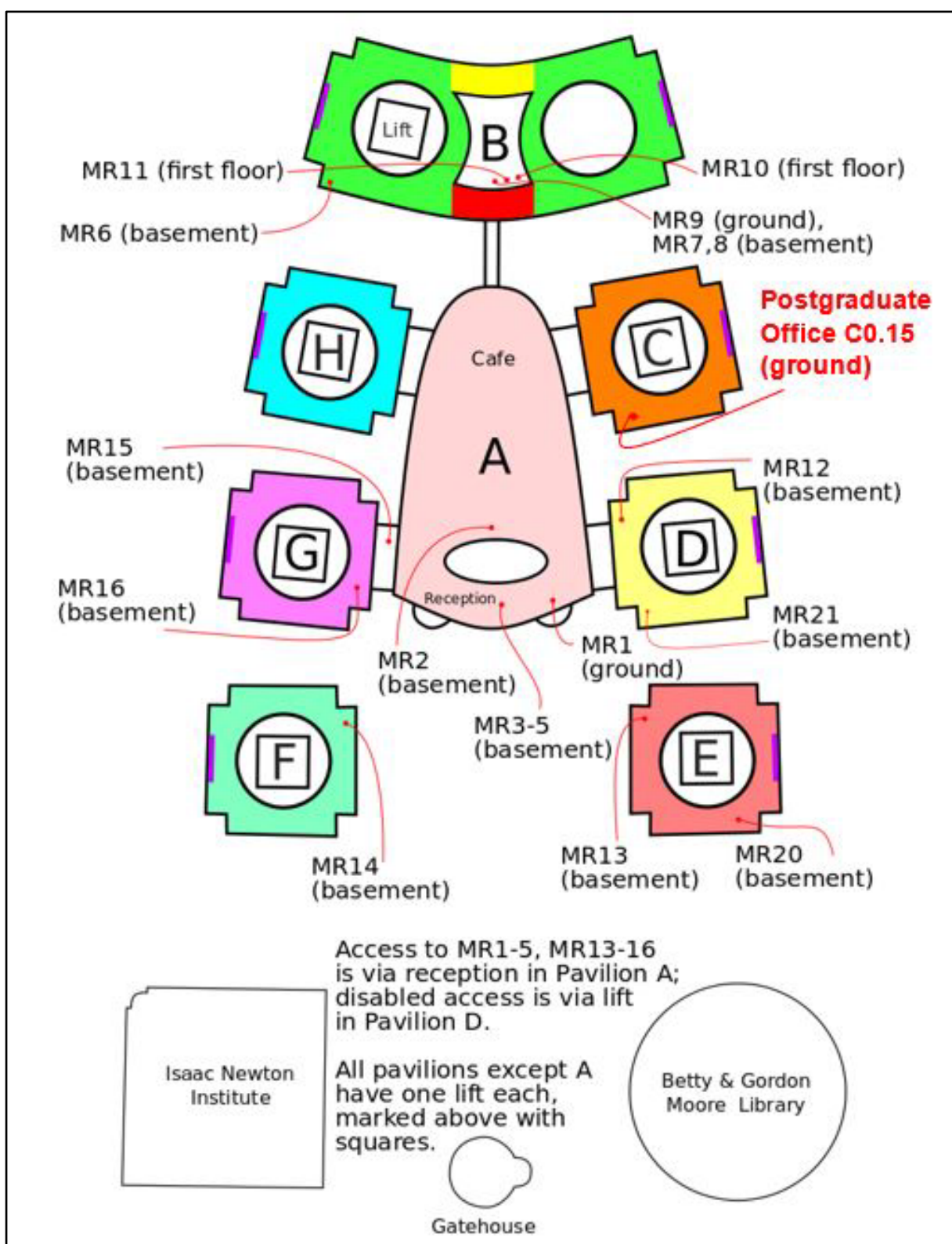


Research Student Handbook 2025-2026



Centre for Mathematical Sciences
Wilberforce Road, Cambridge



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Welcome!

You have become a part of one of the broadest, largest and most successful Mathematical Sciences Faculties in Europe. The opportunity to learn daily about the breadth of new research from the people who are doing it is a truly stimulating experience.

Beginning research can seem daunting and we are keen to provide encouragement and support from the start. This booklet explains the details – both what we expect from you and what you can expect from us. Read it, and keep for future reference.

The Faculty works best if the academic staff, postdocs and postgraduate students appreciate that they are part of one integrated research community and therefore naturally look out for each other. If at any point you have worries – whether mathematical or procedural – please do not hesitate to ask. There will always be someone happy to help.

We hope that you have a rewarding and enjoyable time in Cambridge.

With best wishes,

Professor Nicholas Dorey
DAMTP Head of Department

Professor Ivan Smith
DPMMS Head of Department

Section 1 – Introduction

As a research student, the department should be the focal point of your working life. This handbook explains how your PhD is structured, including key procedures for assessing your progress. It describes what is expected of you, and of your supervisor, and explains the roles of other members of your department who may also prove instrumental in helping you to succeed in your research. It contains advice on how to make the best of your time here, highlighting opportunities that will be available to you, but also giving guidance on how to deal with problems that may arise. This handbook is supplemented by additional material available on the [Faculty webpages for current postgraduate students](#).

DAMTP and DPMMS do not exist in isolation: they belong to the Faculty of Mathematics, and so do you, as one of its students. You are also a member of the University and of a College. Here are a few additional words of explanation:

Faculty of Mathematics

The [Faculty of Mathematics](#) comprises both DAMTP and DPMMS. Both departments are housed under the same roof, at the [Centre for Mathematical Sciences](#), or CMS.

The [Degree Committee](#) for the Faculty has key statutory duties and responsibilities in relation to all research students in Mathematics, from appointing a supervisor to awarding PhD degrees.

Administration of postgraduate affairs is handled by the [Postgraduate Office](#), which is in Room C0.15. Staff will be happy to give advice and answer questions in person, by email or phone. Key contact details are given in Section 6.

The University

The University has an over-arching role in administration and regulation, with rules that apply to research students in all subjects. The central University bodies with oversight of administrative matters relating to research students are the [Student Registry](#) and the Postgraduate Committee (a sub-committee of the General Board Education Committee).

Code of Practice for Research Students

The University issues a [Code of Practice for postgraduate students](#) which you must read. The Code of Practice sets out the formalities of life as a research student in terms which are broad enough to apply to all postgraduate research students in the University, whereas this handbook explains how the principles in the Code of Practice are implemented within your Department.

The University requires all registered students to behave in accordance with University regulations and rules. Where it appears that a student may not have behaved as required this will be investigated and where a breach of the rules has occurred penalties or sanctions may be imposed. The [Rules of Behaviour and disciplinary procedures](#) can be accessed online.

