



School of Informatics
Guide to Research Studies 2009-2010

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out the rules and regulations for research studies in the School of Informatics, in addition to those of the University approved by the Senate. Staff and students should consult the Research studies handbook available on the web (www.city.ac.uk/researchstudies/dps/rshbk_0910.pdf). Staff and students should also note that some areas of policy described in this document will vary across Departments and Centres – where this affects policies in this document, the differences will be highlighted.

For the sake of simplicity the following acronyms will be used in this guide:

- STR for Senior Tutor for Research
- RDC for Research Degrees Committee
- SoI for School of Informatics
- DoC for Department of Computing
- DIS for Department of Information Science
- HCID for Centre for Human-Computer Interaction Design
- CSR for Centre for Software Reliability
- CHI for Centre for Health Informatics

1.1 Forms

The appropriate forms must be completed and approved for any progress (be it annual or six-month progress – section 6, or transfers from MPhil to PhD or writing-up transfers – section 5) or change in registration status (section 2) to be official.

Forms are available at www.city.ac.uk/adu/rd/rdf.html. Some changes are dealt with directly in the student record system. These are for a transfer of course, withdrawal or return from a period of suspension. In these cases the appropriate form must be completed in the student record system for the change to be official.

Example forms for Learning Agreements/Records of Supervision are also available at this webpage (section 6). Finally, Application for Conference Expenses forms (available on request from Robin Syred, rsyred@soi.city.ac.uk) must be completed, signed by the supervisor and approved by the Chair of the RDC and a school budget holder before incurring any expense (subsection 4.3).

Andrew MacFarlane
Chair, School of Informatics Research Degrees Committee
1 October 2009

2. Admission, registration status and fees

2.1 Minimum entry requirements

The minimum requirements for entry to a research programme are a relevant Bachelor's degree, with a classification of 2:i (or an international equivalent). However, consideration will be given to students who have relevant Master's degrees, but who have an undergraduate degree classification of 2:ii. Students for whom English is not a first language must provide evidence of relevant language qualifications (e.g. TOEFL 250 (computer-based), TOEFL 100 (internet-based) or IELTS 6.5 or higher).

2.2 Research degree student status and length of registration

Full-time students can be registered for a maximum of four years, while part-time students can be registered for a maximum of eight years. This includes any writing-up time (see subsection 5.2).

There are a number of registration categories in which research students can undertake research studies:

Full-time internal

A full-time internal student is expected to be present at the University and may also be asked to undertake tutorial work to support the School's teaching. Full-time students spend something in the region of 30, to 35 hours per week on their study. Full-time students can be registered for a maximum of four years, including any writing-up time (see subsection 5.2).

Part-time internal

Part-time internal students only attend supervisory meetings as and when required. Part-time students are expected to study for around 15 hours per week or around two days per week. Part-time students can be registered for a maximum of eight years, including any writing-up time.

Full-time or part-time external

External students do not necessarily attend the University and are supervised by distance methods, but have a local supervisor who assists them on a day-to-day basis. External students can be full-time or part-time.

PhD by Prior Publication

Students registering in the PhD by Prior Publication category must have an existing body of published work and be nominated by a member of the School's professorial staff who can show a common research interest with the candidate. PhD by Prior Publication students are not considered full-time or part-time and may be registered for minimum of one year and a maximum of two years. Further information on the PhD by Prior Publication can be obtained from the University's Research Studies Co-ordinator, Naomi Hammond (naomi.hammond.1@city.ac.uk).

Research students will only be able to change their registration status at four key dates in the year. These dates are: 1 October, 1 January, 1 April, and 1 July. This affects changes to part-time, full-time, internal and external status and transfers from MPhil to PhD and to writing up.

2.3 Fees

The fees for this academic year 2009-2010 are as follows:

INTERNAL FULL TIME

Home & EU	£3,390
Overseas	£9,850

INTERNAL PART TIME

Home & EU	£1,695
Overseas	£4,925

EXTERNAL FULL TIME & PART TIME

Home & EU	£792
Overseas	£2,465

PhD BY PRIOR PUBLICATION (minimum period of registration is 1 year, maximum is 2 years)**Year 1**

Home & EU	£6,600
Overseas	£19,700

Year 2

Home & EU	£3,300
Overseas	£9,850

WRITING-UP

All	£300
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3. Induction

The University runs an induction day every October and February of each academic year, and new students are expected to attend.

