Information for IRDR PhD Students

General

The IRDR aims to cultivate an inclusive, stimulating and sustainable environment to support outstanding research in risk and disaster reduction. Research students are central to this aim. We will support outstanding early career researchers who have the potential to become leaders in their field.

Research in the IRDR aspires to be cross-disciplinary, international and have significant societal impact. Research students need to contribute to the intellectual life of the IRDR and actively engage with UCL as a community of scholars. Full-time PhD students with IRDR as their primary location should centre their research on the IRDR (and be based in an IRDR Research Room) but also actively engage with the academic life of their partner departments or institutions.

IRDR funded or part-funded studentships should be held in the IRDR, which at this stage means that students must be admitted through Earth Sciences. The designation of your degree (e.g., statistics) is not affected by this administrative arrangement. (Presently the IRDR cannot admit its own students.)

Supervisors and Supervisory Panels

Research training is provided primarily by a First Supervisor and a Second Supervisor. Supervisors must be members of the IRDR supervisory pool, but other supervisors or advisors may be brought in.

Part-time and off-site PhD students are expected to ensure that they have adequate face-to-face and electronic communication with their supervisors and to attend UCL whenever they can.

UCL’s graduate research students are required to keep a Graduate School Log Book found on the UCL website.

IRDR Research Environment

The IRDR aims to build a thriving environment for research and research impact. Participation in research in the IRDR requires that students participate in the wider intellectual community, and that they also communicate their research ideas and results to a wide audience.

Full-time research students are expected to be regular attendees at our two series of seminars with internal and external speakers and to engage in the informal life of the Institute by joining IRDR Coffee on a regular basis and social events. Attendance at other IRDR events is also expected, with absence permitted only by the IRDR Director:
• The annual IRDR Student Forum in January to present their research.
• The annual IRDR Spring Academy typically on the first Monday and Tuesday of the third term.
• The one-day IRDR Annual Conference in June to present a poster of their research. Usually a second day linked to the conference is also organised, which previously has been the Academic Summit but which is evolving as IRDR needs change.
• IRDR public events during first and second terms.
IRDR PhD students should submit annually in May, in time for the preparation of the IRDR Annual Report, a one-page research report, written in an accessible way, which includes their main findings and publications/presentations.

Teaching

Teaching is an integral part of the IRDR. Full-time research students are expected to contribute to teaching in the IRDR. Teaching outside the IRDR must be with the agreement of the IRDR Director.

Knowledge Exchange and Public Engagement

Knowledge exchange and public engagement are important aspects of our work and are essential in any career, academic and non-academic. The required presentations and attendance above are essential to learn and practice these skills.

Skills Training

The IRDR’s PhD programme aims to ensure that all students have opportunities to develop important skills during their PhD.

Within IRDR, the following skills are developed:

Oral communications:
• Annual PhD Forum: Popular science and scientific presentations.
• IRDR Lunchtime Discussion Forum: Presenting and responding to questions.
• Media training: A gap to be filled formally.
• Contributing to teaching.

Written communications:
• Annual IRDR Report: Popular science writing. Supervisors need to work with their students.
• IRDR Blog: Popular science writing. Supervisors need to work with their students.
• Spring Academy: A written communications skills exercise or similar each year.
• Poster presentation at the IRDR Annual Conference.
• Publishing in academic journals: Because this skill is highly disciplinary, with interdisciplinary work requiring a different skill set, each supervisor needs to support their students in doing so.

Engaging with the public:
• Acting as event hosts and ushers at IRDR events, e.g. Careers Fair, Annual Conference, Panel Discussion.

Research proposal writing:
• The IRDR Masters module is available which also develops critical appraisal skills.
• Working cross-culturally and cross-disciplinarily: Developed through the Spring Academy.

Careers:
• IRDR Annual Career Fair.

PhD students can also organise their own skills exchange workshops, which might include inviting speakers and asking staff to workshop a specific skill. Possible topics could be teaching/demonstrating, CV writing, networking, and using social media.

Field work (from sample collection to interviews), ethics approval, new languages, lab work, computer programming, and other research skills would be trained individually on an as-needs basis.

Outside IRDR, training is available.

