2011 to replace the previous MPhil/PhD scheme. Deadlines for part-time students are shown in brackets.

Registration	From 1st January 2011, students are directly registered for the PhD degree. (Prior to 1st January 2011, students were initially registered for the MPhil degree.)
3 months (PT-3 months)	Students are required to complete a Research Plan Confirmation (RPC) .
9 months (PT-18 months)	Students are required to complete a satisfactory Early Stage Review (ESR) in order to continue as a PhD student. The ESR consists of a 9-month report and presentation. Students must also complete the requisite Professional Skills Development courses prescribed by the Graduate School (see below).
24 months (PT-36 months)	Students are required to complete a satisfactory Late Stage Review (LSR) in order to continue as a PhD student.
36 months	End of PhD programme. Students can if they wish continue to access College resources (e.g. Library, email) for a further 12 months by entering <i>Writing-Up Status</i> (' Completing Research Status ') and paying a fee of £200.
48 months (PT-72 months)	The PhD thesis must be submitted by end of month 48. This is a strict deadline and can only be extended by seeking formal approval from the College.

Please note that full-time research students failing to submit within 48 months of registration (72 months for part-time students) are not permitted to enter the degree examination. The examination has to be effected (form of entry submitted) no later than 40 (68) months after initial registration and preferably earlier. Students who fail to do so may be refused submission.

Deadlines for Part-time PhD students

The College deadlines for part-time students are given in parentheses in the table above. Deadlines given in this handbook are typically stated for full-time students. Part-time students should assume the corresponding part-time deadline when reading.

Deadlines for RAs registered for a PhD

Important For the purposes of calculating milestones and deadlines, RAs who are registered for a PhD degree are always treated by the College as *full-time* PhD students, even if they work part-time for the PhD.

Graduate School Professional Skills Development Programme

All PhD students are required to complete a number of Graduate School Professional Skills Development courses as part of their PhD programme (previously called Transferable Skills courses). This requirement exists in order to ensure that all students receive some training in generic transferable skills while at Imperial and have the opportunity to engage with fellow students in College and elsewhere.

The requirements are subject to change from time to time. At the time of writing, students need to complete *four* courses from a predefined list of courses. These courses have to be completed within their 4 years period of PhD. PhD students who were formerly Masters students and who completed Graduate School workshops prior to October 2012 may be able to count some of these workshops towards their Early Stage Assessment requirement.

For more details about the programme and the current set of requirements see:

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/professional-skills/doctoral/>

Please note that it is *your* responsibility and not your supervisor's to ensure that you complete this component of the course in time.

English Language Proficiency Test

All students whose native language is not English are required to take a compulsory test devised by the English Language Support Programme. Depending on their performance, they may be asked to take some further courses in English. This is for your benefit and is free of charge. Students who have a UK undergraduate degree are exempt. Special cases can be made to the Postgraduate Tutor via the PhD Programme Administrator.

7 Research Plan Confirmation (3 months)

All research students are required by the College to draw up and agree a formal research plan with their supervisors within the first three months of registration. This consists of a short report on the student's activities and achievements in the first 3 months and a research plan drawn up in consultation with the supervisor. Your supervisor is required to discuss your progress with you and to make a written assessment. You are also asked to do a self-assessment. Assessment forms are available in CATE (<https://cate.doc.ic.ac.uk>). Your report must also be uploaded to CATE.

The 3-month report aims to ensure that you and your supervisor are engaging in an coherent programme of work, and allows the Postgraduate Tutor and 1st year Mentor to monitor your initial period of study. You will be provided with an opportunity to have a confidential meeting with the Postgraduate Tutor or 1st year Mentor.

The following are suggestions for what you could include in the report:

- problem overview
- key papers, concepts, techniques, tools, etc reviewed
- bibliography of papers read
- experimental work undertaken, results obtained
- Graduate School courses taken
- collaborations started with other PhD students, RAs or external groups or individuals
- courses, conferences and workshops attended or helped on

8 Early Stage Review (9 months)

There is a formal review of progress in the first year, approximately nine months after the date of initial registration. This consists of a written report and an oral examination. Students whose work fails to meet the required standards will be asked to resubmit at month 11. Students failing at that point will be required to withdraw or to transfer to the MPhil degree.

The aims of the review are to:

- ensure the student is capable of and suited to PhD research;
- ensure the student is progressing with the research topic at a rate which will allow completion in the allotted three years;
- ensure the research topic is well structured and has the elements needed to provide a successful doctoral topic;
- check that supervision arrangements are working satisfactorily;
- check that there are no problems with the supply of equipment, or other materials;
- provide feedback, comments and technical suggestions;
- provide experience of writing technical reports at the level expected of a PhD dissertation; provide some experience of an oral ('viva voce') examination.