You should also consult and familiarise yourself with the [University web pages on research integrity](#) and consider participating in the [training provided](#).

College

Your College is another institution that will be a key part of your life in Cambridge.

Each college is an academic community, governed by its own rules and regulations. It will give you the opportunity to meet students and academics outside Mathematics, through a range of intellectual, social and recreational activities. Very importantly, your College can also provide

support and advice if you encounter difficulties, whether these are academic-related or personal in nature. A primary point of contact is your College Postgraduate Tutor, whom you should arrange to meet at the first opportunity.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The Faculty, like the wider University, is committed to a pro-active and inclusive approach to equality, which supports and encourages all under-represented groups, promotes an inclusive culture, and values diversity. You are expected to [undertake the online Equality and Diversity Essentials](#) training as part of your induction.

Our aim is that staff and students from all backgrounds feel confident in their ability, feel empowered to be themselves and can achieve their best here in the CMS. We recognise that diversity promotes innovation and creativity, and provides exposure to a wider range of ideas, skills and experiences which we can all benefit from, as well as helping us to attract and retain the best talent from around the world.

Together we can create an inclusive environment of tolerance and mutual respect where everyone feels valued, listened to and protected from discrimination. We want the Faculty to be a safe and supportive learning environment and we are striving to ensure our commitment to inclusion is put into practice.

We expect all staff and students to be equally valued and treated with respect, courtesy and consideration. As a member of our community, you have a personal responsibility to behave professionally, and you have the right to expect professional behaviour from others.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee is responsible for both staff and students and oversees a programme of initiatives aimed at enhancing the inclusivity of the environment in which we work and study covering all the protected characteristics including sexual orientation, gender, race, disability or faith. The Faculty strongly adheres to a zero-tolerance approach to harassment and bullying and supports the [University's Breaking the Silence campaign](#) which provides support and guidance to members of the University affected by sexual misconduct.

If you have concerns, you are encouraged to approach, in confidence, either one of the Faculty Equality and Diversity contacts: Sergio Bacallado (sb2116@cam.ac.uk), Zoe Wyatt zw253@cam.ac.uk or your College Tutor. Dr Wyatt is the Faculty EDI champion and there is a dedicated email address for this role: EDI.champion@maths.cam.ac.uk

The Faculty has a Bronze Athena SWAN award and supports the principles of the London Mathematical Society Good Practice Scheme (see the Faculty's [Women in Maths](#) webpages). The [Emmy Noether Society](#) aims to promote women studying mathematical sciences and host talks from female mathematicians and informal events between students and academics, from both Cambridge and other universities.

The Faculty has a number of mailing lists for information and news about regular social events. If you would like to sign up, they are as follows:

[maths-women-researchers](#) Female maths research staff inc PhD and Postdocs

[soc-maths-lgbt](#) LGBT+ Mathmos

[maths-nonbinary-researchers](#) Non-binary maths research staff inc PhD and Postdocs

Women and non-binary students can also use the Mary Cartwright Room which is in the basement of Pavilion E. This room is used for events, study or relaxing. Access to the room is via a door code which is available from reception.

The majority of toilets on site are gender neutral with one set of gendered toilets on the ground floor of every Pavilion and at the bottom of the stairs in the core. The Faculty has a quiet room available for reflection or prayer in Pavilion F (please contact dampsec@maths.cam.ac.uk). More information on equality, diversity and inclusion can be found on the [Faculty's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion webpage](#).

Wellbeing

Looking after your wellbeing is always important. There are lots of sources of support within the Faculty and across the University. Please see the [Faculty Wellbeing webpages](#) and the [University student wellbeing pages](#).

Section 2 – Guidelines for students and supervisors

Research Groups

Mathematics is a very large Faculty. There are about 270 research students in DPMMS and DAMTP combined, together with a comparable number of postdoctoral research staff, who carry out research in a wide variety of fields. Academic staff, research staff and research students are organised into a number of groups of different sizes, and as a new student you will join your supervisor's group (see below). Groups hold specialist seminars and informal discussion sessions, and act as a social focus too. You can turn for informal advice to a second or third year student in your group, or to a postdoc.

Your Supervisor

All research students carry out their work under the direction of a supervisor who is normally a member of your Department's academic staff but may occasionally be a member of the research staff. Most students arrive knowing the identity of their supervisor. If you do not yet have a supervisor, one will be assigned after discussions within your research group. In any absence of the supervisor, another senior member of the group will be asked to deputise.

The duty of your supervisor is to guide your research and to monitor progress towards successful completion of your dissertation. To achieve this, they will be available to meet you on a regular basis (see next paragraph on meetings and reports).

Your supervisor will suggest preliminary reading and possible research projects, help you to get started, and be on hand to provide assistance and advice. Some students may work collaboratively with their supervisors on certain projects, while others may work more independently, though still relying on their supervisor for overall guidance. When the time comes to prepare results for publication, or to draft sections of your thesis, you should expect your supervisor to read and comment on what you produce. They will guide you on matters of good conduct and integrity in research and on the academic conventions for acknowledging the work of others. Over the course of your PhD, your supervisor will also advise you about attendance at courses and conferences. They can also give valuable advice on the next stage of your career, after your PhD.

Supervision: Meetings and Reports

Good communication is essential for a fruitful working relationship with your supervisor, and it is most important that you keep in close contact. Supervisors are often very busy, so you must be proactive in your approach, especially if you are stuck or need help with a problem. Don't hesitate to send an e-mail to request a meeting if you find it difficult to track down your supervisor in person!

Individual supervisors will vary considerably in the detailed arrangements they make for seeing their students, but there are some general guidelines. In your first year you should expect to meet your supervisor at least once a week, on average, to review and discuss your progress at regular intervals. As time passes, your supervisor will still be available for weekly meetings if needed, but it may not always be necessary to meet so frequently, depending on your progress (if you need time to make headway with a complicated calculation, for example). At some stages you may also find it beneficial to have regular informal conversations (over coffee or after seminars, for instance) rather than a more formal meeting. Nevertheless, you should normally meet your supervisor for a detailed discussion at least every two to three weeks during the course of your second year and into your third year. In the final stages of your PhD, as you are writing up, it may be best to arrange meetings simply as needed.

Your supervisor may keep records of meetings and progress throughout your PhD and they will write regular reports on the Postgraduate Feedback & Reporting System (PFRS). You will be able to read these reports on [CamSIS](#) and you should comment on them or discuss further with your supervisor as necessary. Reports are disclosed to the Department, Degree Committee, Student Registry and your College. If you have difficulty finding your reports, you should contact the Faculty Postgraduate Office (phd-admin@maths.cam.ac.uk). Please note that the reports are not meant to be the primary means of communication between supervisor and student.