Written communications; supervisors should encourage PhD students to:
• Write blogs and book reviews for journals.
• Present posters at scientific and popular science conferences.
• Review papers for international journals and recommend them as reviewers.

Oral communications; supervisors should encourage PhD students to:
• Give public presentations and go into schools. Many student societies exist to support these activities, e.g. UKPN, APECS, GfGD, EWB, ScienceGrrl, and Science Buskers.
• Present orally at scientific and popular science conferences.
• Lecture for a Master’s module.
• UCL Training with course examples being ‘Writing Targeted Grant Proposals’, ‘Conference Abstracts and Posters’, ‘Your Career, Your Future’, ‘Risk Assessment’, and many courses on teaching, public presentations, and leadership.

Security and safety training for the field is best done professionally, with RedR running courses open to the public and NGOs organising their own sessions for their own staff.

We expect all our research students to acquire some competence in a foreign language, which should be one that is relevant to their research (for example, by being the language of communication in a field area). During the course of their research degree, we also expect all our research students to:
• Gain experience in teaching, by taking charge of the classes in the IRDR or on associated modules.
• Submit at least one paper for publication in a high impact journal.
• Present their research at an international conference.
• Apply for small / travel grants, in order to gain experience of proposal writing.
• Communicate their research findings to the wider disaster risk reduction community.

Consultancy

Providing consultancy services can be a valuable part of a PhD training. Such consultancy should be done with the agreement of the supervisor and under the
auspices of UCL Consultants with standard agreements, such as on intellectual property and liability.

**Support from the IRDR**

Students can expect from the IRDR:
- Excellent supervision.
- A stimulating intellectual environment.
- Skills training.
- Support in preparing the thesis and preparing for the viva.
- Support with career development.
- Support from the IRDR Graduate Advisor and IRDR Administrator.
- Adherence to the IRDR PhD student desk policy.
- Up to £3,000 total per student for research expenses, if not already provided by external sponsors, via application to the IRDR Office using the form under ‘my IRDR’ on the IRDR website.
- Access to additional funding for fieldwork, conferences, lab consumables etc. from the IRDR and UCL including the Graduate School. For IRDR funds, a case for support must be made with support of the supervisor via application to the IRDR Office using the form under ‘my IRDR’ on the IRDR website. UCL funds are advertised via email.
- Computing facilities (see below).
- Option to request financial and administrative support for student-led activities promoting IRDR, such as external partnerships, workshops, social activities, or other creative proposals, via application to the IRDR Office using the form under ‘my IRDR’ on the IRDR website.

**IRDR Computing Policy**

The IRDR operates an Apple and UNIX policy. Other platforms (e.g., Windows) are only supported for operation in the field and in the laboratory where Macs are not an option. The preferred scientific computing software are Matlab and R. Microsoft Office and Apple iWorks are supported. A Mac number cruncher is available for batch jobs. High performance requests to UCL will be supported.

All students must back up their work off-site at least weekly.

**Completion of Thesis**

A full-time programme of study is normally 3-3½ years. Students who have not submitted their thesis within this time can progress to Completing Research Student (CRS) status. A programme of part-time study is normally 5 years. Students have an obligation to UCL and to the IRDR to be diligent in their work and to complete their thesis on time. If supervisory support is seeming to be inadequate, then it is the student’s responsibility to flag the situation with the IRDR student advisor and/or the IRDR Director.
A digital copy of the final dissertation should be lodged with the IRDR or supervisor. Programs and techniques developed during the course of supported research should be made available to IRDR researchers. (Full acknowledgement will be given.)

**Publications and Presentations**

In all publications and presentations, IRDR students must identify IRDR as an affiliation. Financial support from the IRDR should be acknowledged. Publications and presentations should adhere to UCL’s Open Access and depository policies. Students should write at least one IRDR blog during their PhD, such as of fieldwork or media appearances. UCL / IRDR templates should be used for presentations.

**Graduate Student Information & Progression**

UCL has a *Handbook & Code of Practice for Graduate Research Degrees*, which sets out best practice for the supervision of PhD students, who are encouraged to read it closely. UCL’s procedures and policies relating to Risk Assessment, Health & Safety, Ethics, equal opportunities, plagiarism, harassment, and other research and professional conduct must be followed.

*Peter Sammonds  November 2016*