

**Your studies**

# The School of Life Sciences

**MSD Postgraduate research**

**STUDENT HANDBOOK**  
2020-21



University of Essex

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## Welcome



### **Welcome – Dr Corinne Whitby, Graduate Director (Research),**

A warm welcome to the School of Life Sciences. We hope that you will enjoy your time here and make the most of the exciting opportunities available. You are an important and integral part of the School community, contributing to its research activities, which fall into four groups: *Protein Structure and Mechanisms of Disease*, *Genomics and Computational Biology*, *Ecology and Environmental Microbiology* and *Plant Productivity*. Each research group brings together several academic staff and their associated teams, who collaborate on projects, scholarly activity and knowledge exchange.

In the UK, academic research outputs are assessed periodically by the government in a process called Research Assessment Framework (REF). In the last REF, 85% of our research was rated as being of internationally recognised quality. This means that the School has an excellent research environment, which encourages novel ideas, critical reasoning and communication skills. Our strong focus on research means that you will be supervised by some of the leading academics in your chosen fields. You will work closely with your supervisor, technical staff, postdoctoral scientists and other postgraduate students.

Our postgraduate programmes require commitment and hard work. However, the rewards for your endeavours are that you will carry out novel research, grow into highly skilled, independent research scientists, and along the way you will develop long-lasting friendships and collaborations.

We are committed to your career development and we will offer advice and resources to help you. It is essential that you plan ahead and take the necessary steps to develop your career and gain the necessary skills that a competitive job market demands. I shall look forward to seeing you in the School and wish you all the best with your postgraduate research studies.

# Contents

Welcome .....	i
Introduction.....	6
Practicalities and Getting Started.....	7
Right to Study.....	7
Student visas.....	7
Explore your Campus.....	7
Get connected.....	8
Working while studying .....	9
Your personal belongings .....	9
The Essex Experience .....	10
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion .....	10
Student communities.....	10
Essex Sport.....	11
Students' Union.....	11
Essex Spirit, social media and What's on? .....	11
About the School of Life Sciences .....	13
Meet the team .....	13
Your supervisor .....	13
Departmental resources and facilities.....	14
Postgraduate (Research) Study Room .....	14
Postgraduate Lockers .....	15
Postgraduate Training.....	15
Photocopying and Scanning .....	15
Noticeboards .....	15
Pigeonholes.....	15
Departmental prizes .....	16
Best Scientific Article Prize .....	16
Social Media.....	17
Learning and Teaching .....	18

Student Staff Partnership .....	18
The academic year .....	19
My Course .....	20
Making changes to your study .....	20
Periods of study .....	21
Course materials .....	21
Research Skills Development .....	23
Proficio .....	23
University and departmental training events .....	23
School Seminars .....	25
Postgraduate Mentoring Scheme .....	25
School Mentoring Scheme .....	25
Scientific Societies and Conferences .....	26
Presenting your work .....	26
Cohort Building Event .....	26
The Graduate Forum .....	26
Research Groups .....	27
Assessment and Academic Integrity .....	28
Ethics in research .....	28
Risk assessments in research .....	28
Covid-19 Safe Working Practice in the School .....	29
Safety glasses .....	29
Ordering and Stores .....	29
Repairs .....	29
Academic Integrity and Academic Offences .....	30
Referencing .....	31
Academic Skills and Support .....	31
Language classes English classes for dependants .....	32
Learning a Language .....	32
Research Students' Progress Board (RSPB) .....	37
Extenuating Circumstances .....	38

Submission of Thesis .....	38
Thesis Submission Pre-Examination .....	38
Thesis Submission for Award.....	38
Thesis Deposit and Retention .....	39
Examiners and the Viva .....	39
Exit Awards (Professional Doctorate students only) .....	39
Appeals .....	39
Student Voice .....	40
Student Representatives .....	40
Student Voice Groups .....	40
Student Surveys .....	40
You Matter.....	41
Student Services Hub .....	41
Support for disabilities and conditions .....	41
Seeing a Doctor .....	41
Counselling services .....	42
UK Immigration Advice and Guidance .....	42
Money management .....	42
Students' Union Advice .....	42
Residence Life .....	42
Religion, faith and beliefs .....	43
Harassment support.....	43
COVID-19 (Coronavirus).....	43
Health and safety on campus.....	43
Making a Complaint .....	44
Student Development.....	45
Careers Services.....	45
CareerHub.....	45
Big Essex Award .....	45
Volunteering .....	45
Essex Interns .....	45

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You Are Essex .....	46
Your Award Certificate .....	46
Graduation.....	46
GradIntelligence .....	46
References.....	46
Alumni .....	47
What comes next? .....	47

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## Introduction

All Schools and Departments at Essex create a Student Handbook each year. These are designed to be useful tools for you to find out what you need to know about your department, the University and its academic policies and procedures, and all of the resources available to you.

We know things might be a little different this year, but we remain absolutely determined to provide you with the best Essex education and student experience we can while safeguarding your health and wellbeing. Make sure that you keep up to date with what we all need to do to keep safe as a community.

At Essex we celebrate diversity and challenge inequality. You are welcomed to a truly diverse community where differences are celebrated, and individuality is valued. Your contribution is welcomed and encouraged based on your own thoughts and experiences. As part of our community you will have the freedom to explore, experiment, challenge your discipline and have your ideas shaped by peer and professional knowledge from all over the world. Essex is about more than just getting a degree: we have so much to offer our students!

Things might have to change and adapt over the year, so make sure that you're checking online and keeping in touch with your department for the latest updates. The Student Directory contains a wealth of other helpful sources of information which you may also find useful,.

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## Practicalities and Getting Started

You've made it to Essex! We've outlined below the most important things you need to make sure you do as soon as possible to get your time at Essex started.

### Registration

Whether a new or returning student, you will need to officially register at the start of each academic year. Registration is not only a formal procedure of enrolling you into the University, but also connects you to a number of vital systems which allow you to access your online Welcome and Induction information and start your studies. As part of this process, you will need to activate your Essex IT account, register online and, once you arrive on campus, undertake a Right to Study check and collect your student registration card.

### Right to Study

The University must ensure all students have the right to study at the University of Essex for the whole duration of their course. If you require immigration permission to study in the UK, this will be checked when you first register on your course and as necessary thereafter. Students have a duty to maintain valid UK immigration permission that allows study for the duration of their course, failure to do so may lead to withdrawal from the University under the University's General Regulations.

### Student visas

The University has many duties as a Tier 4 sponsor and must ensure we remain compliant in order to retain our Tier 4 sponsor status. Students with a Tier 4 or Short-term student visa have responsibilities to the University and the Home Office. There will be conditions attached to your visa that restrict what you can do in the UK, breaking any of the conditions may mean you can't remain in the UK and complete your course. Please be aware that changes to your course, whether due to academic failure or choice, must be considered against the Immigration rules and guidance in place at the time, this can mean that some academic options may not be available to you.

If you are coming to the UK on or after 1 January 2021 to study, you may be applying for a visa under the new immigration rules that the UK government intend to introduce. These rules will also apply to European and Swiss nationals who do not already have EU settled status or UK immigration permission. The government aim to release the new rules in the autumn of 2020, we'll publish more information on our immigration web pages after they have been published and considered.

### Explore your Campus

There is a broad range of facilities across each of our campuses to support your experience at Essex, whether in person or virtually. For the latest information, see the updates on services on campus and make sure that you're aware of the guidance for those coming onto campus.



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## Get connected

### Your IT account

You will need to activate [your Essex IT account](#). Once you're set up, you can access your Essex email, log in to Moodle, access lab computers and library services, print for free on campus, connect to campus wi-fi, and much more. When you activate your account, you should register an external e-mail address and passphrase so that if you [forget your password](#), you can also reset it using these details. If you have forgotten those also, you should either visit the IT Helpdesk or call 01206 872345. Make sure you keep your password safe and do not share it with others!

### Campus Wi-fi

If you are studying on any of our campuses, connect to our Wi-Fi by simply finding the 'eduroam' network on your device and use the same log in details as your IT account to connect up!

### Essex Apps

The University has a variety of online systems and platforms designed to enhance your learning and help make processes, such as submitting coursework, easier. We have rounded up the top platforms, portals and apps that you need to know about!

### MyEssex

[MyEssex](#) is your online account. This is different to your applicant portal – you can use MyEssex to view your timetable, update your personal details, request replacement student cards or supporting documents, monitor your course progress, let us know if you'll miss a lecture or class, contact the Student Services Hub, and much more.

### PocketEssex

[Pocket Essex](#) is the University's official app for students; its interface of icons act as a portal through to a variety of areas and resources. PocketEssex links to many areas that MyEssex does, but also takes you through to other key resources, such as the Students' Union, FindYourWay and the Library.

### Find Your Way

When on campus, we know that finding your way can be challenging to start with. Our Colchester campus in particular can be difficult to navigate with a historically complex room numbering system! [FindYourWay](#) is our interactive campus map designed to get you from A to B on either the Colchester or Southend campuses with quick and easy directions.