Report and Presentation

The 9-month should not normally exceed about 30–40 pages. You may use any papers and technical reports you have produced over the year to develop the report. Your supervisor can offer advice on content and structure. The report will normally include [most of] the following:

- *Introduction and statement of problem.* A clear statement of the research problem and aims and objectives. This should be described in a way that is accessible to any member of the Department's academic staff.
- *Literature survey.* An outline of the precedents for the proposed work, points of departure, and indication of potential significance; a comprehensive and critical literature review demonstrating a good knowledge of the background to the research problem. Where a detailed literature review chapter for the dissertation has already been drafted, this may be attached as an appendix and a summary of the main points included in the report.
- *Methods and techniques.* An account of the methods and techniques adopted in the study. This will normally include a presentation of the relevant theoretical computational or experimental methods to be employed.
- *Summary of research.* An account of research carried out so far.
- *Results.* A discussion of results obtained.
- *Research Plan.* A clear account of the future plans for the research with a schedule for completion of the work. This must include a realistic timetable of activities leading to a successful completion of studies. An outline of the dissertation [chapter and expected section headings] should be included. You should identify any risks and describe briefly the backup plans.
- *Bibliography.*

Detailed papers and reports, if any, can be cited but need not be included.

Examiners are well aware that results at this stage will be limited and ideas still at a preliminary stage. Students should not defer submission of the report because of a lack of results or because they have a paper deadline etc. Assessment forms are available in CATE.

The presentation in the oral examination should cover the following points.

- Introduction and statement of problem, structure of the talk
- Objectives and Aims: what you want to achieve, and how you will measure your success
- Techniques to be used, research carried out so far, (any) results obtained
- Comparable research work in the area
- Proposals for further work

Your target audience should be the Department's staff and fellow PhD students. Part of the presentation should therefore be at a level accessible to a computing graduate. On the other hand, you should not hesitate to include a technical part requiring specialist knowledge. You should expect to be asked lots of questions: about your understanding of the area, the choices you have made, related work, alternatives, etc.

Assessment

Each student will be allocated an Assessment Team consisting of at least three members of academic staff including the supervisor, the 2nd supervisor (or co-supervisor), and one or more independent assessors. The Mentor cannot be part of the Assessment Team.

The outcome of the 'viva' can be one of four basic recommendations:

- The student can progress to the 2nd year.
- The decision is deferred. The student needs to submit a revised report by month 11 and, at the discretion of the Assessment Team, possibly give a second presentation. A final decision will follow the re-submission.
- The student is required to downgrade to the MPhil degree.
- The student is required to withdraw.

Hilfred Chau Memorial Prize

The Hilfred Chau Memorial Prize is awarded annually for the best 9-month report. Supervisors should nominate suitable candidates to the Postgraduate Tutor as soon as possible.

9 Late Stage Review (24 months)

By month 24 students are required to submit a Late Stage Review report and upload to CATE any papers and presentations given at conferences. (A conference quality presentation given to your research group is acceptable also.)

The report should be a snapshot of your thesis at this time. This snapshot should be in thesis format; papers (published or other) are *NOT* acceptable as a snapshot substitute. The finalisation report and papers/presentations will be reviewed by the supervisor and 2nd supervisor and should provide strong evidence that the PhD will be completed successfully and on time. It is expected that several chapters of the thesis will have been completed at this stage, at least in draft form. There should also be strong evidence of progress from the 9-month report.

An appendix must be included summarising the progress on the PhD in the second year and a timetable outlining the remaining work that is needed with estimated deadlines. A second appendix should list all conferences and summer schools attended, positions of responsibility held, and outside professional activities.

10 Writing-Up ('Completing Research Status') (37–48 months)

PhD students are permitted to 'write up' their thesis in College and continue to have access to certain College facilities for 12 months immediately following the end of their registered period of PhD studies (normally, months 37-48). From 1 January 2014 'writing-up' status is known formally as **Completing Research Status** (CRS). Note that students who are awarded an EPSRC scholarship will have a minimum registration period of three and a half years and their writing up status will normally start in month 43.

Research students may apply to register as CRS students for a maximum period of 12 months upon payment of a CRS registration fee of £200.

To be eligible to register as a CRS student, a research student must have completed the minimum period of registration and completed all experimental and programming work. A formal CRS milestone must be completed to ensure that all substantive research has been completed and that during the CRS period the student will be engaged solely in writing up the thesis. Students are expected to submit an Examination Entry Form no later than 4 months prior to their expected submission date.

