Research Placement Summary: Guidelines

For students who are doing research in the department over the summer and were enrolled as an UG student in the previous academic year.

Some of you are funded by the department (e.g. RP students, or from your supervisor's grants), some by awards (e.g. from RAS, Nuffield, JRA), and some of you are working voluntarily. Some of you are nearing the end of your placement, some of you have yet to start yours (the placements vary in length from a few days to three months).

The department would like you to provide a short summary at the end of your placement (see below for more information). These will be used both for marketing and to encourage more undergraduates to get involved in internship schemes.

RP students should note that these summaries form part of the progression requirement.

Some of you will, in addition, be obliged to submit a poster by your funding body (e.g. for JRA) and/or a project report by your supervisor.

Your summary is due on the Friday of the first full week of the Autumn term.

Please include the following in your placement summary (please liaise with your supervisor before submitting it). They should be submitted to Study Direct in PDF format as well as the native format (e.g. Word).

1. Your Name

2. Your email address

3. Supervisor's Name (this should be a faculty member, even if you worked more closely with a student or postdoc)

4. Project Title

5. Project Abstract (between 150 and 300 words, avoiding jargon and acronyms, see below for more suggestions)

6. Your experiences (i.e. what you got out of it, e.g. skills/insights you gained - jargon welcome here!)

7. Mini biography (the degree you are on, your year group during 2011/12 (e.g. Y3), any careers ambitions you might have)

8. One or more images related to your project

9. Captions for the image(s)

10. [If relevant]  Anything else you want to add

11. [If relevant] Where your funding came from

12. [if relevant] Do you need to make a poster for your funding body? (If "yes", then we'll be in touch to get a copy displayed in the department)

13. [Optional] A recent picture of yourself (we can arrange for one to be taken if needed)

ABSTRACTs:

Writing a good abstract for scientific research is not easy. It may only be a paragraph or two, but expect to spend at least an hour getting the wording right. Get input from your supervisor, and do not submit your summary until s/he is happy with the abstract.

You supervisor will have their own ideas about what makes a good abstract, but here are Kathy Romer’s:

1. Draw the reader in. This abstract is for a non specialist, so start with something related to your project that would be interesting to a scientifically literate lay person (e.g. Big Bang, Higgs Boson....).

2. Connect your first statement to the research being done by your supervisor (or his/her group).

3. Connect the research done by the supervisor/group to the sub-project you were involved in.

4. Say what you did, giving some technical detail.

5. What were your results?

6. What were your conclusions and how do they relate to either points 1 or 2?

7. Directions for future work.

Here is a dummy abstract of about 180 words that follows that pattern.

Team GB won more Olympic gold medals than ever before at London 2012. At Sussex, we are researching ways to further improve on this number. We are doing this by devising new Velodrome events for consideration by the International Olympic Committee. My research last summer involved investigating a proposal to make cycling backwards into a team sport. I did this by asking volunteers to cycle backwards down the Lewes Road cycle lane during the afternoon rush hour. All volunteers used the same style of bicycle (one that allows the rider to cycle backwards by pedalling in reverse). As expected, I found a correlation between the average journey speed and the physical fitness of the volunteers. However, I also found a correlation between the number of injuries sustained by the volunteers and the presence of other cyclists in the cycle lane. In conclusion, the potential advantages to Team GB, of adding "Team Backwards Cycling" to Olympic Velodrome events, are outweighed by risk factors to the athletes involved. In future, therefore, research at Sussex will switch emphasis towards devising new events in rowing.