The School itself does not run an induction day; however we do recognise that joining a new environment (particularly for overseas students) can be an alienating experience. As a new student, you should make sure that you do the following as soon as possible:

- Meet your supervisors and discuss issues such as training requirements.
- Meet your departmental administrator, who will allocate you a desk and storage space.
- Contact the Technical Support Team, who will set you up with Sol computer account and arrange for the equipment you are entitled to.

4. Entitlements

The following entitlements refer exclusively to Sol commitments towards students. Students (for example, students associated to research projects) can independently negotiate more facilities with their supervisors.

4.1 Equipment

You are entitled to a computer with a Microsoft, Linux or Macintosh operating system. Please contact the Technical Support Team if you need access to specialist packages for your research (tst@soi.city.ac.uk). As a student in the School you are entitled to a Sol email account and access to the internet from your allocated computer. You are entitled to printing on your Sol account using a shared printer. Some departments allow their research students to use photocopiers (not the Department of Information Science) and other facilities.

4.2 Office space

You are entitled to your own desk with some shared storage space (filing cabinet and/or bookshelf), in a dedicated research student room or open plan office. You are entitled to phone access/fax facilities, but will share these with other research students and/or members of staff.

4.3 Travel expenses

Current students in Sol are entitled to a maximum of £300 per year (1 October – 30 September) towards conference or summer school attendance expenses. The following rules apply:

- A maximum of £300 for a peer reviewed paper and or abstract.
- A maximum of £150 of this £300 total allocation can be used on such activities such as doctoral forums or summer schools, where no peer review process takes place.

This limit of £300 from the Sol fund cannot usually be exceeded. Departments/Centres however have the discretion to allocate extra money for travel as they see fit.

Please note that staff candidates are not entitled to claim from the Sol fund.

Conference Expenses forms (available on the PhD student intranet at www.soi.city.ac.uk/schoolintranet/forms/conference_expenses_application.pdf) must be completed, signed by the supervisor, then approved by the Chair of the RDC and the School Budget Holder before any expense is incurred. It is for students to ensure that they allow sufficient time before the event for this approval process to be completed.

5. Progression

Research students will only be able to progress or change status at four key dates in the year. These dates are: 1 October, 1 January, 1 April, and 1 July. This affects changes to MPhil, PhD, writing up, suspension and extension status as well as changes to registration category (internal, external, full time, part time).

5.1 Standard operating procedures for transfer from MPhil to PhD

At the start of their studies, research students normally register on the MPhil programme. Students planning to obtain a PhD have to apply for transfer from MPhil to PhD. On completion of this transfer process, the student's registration category is changed from MPhil to PhD. The student then has the right to submit a PhD thesis. Without a transfer, the student can submit an MPhil thesis, but not a PhD thesis.

The same procedures apply both to students studying on a part-time basis and to those on a full-time basis. However, full-time students normally have their transfer at the end of the first year and part-time students, after the second year of the study.

The MPhil/PhD transfer has two objectives. It establishes that:

- the student has the **ability** to carry out research leading to PhD; and
- a **plan** exists leading to a worthwhile PhD project.

The following sequence of events is normally adopted in the transfer process, though depending on personal/departmental circumstances these guidelines can be altered subject to the approval of your Departmental Senior Tutor for Research and the Research Degrees Committee:

1. The student establishes with his/her supervisors that there has been satisfactory research progress and a well-defined research plan.
2. The student prepares a draft transfer report and submits it to his/her supervisors.
3. An independent examiner (member of staff with relevant knowledge) is appointed by the STR.
4. A transfer seminar is held. Normally, the supervisors and the examiner attend the seminar together with other members of the Department/Centre.
5. If the transfer report is seen as adequate by the examiner, the student proceeds, otherwise the student revises the transfer report based on comments from the independent examiner and the feedback from the seminar.
6. The revised transfer report is submitted to the supervisors and the independent examiner, who decide whether the report satisfies the requirements.

