School of Engineering and Informatics

Handbook for Research Students

Academic year 2020/21

UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Welcome to Doctoral Study with the School of Engineering and Informatics

As the Director of Doctoral Studies (DDS) for the School of Engineering and Informatics, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the School and congratulate you on securing a place on our Postgraduate Research Programme.

We are delighted you have chosen to study at Sussex, and we are sure you will benefit from the time you spend working towards a higher research degree here at Sussex. Our aim is to equip you with the subject knowledge, research expertise, and transferable skills that you will need to advance your abilities and future prospects. We hope you will also embrace the rich opportunities available at the University and in the community beyond, have a stimulating and enjoyable time, and make new friends and colleagues. The School of Engineering and Informatics is at the leading edge of teaching and research. We have strong national and international links, and we are well funded by grants from government research councils, the European Union, and charitable foundations. In the School, you will benefit from well-equipped laboratories with specialist technical staff to support your study and research; and in the wider University, you will find excellent academic and professional services.

Research is by its very nature challenging, and postgraduate research even more so; not only are you trying to discover or create new things, but also you are simultaneously learning how to do research. You will need a high level of self-motivation and determination in order to make a significant contribution of your own. A research degree is very much what you will make of it, but your supervisor(s) is there to guide you towards your research objectives and help you develop your abilities. If you have any issues at Sussex (whether academic, personal, or financial) you will find that help and advice is never far away. However, your main point of contact should always be your supervisor(s).

I hope you enjoy your studies here, and I look forward to talking with you about your research. Good luck with your work.

Dr Martin White

Director of Doctoral Studies
School of Engineering and Informatics

1.1 KEY SOURCES OF SUPPORT

THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL

The Doctoral School is a University-wide structure supporting doctoral research across all Schools of Study. This is a key point of contact to get involved in the wider research community. Its web pages provide information on diverse issues including training and funding opportunities, as well as the university's regulations and codes of practice for PhD researchers (with which you should be familiar).

The Doctoral School is comprised of several units:

- **Research Student Administration Office (RSAO)**

  RSAO are the main point of contact for issues regarding registration, progress, examinations, and student letters. More information can be found at: https://www.sussex.ac.uk/rsao/ Contact: researchstudentoffice@sussex.ac.uk with enquiries

- **Sussex Research Hive**

  The Sussex Research Hive is a dedicated area of the Library for researchers; it provides private study areas, bookable meeting rooms, space for discussion and collaborative work, and regular events for doctoral researchers and research staff.

  Full details on Sussex Research Hive events can be found at: https://www.sussex.ac.uk/library/research/hive and on the Hive's Twitter Page.

- **Additional Resources for The Doctoral School**

  To keep up-to-date with The Doctoral School you can view their website at http://www.sussex.ac.uk/internal/doctoralschool/index or follow on Facebook and Twitter

  For any other information relating to your time as a doctoral student, please read the Handbook and Regulations for Doctoral Researchers, which can be found here: https://www.sussex.ac.uk/rsao/

Handbook and Regulations for Doctoral Researchers 2018-19

US
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX
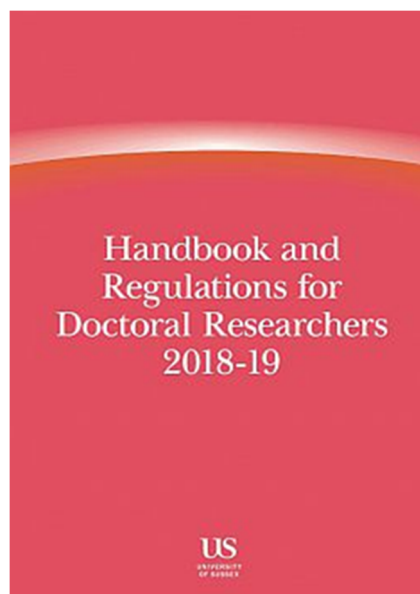
STAFF CONTACTS

Contact details for all Sussex staff can be found online using the staff profile directory here: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/profiles/search/