The CRS registration status cannot exceed 12 months and should usually follow immediately after the end of the student's normal registration period. Students will have access to all College facilities and be eligible for Council Tax exemption if they were registered as full time students immediately prior to going on to CRS. At the end of the CRS period a student will be recorded as 'Writing up Away from College' until the thesis is submitted.

Please note that while the Department will do everything it can to accommodate CRS registered students, space restrictions mean that the Department cannot guarantee it will be able to continue to provide access to a desk or a desktop PC during the CRS period.

Please note also that CRS registration is not compulsory. A student who has completed the minimum period of registration may choose to write-up the thesis away from College. Students in these circumstances are formally recorded as '**Writing up Away from College**' until the thesis is submitted. They will not be registered during this period but will retain VPN access until thesis submission and for a further 12 months from the date of thesis submission.

11 Thesis Submission (up to 48 months)

Deadline

Students *MUST* submit their thesis by the end of month 48. This is a strict deadline imposed by the College. Before you can submit your thesis or have a viva voce examination, you, your supervisor and the Department need to complete several examination entry forms. These are available at the Registry website, or via the link on the Departmental PhD web pages

<http://www.doc.ic.ac.uk/research/phd/phdmatters>

The forms should be submitted at least four months before thesis submission. Your examiners will be appointed at this time. Please consult your supervisor to ensure that these formalities are completed in a timely manner. Although month 48 is the final deadline allowed by the College for thesis submission, most students submit between month 36 and month 42. Do not let your supervisor divert you into writing papers in this final period. Your priority should be submitting an excellent thesis; additional papers can be written afterwards.

Post-Submission

Thesis submission is done electronically (via www.ethesis.co.uk) and causes your thesis to be printed and the printed copies to be posted to the examiners. Your supervisor will arrange the date of your viva. It normally takes place within two or three months of thesis submission although the wait can be considerably longer depending on the availability of the examiners and their other commitments. After the viva, the examiners will make a recommendation. The most common two recommendations are: to award the PhD immediately with no further changes (comparatively rare), or (most usually) to award the PhD subject to some minor specified amendments to be carried out within 3 months of the viva and approved by the examiners. There are other, less desirable, outcomes when sub-standard work is submitted. Work with your supervisor to ensure that your work will be judged to be of PhD standard.

12 CATE

All submission of formal documents and reports in the Department of Computing is done via the Department's Coursework submission service, CATE:

<https://cate.doc.ic.ac.uk/>

13 PhD Supervision

The following is extracted from the Graduate School web pages *PhD Students & Supervisors*.

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/graduateschool/qualityassurance/phdstudentsandsupervisors>

Supervisors expect you to:

- Take responsibility for your thesis: in the end it is your work and your supervisors are here to help you accomplish your research objectives, but not to do the thinking for you!
- Work hard: a research degree cannot be accomplished with only a 9–5 effort. Imperial College is a top ranking University and we expect that students will strive to accomplish good work.
- Display initiative: ultimately, the person who drives the process and strives to understand the research area is you. We expect you to be curious about your work and to think about how other ideas/work have an impact on the research you are doing. In light of this, it is a requirement for you to attend all lab meetings, work in progress etc. plus other seminars. *To be a scientist — you should be curious about science!*
- Write papers (this is dependent on field of study) before you have submitted your thesis. The process of writing enables you to develop skills which are useful when writing up your thesis, and the fact that you have had papers refereed/accepted by International journals satisfies the external examiner that you have what it takes!
- Be self-critical of your own work and results, and use these skills in being sceptical of results in the literature.

- Help colleagues (especially less experienced ones) in the laboratory to learn through discussions and demonstrations.
- Keep up with the literature in your field.
- Provide regular reports detailing your results. You should be conscientious about keeping a laboratory notebook and regularly entering all your data into tables and spreadsheets.
- Be aware of safety at all times and follow safety procedures, especially if you are working in a laboratory.
- Develop your skills and learn new ones by attending the transferable skills courses and lectures provided by the Graduate School, by your own and other College departments/divisions/faculties, and by any other external providers.

As a student you can expect your supervisor to:

- Be supportive of you both intellectually and personally.
- Set up a viable project and ensure that you have a clear idea of aims and objectives and an initial work-plan.
- Provide an adequate work space for you.
- Be available (or provide an identified substitute) to talk about research problems at relatively short notice although, at certain times of the year, you may need to give a few days notice.
- Help and guide you extensively in your first year; help you in your second year; and be a sounding board in your third year. The help is tapered as you develop confidence in your own abilities and research skills, to enable you to learn to work more on your own and to make more of your own decisions.
- Help develop your skills in technical writing, oral presentations, problem definition, statistical data analysis and critical literature reviews.
- Help enable you to attend at least one conference to present a paper.
- Provide adequate funds and/or facilities for your research project.
- Read your thesis thoroughly and make constructive comments on both style and intellectual content.