5.1.1 Transfer report

The transfer report describes the **initial phase** of research.

The report should be centred on an independent piece of work demonstrating the ability of the student to formulate a hypothesis, to select appropriate research methods, to do the work, and to interpret results. A literature review is normally included.

The report is judged on its research merit and also on its style. It is anticipated that the work is an initial attempt to solve the problem or is a subset of the PhD project. However, it is important that the work is well presented, adequately structured, and pitched at the right level aimed at informed researchers (examiners).

The report also contains a **plan**, which specifies how the work presented in the transfer report will be expanded to lead to a PhD thesis. A timescale should be set against tasks specified in the plan.

The transfer report normally contains 5,000 to 15,000 words.

5.1.2 Transfer seminar

The transfer seminar establishes the ability of the student to communicate effectively his/her research.

The seminar normally reflects the content of the transfer report. It includes two parts, the initial research work and the research plan.

The seminar is given as part of the Department/Centre's seminar series. Normally, the seminar lasts for 45 minutes and is followed by a discussion.

5.2 Rules on transfer to writing-up

Research students will not be able to transfer to writing-up until the Research Degrees Committee has approved an outline draft PhD thesis.

Effectively, the draft thesis builds on the document required at the transfer from MPhil to PhD phase. That is, the outline thesis submitted for that transfer would be fleshed out and updated if necessary. The basic requirements of the draft thesis is that it explicitly shows the hypotheses and conjectures being used by the project and the methods used to explore them, with an indication of expected results. It should also have the background chapter more or less complete.

The procedure is to submit the draft thesis to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee who will distribute it to one of the Committee members for review. The STR will then sign the transfer to writing-up form if the Committee member sees the draft as adequate.

6. Supervision

Two supervisors, who have expert knowledge of the area you will be pursuing research in, will have been appointed during the application process. At the initial supervision meeting, you will agree the form of supervision (e.g. frequency of meetings). You can ask for a learning contract to be signed between you and the supervisor. The learning contract can list the responsibilities and duties of the student and each of the supervisors.

You may request a change in supervision if, for example, you are not satisfied with your current supervisor(s) or one/either of the supervisor(s) leaves the University. This process is done in consultation with the STR who will appoint a new supervisor or supervisors as necessary.

A report is required at the end first six months of registration on a student's progress and thereafter yearly progress reports are required. The information from these reports is collated and used in the Annual Research Student Programme Review.

Students should discuss issues that they are experiencing during the course of their degree, including dissatisfaction with supervision, technical support or resource support, with their supervisor at as early a stage as possible. If you feel that a satisfactory outcome has not been reached, you can refer the problem to your departmental Senior Tutor for Research, your Head of Department or the Dean of the School. Further details about the procedures for dealing with problems and complaints can be found in the University Research Studies Handbook (available at www.city.ac.uk/researchstudies/dps/research_studies_handbook.pdf).

7. Training

Training requirements should be identified at the beginning of the student's studies in conjunction with their supervisor – either at the time of the application or at the initial meeting between student and supervisor. Further training needs should be identified during formal meetings between the research student and their supervisor and/or supervisors. Training is also identified in the 6 monthly and yearly progress reports.

In the initial six month review the supervisor is required to state as to whether they have agreed a research training programme with the student. If so the supervisor is required to list the training programmes which students will attend in their first year. The Department of Information Science requires the supervisor to update this list in subsequent six monthly reviews, after the first year.

More detail of training is required in the annual reviews of student's progress. The supervisor is asked to list any training programmes attended by the student which were identified in the six monthly reviews. Any further training needed must also be identified.