### Zoom

Zoom is the principal delivery mechanism used by the University for online meetings, presenting, teaching and training. This [quick start guide](#) gives you an introduction to the essentials of joining and participating in a Zoom webinar or meeting.

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## Working while studying

Many students choose to work part-time to supplement their income. Working during your course can also give you excellent skills and experience to boost your CV. Our [Student Services Hub](#) can help you find part-time work. There are also many opportunities to [work in paid jobs on campus](#).

You can access recommendations on working hours, as well as guidance on rates of pay and National Insurance contributions on the [Careers Services webpages](#).

If you have a student visa, please read our information on [working in the UK for international students](#) before you start looking for a job. The country you're from and your visa type will determine whether or not you can work in the UK. If you can work, the type of work you are allowed to undertake and the number of hours you can work will be restricted.

## Your personal belongings

The University does not cover costs for personal damage or loss of possessions; only in instances where the University has been negligent would a claim be viable for compensation for personal belongings. Therefore, you are strongly advised to take out personal insurance cover for your possessions. This is especially important for valuable items, such as laptops, phones and tablets.

## The Essex Experience

The University of Essex is proud of its inclusivity and its international community. Our campuses and our University are places that are welcoming, where every single person can feel they have a place where they belong and where you can find the world in one place. As part of our ongoing commitment we have created a **Student Charter** as a pledge that every student becomes a part of when they join us. With the Student Charter you agree to support our community and we promise to provide you with a transformational educational experience.

### Embrace the Essex Values

We are different at Essex. We are brave, we are bold, and we embrace challenges and drive change. Our values are underpinned by this very culture. While we full heartedly encourage students to challenge the status quo and explore the unknown, we expect that students do so respectfully, intelligently and act as true ambassadors for the University. The University has a Code of Student Conduct that outlines the rules and regulations that help us maintain our high standards of behaviour.

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The University recognises the value of diversity and is committed to equality of opportunity within the University. It therefore aims to create the conditions whereby students and staff are treated with dignity and respect, and solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential, regardless of race, ethnic or national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, socio-economic background, family circumstances, religious or political beliefs and affiliations, or any other irrelevant distinction.

The University is committed to a programme of action to ensure that this policy is fully effective.

Our School has a large, vibrant community of scientists working at all levels in research, teaching, management and outreach. We successfully achieved a Bronze Departmental Athena SWAN award in April 2017 and have since maintained this Bronze level achievement. However during this time, the School has been working hard to strive for the Silver Athena SWAN award and in April 2020 the School submitted an application for the Silver Athena for which the result is pending

### Student communities

We pride ourselves on being a welcoming and inclusive student community. The University recognises the value of diversity and are committed to equality of opportunity within the University. We aim to create an environment whereby students and staff are treated with dignity and respect, and solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential regardless of their background whether that is race, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or any other distinction.

We offer a wide range of support to individuals and groups of student members, such as our postgraduate students – our student communities - who may have specific requirements, interests or

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responsibilities- to help fulfil your potential. Whether you are an international student, a mature student, a BAME student or have any other requirements or needs, we here at Essex want to welcome you with open arms. The University is committed to a programme of action to ensure that this [policy](#) is fully effective.

## Essex Sport

Learning doesn't just happen in the classroom. Keeping active during your studies is a great way to meet new people, help relieve stress, maintain good physical and mental wellbeing, increase productivity, and improve your employability.

Visit the [Essex Sport](#) website or [download the app](#) to discover all the ways you can keep active during your time at Essex. In order to ensure the welfare of our community there may be changes to opening hours or what's available, so do check on the website for the latest information.

## Students' Union

We're famous for our [Students' Union at Essex](#), and for good reason. Here you're not just a member of a normal Students' Union; you're part of a family. We work hard to support our PGR community, and are here from day one of your research, to the moment you graduate to support you in any way we can.

The Students' Union is run by students for students, and you have the ability to shape what we do. From deciding who leads the SU by electing our entire Student Leadership team including the PGR officer, to shaping your own experiences at Essex, we are here to represent your views and work with you to make amazing things happen.

## Get involved!

There are opportunities to join 45 [Sports Clubs](#), to get involved with our [BUCS teams](#) which offer the opportunity to play competitively in a wide range of sports across the year. If you just want to try a sport, don't want to commit to a regular team, or would rather not play competitively, check out our [Just Play](#) programme.

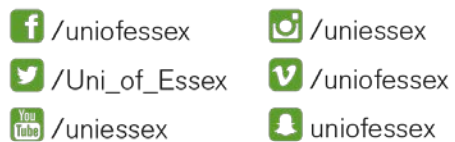
We have [120 Societies](#) where you can meet people with similar interests, challenge yourself with something new or, if you can't find what you're looking for, [start your own!](#)

We also have our very own letting agency [SU Homes](#) designed to offer help and support for students to find off campus accommodation.

## Essex Spirit, social media and What's on?

Keep up to date with important news, events and offers from across the University with our Essex Spirit newsletter, delivered directly to your Essex email address.

Follow us on social media:



Our [Events calendar](#) brings together all the events happening across our three campuses, so you can make the most of your time at Essex.

# About the School of Life Sciences

## Meet the team

A full list of all academic and professional services staff for the School of Life Sciences can be found on our website at: <https://www.essex.ac.uk/departments/life-sciences/people> . Below is a summary of the roles of staff that you are likely to be in contact with most frequently.

## Graduate Director for Research Students

Dr Corinne Whitby      ext: 2062      [cwhitby@essex.ac.uk](mailto:cwhitby@essex.ac.uk)      Room 5.13

## Graduate Administrator (Research)

Emma Revill      ext: 3321      [ecrix@essex.ac.uk](mailto:ecrix@essex.ac.uk)      Room 4.01A

## Your supervisor

A supervisor will have been appointed for you during the admissions process. You are expected to have regular contact with your supervisor during your studies and they should be the first port of call for any concerns/problems.

## Supervision of research students during periods of leave

Academic staff serving as supervisors of postgraduate research students will, on occasion, take periods of research leave for research purposes. During some periods of research leave, supervisors may not be in residence at the University. It is incumbent upon the supervisor, with the approval of the Graduate Director of Research, to develop a plan for the continuing supervision of students during periods of research leave. In making such arrangements, it is the policy of the department that:

- a) Members of staff are expected to continue to carry out their role as supervisor during periods of research leave.
- b) Members of staff on research leave are not expected to attend Supervisory Panel but are expected to provide a written assessment of progress.
- c) Members of staff on research leave should make arrangements for continuing contact with their supervisees, whether through face-to-face meetings, or through some form of remote communication,
- d) In cases where a member of staff plans to be out-of-residence for an extended period during their research leave, an alternate member of staff should be named (by the Graduate Director of Research, in consultation with the supervisor) as a local contact for the supervisee student. The local contact is not meant to act as a substitute supervisor (see point (A) above) but to serve as a designated point of contact in the Department during the period when the supervisor is out-of-residence.

**Staff research interests** Our postgraduate research covers the whole spectrum of biology from genes and cells through to communities and ecosystems. Our academics carry out world leading research

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that tackles some of the key problems of the modern world including: the development of novel drug treatments to help tackle Covid-19, how to improve crop productivity, how to exploit enzymes as industrial biocatalysts, the use of microorganisms to clean up pollution, the development of novel cancer treatments, and the effects of climate change on global ecosystems. Our work is interdisciplinary and frequently involves collaborations with other research institutions, industry, Government bodies, and charities in the UK and internationally. Specifically, some of our recent research is as follows:

- Professor Leo Schalkwyk has led pioneering research in to gene activity and Alzheimer's disease as part of an international project led by the Universities of Essex and Exeter.
- Dr Michelle Taylor embarked on an Antarctic research trip to investigate little-known marine life in the Weddell Sea.
- Dr Vassiliy Bavro is researching antibiotic resistance, and how bacteria manage to evade antibiotics.
- In a project that brought together the ancient world and cutting-edge technology
- Professor Nelson Fernandez utilised ancient DNA analysis to show that a local Roman burial ground contained family burial sites.

Our work covers multiple areas of research within biological sciences. Discover more about our staff and their work via <https://www.essex.ac.uk/departments/life-sciences/people/academic>

## Departmental resources and facilities

A wide range of facilities and resources are available for all students to access and use as part of their study at Essex. Each department and school also have a selection for the exclusive use of their students. Below is a summary of the facilities and resources that are likely to be most useful to you.

### School Common Room

The Darwin School Common Room, 4.11, is located on 4<sup>th</sup> floor and is for the use of all students/undergraduate students/postgraduate students.

### Postgraduate (Research) Study Room

All postgraduate Research students can use the hot desk facilities in the Postgraduate Research room, 4.01. For desk space, please see Emma Revill

## Postgraduate Lockers

Lockers are available in the Postgraduate Research room, 4.01. Please speak to Emma Revill if you are interested in using a locker.

## Postgraduate Training

In addition to laboratory/field work and laboratory training directly related to your research topic, research students are also required to attend a more formal, structured training programme.

## Photocopying and Scanning

You can use the photocopier/scanner located in the Postgraduate Research room 4.01.