Together, students and supervisors are expected to:

- Adhere to the College time-frames: most importantly, in the case of a PhD you have a maximum of 4 years between registration and submission of the PhD thesis.

In addition, you can expect your supervisor to

- identify suitable PhD examiners and make arrangements for the viva examination.

14 Attending Taught Courses

Currently, as a PhD student you are entitled to attend all lectures in the Department. This is a great opportunity and you should continue your education by taking advantage of it. Of particular interest to PhD students will be the Department's MSc in Advanced Computing and MSc in Computing (Specialism). The topics covered often represent the frontiers of work in the relevant areas and provide an ideal introduction or background for your research. Discuss with your supervisor which courses you should attend. Course syllabuses, readings lists and timetables are published in the Department's web pages. Classes are normally held between 09.00 and 18.00 except for Wednesday afternoons. If you plan to attend any lectures it is courteous to ask the lecturer beforehand as space and availability of handouts may be limited.

15 Study Leave

Any periods of *research* in which you work on your PhD away from the College at another institution or organisation *must* be approved by your supervisor, the Department and the College. Departmental approval should be sought at least one month in advance of the period for which leave is sought. Study Leave is intended for cases where the work being carried out is research contributing *directly* to the PhD.

Where Study Leave is undertaken inside the UK, tuition fees are charged at the full rate.

Where Study Leave is undertaken outside the UK, tuition fees are charged at the full rate if the period of absence is less than 3 months. If the period of Study Leave outside the UK is 3 months or more, a reduced fee may be charged at the discretion of the Department.

Students with scholarships need to check whether any conditions are imposed by the funding body with respect to periods of research carried out elsewhere.

Students with visa restrictions need to seek specific advice from the College's International Office before making a Study Leave request, as a change of location may affect their ability to remain in the UK.

16 Interruption of studies

An Interruption of Studies should be requested when a serious personal emergency or other circumstance arises which necessitates a break from PhD studies. No fees are payable for such a period, during which a student's PhD registration is effectively suspended. This is not the same as Study Leave. If a student will be carrying out PhD related research away from College for a period of time, the supervisor can apply for Study Leave for this period.

Students with scholarships need to check whether any conditions are imposed by the funding body with respect to Interruption of Studies, for example, whether payments will resume on return from an Interruption of Studies and whether payments continue past the original end date of the scholarship.

Students with visa restrictions need to seek specific advice from the College's International Office before making an Interruption of Studies request, as a change of location may affect their ability to remain in the UK.

17 Annual leave/Holidays

The Departmental guideline is that students may take up to 8 weeks annual leave including College closures and Bank Holidays (about 5 weeks excluding College closures and Bank Holidays). This is in line with UK Research Council studentship conditions. Before taking any holidays, students must agree the dates with their supervisor. Holidays should not be taken at times when they will impact on PhD milestones, and are not an acceptable reason for delaying the submission of reports, etc. A holiday longer than 3 weeks must be approved by the Postgraduate Tutor.

18 Absence and illness

The College requires students to inform their Department if they are absent from College, for whatever reason, for more than one week. Students should inform their supervisor, and if required by the supervisor, the PhD Programme Administrator. If the absence is due to illness a certificate must be produced.

19 Employment during Studies

The Department provides opportunities for PhD students to carry out work for the Department. These are used to provide some additional financial support and to allow students to engage in the teaching activities of the Department.

The Department's policy is that the total amount of employment during PhD studies must not exceed 6 hours per week *on average* over the academic year. This limit will be strictly enforced for work carried out for the Department. The Department will not accept claims for work exceeding this limit. Any employment outside the Department must be approved by the supervisor. The total of employed work inside and outside the Department may similarly not exceed 6 hours per week on average unless expressly approved by the Postgraduate Tutor.

RAs registered for a PhD are employees of the College and are not eligible for additional payments to support Departmental teaching. RAs are obligated to carry out any duties required by the Head of Department. It has been the Department's policy to require that all RAs are available for assignment to teaching support during term time for up to 6 hours per week. This is subject to change and may be waived from time to time.

It is the PhD student's responsibility to handle any tax liabilities that may arise from their employment. Students with scholarships must also check if there are conditions imposed by their sponsor with respect to additional payments. International students should also seek advice from the International Office regarding visa limitations on employment.

20 Travel funds

The Department sets aside some funds specifically for the support of research student travel, with priority given to students who are *presenting papers* at international conferences and workshops. These funds are not for RAs, who are employees of the College, nor for students on Interruption of Studies.

