DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

APPENDIX TO THE MPHIL/PHD DEGREE STUDENT HANDBOOK 2023/24

This appendix should be read in conjunction with the [core MPhil/PhD student handbook](#)

The Department of Computer Science sits within the School of Engineering, Physical and Mathematical Sciences (EPMS) which covers the following disciplines: Computer Science, Electronic Engineering, Mathematics, Information Security and Physics.

Welcome to your School

Congratulations on getting a place to join our School of Engineering, Physical and Mathematical Sciences. We are delighted to welcome you and hope you will have a very successful, productive and enjoyable time with us.
You will find support in your studies not only from your immediate supervisory team but also from the PGR Lead in your home department – Dr Shyqyri Haxha (Electronic Engineering), Dr Andrew Ho (Physics), Professor Pat O'Mahony (Mathematics), Dr Elizabeth Quaglia/Dr Andrew Dwyer (ISG) and Professor Chris Watkins (Computer Science) – and from the Doctoral School.

Dr Rikke Bjerg Jensen, Director of PGR Education for the School of EPMS

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Welcome to your department

Welcome to the Department of Computer Science. This handbook is designed to welcome you to the department, which we hope you will find to be a friendly, informal and active environment of mutual co-operation. We operate an open door policy in which students are encouraged to see their supervisors and advisers as and when they wish. In this handbook you will find some practical information and some guidelines as to what is expected of you as a research student in the department.

You can also obtain information from the PGR Lead, Professor Chris Watkins, who has overall responsibility for the PhD and MSc by Research programmes, and you should contact him if you have any queries.

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Key contacts

Role	Name	Email	Phone	Room
Executive Dean	Professor Gavin Shaddick	Gavin.Shaddick@rhul.ac.uk	TBC	TBC
Head of Department	Dr Carlos Matos	Carlos.Matos@rhul.ac.uk	01784 414161	LB1-22 - Bedford
School Director of PGR Education	Dr Rikke Jensen	Rikke.Jensen@rhul.ac.uk	01784 276 549	Bedford 2-04
Department PGR Lead	Professor Chris Watkins	C.J.Watkins@rhul.ac.uk	01784 443419	LB2-29 - Bedford
School helpdesk*		EPMS-school@rhul.ac.uk	01784 276881	Bedford 0-37

* For the majority of your non-academic related issues, please contact the Doctoral School. However, for queries about teaching contracts, expenses and study space within the school, please contact the School of EPMS helpdesk.

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Staff

Staff list within the Department of Computer Science

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Research areas

Staff research interests within the Department of Computer Science

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Student-Staff Committee and feedback opportunities

It is vital that the department should know of any concerns you have about the progress of your work or of any suggestions for improving the research environment. You have several ways of making your views known:

- by talking to your supervisor(s), and perhaps by following up your discussion with a letter or e-mail, so that your comments can be forwarded if appropriate;
- by contacting the School Director of PGR Education or the Head of Department, either to arrange a meeting or again by putting your ideas in writing;
- through the School PGR Staff-Student Action Meeting;
- in the on-line survey that you will be asked to complete as part of the Annual Review process;
- through the Students' Union if your concerns or ideas relate to the University rather than to the department.

Staff-Student Action Meeting

The purpose of the PGR Staff-Student Action Meeting is to maintain and foster communication within the School. The meeting is a platform to receive and to discuss matters of concern to both students and staff. As such, it provides a formal means of communication between students and the School Board.

The PGR Staff-Student Action Meeting meets at least once every term. You can use the meeting to raise any issues by either attending one of the meetings or passing the information to the current student representatives. Course representatives are there to represent your views and ultimately, to help improve the quality of education provided by the University.

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Facilities and resources

Office facilities

You will have access to general office facilities, including printing, phone, fax, photocopying, post and stationery. These resources are provided for your postgraduate study. If you wish to use any of these for private purposes, please discuss your requirements with the EPMS School helpdesk.

At the end of your studies, you will be expected to vacate your desk, normally within four weeks of submitting your thesis. Your computer account and the use of a terminal will be made available to you whenever you need it up to the time of your viva, and afterwards if you have corrections to make to your thesis.

Departmental computers

The department's main computer systems are Linux based servers. These can be accessed remotely from any computer lab on campus, or indeed from any computer in the world with an internet connection.

The departmental Computer Policy

Priority in the use of terminals will always be given to those wishing to do academic work, rather than those using them for recreational purposes. Attempts at unauthorised access to any part of the departmental computer system, or the use of that system to attempt unauthorised access to University or external computer systems, will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter. Offenders may be reported to the police under the Computer Misuse Act 1990; the maximum penalty under this Act is six months imprisonment and an unlimited fine. Disciplinary action will be taken against any student storing or transmitting offensive material on the departmental computer system, including sexist, racist or pornographic text or pictures. The Technical Support Staff may deny access to any person suspected of misusing the system in any way. Students must not reveal their password to anyone. Use of the departmental System by students from outside the Computer Science Department must be authorised by the Head of Department. The Technical Support Staff regularly monitor the use of the departmental System, and records of a student's usage may be used in assessing their academic progress.

Departmental website

Research students are expected to create their own home pages on the departmental web site and to add their details, list their publications etc. on their individual web page in Pure, which is the University's research database website.

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Health and Safety

General Health and Safety policies

Any health and safety concerns should be brought to the attention of the Departmental Health and Safety Coordinator, Adrian Thomas (McCrea Building, room 355A, tel: 01784 443428, e-mail: Adrian.Thomas@rhul.ac.uk or the University Health and Safety Office.