You can also view **department** specific staff and technician lists online here for Engineering: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/engineering/people/peoplelists/group/teaching-faculty

And here for Informatics: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/informatics/people/peoplelists/group/teaching-faculty

There are a number of key School contacts that are important to note throughout your time at Sussex:

- Dr. Martin White – Director of Doctoral Studies M.White@sussex.ac.uk

- Dr. Kate Howland – Director of Student Experience K.L.Howland@sussex.ac.uk

- Prof. Thomas Nowotny – Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange T.Nowotny@sussex.ac.uk

- Susan Eamer-Tsoureas – School Administrator S.Eamer-Tsoureas@sussex.ac.uk

- Luke Scott – Research and Enterprise Coordinator L.Scott@sussex.ac.uk

SUPPORT SERVICES OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

There are a range of support services that provide advice and help to students across the University.

- **International Student Support**

  The International Student Support office aims to offer you a high level of support to ensure that your time with in the UK is as rewarding and problem-free as possible. Further information is available at: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/internationalsupport/

- **Careers and Employability Centre**

  The Careers and Employability Centre works within the University's equality and diversity policy, which is set out here: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/equalities/

  The Centre runs training courses specifically for doctoral students and has published a Researcher's Guide to the Careers and Employability Centre available here: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/services/researchers

- **Academic Development**

  Academic Development workshops and one-to-one tutorials are available free of charge for students for whom English is a second or additional language. The workshops also offer guidance on academic referencing and plagiarism. The sessions are run through the Sussex Centre for Language Studies: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/

PGR REPRESENTATIVE AND UNION

Your postgraduate representative is a research postgraduate in the same School who may sit on certain School committees, as well as University level committees, and maintain a close involvement with the Student's Union. Due to their close working with the Director of Doctoral Studies, it is useful to provide them with feedback on areas such as supervision, and School related problems and concerns.

Visit the Student's Union webpage for more information on the Student Representative Scheme and to find your PG representative: https://www.sussexstudent.com/student-reps/

The University of Sussex Students' Union (USSU) can always be of some service if problems arise, they are situated in Falmer House. Free confidential and impartial advice, information, and support, is offered on a whole range of academic and non-academic issues: https://www.sussexstudent.com/support/

1.2 HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The University is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of all doctoral researchers at Sussex. It is important to remember that there are many opportunities to access help and advice if you feel that your wellbeing is being affected by any challenges that you encounter during your doctoral study.

Below you will find details of the support available at Sussex as well as a number of online resources.

- **Student Support Unit**

  The Student Support Unit is a team of specialist advisors who work with students who may need support at the university due to a long-term condition, such as disability, learning difficulties or mental health problems. For full details on how to contact the unit, please see here: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentsupport/

- **Student Life Centre**

The Student Life Centre offers information and advice to all Sussex Students. They provide easily bookable appointments and drop-in sessions for a range of different things including:

- Emotional, personal or family crisis
- Homesickness or housing problems
- Safety, crime and sexual violence
- Concerns about study skills, performance and progression
- Issues affecting attendance such as personal matters or anxiety about seminars
- Health concerns and other situations that may impact studies
- Specialist advisors in areas such as race and culture, LGBT issues, care leaver support.
- Problems with money including funding, budgeting and maximising income.

For more information on services offered please see https://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre/index

2. REGISTRATION AND INDUCTION

REGISTRATION

Registration is the formal process of recording that you have become a member of the University. Once you have registered you will be able to use the Library, Computing and other University facilities. Once registered you will receive a University registration card, which includes membership of the Students' Union.

In order to remain a candidate for the degree you are required to renew your registration each academic year. The academic part of this requirement is to complete the Progression Review.

All students should register using the online registration system. If you are full-time and unable to register using the online system, you should attend registration in person.

INDUCTION

The Doctoral School will contact you with information on the full package of support that is available during induction.

The School will ensure that all new research students meet their supervisor as early as possible. In addition to a wider induction of students by the University, the School will organise a social event for you to meet with faculty and new and existing research students.