At the time of writing each PhD student in the Department can expect to receive travel funding of up

to £3000 from the PhD Travel Fund over the course of his or her PhD studies, that is, from the date of initial registration until they stop paying fees. The maximum claim for any one trip will be £1250 and £2000 for any 12-month period. These limits are subject to change and may be amended from time to time.

Approval for a trip must be obtained before the trip by submitting a completed Travel Request form to the PhD Programme Administrator. The form can be found at the Departmental PhD webpage. You must ensure that you have your supervisor's approval and signature on the form. To avoid delays ensure that all details asked for on the form are supplied in full, together with brief justifications for all major items. The Postgraduate Tutor will approve the maximum amount that may be claimed. The approved amount may be lowered if items on the claim are excessive or inappropriate. After the trip, complete a College expense claim form, available from the PhD Programme Administrator, and submit this together with the approved Travel Request form and all receipts to the Departmental Accounts Officer via the Claims box in the post room. You will have to supply receipts for all items of expenditure. Note that the College imposes strict limits on travel expense claims. See

One claim during the PhD studies can be for a **training trip**, which is attendance at a conference, summer school, or similar event at which you are not presenting a paper. Trips to conferences of dubious standing will not be approved. You must supply a justification for the proposed trip and include signed approval from your supervisor. Short one-day trips within the UK, for example to attend a lecture at another institution, can be supported and will not count as training trips.

In order to allow the Department to support as many student trips as possible, PhD students are expected to minimise costs, for example:

- to use travel funds on Scholarships, Studentships or research grants where possible in preference to Departmental travel funds;
- to make sure they register as students when possible;
- to offer to work as a student volunteer (some conferences pay students to help with the running of the conference);
- to use public transport and not taxis when possible and safe;
- to use cheap/discount flights when possible and to book well in advance;
- to consider more hotels than just the conference hotel;
- to share a room with others if possible;
- to use cheap poster printing services: e.g. at the time of writing, an A1 poster at www.pwauk.com costs about £18 inc. delivery with a student/academic discount.

You cannot claim for travel insurance. The College's travel insurance policy covers students of the College whilst abroad on College business. College business is deemed to include (but is not limited to) visits to overseas universities and other academic institutions, attendance at scholarly conferences and research meetings, visits to overseas laboratories and industrial plants in connection with College research projects or teaching duties, field trips and sporting visits as representatives of the College. The policy does not apply to private holidays. For details and additional advice and exclusions see: <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/finance/sections/insurance/overseastravelinsurance>.

Other purchases Funding for other items, such as specialist books, small items of equipment, software and other services, may also be provided if they cannot be provided by your supervisor. Please submit enquiries to the PhD Programme Administrator in the first instance.

21 Disabilities, specific learning difficulties, long-term health issues

Studying at university can be a challenge, especially if you have a disability. The College is keen that you have every opportunity to fulfil your potential and graduate with the degree you deserve. It is therefore important that you let us know about any disability, specific learning difficulty or health problem as soon as possible so that we can give expert advice and all available support.

Some people never think of themselves as having a disability, but students who have experienced any of the issues listed below have found that some help and support has made all the difference to their study experience.

- Specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, AD[H]D)
- Autistic spectrum disorder (such as Asperger's)
- Deafness or hearing difficulties
- Long term mental health difficulties (such as chronic anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression)
- Medical conditions (such as epilepsy, arthritis, diabetes, Crohn's disease)
- Physical disabilities or mobility impairments
- Visual impairment

Disability Advisory Service

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/disabilityadvisoryservice>

The Disability Advisory Service works with individual students no matter what their disability to ensure that they have the support they need. The Service can also help if you think that you may have an unrecognised study problem such as dyslexia. The service is both confidential (information about you is passed to others in the University only with your agreement) and individual in that any support is tailored to what you need.

Some of the sorts of things that the Service can help with are:

- Being an advocate on your behalf with others in the College such as your Departmental liaison officer, Senior Tutor or Examinations officer, the Accommodation Office or the Estates Department
- Checking that your evidence of disability is appropriate and up-to-date;
- Arranging a diagnostic assessment for specific learning difficulties;
- Help with applying to the College for the cost of an assessment;
- Help with your application for the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) — see below;
- Helping students not eligible for the Disabled Students Allowance in obtaining support from other sources;
- Help with arranging extra Library support;
- Supporting applications for continuing accommodation for your second or later years.

Disabled Students Allowance

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/disabilityadvisoryservice/supportforstudents/dassupport>

Students who have home-fees status and who have a disability can apply for a grant called the Disabled Students Allowance which can pay any extra costs that are a direct result of disability. This fund is not means-tested and is a grant not a loan: any home student with a disability can apply and will not be expected to pay it back. Students with unseen disabilities such as mental health difficulties, dyslexic type difficulties, or long term health problems are also eligible for this fund.