You will also receive an email invitation from the University to complete a self-evaluation report each year in Michaelmas term. Submission of this report is voluntary, but it provides a good opportunity for you to take stock of your own progress and to highlight any concerns that you have. The report you submit will be sent to your supervisor for comment, and you may wish to arrange to discuss it with them. If you do choose to submit a self-evaluation, your supervisor will write a response which will become your supervision report.

Your Academic Adviser

Besides your supervisor, you will also be assigned an adviser, who will usually be another senior member of your research group or a group in a related area. This is someone you can contact for additional help and support. This person will also normally be one of your assessors for PhD registration. It is expected that you will see your adviser on a regular basis. Provided their engagement with your research has not become so involved as to cause a potential conflict of interest they may, with the Degree Committee's agreement, act as the internal examiner for your PhD. If you are unsure who your adviser is, ask your supervisor in the first instance, or the Postgraduate Office.

Postgraduate Education Committees

The DAMTP Postgraduate Education Committee (PEC) oversees all aspects of research education in the Department, including admissions, progression and training. The PEC is chaired by the Director of Postgraduate Education. Other members of the Committee have specific responsibilities for researcher development and postgraduate admissions. The Committee has a research student representative who can be contacted on: pgradcom-rep@damtp.cam.ac.uk. The DPMMS PEC, which includes the Head of Department and Director of Postgraduate Education, primarily oversees research degree admissions.

Attendance in the Department

Experience has shown that coming to the Department on a regular basis is extremely beneficial for the progress of a student's research. Accordingly, you are expected to keep regular hours, and to be present in the Department for a substantial part of each weekday, for example 09.00 to 17.30 or 10.00 to 18.30.

You must keep your supervisor informed if you are going to be away, for whatever reason. Any planned absence must be discussed with your supervisor in advance, and also with your College Tutor if necessary. In addition, you need to consider the impact of your absence on your residency requirement and, if appropriate, on your funding and/or Student visa.

Absences (e.g., working away from Cambridge, intermission, other leave) require formal permission from the University. You can find further details of this process at [Changes to your student status](#).

Seminars and Courses

During term time there are many seminars every week. Each group has a weekly seminar, and there are other seminar series of more general interest. In addition, there are talks at the Isaac Newton Institute, in particular the general lectures that are held on Monday afternoons. You will be expected to attend the specialist seminar related to your research area, and other more general seminars on

offer (see [talks.cam](https://www.talks.cam) or the Departmental websites for the most up to date seminar information). Your supervisor can advise you on which seminars to attend. You may also be asked to attend one or more MMath/MASt or postgraduate courses, especially in your first year, as part of your training. The [lecture list](#) is published on the Faculty website.

Conference attendance and research visits

There are a variety of research related activities that students may undertake during the course of their studies, for example conference attendance and workshops, research visits, summer schools and fieldwork. Students are encouraged to participate in such opportunities where these are relevant to their intended research projects, as well as for their career development.

If you are planning to be absent from Cambridge, you must inform your supervisor **and** the department of your plans. Your department may also be able to assist financially to support this activity. Full details can be found on the webpage [Time away from the Department](#).

Teaching and Related Opportunities

During your time as a PhD student, your priority must be your research. However, many research students value the opportunity to participate in the small-group teaching that complements lectures, and which is such a distinctive and important feature of the Cambridge Maths course, or Mathematical Tripos. While teaching students something new, or consolidating their knowledge, is intellectually rewarding and enriching in itself, small-group teaching

- can be a useful part of your own educational journey (e.g. in developing transferable skills),
- can be a useful supplement to income,
- provides for contact with bright, enthusiastic students, as well as with lecturers.
- at times, can provide some variety and a helpful break from the challenges of research,

For these reasons you are strongly encouraged to participate in the Faculty's teaching programme.

For the first three years of the Mathematical Tripos (i.e. Parts IA, IB and II), the small-group teaching sessions are called supervisions, and are usually two-to-one. Further information can be found on the [Information for Undergraduate Supervisors](#) webpage. As noted there, the Faculty of Mathematics publishes a guide on undergraduate Supervision in Mathematics that outlines how to give good supervisions that are of maximum benefit to the students. The guide also describes the responsibilities of the supervisor to the students' College and deals with some practical details, such as how to go about finding supervision work, and when and how to get payment.

While there is no requirement to supervise, and whether or not you have immediate plans to supervise, all new PhD students are expected to attend the supervisor training course. The course takes place in October, usually immediately after the Induction week. The training course will be advertised here: <https://www.training.cam.ac.uk/maths/event-timetable>, however the Postgraduate Office will also send out an email to new postgraduate research students. Please contact the Director of Undergraduate Education (email: undergrad-director@maths.cam.ac.uk) if you have questions or require more information.

For Part III of the Tripos (a taught, masters-level course) the small-group teaching mostly takes the form of examples classes. These provide a valuable opportunity to share expertise in an area that is much more closely related to your own research (as compared to an undergraduate-level course). New examples class instructors are expected to attend a 1-hour training session provided by the Faculty, which will be advertised to those concerned at the start of each term.

There are various other opportunities to support Part III students and at the same time build your teaching and transferable skills. Both departments regularly recruit postgraduate students to lead drop-in sessions (informal sessions during which Part III students can come and ask questions about individual lecture courses, similar to office hours) and to teach preparatory workshops in each subject area at the start of the academic year. Research students also regularly act as directors of the Part III seminar series and organise a variety of other Part III events throughout the year. Please contact Dr Ron Reid-Ewards, the Faculty's Associate Director of Taught Postgraduate Education, at adtpe@maths.cam.ac.uk if you would like to get involved.

Your PhD in outline: progress and funding

Most students' maintenance funding lasts for three years or three and a half years (e.g. for some students funded by UK Research Councils), and you are expected to complete your research and submit your dissertation within four years. A typical outline of progress for a student in DAMTP could be as follows: the first year spent mostly reading the literature and attending courses while working on an initial 'starter problem'; the next 18 months spent carrying out the main calculations that will form the basis for your thesis; and the final 6-9 months spent writing up. The typical progression of a PhD in DPMMS follows a similar outline, but there is considerable variation depending on the research area and the nature of the student's thesis topic.

No PhD student on a standard 3-year course is liable for University fees once 9 terms of study have been paid, but additional help with maintenance may be needed if writing up requires funding beyond your initial studentship. You may need to seek such help from a number of sources: from your funding body; from your College; and for instance from the [Cambridge Philosophical Society](#). [Applicants for awards must be Fellows of the Philosophical Society of at least one year's standing at the closing date for applications and you are STRONGLY encouraged to sign up in your first year.]