2.1 CANVAS

Canvas is the University's new cloud-based online study platform, supporting both our on-campus teaching, and online distance-learning courses.

On Canvas you will find your module homepages and online assignment submission points. After registration, you will be added to the Engineering and Informatics PGR Canvas page. Here you will receive regular updates on University and School specific events, and find general information related to your studies and progression.

For more frequently asked questions related to Canvas please visit:
http://www.sussex.ac.uk/tel/learningtechnologies/canvas/canvasfaq

2.2 SUPERVISION

You will have a main supervisor and a secondary supervisor, both of whom will provide you with advice and guidance throughout your time at Sussex. You should have your first meeting with your supervisory team within your first two weeks after registration. This meeting should include a discussion of the schedule of supervisory meetings.

Both research degree students and supervisors have responsibilities that must be observed, for example:

- Maintaining regular contact
- Maintaining the progress of work in accordance with the stages agreed upon
- Providing annually, the work required by your School as part of the Progression Review process

For more detail, please visit the Doctoral Researchers Handbook: https://www.sussex.ac.uk/rsao/

2.3 ATTENDANCE, ENGAGEMENT, AND ABSENCE

ATTENDANCE

You should meet with your supervisor regularly. Most students have weekly scheduled individual meetings with their supervisor. For many, contact also occurs day-to-day in the lab. It is University policy that a supervision log is written on Sussex Direct at least once every four weeks for full time students (or 6 weeks for part-time students). It is normal practice for students to write the log entry, and supervisors to provide comments. You and your supervisor both have responsibility to keep the log up to date.

For more information on how to record your supervision, please visit the ENGINF PGR Canvas webpage.

ENGAGEMENT AND ABSENCE

You should be attending for about 40 hours per week if full-time and a pro-rata number of hours if part-time. If you are an Independent Distance Learning student, you are expected to be working full-time on your research.

Short periods of absence for holidays must be agreed with your main supervisor, as must attendance at conferences or visits to other universities or laboratories. If you need a longer period of absence to attend to family problems, or for financial or health

reasons, you might need to apply for Intermission (also known as Temporary Withdrawal).

Intermission is granted for individual months. There are no fees payable during Intermission and you should not be using university facilities or your School office or laboratory while on intermission. Intermission may require that your funding body be informed please discuss this with your supervisor.

2.4 INFORMATION AND SUPPORT RESOURCES

THE LIBRARY

To enter the Library you will need your Student ID card, which will be given to you after registration. If you forget your Student ID card, you can use the self-service kiosk in the reception area to issue a temporary 24-hour pass.

Most relevant journals for Engineering and Informatics can also be accessed online and copies of articles can be downloaded:
https://www.sussex.ac.uk/library/#searcharticles

Photocopies of other publications can be obtained via the Interlibrary Requests online catalogue. If you have any queries about interlibrary requests please ask the Library Information Hub on the ground floor or see here:
https://www.sussex.ac.uk/library/info/ilr

The Library also has a small Research Liaison team who support researchers at Sussex. The team ensure that the Library's collection meets the needs of researchers and provide support in using those resources effectively. To book a 1-2-1 support meeting with the team please visit:
https://www.sussex.ac.uk/library/research/support

The Research Hive is another Library facility dedicated to researchers, see page five of this handbook for more information.

The Library Skills Hub is located on the ground floor. The Hub helps develop your skills in areas such as digital skills, language support, critical thinking and writing, referencing, presentation skills, and numeracy and statistics. You can find more information on the Skills Hub at:
http://www.sussex.ac.uk/skillshub/?id=1

IT SERVICES (ITS)

The main user area and reception for IT Services is the ground floor of the Shawcross Building.

After registration, you will be issued with a username, password and email account by IT Services. ITS provide a range of services including information on how to select and print to local printers. Full details of the facilities and services specific to researchers are available on the IT Services webpages:
http://www.sussex.ac.uk/its/researcher

INFORMATICS HELPDESK

The Department of Informatics maintains its own computing facilities that are managed separately from central IT facilities, and provides some support that is specific to the needs of Informatics research students and staff.