22 Difficulties

One of your supervisor's roles is to offer help and support when you run into academic, personal or financial difficulties. You might also consider discussing such problems the Postgraduate Tutor or your Mentor. Please note that the College provides a wide range of Health and Welfare services. Do not hesitate to make use of these:

- **Welfare and Advice**
<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/students/welfareandadvice>
- **Fees and Financial Help**
<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/students/feesandfinancialhelp>
- **Accommodation**
<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/students/accommodation>
- **International Students**
<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/students/international>

23 Research seminars and social activities

Research is a social activity. You will learn more by talking with people working in your area and attending seminars than you will by reading papers in isolation. Many of the best ideas spring from casual conversations or accidental meetings. The Department has a wide range of active research groups that are well over the 'critical mass'. There are frequent informal seminars to complement the official Departmental seminars (held usually on Wednesday afternoons). Seminars are announced by email, and on the Department's web pages. As a PhD student you are entitled to attend all such seminars and use any departmental facilities such as the Common Rooms on the 4th and 5th floors of the Huxley Building. Try and maximise the opportunities this offers.

As well as attending seminars you should be prepared to give some. Most of the research group seminars are pitched at an informal level to encourage the early dissemination and discussion of ideas. The sooner you get used to exposing your ideas to others the better; you will find the audiences sympathetic and constructive.

Descriptions of the Department's research structure, listings of current research groupings, and staff research profiles may be found on the Department's web pages.

There are many other events and activities throughout the year. There is a ‘Cakes’ day in the 5th floor Common Room each week so that all PhD students can come together socially, discuss life and the universe and make friends. There is a very popular series of ‘Minute Madness’ events: first year PhD students have one minute to explain to the audience what their research is about; second year students get two minutes; third year students get three. There is an annual PhD Poster Competition (sponsored by Google). Beginning in 2011, the PhD students of the Department have successfully organised and run their own workshop with printed proceedings including papers submitted by outside persons and talks by prestigious invited speakers (see <http://iccs.w.doc.ic.ac.uk>).

24 ACM Student Chapter

The Imperial College London ACM Student Chapter aims to create a strong Computing research student community within our university. All research students are strongly encouraged to participate actively in organising and attending chapter activities. You will get to know the other postgraduate students in the department and their research interests. You can find students working on similar problems, with similar interests. You can find future collaborators, discuss ideas and get feedback. In addition, activities of the student chapter provide opportunities to meet distinguished computing professionals and grow your professional network. You will broaden your knowledge by taking part in lectures and discussions from different computer science fields. See <http://acm.doc.ic.ac.uk/> or the link on the Department’s PhD web pages.

25 Study room allocation

As a research student you will be allocated a working space in a room shared with other research students. When you arrive you will be told where this will be. Office keys are obtainable from the Department’s General Office. A deposit is usually required.

26 Computing Support

It is Departmental policy that all research students have, at the very least, their own desktop PC with appropriate word-processing software, access to printers, archive and back-up facilities, email, and networks. Most students will have access to more sophisticated computing equipment in addition, as required by the nature of their research. Research students may also borrow a laptop from the Department for a short time, e.g. for giving a presentation at a conference. If you have problems with hardware or software, or want to learn more, you should contact the Computing Support Group (CSG) preferably by mailing help@doc.ic.ac.uk. All such emails are logged allowing you to follow the progress of requests.

If you have a computer and access to the internet at home it is possible to connect to College systems via the College’s VPN service. Consult the College’s ICT service
<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/ict/services/networks/networkconnections/vpnconnection>.

Useful information can be accessed via either the Department or the College webpages. It is worth spending some time familiarising yourself with them and bookmarking pages with useful information. The Departmental PhD web pages are at
<http://www.doc.ic.ac.uk/research/phd/phdmatters>.

As a PhD student you should be on the Department's `phd-list` mailing list. As an RA registered for a PhD, you should be on the `ra-list` as well as the `phd-list`. You should check your email regularly, as important notifications are disseminated using email.

All research students are entitled to a certain amount of photocopying, either in the Department or in the Central Library. Check with Ann Halford in the General Office about allowances and access codes for the printer-copiers.

27 Common Room

Research students in the Department of Computing are entitled to use the Department Common Room on the 4th floor (room 418) of the Huxley Building. Tea and coffee are available. Research students are also entitled to use the Maths/Computing Common Room on level 5 of the Huxley Building. It is open from 09:00 to 17:00 and serves tea, coffee, sandwiches and other items. To be a little bit more eco-friendly bring your own mug.