## Noticeboards

Every department and school has their own noticeboard(s) providing information on staff, courses and classes, updates, careers, events and opportunities. The Postgraduate Research noticeboard is located opposite room 4.22.

## Printing, photocopying and scanning

All students can print, copy and scan for free at Essex! You can even print from your mobile by sending your attachment to [mobileprinting@essex.ac.uk](mailto:mobileprinting@essex.ac.uk).

Once you've located a device, simply log in using your Essex login and password, or tap with your student card to print. Whilst printing is free for all students, please think of your carbon footprint and only print if necessary.

Please note that there are strict laws about infringement of copyright; more information can be found on the library website which explains what and how much you are permitted to copy. Usage is monitored and subject to a fair use policy.

## Premium printing

Premium services for printing and finishing, including binding your documents for presentational purposes, are available at The Copy Centre (Square 4, Colchester Campus). These services are chargeable.

## Pigeonholes

The Postgraduate Research pigeonholes are located in the Darwin School Common Room, 4.11. Please ensure to regularly check your pigeonholes.

## HEROES: Helping Each other with Research On Empirical Subjects

HEROES is a group of empirical minded PhD students. HEROES stands for Helping Each other with Research On Empirical Subjects.



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## Departmental prizes

### Best Scientific Article Prize

The purpose of this prize is to encourage PGR students to produce manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed journals. The prize for the best article will be a certificate signed by the Head of School and the Dean of Faculty plus a financial gift. Full details on the award will be circulated via email. The prize for Best Scientific Article is awarded at our Graduate Forum event.

### Graduate Forum – Best poster and oral presentation award

At the Annual Graduate Forum awards are presented to the best poster and oral presentation. The marking panel announces the awardees at the end of the Graduate Forum.

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## Social Media

The School of Life Sciences has its own Facebook page via <https://www.facebook.com/UOELifeSciences/> through this page you can see our latest news, upcoming events and open day information.

We also have a specific Facebook group for PGR students <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1000658820109646/> where you can share tips, ideas and relevant research links.

We have created a SLACK group which enables you to start discussion “threads” around particular topics, such as accommodation and general university queries. SLACK also allows you to communicate amongst each other and arrange Zoom meetings. The SLACK group includes key academic members of staff as well as the Graduate Director and Postgraduate Research Administrator. [https://join.slack.com/t/lis-postgrad-essex/shared\\_invite/zt-gcv8k9k1-4fjR9SuhkKvuc56yBRhzFg](https://join.slack.com/t/lis-postgrad-essex/shared_invite/zt-gcv8k9k1-4fjR9SuhkKvuc56yBRhzFg)

## Learning and Teaching

The University is committed to providing equal opportunities for all our students regardless of where or how you study. Our diverse student population is taken into account when developing the resources, services and facilities on and off campus, when we create our courses, write publications and course materials, and set our policies and regulations.

### Student Staff Partnership

The supervisor-student relationship is an interactive one where communication will take place between both with the supervisor offering advice to the student throughout the PhD. The relationship will change over the period of study, from the supervisor being more prominent in the first year with the student gradually becoming more independent. Communication will take place either face-to-face or via electronic means, to engage in discussion/review of the work and progress. These meetings will be at least once a month (and bi-monthly for part-time students).

If any difficulties arise during the course of your work or supervisory arrangements it is preferable that they are raised initially with your Supervisor. If this is not possible, speak with Emma Revill who will arrange an appointment for you with the Graduate Director (Research). Problems of a more general nature, applying to several postgraduate students, may be raised at the Postgraduate Research Student Voice Group.

As a Postgraduate Research student, you have a responsibility to:

- Read the documentation provided, including the [regulations](#) for your degree, the [Code of Practice](#) and details of the departmental supervisory arrangements.
- Attend meetings with your supervisors and Supervisory Panels as arranged, and prepare adequately for them, notifying your supervisor in the event of unavoidable absence.
- Keep in regular contact with your supervisor. Students and supervisors are required to communicate, whether face-to-face or by electronic means, to engage in discussion/review of the student's work and progress at least once a month (and bi-monthly for part-time students).
- Provide updates on progress as outlined in the [Progress and Appeals Procedures for Research Degree Students](#)
- Carry out, as far as possible, the work agreed with your supervisor and submit written work as agreed so that you meet the required milestones.
- Familiarise yourself with the departmental [milestones](#) for your degree and the requirements for your chosen thesis format. The milestones are designed to help you submit your thesis by the deadline and are used to assess your progress during your period of study. The milestones will be considered at your RSPB which takes place twice a year (or equivalent for part-time students). It's important that you review your milestones regularly to ensure you'll be ready to submit your thesis by the required date.
- Familiarise yourself with University and subject-specific guidelines on ethical research, including data protection matters, and with health and safety and intellectual property regulations and obtain ethical approval as appropriate.
- Familiarise yourself with the expectations and conventions regarding academic referencing other people's work.
- Attend any research training and generic skills courses as agreed with your supervisor.
- As requested, submit reports on progress to professional practice and research supervisors, Supervisory Panels, or the departmental Research Students' Progress Board.
- Keep a record of your personal progress, including a copy of agreed training needs, courses that

need to be attended and when they are attended. This may take the form of a logbook or research portfolio to be signed off by your supervisor.

- Inform the relevant supervisor promptly if there are any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect your work. Notify the Supervisory Panel/Research Students' Progress Board in writing of any extenuating circumstances that you believe have significantly affected your performance.
- Discuss any supervisory problems with your supervisor or the Head of Department. Alternatively, if you feel unable to talk to a member of the departmental staff, please contact the Postgraduate Research Education Team to discuss the concerns. Any discussions will remain confidential if requested. Students may request a change of supervisor but should note that it may not always be possible for suitable alternative arrangements to be made.
- You must present your thesis for examination by the end of the final term of your standard period, or by the end of the prescribed completion period.
  - A request for an extension of up to two weeks to the submission deadline may be made. Requests must be made to the Postgraduate Research Education Team in advance of the deadline. If granted an extension, you will not be expected to register or pay the prescribed fee for that two-week period.
- If you fail to present your thesis for examination by the deadline, you will be deemed to have withdrawn permanently from the University and from your research degree, unless you are permitted an exceptional further period of completion.
- Extenuating circumstances that affect your ability to submit your thesis by the agreed deadline will be considered by the Dean on a case-by-case basis.
- Familiarise yourself with the guidelines on thesis submission and with the examination process, and ensure that you are prepared for your viva.

In addition to the above requirements, Professional Doctorate students should:

- Attend lectures and seminars for taught modules and attend meetings with your professional practice supervisor.
- Complete the work required for your taught modules.
- Maintain a professional practice portfolio which forms part of the assessment for the degree.

Full details of the PGR milestones can be viewed via the Moodle page <https://moodle.essex.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=3238>

## The academic year

The academic year uses a week numbering system that covers the 52 weeks of a calendar year but corresponds to typical term dates. So, the start of the academic year is week 1, which is Welcome week, with teaching commencing in week 2.

Term	Week numbers
Autumn	2-11
Spring	16-25
Summer	30-39

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You can view the University's week numbers with the equivalent dates in the week by week [calendar](#). The University's [key dates](#) include an overview of the start and end of each term and exam periods.

Some courses have slightly different term dates. However, you will find that all campus activities and events make reference to the standard academic year terms and schedule noted above.

You are expected to be available during term time to attend teaching events, unless otherwise advised by your Department.

## My Course

Each course at the University has its own syllabus, full details of which, including the aims and learning outcomes of your course, can be found in the University's [Programme Specifications Catalogue](#).

Your own course structure, including your specific programme specification, can be found in the MyStudy section of your [MyEssex](#) homepage.

## Credits

Your course will be made up of a certain [number of credits](#), depending on your level of study and specific postgraduate course. Each year of study will hold a credit value, with credits allocated to each module. You will need to meet the required learning outcomes and assessments to be awarded credits.

## Learning outcomes

Each course has learning outcomes which need to be met in order to progress. Course learning outcomes are categorised into knowledge, intellectual, practical and key skills, and are also defined more specifically at a modular level. Having this information means that you can measure your progress against the outcomes, for example when reviewing coursework feedback.

## Making changes to your study

If you feel as though your research has changed direction and that it would be appropriate to change your degree title, please discuss this with your supervisor, as they'll be best placed to advise on the most suitable option. You may also feel it appropriate to change to a differing degree type (from PhD to MSD for example), again please discuss this with your supervisor in the first instance.

Once you have decided that you want to change your degree title, you will need to make a formal request using the online Change of Course/Degree title form (available here: [www.essex.ac.uk/esf/](http://www.essex.ac.uk/esf/)).

Until your final term, you may request **a transfer from one mode of study** to another, for example from full-time to part-time, including distance learning, or vice-versa. You should discuss any proposed change with your supervisor.

If you are a **sponsored student**, you should discuss any proposed change with your funding body and/or check its terms and conditions. If you are a UK Research and Innovation funded student, you should contact the Postgraduate Research Education team to discuss your request to change your mode of study.