The Helpdesk is based in Chichester I Room 201 and can be reached via email: rt-informatics@sussex.ac.uk

COMMON ROOM

The common room space for research students is in Chichester I Room 202, commonly referred to as the 'Debugging Room'. This space is open to all research students in the school and is the perfect place to meet other researchers.

The room has seating and a small kitchen area with free tea and coffee, a microwave and a fridge.

PGR PIGEONHOLES

If you need post delivered to the University you can use the PGR Pigeonholes.

Pigeonholes for Informatics Students can be found in Chichester I opposite the debugging room and for Engineering Students in the Richmond Building at the back of the ground floor.

3. THE FIRST YEAR: RESEARCH OUTLINE

RESEARCH PLAN

Your research progress is reviewed annually, and it is an important process. The first stage is the preparation of a research plan, which sets out the overall plan, objectives, and timetable for your research. This needs to be completed by the end of your second term of full-time study at the latest. Your research plan will need to include a proposed thesis title, be endorsed by your supervisor and approved by the Director of Doctoral Studies.

TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS

You must complete a Training Needs Analysis with your supervisor at the start of each year. By reflecting on your training needs you can identify areas for development and then target specific workshops and courses offered by the Doctoral School that focus on these areas.

ETHICAL REVIEW

All staff and students whose research involves living subjects will require ethical approval before their research may commence. To determine whether you need an ethical review, during your first year you will need to complete an ethical review checklist: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/checklist

Subsequently, if appropriate, you will need to gain ethical approval for your research via a committee review.

MID-YEAR SURVEY

All first year research students must complete the Mid-Year Survey. The purpose of the Mid-Year Survey is to provide an early realistic appraisal on the student's progress to date; it will not however directly affect your registration status. The School will inform you when you need to complete the Mid-Year Survey.

3.1 PROGRESSION REVIEW

Each year of registration, you will need to achieve satisfactory progress in your research. The Director of Doctoral Studies will advise the Research Student Administration Office on whether you have academic clearance to progress.

The Progression Review process helps to evaluate your progress and provides a confidential opportunity to draw attention to any problems you may be experiencing, or any areas where the School might better support you.

For more information, please visit the Handbook for Doctoral Researchers: https://www.sussex.ac.uk/rsao/

3.2 RESEARCH STUDY SKILLS MODULE

The School runs a PGR training module specifically designed for Engineering and Informatics students. Its purpose is not only to develop your research skills, but also to directly support your timely submission and successful completion. The design of the course focuses upon topics that will aim to improve your effectiveness in research and will involve tasks of immediate relevance to your research, the progression review, thesis and paper writing, and viva defence. The course also provides a library skills session, which is invaluable to using your time effectively in the library.

The module is compulsory and you must pass the module assignments in order to progress to the next year. The course convenor will contact all new starters directly with further details on course content and schedule.

4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Doctoral School coordinates professional development opportunities for all doctoral researchers at Sussex. These transferable skills opportunities range from workshops and lectures to e-learning modules and researcher-led open-discussions in the Research Hive in the Library.

Examples of these opportunities that take place throughout the year include:

- Technical skills: SPSS, LaTeX, UNIX, Matlab, Emacs, STATA, EndNote, NVivo, Dreamweaver, Writing your thesis in Word;

- Engagement skills: Measuring research impact and bibliometrics, preparing a paper for publication, poster presentations, science journalism, presenting at conferences, presentation design, peer review, getting published, media skills;

- Researcher skills: the Thesis Boot Camp, the Three Minute Thesis competition, writing retreats;

- Professional skills: the Doctoral School Mentoring programme, Vitae's online professional development course;

- Wellbeing: the Doctoral School support a number of projects that complement the exceptional mental health and wellbeing research already conducted at Sussex. This includes projects such as 'Understanding the Mental Health of Doctoral Researchers'.