28 Staff/Student Committees

The PhD Committee is the forum for general discussion of issues that affect research students. It consists of the Director of Postgraduate Studies, the Postgraduate Tutor, the PhD Programme Administrator, the PhD Admissions Tutor, the year mentors, and representatives elected by the research students (one for each year). Meetings are held at least once a term, and on demand.

The PhD Committee is not the appropriate forum to raise or solve specific problems affecting one or two individuals. It is the place to discuss persistent or widespread problems, or general points that affect all students. Constructive suggestions are encouraged and are always welcome. Approach any member of the Committee or send an email message if there is an issue you would like to raise.

See the *Who's Who* link on the Department's PhD Student webpages:
<http://www.doc.ic.ac.uk/research/phd/phdmatters>.

29 Term-time and Home Addresses

Students must provide both their term-time and home addresses upon registration at the start of each academic session. It is essential that any subsequent changes of address are notified to both the Registry and the Department's PhD Programme Administrator immediately. Change of address forms are available from the PhD Programme Administrator.

30 Mail

You must read your email every day. This is the normal means of informing you of changes to the PhD programme, deadlines etc.

Research students' mail is put in pigeonholes in room 440 (opposite the Department General Office). All student mail should be addressed as follows:

Student's Name

PhD student *or* Research Assistant — *whichever is applicable*
Department of Computing
Huxley Building
Imperial College London
180 Queens Gate
London SW7 2RH

The address *MUST* contain the designation ‘PhD Student’ (or ‘Research Assistant’) otherwise post may be delivered to the wrong pigeonholes. Students should check their pigeonholes daily.

31 Telephones

All research student offices have telephones that can dial internal College numbers. Please inform Bridget Gundry in the General Office if your phone number (or office) changes. Most offices also have a phone that can dial external local calls. Dial 7 for personal calls and 9 for work related calls to get an outside line. If personal calls come to more than about 5 pounds a month your office will get a bill (this rarely happens). If you want to dial long distance from the College phone network, you can get a calling card and you will be billed. If you can work out the access codes you might also be able to call other UK universities directly, and do all sorts of complex things such as call diversion.

For calls from outside, the direct line for your office phone is obtained by prefixing the extension number with 020 759. For example, the outside number for extension 48251 is 020 7594 8251. This only works for extensions starting with 4. The international dialling code for the UK is +44.

32 Stationery

You can get a variety of stationery items such as paper and pens from the Department General Office (room 436).

33 Identity cards

Everyone in the Department is required to have an ID card. Photographs for the cards are taken by the College Security Section. Please enquire at the Department General Office for details. The ID cards are also used to access printers and photocopiers, and other facilities. You will also need to have your ID card before you can use the College library.

34 Out of hours access

Normal College hours are between 08.30 and 18.00, Monday to Friday. The times outside these hours are known as ‘out of hours’ periods. Students are permitted to work (not eat, play or sleep!!) in some parts of the Huxley Building for parts of the out of hours periods. Entry to the building will not be permitted after 22.00 and all students must leave the building by 23.00. The building opens at 05.00 in the morning. All students must carry their ID card to be allowed out of hours access. The Security Guards hold lists of student names showing for which rooms and times out of hours access is permitted.

When using the Huxley Building out of hours, you must

- carry your ID card at all times,
- show your ID card to the Security Guard or other members of College staff on request,
- complete the attendance register at the Security Desk on level 2 when you enter the Huxley Building (or at 18.00 if you are already in), and complete it again when you leave.

35 Library information

Students are automatically registered with the Library when they are issued with a College ID card on joining the College. Your ID card is used as your library card, to swipe into the Library, borrow books and operate the Library printers. For more information see: <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/library>.

The Library has access to many sources of books outside the College and can arrange short and long term loans. It is also open to requests for the purchase of specific new books. Contact the Departmental Librarian, Ellen Haigh (e.haigh@imperial.ac.uk), if you need help.

36 Safety procedures

Fire Alarm Signals

The *GENERAL ALARM* signal is a continuous ringing of the fire alarm bells. This is a signal that the Huxley Building should be evacuated immediately.

Evacuation Procedure

- Act quietly. Use the nearest available exit — indicated by green ‘Fire Exit’ signs.
- Do not use the lifts.
- On leaving the building keep clear of the exits to avoid impeding the Fire Brigade. Report to the assembly point, which is outside the main entrance in Queen’s Gate, but well away from the entrance. Do not re-enter the building until you are told it is safe to do so.