Once you have decided you want to change your mode of study, you will need to make a formal request, using the online **Change of Mode of Study form**, which will need to be approved by your department and the Dean. You can find the form at: [www.essex.ac.uk/esf/](http://www.essex.ac.uk/esf/)

If your request is approved your period of study will be adjusted pro-rata.

### Thinking of leaving or taking a break?

You may experience doubts at some point during your studies. If you're thinking about leaving Essex, we're here to support you and give you the advice you need to help you make an informed choice.

You can contact your department, supervisor or Student Services Hub to speak in confidence about your concerns, and also the [different options available to you](#) and the impact they may have.

### Periods of study

		<i>Students first registered between 2008-09 to 2017-18</i>		<b>Students first registered from 2018-19 onwards</b>	
<b>Research degree</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Completion</b>
Masters by Dissertation ( <i>MA or MSc by dissertation</i> )	FT	One year	Two years	One year	Up to one year
	PT	Two years	Three years	Two years	Up to one year
Master of Philosophy ( <i>MPhil</i> )	FT	Two years	Three years	Two years	Up to one year
	PT	Four years	Five years	Four years	Up to one year
Doctor of Medicine ( <i>MD</i> )	PT only	Two years	Three years	Two years	Up to one year
Doctor of Philosophy ( <i>PhD</i> )	FT	Three years	Four years	Three years	Up to one year
	PT	Six years	Seven years	Six years	Up to one year
Doctor of Philosophy Integrated ( <i>PhD</i> )	FT	Four years	Five years	Four years	Up to one year
	PT	Eight years	Nine years	Eight years	Up to one year
Professional Doctorate	FT/PT	See individual programmes	See individual programmes	See individual programmes	See individual programmes

### Course materials

We use Moodle as our online learning environment, to enhance face-to-face experience. It lets you access course materials, useful forms, and has built-in features to enhance learning such as

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discussion forums, chat facilities, quizzes and wikis.

<https://moodle.essex.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=3238>Library Services

The library provides access to an extensive digital library of books and journals to support your research. As well as a team of specialist Academic Liaison Librarians who can advise on appropriate resources for your area, there is also a Scholarly Communications and Research Support team, who can advise on a variety of topics including open access and how/where to publish your work. Online support in these areas can be found in the [Library's Research Support guide](#). A range of workshops and training sessions are also held throughout the year through [Newcomers](#), a collaborative network run by Library Services, the Research Enterprise Office, and the UK Data Archive that aims to support researchers, and offer training across the research lifecycle.

At our Colchester Campus, the **Albert Sloman Library** on Square 5 is open for long hours and has a variety of study spaces, including a dedicated Postgraduate Study Room. The Library offers a dedicated Helpdesk, live chat and the opportunity to book appointments with specialist staff to help you through your studies and beyond.

See the [Library website](#) for the latest information on all our libraries and the services available, including opening hours.

# Research Skills Development

## Proficio

Proficio is our innovative professional development scheme for doctoral students, and it's unique to Essex. We believe that your academic and professional development is vital to your growth as a postgraduate research student and so we credit your Proficio account with funds that can be spent on a variety of courses and for conference attendance. You can find out more information via:

<https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/study-resources/research.aspx>

You can contact the Proficio team at: [proficio@essex.ac.uk](mailto:proficio@essex.ac.uk)

## University and departmental training events

### Doctoral Welcome Conference

This is designed to introduce participants to researching at Essex and to mark the start of their doctoral journey with us.

### The School Postgraduate Training Programme

This programme starts in Week 1 and continues throughout the year. **Most of these training seminars and meetings are compulsory and progress is conditional on adequate attendance.** They cover topics of common importance to all Biological Sciences research students, and have been designated by the Research Councils as topic areas in which graduate students must receive training. There is a training programme for each year of study and include sessions on writing a Literature Review, Annual Report writing, preparation of a thesis (includes School guidelines on the preparation of a thesis), and preparing for the viva. Information on training sessions throughout the year will be emailed directly to you. Below is the draft training schedule, Zoom invites will be emailed in advance.

Course Title	Academic	Course Duration	Date
<b>Compulsory</b>			
Postgraduate Research Induction (Part I)	Dr Corinne Whitby	1h	12/10/2020 at 10am
Postgraduate Research Induction (Part II)	Dr Corinne Whitby	1 h	12/10/2020 at 2pm
General Safety (Part I)	Dr David Knight	1 h	13/10/2020 at 10am
General Safety (Part II)	Dr David Knight	1 h	13/10/2020 at 2pm



Regulations in Biology Risk Assessments	Julie Arvidson	1 h	14/10/2020 at 10am
Regulations in Biology Risk Assessments	Julie Arvidson	1 h	14/10/2020 at 2pm
Intellectual Property Rights in Bioscience Research	Ed Cappabianca	2hrs	15/10/2020 at 10am
Referencing and how to avoid plagiarism (including ethics and conduct in research) VIA PROFICIO	Dr Valdimir Teif	1hr	16/10/2020 at 10am
Scientific Writing: Literature Reviews	Dr Corinne Whitby	1hr	19/10/2020 at 10am
Time Management and Productivity in the Practice of Science	Dr Eoin O’Gorman	1hr	20/10/2020 at 10am
<b>Optional</b>			
Introduction to Next Generation Sequencing analysis- VIA PROFICIO	Dr Toni Marco/ Dr Valdimir Teif	1 h	Autumn Term
Genome Bioinformatics- VIA PROFICIO	Dr Toni Marco	1 h	Autumn Term
LabMaths-- VIA PROFICIO	Dr Corinne Whitby	1 h	23/10/2020
Introduction to R for Biologists (And Others)VIA PROFICIO	Dr Tom Cameron		Autumn Term/ Jan 2021
Recombinant protein expression and purification VIA PROFICIO	Dr Filippo Prischi	1h	Autumn Term
Online tools for scientific research VIA PROFICIO	Dr Vladimir Teif	1h	Autumn Term
Experimental design, reproducibility and the	Prof Nelson Fernandez	1hr	TBC

validation of antibodies and cells used in research			
An overview of imaging in biological research	Dr Philippe Laissue	1hr	Spring Term
Fundamental statistics by a non-statistician	Dr Patrick Varga Weisz	1hr	06/04/21

## School Seminars

Research students are expected to attend the regular School Seminars held during term time. These usually take place on Thursdays from 1.00 – 2.00pm. It is important to continue to extend your general scientific education. The seminars are selected to be of wide biological interest.

## Postgraduate Mentoring Scheme

The University has a postgraduate mentoring scheme where you can contact two current Biological Sciences students with questions related to study and University life. You can contact the mentors via <https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/study-resources/mentoring/default.aspx>

## School Mentoring Scheme

The School of Life Sciences is committed to supporting staff and research students at all stages of their careers. A School Mentoring Scheme has been established as a result of an action from the School's Athena SWAN Bronze Department Award. This voluntary scheme is open to all academic and research staff and PhD students.

### Aims of Scheme

The Mentoring Scheme aims to support individuals' at various stages of their professional or personal development. Mentors will provide support, give advice and guidance on career/ personal development and provide opportunities to reflect on progress. The scheme supports both traditional mentoring with senior staff as well as peer mentoring and can be either long-term or short-term to suit individual needs. Through the establishment of the Mentoring Scheme we aim to:

- Support staff and students at key career transition points
- Provide guidance on career and personal development

Further information can be found on the School Mentoring Scheme Moodle page. To request a mentor or to sign up as a mentor for this scheme, please contact the Mentoring Coordinator, Liz Lee-Reynolds ([eeleer@essex.ac.uk](mailto:eeleer@essex.ac.uk))

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## Scientific Societies and Conferences

It is really useful to join a scientific society and become part of the wider scientific community. In addition, societies hold conferences where you can meet key researchers and hear about new work, often before it is published. You may also have the opportunity to present your own work in a talk or poster. Some societies provide funds to students to attend these conferences. Your supervisor will be able to advise on which society or societies is appropriate for you to join and further information is available on the Early Career Researcher Resources Moodle. These conferences and other meetings in the UK or abroad are considered very important parts of your scientific training. If your studies are funded by a studentship or scholarship, your sponsors will probably have allocated funds for you to participate in at least one major conference. Your supervisor will keep you informed about these conferences or meetings and may be able to provide some financial support. The School may be able to help as well and a call for requests for funds to attend a meeting or conference is made each term by Email.

## Presenting your work

Throughout your period of study you will be expected to present your work orally to audiences, typically in the informal setting of your laboratory group meetings or in your Research Group meetings. The annual Graduate Forum (above) provides a more formal meeting structure for poster and oral presentations. Some PhD students in their third year may, in addition, be invited to present a seminar to a wider School audience, for example during the weekly School Seminar Programme. Presentation of your results in a poster or talk and the opportunity for discussion is an important part of participating in a conference or meeting.

## Cohort Building Event

In 2017 the School held the first postgraduate cohort building event. The event brought together postgraduate students and postdoctoral scientists from all the diverse disciplines within the School to promote interdisciplinary knowledge and exchange of techniques. The event comprised of talks from each of the seven research groups, an interactive session on networking, an alumni presentation, a motivational lecture by an eminent guest speaker and the opportunity to attend a careers workshop to provide targeted careers advice. We plan to hold a similar event in due course.