The following MSc modules are available in the University and a student's supervisor may recommend that the student attend one of the modules if it is appropriate to the student's training needs:

Module	School	MSc Course
Research evaluation and Communication Skills (RECS)	Sol	All Masters courses
Research Design and Statistics 1	City Community & Health Sciences	Human Communication
Research methods introductory	City Community & Health Sciences	Public Health
Research Methods	City Community & Health Sciences	Radiography (Diagnostic Imaging)
Statistical methods for Economic Research	Social Sciences	Economic Evaluation in Healthcare
Research Design, Methods and Methodology	Social Sciences	Social Research Methods
Qualitative Research Methods	Social Sciences	Social Research Methods
Survey Research Methods	Social Sciences	Social Research Methods
Ethics in Health Research	Social Sciences	Research Methods and Psychology

The Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) has made available some research training funds. For more details, please contact the University's Research Studies Co-ordinator, Naomi Hammond (naomi.hammond.1@city.ac.uk).

Students should also look out for seminars run by the Learning Development Centre (LDC), many of which are relevant – details are on their web site (<http://www.city.ac.uk/ldc>).

8. Communication

8.1 Sol CitySpace PhD Resource Area

This is a new online resource which aims to facilitate communication between research students within the School. It is a repository for documents such as MPhil to PhD transfer reports enabling the sharing of examples of good practice, and hosts a forum where students can post information or requests for advice which others will be able to see and respond to.

To access the CitySpace area, visit <http://www.city.ac.uk/cityspace>.

In addition to this module, you also have access to Epigeum Research Skills via CitySpace, which has some excellent material on conducting research. Modules within this include 'how to publish your research' and 'research ethics'. You are strongly advised to take advantage of this material, particularly if you are a new student.

Shane Wohlers and Gill Smith provide administrative support for the CitySpace area. Please contact them if you have any questions about how you can contribute to the area or if you have ideas about how it can be improved or developed.

Shane Wohlers: sbbb311@soi.city.ac.uk

Gill Smith: gsmith@soi.city.ac.uk

8.2 Email Lists

There are a number of mailing lists relevant to research students in the School:

- All SOI PhD students: school-phd@soi.city.ac.uk
- CSR PhD students: csr-phd@soi.city.ac.uk
- HCID PhD students: hcid-phd@soi.city.ac.uk
- DOC PhD students: doc-phd@soi.city.ac.uk
- DIS PhD students: is-phd@soi.city.ac.uk
- CHI PhD students: chi-phd@soi.city.ac.uk

8.3 Web Pages

Information for current research students can be found on City's website, and the URL is <http://www.city.ac.uk/adu/rd/rdf.html>. Here students can read and download the Research Studies Handbook that this Guide complements.

The School has an intranet page for research students, which contains links to useful information at <https://www.Soi.city.ac.uk/schoolintranet/phd.html>.

8.4 School staff contacts and student representatives

For administrative issues students can contact their Departmental Administrator or one of the following:

- Robin Syred, Sol Executive Support Manager, rsyred@soi.city.ac.uk
- Stephanie Wilson, HCID STR, steph@soi.city.ac.uk
- Andy MacFarlane, Sol Chair of RDC and DIS STR, andym@soi.city.ac.uk
- Darrell Conklin, DoC STR, peters@soi.city.ac.uk
- Abdul Roudsari, CHI STR, sb374@soi.city.ac.uk
- Lorenzo Strigini, CSR STR, strigini@csr.city.ac.uk

These are staff members of the Sol Research Degrees Committee. This Committee meets regularly to discuss issues related to the administration of the School's research student programme.

Students contribute to the Committee with representatives, one from each Department and Centre. The student representatives for this academic year 2009/10 are:

- George Lekeas, DoC, cj571@Sol.city.ac.uk
- Makayla Lewis, HCID, abdk702@soi.city.ac.uk
- Kizito Oluwaseun Salako, CSR, kizito@csr.city.ac.uk
- Elizabeth Poirier, DIS, elizabeth.poirier.1@soi.city.ac.uk
- Omid Shabestari, CHI, omid.shabestari.1@city.ac.uk

9. Bibliography on how to undertake research

Useful books for undertaking research include:

- Brause, R.S. (2000) *Writing your doctoral dissertation: Invisible rules for success* (London, Falmer Press)
- Brown, D., Maney, A.S. and Smallwood, R.L. (1996) *MHRA style book: Notes for authors, editors, and writers of theses (5th edition)* (London, Modern Humanities Research Association)
- Orna, E. and Stevens, G. (1995) *Managing Information for Research* (Buckingham, Open University Press)