If you discover a fire

- Give the alarm immediately by breaking the glass in a corridor or room fire alarm. This will sound the alert signal. If you are unable to set off an alarm ring 4444 (four digit emergency number). If you hear talking on the line decide whether the same emergency is being reported; if not, interrupt with details of the emergency.
- Try to extinguish the fire by using the nearest extinguisher or hose reel *but do not take any personal risks*.
- Shut all doors, and if possible, the windows, of the room in which the fire is discovered. This will prevent draughts and reduce the risk of the fire spreading.
- Telephone the Messenger/Security Guard (58907 or 4444) or go to the main entrance and give him/her the details. The Messenger/Security Guard will call the Fire Brigade to the Huxley Building.

Escape Routes from the Huxley Building

Green 'Fire Escape' signs posted in the building mark escape routes. These are not always at the bottom of the stairwells. (For instance it is necessary to exit at level 2 for the main stairs in the Huxley Building.) It is important that you are aware of the escape routes near the place you are working. Check these whenever you move your workplace, before any emergency occurs.

Remember *NOT* to use lifts in emergencies — the power may be cut off abruptly. In addition, short-circuits can cause lifts to stop at the level of a fire.

Fire Wardens

There are Department of Computing Fire Wardens on levels 2, 3, 4 and 5. When an *ALERT* signal sounds it is the duty of the Fire Warden to check their area, and then take action as described above. When the *GENERAL ALARM* sounds, it is the duty of the Fire Warden to ensure that the area for which they are responsible is vacated and that all persons in the area make their way out of the building by the nearest escape route. In level 1 lecture theatres the lecturer has the responsibility of the fire warden.

If a Fire Warden instructs you to evacuate, you should follow their instructions quickly and quietly, even if there is no other warning.

Fire Drills

From time to time a fire drill will be organised. Please follow the standard procedures for evacuating the building.

First Aid

In the event of an accident or sudden illness, call a first-aider. The location of the nearest first-aider is shown on green notices on each floor. Alternatively, you can contact the College Health Service on extension 49400 during normal hours (Monday to Friday, 09.00 to 17.00, except when the College is closed). Give emergency details. If this fails dial 4444 and ask for an ambulance.

Bomb Warnings

In the event of a bomb warning, the evacuation signal may or may not be used. Security staff will have been alerted to ensure that sensible exit routes are used and you should follow their instructions. You are advised to stay clear of the campus for at least one hour after the alarm. Any assembly point could itself be the location of the bomb.

37 Links to Various College Webpages

Warning *College links tend to be unstable.* You may need to search the College website to locate the information. For more up-to-date links to the most important items you can also look at the Department's PhD web pages:

<http://www.doc.ic.ac.uk/research/phd/phdmatters>

Information for Research Students

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/researchdegrees>

- PhD Direct Registration Procedures
- Useful information for PhD Students
- MPhil/PhD and EngD Procedures

- MD(Res)
- Change of Supervisor
- Study Leave
- Interruption of Studies
- Writing-Up Status

What is a PhD?

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/researchdegrees/usefulinformation>

- PhD Structure
- Types of PhD
- Partner Research Institution Scheme

Support for PhD Students

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/researchdegrees/support>

- Academic Support
- The Graduate School
- The Graduate Students Association
- International Students
- International Office
- English Language Support
- Imperial College Union

PhD Students & Supervisors: What to expect

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/graduateschool/qualityassurance/phdstudentsandsupervisors>

Codes of Practice

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/graduateschool/qualityassurance/codeofpractice>

- The research supervisor
- The research student

Research Degree Assessment and Review

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/currentstudents/researchstudents/assessment>

- Early Stage Assessment — Guidance notes
- Early Stage Assessment Form
- Late Stage Review — Guidance notes
- Late Stage Review Form

Graduate School

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/graduateschool>

English Language Support Programme

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/humanities/englishlanguagesupport>

Postgraduate English Requirement

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/humanities/englishlanguagesupport/postgraduateenglishrequirement>

Registry

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry>

Exam Entry Forms

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/exams/examentryforms>

Guidelines for Supervisors for the Appointment of Examiners

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/workspace/registry/public/Exams/Procedure%20for%20Appointment%20of%20Examiners%20for%20Research%20Degrees.pdf>

Thesis Submission and Vivas

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/exams/thesisandvivas>

Academic and Examination Regulations

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/regulations>

College Certificates

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/currentstudents/degreecertificates>

Student e-Service

<https://centssso.ad.ic.ac.uk/sso/pages/IClogin.jsp>

International Office

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/international>

Points Based System (non-EU nationals)

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/international/current/visas/pointsbasedsystem>

Council Tax

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/currentstudents/counciltax>

18+ Student Oyster Card

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/currentstudents/traveldiscount>