## The Graduate Forum

This is a compulsory one-day event held in September each year and **must** be attended by all research postgraduate students. First year students are required to present a poster, second years to give a 10-minute oral presentation and third years to co-ordinate the event. Students are responsible for the planning and the organisation of the Graduate Forum, including the programme for oral and poster presentations, preparation of abstract booklet, organising publicity and refreshments. There are prizes for best oral and poster presentations. There will be seminars on poster preparation and also oral presentation for second and third years respectively, in the Summer Term (see your Training Programme timetable).

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## Research Groups

Students will be members of one of the research groupings: Protein Structure and Mechanisms of Disease, Genomics and Computational Biology, Ecology and Environmental Microbiology and Plant Productivity. These groups have regular research meetings which students should attend. Laboratory groups, research workers and students supervised by individual members of staff, also have regular lab meetings.

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## Assessment and Academic Integrity

Undertaking a research degree varies for each person. Some are predominantly lab based, others require significant library research, and some must undertake taught modules. All schools and departments at the University employ a variety of assessment methods, and these will be tailored based on your research area and the course you're on.

### Ethics in research

All research involving human participants, whether undertaken by the University's staff or students, **must** undergo an ethics review by an appropriate body and ethical approval **must** be obtained before it commences. You should first read the [Guidelines for Ethical Approval of Research Involving Human Participants](#) and then submit an Ethical Approval application form via [ERAMS](#). You should be aware that ethical approval cannot be granted retrospectively so it is very important that you make your application before you start to recruit participants or collect data from them.

**Research involving the NHS may require and research involving human tissue or adults lacking capacity to consent will require Health Research Authority and / or NHS Research Ethics Committee approval.**

**Research involving vulnerable groups may require a DBS check if you are engaging in regulated activity. More information about the DBS check process can be found on the [University's DBS webpages](#).**

### Risk assessments in research

If the research you are undertaking could potentially harm participants, researchers or the University (e.g. risks to physical or mental health, safeguarding or reputational, legal or financial risks) you will need to carry out a risk assessment, which you may be asked to provide as part of the ethics approval process. Your academic supervisor will be able to advise you on this.

You can book onto [Research Risk Assessment training](#) online, where there is also further information about risk assessment and managing health and safety risks.

If you are planning to carry out research abroad it is important that you research your destination, so that you are aware of [security, safety or culture issues](#) that may affect you or your research. The University has comprehensive travel insurance, which you will be able to arrange by completing the online [Travel Insurance Application Form](#).

### School Safety

The University's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy, sets out the health and safety responsibilities of all University employees according to their job role. The responsibilities of employees and managers are also summarised in the *Employee Guide to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy*. Both documents can be found either on the safety notice board adjacent to the main entrance, from David Knight or by following the link at <http://bsintra.essex.ac.uk/safety/default.shtm>

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The School has produced specific guidance and, where appropriate, safety standards and codes of practice for a range of activities. Further information can be found on the Biological Sciences safety intranet site, which can be found at <http://bsintra.essex.ac.uk/safety/default.shtm>

## Covid-19 Safe Working Practice in the School

In line with Government guidance, the School has set in place a policy for the safe lab and field working practices under Covid-19 secure conditions. The details of this can be found on our dedicated School of Life Sciences Covid-19 Return to Work Information moodle page.

### Safety glasses

There is a School rule (supported by legislation) requiring you to wear safety glasses in all laboratories. Some areas have a risk assessment which says that glasses need not be worn, for example, when using a microscope; these areas will be made known to you when you are in the lab.

**SO PLEASE NOTE** – the general rule is that you must wear safety glasses in the laboratory.

### Ordering and Stores

You can obtain items (e.g. stationery, pipettes etc.) from the Stores on the second floor (Room 2.07). The purchase of other materials and equipment using School order forms should be made in consultation with your supervisor or the technician in charge of your laboratory.

For up-to-date opening hours and information:

<http://bsintra.essex.ac.uk/lab/admin/stores/default.htm>

### Use of equipment

Many items of equipment are heavily used and their use must be reserved in advance on an appropriate booking sheet. Only people whose names have been approved in writing may use the autoclaves. Please inform your supervisor of any faulty equipment by email.

### Repairs

If you find any equipment that is broken or not functioning properly you should complete a repair form on the Intranet (<http://bsintra.essex.ac.uk/lab/faults/default.htm>). Failing this you should notify the technician in charge of your laboratory. **You should never try to repair equipment yourself.**

### Late working

- The normal working hours of the School are 8.00 am until 6.00pm, Monday to Friday.
- Those working in the School outside working hours must have a late working pass.
- Researchers working after **10.00 pm** and before **7.00 am** must obtain written permission from their supervisors and notify the Technical Services Manager in advance.
- Such permission may only be given for periods of **7** days.
- Those working after **10.00 pm** should inform patrol officers at the Information Desk before 10.00 pm or starting work if this is later.

- f. After completing a session of late work, the worker should inform the Information Desk that he/she is leaving the building.
- g. You will only be issued a late working pass when you have been fully trained in the laboratory. To obtain this a passport size photograph should be attached to the Late Working Pass Application form (<http://bsintra.essex.ac.uk/safety/documents/forms/default.shtm>). There is a photo machine outside Students Union Bar. You will also be given a copy of Late Working Pass Procedures which must be followed. Passes will be issued by David Knight, the Technical Services Manager in room 4.02, and must be carried at all times and produced when asked by a Security Officer <http://bsintra.essex.ac.uk/safety/security/default.shtm>.

## Laboratory Notebook

All PGR students receive one complimentary laboratory notebook per academic year. The laboratory notebook facilitates the keeping of a valid record of your research work. Accurate records will allow you to prove when a particular idea was generated. It will also allow you to register details of each experiment and when they were done. This Notebook belongs to the student/researcher and the supervisor or head of laboratory. The School requires that you adhere to a set of guidelines in completion of the Notebook and these will be circulated via email.

All PGR students have a supervisor or supervisors. Your most important academic contact in the School is your supervisor. Your supervisors will guide you in your studies including your training in the laboratory. Students meet with their supervisors on a regular basis. The frequency of meeting will vary with different projects and also at different stages of your studies but is likely to be weekly or fortnightly. Meetings and discussions with supervisors should be recorded in your laboratory notebook. Consultation with your supervisors is particularly important when you are writing up your thesis. The supervisors should see all chapters with time to make comments and suggest revisions before your deadline for submission.

A full description of the responsibilities of supervisor and student are described in the accompanying document "Responsibilities of Supervisor and Student" and in the Code of Conduct <https://www.essex.ac.uk/governance/regulations>. As research students you are entitled to six weeks annual leave which must be agreed with your supervisor and the Graduate Office. As detailed in the code of practice any research time conducted outside the UK must be approved by the Head of School. A form must be completed which can be obtained from the Graduate Office.

## Academic Integrity and Academic Offences

The University expects students to complete all assessment with honesty and integrity and to follow our [conventions for academic writing](#) (including appropriate referencing of sources) and ethical considerations. If you don't meet these expectations, then you may be charged with having committed an [academic offence](#), a matter the University takes very seriously.

It is your responsibility to make yourself aware of the regulations governing examinations and how to correctly prepare your coursework. An academic offence can take place even if you didn't mean to

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commit one, and examples include plagiarism, falsifying data or evidence, and communicating with another candidate in an examination.

## Referencing

Respecting authorship through good academic practice is one of the key values of higher education in the UK. Referencing is how you acknowledge all sources used within a piece of work. You must reference all work used whether cited directly (quotes), or indirectly (paraphrasing and summarising).

Referencing allows you to give credit to other's ideas, work, research, theories, concepts, outcomes and results, and demonstrates your breadth of reading and knowledge on a subject. If you do not reference properly, this could amount to plagiarism, which is an academic offence.

There are styles of referencing which will determine exactly how you format your reference. Your departmental referencing style is Harvard. You must use this referencing style. Guidance on your referencing style is available online, including an interactive referencing tutorial. You can also take the Academic Integrity course on Moodle.

## Academic Skills and Support

Every student arrives at Essex with the same spirit of determination but different experiences of education and levels of academic readiness. Skills for Success can help you identify your talents and strengthen those areas you need to develop.

We are committed to ensuring that every student is able to get the most out of their academic study and achieve their potential on their course, which is why Skills for Success team is available to help by providing support, resources and workshops on:

- Academic writing
- Maths and stats
- Digital Skills
- Research and referencing
- English language
- Exam revision

The Skills for Success team can also provide further learning and study skills information and support for disabled students.

## Proofreading services

Before considering the use of proofreading services, all students should first discuss their work with their supervisor(s). Many students seek 'proofreading' services at some point during their studies, but different types of editing can occur under this name which may not be appropriate in an academic context where work is assessed and could potentially qualify as an academic offence. The University is keen to ensure as far as possible that students understand what proofreading work should entail and the acceptable boundaries to which any proofreading or editing must adhere to.



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The University maintains a list of local freelance proofreaders who offer services to students and staff at Essex that have read and agreed to abide by the University's policy and guidance on proofreading.