It is essential that you submit your thesis before the end of your fourth year (at which point you will automatically be withdrawn from your course). If you think that you may have difficulties in meeting this deadline, you must discuss this with your supervisor at the earliest possible opportunity.

While your supervisor is available for advice and direction, you have the final responsibility for writing and submitting the dissertation, and for checking that the work in it is free from error. The work presented must be your own; if some of the material has been produced in collaboration, this must be declared. Your supervisor can advise you if you are unsure.

Section 3 – Researcher Development

The purpose of postgraduate study is not just to develop into a skilled mathematician who produces a PhD thesis, but also to learn the skills which will help you to have a successful career, whether in research and teaching, or beyond academia, for example in industry. Researcher Development (RD) is therefore an essential part of any research degree.

Your effectiveness as a mathematician or physicist will depend on many skills: these include the ability to give good talks, write clear papers, negotiate with other department members, teach, run a research project, interact with and encourage others. We have a responsibility to provide opportunities for you to develop these skills. The policy within the Faculty is to give students the opportunity to develop their skills through taking on real responsibilities within their research groups and the Department, supported appropriately by more formal training.

Expectations

You are expected to spend approximately 10 days each year in acquiring and developing your skills.

All first-year students are expected to:

- undertake the introductory courses and videos available from the [Postgraduate Researcher Development 'Getting Started' webpage](#)
- attend the [University Postgraduate Safety Course](#)
- attend a [Faculty training session on supervision of undergraduates](#)
- complete the [University Equality and Diversity Essentials](#) online training
- complete the University's [online data protection training course](#)

Each postgraduate student is expected to:

1. Undertake activities that help you to develop your core research skills, such as:

Presentation skills: Your work must be communicated to be effective. You learn communication skills primarily by giving talks and using feedback to make improvements. Giving talks and presenting posters at conferences, or participating in seminars and in reading groups are all good experience. In addition, you should consider attending presentation skills training.

Writing Skills: It is important to learn how to present your work clearly and you will need to acquire writing skills, in particular for scientific writing. In addition, you might wish to write more general articles. Throughout the course of your postgraduate work, you will be expected to write or contribute towards research papers for publication in scientific journals, and to submit written work as part of formal progress assessments. In your third year, you will have the biggest challenge of all - writing your dissertation. Various workshops are available to give you advice and practice. If your first language is not English, the Language Centre and Student Union can advise you on additional help.

Good Academic Practice: Your supervisor, as well as helping you on the academic side, will be responsible for much of your training, by helping you to acquire the skills needed to survey the literature, show you how to organise your work and how to keep records, and to present your results in a clear and coherent way. They will be able to provide you with guidance on good academic practice. The University also provides guidance and training in these areas.

Different research groups have different ways of organising these aspects of your training but a general overview of what is expected is provided in the programme timeline (see [Appendix A](#))

2. Learn skills in addition to those specifically targeted at your research, such as communication skills, outreach activities (helping with open days, Millennium Maths Project), organisational (helping with seminars, workshops), teaching, computing, learning another language, etc.

We strongly recommend when planning your RD that you aim to undertake a combination of both research related and transferable skills training activities. Whilst direct experience is essential, formal training sessions provide valuable opportunities to take stock and think about your future career.

Please note that your funder may have other training requirements. It is your responsibility to fulfil these.

Recording and reporting on your activities

In June each year you will be asked to complete and return a log ([template available on the website](#)) giving details of the activities that you have undertaken to develop your skills, so please keep a record throughout the year of what you have done.

University Researcher Development Programme

The [Postgraduate Researcher Development team](#) are the central providers of researcher development support and training for postgraduate students in the University. They have developed the Cambridge Researcher Development Framework ([CamRDF](#)), designed to help structure your RD and facilitate your development into a professional researcher. It is important to realise that the skills of a professional researcher will be helpful to you during your studies and beyond. The CamRDF helps you to prepare yourself in fifteen competencies that will be valued by both academic and non-academic employers in an increasingly interdisciplinary and international context. The work required to complete your research and write your PhD thesis is one part of that process, but you will also be able to learn through formal training and by applying your skills in non-research situations. From live events, on demand training and podcasts to LinkedIn learning and one-to-one coaching, there are plenty of opportunities to suit all learning styles.

Careers Service

The Careers Service provides support and resources for postgraduate students to maximise your employability during your PhD - whether in academic research or beyond. From 1-to-1 guidance consultations to information on prospective employers, the Careers Service is there to help and advise. Check out [/Handshake/](#), the innovative career development platform through which you can make use of the Careers Service and develop your career and network:
www.careers.cam.ac.uk/careers-support-phd-students

Further Information

We encourage you to use your initiative and be proactive in developing your skills; if you have a new idea for training or events related to skills or researcher development, then we would like to hear from you. Please contact the Faculty Postgraduate Office via phd-admin@maths.cam.ac.uk

Section 4 – Progress with your PhD

During your first year as a research student your official status is probationary, and it is necessary to pass a progress examination before you can be registered for a PhD (there are similar arrangements across the University although the details may differ in other departments). The process varies depending on your Department.

You should keep a record of all courses, lectures and seminars you have attended or given on a Researcher Development Log ([template available on the website](#)). This includes, for instance, academic courses given as part of the MMath/MASt (Part III), which may form part of your training, as well as other training sessions and workshops. It is particularly beneficial for research students to attend research conferences, workshops or schools during their PhD, so you should list those you have attended as well as plans you may have for attending any in the future. See [Section 3](#) for further details.

Registration Assessment

3rd Term Report - DAMTP

Before the end of the 3rd Term of research (the end of Easter Full Term for those starting in October) DAMTP students are required to prepare a short-written report (no more than 1,500 words or about 4 sides of A4) summarising the work that you have done so far and giving an outline of future plans. In preparation for this review you will be asked to discuss your progress with your adviser, in addition to your supervisor. Writing the 3rd Term report will be a valuable exercise in clarifying and summarising your thoughts and goals. You will be sent further details of what is expected by the Postgraduate Office at the appropriate time. Copies of your submitted report will be passed on to your supervisor.

4th Term Report and Interview – DAMTP & DPMMS

The PhD registration procedure in DAMTP and DPMMS involves a thorough progress assessment in the 4th Term of your research (so for students starting their PhD in October 2025, this will be carried out in October/November 2026). The assessment is based on a substantial report written by you, followed by an interview and discussion with two assessors. Provided the assessors are satisfied with your progress, they will recommend that you be registered for the PhD.

The 4th Term assessment is organised by the Postgraduate Office. You will need to start planning your report well in advance and you will receive an e-mail at the beginning of your 3rd term which explains the procedure in detail, but here are some of the most important points.