Professional development events can be booked from the Doctoral School website: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/internal/doctoralschool/researcherdev/

4.1 RESEARCH CULTURE

Research groups and labs in the Department of Informatics organise seminars with presentations from internal and external speakers. For a list of seminar programmes, visit the research seminar webpage: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/ei/internal/research/research-seminars

4.2 TEACHING AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES

TEACHING AT SUSSEX

Some postgraduates help with the teaching and marking. For example, they may support workshops and demonstrating in the undergraduate laboratories. If you are interested, please discuss with your supervisor and inform the School Office.

- **Starting to Teach**

Starting to Teach is the University's training module for new, early-career and more experienced Higher Education teachers. Starting to Teach is a Master's level module accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), meaning successful completion of the module can gain you Associate Fellowship of the HEA.

It is open all PhD students, whether you are currently teaching or not. Most people find it beneficial to settle into Sussex and their PhD before taking the module, and while you are required to complete Starting to Teach if you want to teach at Sussex, you can do this either before or alongside your teaching. Further information on the programme is available here: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/enhancement/devawardsrecognition

WORKING OUTSIDE OF SUSSEX

Before taking on paid work, you should discuss with your supervisor the impact that this will have on your studies. The University recommends no more than 16 hours per week. If the need for paid work is affecting your studies, you should promptly discuss your situation and options with the Director of Doctoral Studies, so that this does not adversely affect your progress and outcome of your Progression Reviews.

Local job opportunities for part-time work are advertised in the Careers and Employability Centre, who can also offer advice and career positions after graduation: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/

Overseas students on a 'Tier 4' student visa can take paid work up to 20 hours per week during term time. We advise you check your visa obligations, or the UK Visas and Immigration website, for recent changes to this rule: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration

4.3 CONFERENCES, SUMMER SCHOOLS AND TRAVEL

As a Research student, it is a good idea to try to attend at least one academic conference during your studies in order to present your work to a wider audience.

Discuss possible sources of funding with your supervisor. The Doctoral School also offer an overseas travel grant for which you can apply online: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/internal/doctoralschool/funding/doc

Travel insurance is a **mandatory requirement** for all University business travel that involves either an overseas trip, or an overnight stay if in the UK. Students **must** arrange travel insurance through the University. You may also need to complete a travel risk assessment. You can find out more here: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/finance/how/expenses/travel-insurance

5. LABORATORY AND OFFICE SAFETY

IN AN EMERGENCY

In an emergency dial **Ext 3333** from an internal phone or **01273 873333** from a mobile. Blue emergency telephones are also provided at various locations on campus. They are directly linked to the University's 24 hour Security Service.

It is important that this number is used and **NOT 999** as the Security Team will contact emergency services on your behalf and meet emergency services at the entrance to the campus and guide them directly to the relevant location. Otherwise, emergency vehicles can get lost on campus and this may delay their response.

SECURITY

There is a 24-hour Security Service on campus. They can be contacted on **Ext 8234** from an internal phone, or **01273 678234** from an external line, or by email on security@sussex.ac.uk

HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICE (HSO)

The University HSO can be contacted via the Health and Safety webpage: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/hso/

NEW RESEARCH STUDENTS

Supervisors are responsible for the health and safety of their students, and projects they supervise. Ask your supervisor about the risks in your working environment and the procedures that have been put in place to ensure you can work safely.

It is important you should download a copy of the Science Schools Safety Handbook and read the precautionary measures that must be used, particularly in laboratories: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/enhancement/devawardsrecognition

For further information please visit the School Health and Safety webpages: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/ei/internal/general/healthsafety

5.1 APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

Procedures for Appeals and Complaints are laid out in detail in the Handbook for Research and Doctorate Students: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/enhancement/devawardsrecognition

Where possible, complaints should be resolved informally. You may wish to contact one of the following who may assist you informally, or may support you in the process of making a formal complaint:

- Your supervisor
- The Director of Doctoral Studies
- The Head of your respective Department (Engineering and Design, or Informatics)
- A Student Advisor
- The Welfare or Education officer of the Students' Union
- Your student Representative
- A Disability Advisor

5.2 FURTHER INFORMATION

For more School specific information, visit our School Webpage: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/ei/

For updates on events, competitions, job opportunities and more, visit our School Facebook or Twitter page.