## Language classes

### English classes for dependants

The Department of Language and Linguistics offers dependants of international students and staff at the chance to improve their English language, through our ECDIS programme, at no extra cost. Classes are taught at the Colchester Campus at three basic levels: Elementary (A1/A2), Intermediate (B1/B2) and Advanced (C1/C2) and will focus on listening, speaking, reading and writing.

### Learning a Language

Learn a language at Essex to increase your global and cultural awareness. Language learning can give you the confidence to work and travel internationally, expand your options for studying abroad, and get a competitive edge when you're looking for a job. There are a number of ways to do it, so look online to discover the best option for you.

All schools and departments at the University should employ a variety of assessment methods designed to ensure that the learning outcomes of each module, and course, have been successfully met by the student.

The Principal Regulations and the Codes of Practice are extremely important documents that set out both your responsibilities and the responsibilities of the University to you; take time to familiarise yourself with them. They outline the roles and responsibilities of you, your supervisor, your Supervisory Panel and the Research Students' Progress Board.

[www.essex.ac.uk/governance/regulations](http://www.essex.ac.uk/governance/regulations)

## **PRINCIPAL REGULATIONS FOR RESEARCH DEGREES AND THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH DEGREES**

[www.essex.ac.uk/about/governance/regulations/regulations-higher](http://www.essex.ac.uk/about/governance/regulations/regulations-higher);  
<https://www.essex.ac.uk/about/governance/regulations/codes-higher>

The Principal Regulations and the Code of Practice are extremely important documents that set out both your responsibilities, and the responsibilities of the University to you. Take time to familiarise yourself with them. They outline the roles and responsibilities of you, your supervisor, your Supervisory Panel and the Research Student Progress Board.

<https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/ppg/pgr/assess-rules.aspx>

## **SUPERVISORY BOARD**

All research students have a Supervisory Board; the role of the Supervisory Board is to review the student's progress. The Board consists of the supervisor(s) plus at least one other member of academic staff who should Chair the Board. The supervisor nominates the other member(s) of the Supervisory Board who should be generally familiar with the field of research so they can meaningfully review the student's progress but they are not directly involved with supervising the

research project. The composition of an individual's Supervisory Board will be notified to the student before or at the time the first report is submitted i.e. towards the end of the Autumn term.

The Supervisory Board formally meets with the student at least twice a year, in December and in June (subject to your start date, please refer to the flow chart which are in your packs and also emailed to you). The system of Supervisory Boards is intended to give the students a different perspective on their work and also experience of discussing and defending their work. They may also give feedback on written work such as the Annual Reports. The Supervisory Board also reviews training undertaken and further training needed.

After each meeting the Supervisory Board will agree on a report which is sent to the Graduate Administrator (Research) and the student. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the student is informed of any recommendations made by the Board. The board report form is submitted to the Research Students Progress Committee where all recommendations are approved and confirmed. A copy of all board report forms are then submitted to the Postgraduate Research and Education team.

## **GENERAL POINTS**

You will have at least two meetings with your Supervisory Board and you are required to produce the documents described below, depending on the stage of your programme, that will form the basis of the meeting. See the flow charts to find the deadlines for handing in these documents. Hard copies of your documents should be given to each member of the Supervisory Board and an electronic copy to the Graduate Administrator (Research).

## **ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS**

## **IMPORTANT POINTS**

It is most important that you understand the function of, and engage fully with, the Supervisory Boards (sometimes referred to as "Boards"), as they are designed to help you. Some of the functions that they serve are:

- An opportunity to communicate your research, clearly articulating your aim and key hypotheses, both in general discussion and via presentations.
- More specifically, an opportunity to discuss your research with someone other than your supervisor or co-supervisor, namely the "supervisory board member". They should be considered as a "critical friend", who can provide advice on your research with an external perspective and help if there are any supervisory issues. You should get to know your supervisory board member.
- An opportunity to reflect on progress and clarify expectations in terms of the quality and quantity of your work.
- An opportunity to get feedback on specific pieces of written work that have been set to encourage you to keep up to date, e.g. general project plans, training plans, a literature review that will serve as the Introduction to your thesis, reports in scientific paper format that migrate into draft thesis chapters and/or papers. It should be recalled that there are few jobs without deadlines. Therefore, keeping to these deadlines is an important aspect of your training and also spreads the workload, thus alleviating future stress.
- An opportunity to defend your research after questioning. Scientists must ask and address critical questions, so you should consider the Boards as training in this respect (it is not

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expected that you will have all the answers, but it is expected that you will reflect on the questions).

- An opportunity to ask about training needs and career opportunities.
- An opportunity to inform the Board members about any difficulties and mitigating circumstances that may have affected progress.

We have a duty to you, the University and sponsors to have formal measures to assess progress. You should not worry unduly about the Boards, as they should follow the natural progression of a hard-working postgraduate researcher rather than dictating the progress. Use the Boards to your advantage, e.g. to put in the extra hours to read and critique key papers, to analyse your data rigorously, to prepare professional figures, to think more broadly about your research, to ask whether your hypothesis is justified and is it being tested rigorously. However, you should not curtail experiments because of the Boards

If problems arise, then talking about them early and trying to resolve them will benefit everyone. You should not wait until the Boards to do so, but please do additionally discuss any issues at the Boards. Please also note that you should read and reflect on the Board reports. By signing at the end you indicate that you are content with the report.

You will have at least two meetings each year with your Supervisory Board, and you are required to produce the documents described below, depending on the stage of your programme, that will form the basis of the meeting. Please refer to the flow charts (which are in your pack and also emailed to you) to find the deadlines for handing in these documents.

Electronic copies of your documents should be given to each member of the Supervisory Board and the Graduate Administrator (Research), but also ask whether the Board members would like a hard copy.

It is important that you submit documents to your supervisors in time for them to provide feedback and for you to act on it. The final documents should be sent by the specified deadline.

In addition to the information provided below, there are two documents that must be **submitted before each board (at the same time as the other documents)**:

- Specific sections of the Board Report, such as: a check-list, an opportunity for you to comment on progress and any points that you'd like to discuss at the Boards.
- Your training document, which is a living document where you record training and, importantly, highlight your training needs.

## FIRST YEAR

### Interim Board:

Each student is required to produce a short written report (1000 words maximum) two months after the commencement of their programme. This will:

- briefly describe the background of the research project, including a few key references
- present the aims and hypotheses of your research project, together with an explanation of your approach (a schematic is often helpful for this)
- include an outline plan for the year ahead, with more emphasis on the first 6 months, including some experimental detail

Your report will be discussed at your Supervisory Board. Following this meeting the Supervisory Board will write a report summarising progress, highlighting strengths and any shortcomings, and recommending whether you are allowed to proceed to the next stage. These reports are considered at a meeting of the RSPB and this committee makes recommendations on progression to the Postgraduate Research and Education team (which includes upgrade, downgrade and discontinuation).

### **First Submission of the Literature Review / Introduction to your Thesis:**

You are expected to formally submit your Literature Review / Introduction to your Thesis (see below for more details) at the start of Term 2 to your supervisors, supervisory board member and Graduate Administrator. You will receive feedback by email or an informal meeting. The supervisors are primarily responsible for providing feedback, but the supervisory board member should also offer generic advice.

### **First-Year Board:**

At this stage you are expected to have completed (or very nearly completed) all data-collection / experimental work. The documents required are:

- Revised Literature Review / Introduction to your Thesis (see below for guidance)
- Draft Chapter (see below for guidance)
- Thesis plan, timetable of remaining work and writing up to submission
- 10-minute presentation on your research

### *Literature Review / Introduction to your Thesis*

An extensive Literature Review should be produced, discussing the background of your project and placing it in the context of previous work in the field. The Literature Review will evolve into the Introduction to your Thesis. It is essential that you become familiar with the literature in the area of your research as it will dictate your aims and hypotheses and thus your approach. Therefore, the Literature Review is regularly updated. A draft should be presented to your supervisor in the first term, and a version formally submitted at the beginning of the second term. You will receive further feedback on this version, and you are expected to submit an updated version for the First-Year Board. A good literature review will be integrative and critical, providing added value with, for example: tables compiling data from different literature sources, meta-analysis, and self-constructed conceptual figures. There will be a seminar on the approaches to writing the Literature Review in the Autumn Term (see your Training Programme timetable). The Literature Review should:

- be thorough and logically structured
- be **5000-10000 words** in length
- be fully and correctly referenced (consult the Guidelines for Referencing below)
- have an abstract of approximately 300 words that outlines why the research area is important and summarises what major conclusions can be drawn from the review

### *Draft Chapter*

This should succinctly summarise results to date. The format of this chapter should follow the requirements of an MSD thesis, so that you can practise writing clearly and logically and presenting data in the correct manner. It is important that you use abbreviations, species names, etc. correctly, and present references in the correct format in the text and in the reference list.