Your report should be typeset and typically between 15 and 20 pages long. It should clearly describe the general area and background of the problems you are working on, previous work by other people which is especially relevant to what you are doing, the progress you have made with your research to date, and (very importantly) the plans you have for how your research is going to develop over the next two years. When writing the report, you should bear in mind that the assessors will not necessarily be experts in the precise problem on which you are working, but they will be able to follow the technical details of your work if clearly explained. You should also give prominence to any new results which you have been able to obtain. It is important that you write the report yourself, although of course your supervisor will be able to give you advice. You should also feel free to contact the Postgraduate Office if you have questions.

You will be given a deadline for submitting your report, usually within the first few weeks of your 4th Term. After that you should arrange a suitable time for an interview with your assessors, and this should normally take place by just over half way through the Term.

The 4th Term interview typically lasts about an hour. Although this is part of a formal progress examination, the interview will usually involve a discussion of a fairly informal kind between you and the assessors about the content of your report. Much of the discussion will be technical in nature, but the assessors will also want to ask you about other issues, such as supervision arrangements and the range of courses etc. that you have attended. Students invariably find the interview a helpful and stimulating experience and of course the assessors will take a close interest in your subsequent work and be happy to offer further advice and help.

Based on your 4th Term report and interview, the assessors will write a joint report summarising their views on your progress so far. Copies of the assessors' report will be sent to your supervisor. The outcome will be communicated to the Degree Committee. Your supervisor will discuss its contents with you as soon as they receive it. The report will usually contain a number of helpful suggestions about your research.

If the assessors recommend registration for the PhD and your supervisor agrees with the recommendation, the Department and Degree Committee will confirm your registration with the University and your student record will be updated. If the assessors are unable to recommend registration, then there would usually be an agreed period in which you and your supervisor work together to address any problems, typically followed by a further interview. (Discussion with the Director of Postgraduate Education or Research Student Adviser may be helpful at this stage.) In the unlikely event that progress is still not satisfactory then it may be necessary to consider alternative options, for example registering for an MPhil by Thesis.

You should be kept fully informed by your supervisor. If you are concerned about the progress of your research and would like independent advice, you are encouraged to contact the Director of Postgraduate Education or Research Student Adviser.

Between registration and submitting

Hopefully, the registration process will have revealed profitable avenues to explore, and attempting to frame your own conjectures and write your own proofs will take up an increasing proportion of your time. You will have established a good relationship with your supervisor and found sources of support to complement that which your supervisor is able to provide.

Do not be surprised or discouraged if you feel as if you are getting nowhere. A thesis often depends on one small observation. Even established mathematicians have the experience of chasing blind avenues for months before stumbling on the solution, or even a completely different result than the intended one. Keep coming into the Department to interact with peers and colleagues. Keep going to seminars and courses. Pay even closer attention to the work of colleagues in neighbouring fields; when the obvious methods don't work, sometimes methods from other fields can be adapted. Keep talking; try explaining what you need to your colleagues. Often the process of trying to explain what you are looking for clarifies the situation so that you can see what you need.

By the time you come to write up your final thesis, you should have attempted to write at least three pieces of work, and indeed much of the background material and even the new material will have been presented in seminars. This will make the task of finalising your thesis easier, but do not underestimate the time it takes to produce the final version and start drafting chapters well in advance of your target completion date.

Submitting your PhD and the Examination

The Faculty Degree Committee is responsible for overseeing PhD examinations, and the administration is undertaken by the Postgraduate Office. The Degree Committee provides [guidance to students and their supervisors via a dedicated webpage](#).

By the middle of the third year, large portions of your research project should be nearing completion.

When you and your supervisor judge that your thesis is around two months from completion, you send in an Appointment of Examiners Application Form, calling for examiners to be appointed, and giving the date of submission. The names of two examiners (usually one internal to Cambridge, one External to Cambridge) are suggested by your supervisor and formally appointed by the Faculty Degree Committee. You will be advised of the confirmed appointments in advance of submission and have the right to appeal against an appointment if you believe there might be a potential conflict of interest.

Please ensure that you read the [University statement on plagiarism and academic misconduct](#), including the statement on use of [content generated by artificial intelligence](#). Students should be aware that under University Policy any work submitted for assessment purposes may be submitted to [Turnitin UK \(text-matching software\)](#) for screening.

The actual process of getting the thesis bound and submitted must be done in accordance with [University guidelines](#).

Prior to the oral examination (viva), students are able to make a voluntary disclosure on grounds of disability or serious illness which will allow the examiners to make reasonable adjustments to the oral examination. Application is via the Degree Committee. See the website for further details or ask the Postgraduate Office.

The examiners will contact you to arrange for the oral examination. Your supervisor will not be present at this, and it may well last 2 to 4 hours. The oral examination can take several forms, but typically you might be asked to give a short presentation and then be asked detailed questions on your dissertation. Your supervisor can normally offer you advice as to how to prepare. At the end of the oral exam you will normally receive some (purely unofficial) indication of the recommendation that the examiners will make to the Degree Committee.

The possible outcomes of the examination are given on the [University website](#) and listed below:

- Approval without correction (subject to submission of hardbound and electronic copies of the thesis)
- Conditional approval subject to satisfactory completion of minor or major corrections
- Revision and resubmission of the thesis for further examination
- Revision and resubmission of the thesis for a further examination or the option to accept the MSc or MLitt degree without further examination (which may be conditional, subject to satisfactory completion of corrections)
- Not to be allowed to revise the thesis, but approve for award of the MSc or MLitt degree (which may be conditional, subject to satisfactory completion of corrections)
- Revision and resubmission of the thesis for examination for the MSc or MLitt degree
- Outright failure

When approval is deferred until more work has been done, a second oral examination is sometimes necessary. With all the safeguards and assessment that has preceded the examination, it is most unlikely that a thesis will be rejected outright at this stage.

When submitting the final hardbound version of their doctoral thesis all students are required by the University to submit an electronic version. Electronic theses should be submitted to the [University's repository Apollo](#).

Section 5 – Student Support

Although in the vast majority of cases a student's time passes in a trouble-free manner, there can be occasional problems. These might be personal in nature, or stem from failure to make progress with research. The Faculty is committed to the welfare of students and there are various people you can turn to for help and advice.

The first, of course, is your **Supervisor**; a second is your **Adviser**. In addition, the **Director of Postgraduate Education (DPE)** and the **DAMTP Research Student Adviser (RSA)** or **DPMMS Postgraduate Welfare Adviser (PWA)** are available to offer help and guidance to research students in difficulties. The DPE may act as moderator in case of a complaint or disciplinary matter (see below). Please contact one of them as soon as possible if there is a problem that is hindering your progress. Contact details are available in [Section 6](#).