The department is committed to ensuring the safety, health, and welfare of all staff, students, and visitors. You are expected to adhere to the following whenever you are in the department.

The Computer Science Department is a low-risk environment, but you should still take precautions by storing the emergency number for Campus Security in your mobile phone (01784 44 3888). There are phones in all the PG working labs which can be used for this purpose; use 444 from these phones.

Lone working policies and procedures

The principles and guidance around lone working are often highly applicable to the nature of postgraduate research and the variety of activities this might involve. As such, awareness and planning around any lone working you may be required to undertake are essential.

Any health and safety concerns should be brought to the attention of EPMS team in the school office, email EPMS-school@rhul.ac.uk or the University Health and Safety Office. It is likely that most activities will take place on University premises. However, the principles also apply to students undertaking duties off campus.

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Training, conferences and workshops

Although further discussions on your training may take place during the year during your supervisory meetings, at least once a year normally at the time of the annual review you, together with your supervisor(s) and adviser, should review the training completed in the previous year and draw up a plan for the following year. The training plan is likely to include both generic research skills courses and training which is specific to the research project. You should be fully engaged with the design of your training programme, as this is an important part of your personal development planning, and should be considering what will be of benefit to you in both the short and long term. Completion of the required training is a prerequisite for the upgrade from MPhil to PhD so will also be checked at the time of your upgrade.

Departmental training

Most topics are now covered by the Researcher Development Programme. Additional postgraduate training seminars may be provided by the Department if required, in which case they will be advertised on the Department's postgraduate web pages. Students are invited to submit requests and suggestions for topics they would like covered.

Department Research Seminars

These are given by visiting academics and members of staff of the department. They are normally held on Tuesdays but may be scheduled at any time, especially out of term time. All research students are expected to attend all Department Research Seminars.

Cakes talks

Postgraduate students organise their own 'cakes' talks series to provide an informal environment for describing their research and practising presentation skills. Students in their second and third years, and MSc by Research students, are expected to give at least one such talk as part of their postgraduate training. The student's supervisor will normally attend.

Cakes talks take place usually on scheduled Wednesdays at 4pm, usually in the floor 1 common room next to the kitchen. The student giving the cakes talk is responsible for providing cakes for the audience. The departmental charge card should be obtained from the office and cakes bought from the University Shop (up to the value of £10.00). The student should also e-mail the PGR Lead with the abstract of his/her talk some time in advance, so that the talk can be publicised to other students and academic staff.

EPSRC Graduate School Programme

EPSRC funded PhD students must attend a total of 30 days training in transferable skills during their PhD study, including a training course during the second or third year, usually a UK Grad Programme course or equivalent. The UK Grad Programme (organised by Vitae) provides courses in transferable skills including networking and team working, communication and career management skills etc. Courses are generally three to four days long and can be residential or non-residential and are free for EPSRC funded students. [Find out more](#)

Postgraduate Research Colloquium

Every year in May/June the School runs a Postgraduate Research Colloquium. All research students give a short presentation on their research.

National / international conferences

Our aim is that PhD students should present a paper at some national and/or international conferences or workshops during their period of study. These enable you to meet workers in your research field from other institutions worldwide and are a very important source of inspiration and information. You can apply to the RTSG fund (see below) for support to attend conferences and workshops.

Research Training Support Grant (RTSG fund)

The department has a fund, the RTSG (Research Training Support Grant), to support research students attending conferences, workshops, and training courses. Applications may also exceptionally be made to fund other research-related activity.

Application forms and procedures are available from the School office and from the postgraduate area of the department's website. Applications are considered by the department's Research Management Committee. The department requires a short written report on the conference, workshop, or training course afterwards. This is a condition of receiving funding.

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Calendar for MPhil/ PhD students

This calendar gives an outline of the expected commitments full-time students will have over the year. The dates below are based on the usual starting date, which is the end of September. If your start date is at a different time of year you need to work out the number of months and amend the dates accordingly.

Part-time students are not expected to meet all these commitments every year, and should discuss with their supervisor the participation appropriate to their part-time attendance.

These activities are in addition to the research that you are pursuing for your MPhil / PhD. An overall awareness of all your commitments will enable you to plan your time effectively.

Weekly	Tuesday 3pm: Department Research Seminar Teaching commitments (October–March) Training activities (all year) Meetings with Supervisors (frequency to be agreed with your Supervisor)
Annually	
Year 1	January: First Term report and informal review May: First Annual Review (report required) May/June: Postgraduate Colloquium Day
Year 2	May: Second Annual Review (report required) and assessment for Upgrade Between October and May: Give a Departmental Seminar and/or Cakes Talk May/June: Postgraduate Colloquium Day September: Deadline for successful Upgrade to PhD
Year 3	May: Third Annual Review (report required) Between October and May: Give a Departmental Seminar and/or Cakes Talk May/June: Postgraduate Colloquium Day
Year 4	By May: submit examination entry form End of September: Deadline for submission of PhD thesis
Other	Researcher Development Programme University Teaching Programme (InSTIL) External training courses EPSRC Graduate School Programme (3-4 day courses) Attend conferences/workshops

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Annual reviews and upgrade

Although you will meet with your supervisor regularly during the academic year, your academic progress is formally reviewed at least once every twelve months, regardless of whether you are studying full or part time.

- Core annual review details
- Annual reviews in the Department of Computer Science

All MPhil / PhD students start their programme on the MPhil and have to pass the upgrade review meeting in order to be eligible to submit for the PhD.

- Core upgrade details
- Upgrades in the Department of Computer Science