The Draft Chapter should be ~**3000 words** (figures, tables and the reference list are in addition to this). Make sure the pages are numbered. The report must have the following:

- **Title page** (title, your name, supervisor's name year of study and date).
- **Summary/Abstract** (approximately 300 words) explaining why the work is important, the purpose of the research, the methods used, summary of key results and main conclusions.
- **Introduction**, which sets out the scientific question you are investigating, but should not be an extensive review of the literature because you have already written a Literature Review.
- **Methods**, which should be complete with a description of all the methods used.
- **Results**, which should be presented in exactly the same way as for the final thesis or for publication. Figures and tables should be numbered and figures should have legends and tables should have headings. The legends should be clear and self-explanatory and contain the key to symbols or lines used in the figure. Microscope images, maps etc. should have scale bars. Statistical analysis, if appropriate, should be included. The results section should also have a written description or commentary on the data you have presented, highlighting key results and trends.
- **Discussion**, in which you address what your results mean. You need to set your findings in the context of the existing body of knowledge. You should discuss any possible limitations in your methods and the reliability of your results.
- **Reference list**, which must be correctly and consistently formatted.
- **Appendix**, which is optional and may contain extra experimental detail or results.

Following this meeting the Supervisory Board will write a report summarising progress, highlighting strengths and any shortcomings, and recommending an intended submission date. If the Board agrees that you are not ready to submit, you will enter the Completion Period. Your progress during the Completion Period will then be monitored on a term-by-term basis. The reports from the Supervisory Board are considered at a meeting of the RSPB and this committee makes recommendations on progression to the Postgraduate Research and Education team for the Dean's approval (which includes upgrade, downgrade and discontinuation).

In the September of your first year, you are expected to **present a poster** on your research at the Annual Graduate Forum.

### **COMPLETION PERIOD**

If you need to use the Completion Period to prepare and submit your thesis, your progress will be monitored on a term-by-term basis. For each term that you remain in the Completion Period there will be one formal meeting with your supervisors, at which progress is recorded. These meetings do not involve your supervisory board member, but you are welcome to seek their advice as normal. As part of our continued monitoring during the completion year, you will regularly receive a completion review form which allows you to report on chapter progress and feedback received.

### Completion Period 1:

The documents required for this Completion Period Meeting 1 are:

- completed **final draft for submission** (or a draft that is close to submission)
- **timetable** to thesis submission

### Completion Period 2:

The documents required for this Completion Period Meeting 2 are:

- completed **final draft for submission** (or a draft that is close to submission)
- **timetable** to thesis submission

### Completion Period 3:

The documents required for this Completion Period Meeting 3 are:

- completed **final draft for submission**
- **timetable** to thesis submission

The documents are discussed at each of your Completion Period meetings and an agreed submission date finalised. You will receive detailed feedback on your draft final submission. Following this meeting the Supervisory Board will write a report summarising progress. The reports from the Supervisory Board are considered at a meeting of the RSPB and this committee makes recommendations on progression to the Postgraduate Research and Education team for the Dean's approval (which includes upgrade, downgrade and discontinuation).

## Research Students' Progress Board (RSPB)

The RSPB is made up of senior members of academic staff and is chaired by the Graduate Director, PGR. It "reviews the progress of every student through to the award of a degree, withdrawal or failure, on the basis of the reports from the Supervisory Panel, including the written report from the student. Where no Supervisory Panel has taken place, for instance because a student is carrying out research abroad, the supervisor and the student must each submit a progress report. A decision/recommendation for discontinuation, downgrading or upgrading or to confirm PhD status or change to MPhil, to permit entry into completion, or to extend the minimum period can only be made by the RSPB."

Principal Regulations for Research Degrees: <https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/about/governance/principal-regulations-research-degrees.pdf>

Professional Doctorate rules of assessment: <https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/ppg/pgr/assess-rules.aspx>

## Extenuating Circumstances

Extenuating circumstances are circumstances beyond your control which cause you to perform less well during your studies than you might have expected or to miss an assessment or milestone. In general, valid extenuating circumstances will be of a medical or personal nature that affect you for any significant period of time and/or during assessment.

Your department will review your claim at your Supervisory Panel and RSPB and determine an appropriate course of action to take into account your extenuating circumstances, if appropriate.

If you do need to make an extenuating circumstances claim, you should first read the guidance very carefully and seek advice from SU Advice or the Student Services Hub. Please be prepared that you may need to include supporting evidence with your claim. Extenuating circumstance claims must be submitted to your Graduate Administrator in your department/school by no later than two weeks before the meeting of the Supervisory Panel, or by the deadline published by the department/school if different. It cannot be guaranteed that forms submitted after this date will be referred to the panel/RSPB. You should also ensure that you record at least a brief summary of your extenuating circumstances on your Supervisory Panel report form.

## Submission of Thesis

### Thesis Submission Pre-Examination

All candidates for a Masters by Dissertation (MAD or MSD), Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Doctor of Medicine (MD), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Professional Doctorate must submit an electronic copy of their thesis for examination.

The electronic copy should take the format of one PDF document containing all chapters, references and appendices.

All registration fees and debts must be paid before the thesis can be accepted for submission.

You should submit the following as attachments via email to: [pgrsubmission@essex.ac.uk](mailto:pgrsubmission@essex.ac.uk):

- a) A single PDF copy of your entire thesis; and
- b) A submission form (RD1) completed and signed by yourself.

### Thesis Submission for Award

Following the completion of the examination process, the candidate will be notified via email that in order to gain their award they must submit one electronic version of their thesis to the online Research Repository. Following the receipt of this deposit, the candidate will be awarded their postgraduate research degree.

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## Thesis Deposit and Retention

Your thesis will be made open access when deposited in the online Research Repository. Students wishing to place a restriction or embargo on their thesis must do so via the Approval of Title (intention to submit) form prior to the submission of their thesis for examination.

When depositing your thesis in the online Repository you will be required to read and accept the conditions stipulated in the Thesis Deposit Agreement. The Thesis Deposit Agreement outlines the availability of the thesis and how it will be stored in the Repository.

## Examiners and the Viva

Your supervisor will not normally be present during **your viva** and will not normally have any contact with your examiners other than to arrange their appointment. More information on the examination process and viva can be found on the Student Directory.

## Exit Awards (Professional Doctorate students only)

If a student does not meet the progression requirements on the Professional Doctorate, or the examiners feel that the thesis has not met the requirements for the Professional Doctorate, they may be eligible to receive an exit award or lower award, as appropriate for the course. Details of the available exit/lower awards can be found in the Code of Practice: Professional Doctorates.

## Appeals

PGR students wishing to appeal against either a progress decision (a recommendation made by the Research Students' Progress Board (RSPB)) or an examination decision (an outcome decided upon by the examiners following a viva voce) should follow the Appeals Procedure.

Please note that research students on the first year of an Integrated PhD (a 4-year programme) or a research student on a Professional Doctorate programme who wishes to appeal against a progress decision of the RSPB (e.g. being downgraded or discontinued) should do so in accordance with the above procedure. However, students who wish to appeal against the decision of the Board of Examiners' consideration/decision of their taught marks should appeal in accordance with the Academic Appeals Procedures for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study.



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## Student Voice

At the University of Essex, the views, ideas and feedback of our students are at the heart of what the University does. The time students take to offer feedback is hugely appreciated and this feedback, both positive and developmental, is used to help make short and longer-term improvements, both to the experience of current students, but also for Essex students of the future. You can do this in a number of ways at Essex through your [Student Voice](#).

### Student Representatives

You can contact or volunteer to be a **student representative** who represent the voice of fellow students in departmental Student Voice Groups (SVG) and other University level committees.

### Student Voice Groups

Student Voice Groups (SVGs) are made up of **student representatives** and members of staff. SVGs typically meet once per term and provide an accessible arena for students to discuss with staff issues connected to teaching, learning and student support. They also provide an opportunity for the department or school to consult with students and receive feedback on new proposals.

### Student Surveys

[Student satisfaction surveys](#) enable the University to gauge overall satisfaction amongst students. When the results have been reviewed and analysed, the University can then enhance your experience of learning at Essex.

A new PGR Student Voice Survey will be launching in 2021, designed by students for students, details of which will be emailed to all students nearer the time.

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## You Matter

We know university life can throw up all kinds of concerns and questions. Everyone has mental health – sometimes your mental health may be good, other times it may be not so good. It could be stress related to deadlines, general worries or concerns about friends and family members. Whatever is worrying you, if you need some information, advice or support, the University offer a wide range of services and support to help you.

### Student Services Hub

If you need practical advice, a confidential conversation, or general information and guidance on University life, no matter what the issue is, the Student Services Hub is the place to go. You can find out about health and wellbeing, accommodation, careers services, money matters and much more. Your questions matter and you'll get answers from our team of experts.

**To Contact the Student Services Hub please use this link to access our web pages and talk to us on Live Chat: Ask the Hub**

### Support for disabilities and conditions

We encourage all new students with a disability, long term medical condition, specific learning difficulty or mental health difficulty to disclose and register with the Student Services Hub so that we can plan how best to support you in your studies.

### Funding opportunities

UK students may be eligible for a Disabled Students' Allowance grant. If you are not a UK student, you may be eligible for other grants and funding. We would recommend you contacting the Student Services Hub to discuss all the options that may be available to you, as well as for general advice, support and information on health and wellbeing issues.

### Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP)

If you have a permanent or temporary disability that may mean you have difficulty in evacuating one or more areas, you can arrange for a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP).

### Seeing a Doctor

If you're studying on a course for more than six months, you're required to register with a local doctor. Our Colchester Campus has its own health centre or you can use the NHS Choices postcode finder to find your nearest doctor. If you require emergency medical or mental health services, there are a number of options available both through the NHS and also the University, regardless which campus you are studying at.

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## Counselling services

Our University offers a wide range of services and resources to support all of our students. with a variety of counselling opportunities.

If you feel you would benefit from support, including counselling, please contact your Student Services Hub. You can find more information, including the full range of counselling services available to you.

## UK Immigration Advice and Guidance

Immigration advice and guidance is regulated in the UK by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) and can only be given by those that are authorised to do so. We publish lots of information and guidance on our website for students and you can contact one of our authorised advice services via the 'ask us a question section' for further advice about the UK's student immigration rules.

## Money management

If you get into financial difficulty you should get help and talk to someone as soon as possible. The sooner your problem is identified, the sooner it can be solved. You may be eligible to apply for financial support to assist you with short-term unexpected and unforeseen costs. Advisers in our Student Services Hub and our independent Students' Union Advice can listen and talk you through the issues you are experiencing.

## Students' Union Advice

Our SU Advice service also offers free, confidential, independent and impartial advice on many issues that might be affecting you. Our friendly, trained staff are on hand to support you throughout your time at Essex. You can speak to us about Academic processes and procedures, representation at University meetings, Tier 4 UK visa extensions, housing, complaints, welfare and consumer issues.

**Colchester students** – [suadvice@essex.ac.uk](mailto:suadvice@essex.ac.uk); 01206 874034

**Southend students** – [suacsou@essex.ac.uk](mailto:suacsou@essex.ac.uk); 01702 328235 (term time only)

**Loughton students** – [suaclou@essex.ac.uk](mailto:suaclou@essex.ac.uk); 01206 874034

## Residence Life

Our Residence Life team is here to help you settle in and support you during your time living on campus. Each residents' assistant (RA) is assigned an area and will aim to get to know you and organise a range of social activities. Plus, they can help if you've got any concerns or complaints. Residence Life operates outside of office hours when other University support services are closed.

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## Religion, faith and beliefs

We're proud of our vibrant and diverse [multicultural community](#) and welcome everyone, of all faiths and none. The calm, friendly and supportive atmosphere in our Faith Centre is a welcoming place for staff, students and the wider community to meet, interact and engage with each other.

## Harassment support

We are Essex. We pride ourselves on being a [welcoming and inclusive student community](#). We offer a wide [range of support](#) to individuals and groups of student members who may have specific requirements, interests or responsibilities – to help you fulfil your potential.

We encourage a culture of dignity and respect. We're committed to upholding an environment that's free from any form of harassment or bullying. Though rare, these incidents can occur and if they do our [Harassment Report and Support Service](#) of trained Harassment Support Workers are on hand to help.

## COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

The health and wellbeing of our students is our priority. This means we are constantly monitoring advice from the UK Government, Public Health England, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the World Health Organisation, and updating our guidance for students in line with their advice.

Our [guidance to students on protecting yourself and others from COVID-19](#) is updated regularly. It is advisable to check the page frequently to be sure you are up to date with the latest guidance and information from the University.

## Health and safety on campus

Our campuses are generally very [safe environments](#). We want to ensure that things stay this way. In order to achieve this, we work closely with local agencies including the police and borough councils. Take a look at our website for [general information and advice](#).

Please familiarise yourself with [fire safety and emergency evacuation procedures](#) for your accommodation, work or study location. If you have a permanent or temporary disability that may mean you have difficulty in evacuating one or more areas, you can arrange for a [Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan \(PEEP\)](#).

Please take note of our [advice on the safe use of electrical items and prohibited electrical items](#) in residential and non-residential areas.

All students residing on campus should complete the Moodle [Fire Safety Course for Residents training](#).

If you have any health and safety concerns or need to report an incident, please use the [University's reporting service](#) to notify us.

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## Making a Complaint

The University is a large community engaged in many activities of both an academic and non-academic nature. From time to time, you may feel dissatisfied with some aspect of your dealings with the University and, when that happens, it is important that the issue is dealt with constructively and as quickly as possible without risk of disadvantage or recrimination.

The University aims to resolve complaints quickly and informally in accordance with the [Student concerns and complaints procedure](#) which can be found on our website.

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# Student Development

## Careers Services

The Career Services team offer a programme of information, advice, guidance and support through various events, workshops and one- to- one sessions. We also have teams dedicated to Work Based Learning, Placements and Internships that can provide information and support as needed. Find out more about the Career Services available to you here: <https://www1.essex.ac.uk/careers/>

## CareerHub

Find hundreds of part-time jobs, internships and graduate vacancies, book on to careers events and workshops, take career assessments, practice your interview skills, build your CV, and connect with employers on CareerHub, the online Essex careers and jobs portal. Login with your Essex username and password.

[careerhub.essex.ac.uk/students/login](https://careerhub.essex.ac.uk/students/login)

## Big Essex Award

The Big Essex Award is a way to get recognition for the extra-curricular and voluntary activities that you complete during your time at Essex, both on and off campus. All verified activities will be included on your university transcript, the Further Achievement Report (FAR). Postgraduate students can use GradIntelligence to record any extra-curricular activities you may be involved in through the Big Essex Award.

<https://gradintel.com/index.php/en/account-support/recover/students>

## Volunteering

Join the vTeam and be the difference. There are plenty of opportunities to volunteer during your time at Essex. The vTeam, run by the Students Union, is a fantastic opportunity to meet new people, make friends, give something to the local community, and gain valuable skills.

[www.essex.su/vteam](http://www.essex.su/vteam)

## Essex Interns

Essex interns create paid internships exclusively for you as an Essex student. They're flexible too; part time during term time or full time in vacations. Sign up for Essex Interns to kick-start your career.

[www.essex.ac.uk/careers/internships](http://www.essex.ac.uk/careers/internships)

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# You Are Essex

## Your Award Certificate

Once your exam board has met, it can take between 7-10 working days for your results to be confirmed and published. The University's [exam board and publication of results schedule](#) is updated in the summer term, and you will be notified once this information is available online. As soon as your results are ready, you will be sent an email and directed to a password protected web page. You will be able to see your marks obtained and any decisions that you must make in order to progress to the next stage of study.

Upon graduating from your studies, you will receive a [degree certificate](#) and a copy of your academic transcript. You will also be invited to attend the next Graduation ceremony available to you.

## Graduation

The culmination of all your hard work, [Graduation](#) ceremonies take place at our Colchester Campus each July in the Ivor Crewe Lecture Hall. All eligible students studying at our Colchester, Loughton and Southend Campuses will be invited to attend.

Students with exam boards held in Autumn term will be invited to attend our Winter Graduation ceremony where these are held; students with exam boards held in Spring or Summer term will be invited to attend our Summer Graduation ceremony.

## GradIntelligence

If you studied an undergraduate degree with us at Essex, you would have had access to your [Higher Education Achievement Report \(HEAR\)](#) record which would also show any awards or additional achievements you have received formal recognition for. However, this is currently only available for undergraduate awards; postgraduate students can instead use [GradIntel](#) to record any extra-curricular activities or achievements during your studies, such as the [Big Essex Award](#).

## References

### Requesting references from members of staff

If you require a personal reference, always ask permission from a member of staff before giving their name as a referee. You should consider from whom it is most appropriate to request a reference and who will be best equipped to evidence your character and performance in the subject.

For example, final year project supervisors, year organisers, and core course supervisors are likely to be more suitable than lecturers that have taught you on a first-year option course. Every reasonable effort will be made to meet a request for reference for a student who has undertaken study within our Department. Requests received from students who have graduated from the University within the last

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three years will be prioritised. Requests received outside of this period may, of course, be met if a member of staff is equipped with the necessary information and is willing to provide a reference.

It is always helpful if you can provide the member of staff with details about the course or job you have applied for and, if relevant, a CV or other summary of your qualifications and experience. Please try to ask for references in good time – it is not always possible for a member of staff to write a reference immediately.

### Copies of references

A copy of any reference provided will be retained within our department for no longer than three years for taught students.

### Alumni

Essex is forever and although your time here will fly by, you'll be part of the Essex family for life. When you graduate, you'll get an alumni card and join a community of over 100,000 fellow graduates around the world. We'd love to keep in touch and invite you to our alumni events, networking and volunteering opportunities, as well as offer you special alumni benefits. Want to know more? Visit [our website!](#)

### What comes next?

The world is your oyster! The options and opportunities open to you as a graduate can be overwhelming. You may know the exact path and next steps that you wish to take, or you might not, and this is okay. Our Careers Services can offer information, guidance and advice on your different options after graduation and you can return to Essex for these services at any time.

Whatever you choose to do, please stay in touch! Keep us up to date with your achievements and explore the variety of ways through which you can give back to Essex too.