Students with personal difficulties may also turn to their College Tutor, the [Postgraduate Wellbeing Service](#) or [the University Counselling Service](#). The [Students' Unions' Advice Service](#) provide independent advice for anything ranging from procedural matters to welfare support. Their website also lists all the University's support organisations.

The [Student Support website](#) is a useful resource which includes a directory of advice and support for dealing with specific issues.

Dealing with Difficulties

It is the intention to resolve academic problems or disputes within the Faculty, as far as possible.

(a) Academic problems

1. Informal Procedure

If any serious academic problem (including lack of progress) becomes apparent, or any serious dispute between a student and a supervisor should arise, then the Director of Postgraduate Studies (DPE) should be consulted. The DPE will discuss the problems with the student in confidence and offer advice. If the problem is not resolved after a reasonable time, then the next step would normally be for the DPE to arrange an informal meeting with both student and supervisor to try to sort out any misunderstanding or disputes. The aim is to improve the relationship and communication between them so that a fruitful working relationship can be resumed. The Director of Postgraduate Studies may on occasions find it necessary to consult the Head of Department.

If the informal procedure does not work, it may be necessary to follow a more formal procedure.

2. Formal Complaints Procedure

For students who wish to make a formal complaint against their supervisor or to complain that they have not been permitted to continue to a PhD, the following procedure below will be followed:

- the student will be asked to prepare a written complaint and the DPE will ask the supervisor to prepare a response.

- the DPE will then review all the documents, including the reports made by the supervisor on the student, and vice versa.
- the DPE will meet with the student (who might be accompanied by a friend or Student Union Representative) and meet separately with the supervisor. The DPE will then provide a judgement on the case to both parties.
- if the student or supervisor is not satisfied with the result, then the DPE will pass the paperwork, together with their written judgement (giving reasons), to the Head of Department, who will convene an *ad hoc* panel to consider the matter. The panel would consist of the Head of Department and three members of staff not in the group concerned but in cognate subjects (this may include a member of staff in a cognate subject from another department). The panel would be supported by either the Deputy Departmental Administrator (Education) or the Department's Business and Operations Manager.
- the panel would have all the documentation available and would have the obligation to speak to the student (who might be accompanied by a friend or Student Union Representative) and to the supervisor. The panel could, at its discretion, also call the DPE.
- the panel's decision, which - for the Department - will be final, will then be transmitted to the student, the supervisor, the Degree Committee, College and, where withdrawal is recommended, the University's Postgraduate Committee.

(b) Disciplinary Problems

Any complaint about a student's conduct will initially be referred to the DPE. If a *prima facie* disciplinary case is found, and if the matter cannot be resolved by negotiation between the parties (first trying an informal approach), then the complaint will be referred to an *ad hoc* panel as in (a) above.

In either of these cases, if a student does not accept the judgement of the DPE or the panel, then there is normally a right of appeal to University disciplinary bodies. The DPE and/or the student's Tutor can advise about the options available; [see also the University web page](#).

It is very rare for a PhD student to encounter serious difficulties. When they do, it is the Faculty's policy to offer help and support, to enable the PhD student to successfully complete their studies.

For other types of complaints, for example harassment and sexual misconduct, please see the information on the [student complaints webpages](#).

Section 6 – Key Contacts

Those who will be most important to you in your life in the Department are **your supervisor(s), your adviser**, as well as **your peers and colleagues**. Beyond these, there are some people who have specific roles.

Director of Postgraduate Education

There is a Director of Postgraduate Education (DPE) who has oversight of postgraduate research students and programmes in each Department:

DAMTP DPE	Professor Matt Wingate	graddirector@damtp.cam.ac.uk
DPMMS DPE	Professor Jason Miller	graddirector@dpmms.cam.ac.uk

Research Student Adviser / Postgraduate Welfare Adviser

In addition, each Department has appointed individuals who act as a first point of contact for research student welfare. In DAMTP this is called a Research Student Adviser (RSA) and in DPMMS a Postgraduate Welfare Adviser (PWA). If you have a problem which cannot be resolved by your supervisor or adviser then you can talk to RSA/PWA about it. More serious issues may be referred to the Director of Postgraduate Education, or Head of Department (see previous section).

DAMTP RSA	Professor Matthew Wingate	M.Wingate@damtp.cam.ac.uk
DPMMS PWAs	Professor Holly Kreiger	hkrieger@dpmms.cam.ac.uk
	Professor Varun Jog	vj270@dpmms.cam.ac.uk

Faculty Postgraduate Office

The Faculty Postgraduate Office provides a shared administrative service for both Mathematics Departments. It is located in C0.15, just by the Pavilion C common room.

A list of the full team and our contact details are available on our webpage. The main people you will encounter are:

Postgraduate Office Manager	Pilar Alonso	grad-administrator@maths.cam.ac.uk
PhD Administrator	Jo Clifford	phd-admin@maths.cam.ac.uk

Deputy Departmental Administrator (Education)

The Faculty has a Deputy Departmental Administrator who oversees the operational delivery of education provision at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. They work closely with the Directors of Education and the senior management in both Departments on matters concerning education policy and practice.

Faculty DDA	Sarah Dodd	deputyda@maths.cam.ac.uk
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Business and Operations Manager (BOM)

Each Department has a Business and Operations Manager. They have administrative oversight of each Department, its finances and strategic planning. They work closely with the Heads of Department, DPE and other senior academic staff. The DAMTP BOM is Secretary to the Faculty Board. The DPMMS BOM is Secretary to the Degree Committee.

DAMTP BOM	Rachel Plunkett	damtpsec@maths.cam.ac.uk
DPMMS BOM	Ben Daft	bom@dpmms.cam.ac.uk

Heads of Department

The Heads of Department are:

DAMTP	Professor Nicholas Dorey
DPMMS	Professor Ivan Smith
Director of the Statslab	Professor Richard Samworth

Department Support Staff

If you wish to make an appointment with the Head of Department please contact the relevant PA (hodsec@damtp.cam.ac.uk or hodsec@dpmms.cam.ac.uk). For DAMTP students, there is a Pavilion or Group Secretary who will be able to assist with DAMTP office keys and other logistical matters.

For HEP students in Pavilion B contact Amanda Stagg (B2.16)

(hep-administrator@damtp.cam.ac.uk)

For GR students in Pavilion B contact James Parke (B0.42)

(gr-secretary@damtp.cam.ac.uk)

For Pavilion F contact Zvezda Petrova-Woodhouse (F0.09) (pavfsec@damtp.cam.ac.uk)

For CQIF students in Pavilion B contact Zvezda Petrova-Woodhouse (F0.09)

(pavfsec@damtp.cam.ac.uk)

For Pavilion G contact Vanessa Hansen (G1.18) (pavgsec@damtp.cam.ac.uk)

For Pavilion H contact June Stamper (H1.11) (pavhsec@damtp.cam.ac.uk)

[Julia Blackwell](#) (C1.01) and [Jayne Clough](#) (C1.05) organise office allocations for DPMMS PhD students and can be contacted regarding office keys, stationery and other logistical matters.

Department Finance Offices

Each Department has a Finance Office who can assist with payments and expense claims:

DAMTP Finance Manager Jonathan Foulkes (B1.24) accountant@damtp.cam.ac.uk

DAMTP Finance Co-ordinator Sue Screaton (B1.25) finance@damtp.cam.ac.uk

DPMMS Finance Manager Edina Tandari (C1.19) finance@dpmms.cam.ac.uk

DPMMS Finance Administrator Annette Keuper accounts.payable@dpmms.cam.ac.uk

Faculty Undergraduate Office

The Faculty Undergraduate Office (UGO) is in B1.28 and provides a shared administrative service for both Mathematics Departments. You might come across them if you volunteer to help with exams (further information will be circulated during the year). They also manage the Lecture List. You can contact the team at undergrad-office@maths.cam.ac.uk

Section 7 – Centre for Mathematical Sciences

Health and Safety

Students are expected to comply with all local, University and government guidance put in place in order to minimise the risks of respiratory illnesses such as Covid-19 within the CMS. There is currently no legal requirement to wear face coverings. However, individuals may choose to wear them in the CMS, including in lecture theatres. ***Please show consideration for those who remain at an increased risk from catching any communicable disease and those who wish to continue to wear face coverings.*** The University's [Communicable Disease Helpdesk](#) is available to advise staff and students. It can be reached on 01223 339514.

Access and Security at CMS

The main doors into Central Core are normally unlocked on weekdays between 8.00am-5.30pm, and on Saturdays from 8.30am-5.00pm in term time. Magnetically locked doors should not be propped open or the alarm will sound. You need a University Card to unlock exterior doors and interior doors outside core hours. **Keep your card on you at all times.**

Your College is responsible for providing you with a University Card, but CMS Reception will need to activate it before it will work on-site. You will be given 24/7 access. If you lose your card report it immediately to Reception (reception@maths.cam.ac.uk / 65000).

Do not let strangers without keys or entry cards into the buildings. Close manual windows and lock manual doors if you are the last to leave. The University is not insured for *theft* of, or damage to, your personal property while you are on University premises, so if you bring a computer with you, you should take out insurance for it. The University is insured for accidental personal injury to staff, students and visitors while they are on University premises, but only where the accident was due to fault on the University's part.

Bicycles

There are cycle racks at several points around the CMS site - please use these. A good lock is a necessity! Please take care **not** to lock your cycle to neighbouring cycles. Cycles are not allowed inside the buildings or inside the courtyard between the Gatehouse and Pavilion A.

Cars

Unless you are registered disabled you will not be allocated parking.

Catering Facilities and Common Rooms

The CMS café is open from 09:00 to 16:00 from Monday to Friday. Please ensure you return your trays to the collection points and place all unwanted items in the appropriate bins.

There are coffee machines in the common room in each pavilion and vending machines in Pavilion A and the Betty and Gordon Moore Library. Each pavilion has its own common room with fridge, kettle/water boiler, microwave and Flavia coffee machine; drink sachets for the Flavia machines can be purchased from Reception. Wash and clear away any crockery and cutlery after use. The refrigerators should not be used for long-term storage of food as space is limited.

Children

Children brought onto the site should never be left unaccompanied. Children under the age of 12 are not allowed on the roof. Children should not be brought into the site routinely; the buildings are not designed and above all not used with their safety in mind (e.g. building work, doors and windows with automatic closers, congested car park, etc.). Anybody bringing a child into the site is responsible

for that child's safety whilst they are on the premises. The [University Childcare Office](#) provides information on childcare services.

Computing and printing

New students are provided with information on getting started with IT, including the Maths computer system prior to arrival. Information about both University Information Services (UIS) and departmental computing services can be accessed via the 'New PhD Student' webpage.

Disabled Students

The building was designed for universal access but please contact the CMS Facilities Manager, (CMSfacilitiesmanager@maths.cam.ac.uk / 66915) for advice on your detailed access requirements. A range of support is available via the [Accessibility & Disability Resource Centre \(ADRC\)](#), or contact your department Disability Liaison Officer: Rachel Plunkett (37863) for DAMTP or Ben Daft (37996) for DPMMS.

Electrical Equipment

No portable electrical equipment should not be brought into the Department apart from laptops and phone chargers and they must be in good working order and safe to use. If in doubt it should be checked by the CMS Facilities Team technicians. Please email facilities@maths.cam.ac.uk. If required, lamps and supplementary heaters can be provided by the Facilities Team. Portable appliance testing (PAT) is carried out across the department every 2 years. Any redundant electrical items or batteries should be disposed of in the dedicated waste streams for such items.

Expenses (incl. travel)

Standard expenses (such as postage, phone, photocopying, fax, stationery, etc) are not normally charged for but must be work related. This policy is possible only because it is not abused, e.g. people do not make long national or international phone calls (note that all phone calls are automatically logged).

For unusual expenses, please contact the Lab Manager, Diana Thomas-McEwen (37842) if it involves laboratory materials or your Department Finance Office for anything else.

It is a requirement that you obtain approval for travel expenses in advance. Full guidance on pre-approval and claiming expense are available on the [current student webpages](#). If you claim travel expenses, you are required to produce receipts for all items.

Faults

Report faults in your room (such as radiator or lights not working) to the Facilities Team by emailing facilities@maths.cam.ac.uk. Serious faults that may affect the safety of occupants or security of buildings should be notified immediately during office hours to Reception (65000) or, if out of hours, to Security (31818).

Fire Safety

Familiarise yourself with entrances, emergency exits and fire-alarm assembly points. In the event of the fire alarm sounding, leave the building by the nearest exit. **Do not re-enter the building, even if the alarm has been silenced, until advised to do so.**

The external doors do not unlock automatically for security reasons; exit in the normal way. Assembly points are shown on posted site plans and Fire Wardens will direct you. Do not attempt to enter another building if the alarm is sounding there also.

In an emergency, and in the event of doors failing to open, break the glass in the **green** “break glass” boxes located alongside each door. Please report this to Reception/Security, as the doors will remain unlocked until the glass is replaced.

Fire alarms are tested in each building every Wednesday morning between 08:30 and 09:00. The alarm will sound for only a few seconds and for this brief period only it can be ignored; if the alarm continues to sound please evacuate the building. Fire Safety training is provided at CMS in Michaelmas term and you are encouraged to attend.

First Aid

First Aiders may be summoned via Reception (**65000**). First Aid boxes are held in each common room in one of the cupboards and a First Aid room is located in the lower ground floor of Pavilion F. There is an automated external defibrillator (AED) sited on the buttress adjacent to reception leading to the entrance to Pavilion G common room.

If an accident occurs outside normal office hours, telephone Security on 31818. The emergency number for FIRE, POLICE or AMBULANCE is **via Security on 101, or 1999 on any network phone**.

All incidents must be reported to Reception, and a report form completed. Completed forms should be submitted to the Department Safety Officer as appropriate.

Laboratory

The GK Batchelor Laboratory occupies the basement of Pavilions A, C and H. Members who wish to carry out experimental work there should contact the Laboratory Director **Prof. Stuart Dalziel** (37911, S.B.Dalziel@damtp.cam.ac.uk). New arrivals should always make themselves known to the Laboratory Safety Officer, **Dr Mark Hallworth**, (37841, mah14@cam.ac.uk) and Laboratory and Workshop Manager, **Diana Thomas-McEwen** (dmt38@cam.ac.uk) who will provide a laboratory induction and Risk Assessment advice and authorise their access card to be programmed for lab access.

Library

The Betty and Gordon Moore Library (BGML), located on the CMS site, is the principal STEM library of the University holding collections across the whole of STEM with the exception of Clinical Sciences (which are held at the Medical Library). The library holds extensive collections in Mathematics and the Physical Sciences. Detailed information is available from the [library webpages](#). Students are pre-registered for borrowing on the library management system as part of the general enrolment to the University.

Other libraries in Cambridge may be relevant to postgraduate students. For example, the University Library in West Road holds a large collection of older mathematical material. A [complete listing of Cambridge libraries](#) is available online.

The library discovery system is [iDiscover](#), which allows you to search the University's libraries print and online collections using a single search. You are also able to manage your patron account through iDiscover, including check your loans, pay fines online etc.

There are many specialist print and online resources to support mathematical sciences in Cambridge, which are detailed in the [Maths LibGuide](#).

You may find that you have to search existing academic literature for your work. The Betty and Gordon Moore Library's Research Support team will be happy to help you do this. Feel free to get in

touch with them to book an appointment at moore-rso@lib.cam.ac.uk. The team also offers useful training sessions on a range of topics, which are advertised to all mathematics students throughout the year.

For current library opening hours you should refer to the [Betty & Gordon Moore Library website](#).

Mail Services

Long-term members of the Department have their own pigeonholes; others (including research students) have shared pigeonholes allocated by first letter of surname. The pigeonholes are on the ground floor of Pavilion A, near to Reception.

Outgoing mail should be placed in the trays in Reception, before 15:00 on weekdays. A University Messenger Service circulates between the University's departments and Colleges. Mail is collected by the UMS daily and needs to be in the trays in Reception by 10:00. There are no mail services at weekends. Please ask Reception if you have any queries.

Offices and keys

All students are provided with desk space in a shared office with 2 or 3 other students for four years from the PhD start date. A key to your office is obtainable from your Group/Pavilion Secretary (DAMTP students) or the Postgraduate Office, (C0.15) (DPMMS students). You might have to pay a returnable deposit of £20. Please notify us (returning your key if appropriate) if you do not want / no longer require a desk space, or when you leave the Department.

If a desk is required for longer than four years, please contact the Postgraduate Office (DPMMS students) or your Group/Pavilion Secretary (DAMTP students). For periods of approved leave to work away, your desk space might be re-assigned until you return.

***Keep your office door locked at all times when the room is unoccupied.
Do not leave any valuables unattended.***

Phone

Dial 9 before the number to obtain an outside line. Student phones are restricted for outgoing calls to local calls only. University numbers are mainly 3nnnn, and outside callers must prefix another 3 to the number. For those numbers starting with 6nnnn, callers from outside need to prefix with a 7. The [University telephone directory is available online](#).

Photocopying

Multiple photocopiers are available in each pavilion. In DAMTP codes may be required - please ask your Group / Pavilion Secretary.

Recycling

CMS has one of the best recycling rates within the University with approximately 2/3 of waste recycled; please help us maintain and better this by thinking carefully about how you should dispose of waste and select the correct waste stream. Minimising our impact on the environment is increasingly important and it costs the University twice as much to dispose of general waste as it does for mixed recyclables waste.

Safety

A short safety briefing for new students is provided as part of induction. It is important that all members of the Faculty observe safe working practices and inform the appropriate Safety Officer or

relevant Business and Operations Manager if they see anything giving cause for concern. The [CMS safety policy is available online](#).

All accidents or near misses should be reported, whether or not they involve personal injury. [Accident report forms are available online](#).

Site Officers are:

For the Laboratory:	Dr Mark Hallworth	mah14@cam.ac.uk
For the CMS site:	James Wilcox	CMSfacilitiesmanager@maths.cam.ac.uk
For DAMTP:	Rachel Plunkett	dampsec@maths.cam.ac.uk
For DPMMS:	Ben Daft	bom@dpmms.cam.ac.uk

Seminars

Lists of forthcoming seminars within DAMTP, DPMMS and the nearby Isaac Newton Institute for Mathematical Sciences are displayed on the relevant web pages. See also <http://www.talks.cam.ac.uk/>

Smoking

Smoking, including electronic cigarettes and vaping, is not allowed in any of the CMS buildings and is actively discouraged near entrances or automatic vents and windows. Ashtrays are provided beneath the cycle shelters around the perimeter of the site and the circular seating areas outside the main entrance to the Central Core.

Stationery

Each Department has a stationery store. A key for the stationery store can be obtained from Reception or your Pavilion / Group Secretary (for DAMTP students) or C1.05 (DPMMS students).

Appendix A: Research Student Timeline

Year 1	
October	Faculty and Department Induction
	Postgraduate Safety Training
	Supervision Training (Maths Specific)
Variable	It is expected that in your first year you will give at least one talk either to your group, or as part of a specific activity (e.g. RD workshop)
March/April	Student Meeting: Registration process and requirements
June, last day of Easter term	3 rd term review (DAMTP only) Researcher Development Log submission
Year 2	
October	4 th term assessment: report submission deadline
	4 th term assessment: presentation to and discussion with assessors
Variable	In most research areas, there will be a 'seminar' afternoon during your second year when all second-year students will be expected to give a talk on their work to a broad audience.
June	Researcher Development Log submission (last day Easter term)
Year 3	
Variable	In the third year, it is expected that you will give a full-length seminar at your Department and/or a seminar at another institute and/or a talk at a conference.
June	Researcher Development Log submission (last day Easter term)
Year 4	
	You should aim to complete the write up of your thesis within your 10 th term
	Two months prior to submission: request appointment of examiners
September	Submission Deadline