



MSc Data Science

Course Handbook for Postgraduate Students
2024—2025

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Introduction

Welcome to the MSc Data Science at the University of Sussex.

We hope that you will enjoy studying here and that you participate actively in the life of the University. Our aim for all students is to provide you with the opportunities to achieve your potential and obtain the best degree possible.

Please take some time to read this document entirely and keep it handy for future reference.

You will find key points of about the MSc Data Science at the University of Sussex, including how the course is organised and the staff (faculty and admin) who are your key contacts. It also provides links to key websites, including online descriptions of modules and explains the methods of teaching and assessment we use. It also offers hints about how to make the best use of your time, outlines some of the teaching and learning resources provided on the course and at the University.

In addition to this handbook, which is specific to the MSc Data Science, the general [Student Handbook](#) provides you with even more University-wide information.

Dr Omar Lakkis

Reader in Mathematics and MSc Data Science Course Convenor

Course Information MSc in Data Science

For the full details of module content, module aims, and learning outcomes see www.sussex.ac.uk/mps/internal/departments/mathematics/pg/pgcourses

Overall structure

Requirements for the MSc degree are 8 (5 core and 3 optional) modules, each worth 15 credits, and complete a final dissertation worth 45 credits.

- *5 core modules* common to all MSc Data Science students
- *3 optional modules* that are organised into application areas (formerly known as “streams”).

Different modules may have different assessment modes and weightings.

The following schedule summarises study activities over the whole academic year.

	T1: Autumn term Sep—Dec	T2: Spring term Feb—May	T3: Summer term
<i>Main tasks</i>	Four modules	Five modules	Project work
<i>Core modules</i>	1. Algorithmic Data Science 2. Data Science Research Methods	5. Data Science Masters Research Proposal 6. Machine Learning 7. Wider Topics in Data Science (L7)	N/A
<i>Optional modules</i>	Modules 3 and 4 from module selection webpage	Two modules from module selection webpage	N/A
<i>Project</i>	Project proposals by supervisors (Oct—Dec) Selection of 5 possible projects by the students (Dec—Jan)	Assignment of student—supervisor pairs (Feb) Work on project starts with Research Proposal (see module 5 in T2)	While Research Proposal is submitted and assessed, actual work starts. Dissertation due Aug. Presentation due Aug—Sep.
<i>Assessment session</i>	A1: January	A2: May—June	A3: Aug—Sep

Most modules have term-time forms of assessment (Coursework, Essay, Project, e.g.).

Some modules have also Exam (Unseen, Computer-based, or Oral) for take place in assessment sessions A1, A2 and A3.

Some of the Projects and Essays may also be due in assessment sessions rather than during term-time.

Course switch

If you decide the MSc course you have selected no longer suits you and you wish to change to another MSc course, you must:

1. Complete a Course Transfer Form;
2. Complete a new Module Options form for your intended new course and approve it by collecting the three required signatures on the Transfer form;
3. Email both forms to mps_pgtoffice@sussex.ac.uk.

Consider doing this as soon as possible to increase the chances of approval.

The forms are available here:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/mps/internal/departments/mathematics/pg/studyingmsc/modules>

The deadline for course transfer requests is the end of Week 2 in the Autumn term.

Choosing your modules in each of Autumn and Spring terms

Optional modules must be chosen upon registration. (See <https://student.sussex.ac.uk/new-students/before-you-arrive/registration> for the details.)

Changing optional modules is possible only before Week 2 of the corresponding term.

We cannot guarantee any module changes as these are subject to availability (i.e. number of students in the module) and timetable clashes.

*The firm deadline for optional modules switch is by the end of Week 2 in the corresponding term. **No option module changes will be allowed after this deadline.***

Key Contacts

School office

The Department of Mathematics is based in Pevensey 2/3 buildings, and the School Office is in Pevensey 2 Building. If you have any queries about your course overall, or your module choices, you should contact the School Office for the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences:

E: mps-pgtooffice@sussex.ac.uk

T: [01273 873254](tel:01273 873254)

To report any justified absence, send an email to the School Office. You should also notify the tutors of modules.

Course convenor

The course is managed and developed by the Department of Mathematics within the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, where the course convenor and faculty contact for the application area in Mathematics:

Dr Omar Lakkis,
Room 5C14A, Pevensey 3 Building.

E: O.Lakkis@sussex.ac.uk

Application area contacts

For each application area (formerly known as “stream”), wherefrom you can choose the optional modules, there is a key contact who can guide your module/dissertation interests in that specific area:

Computer Science application area

Dr James Bennett,
Room Ci111, Chichester 1 Building

E: James.Bennett@sussex.ac.uk

Life Sciences application area

Dr Frances Pearl,
Room 316, Chichester 2 Building.
E: F.Pearl@sussex.ac.uk

Physics and Astronomy application area

Dr Elisabeth Falk,
Room 4A08, Pevensey 2 Building.
E: E.Falk@sussex.ac.uk

External Examiners

The MSc in Data Science is externally reviewed by

Dr Guido Germano
University College London
Department of Computer Science
Room GS4.0766-72 Gower Street
London
WC1E 6EA

Modules from Mathematics, Physics, Informatics and Life Sciences are reviewed by their own external examiners.

Student Support Unit

The Student Support Unit is a team of specialist advisors who work with students who may need support at the university due to a long term condition.

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentsupport/>

Academic Development Support

The services of Academic Development Support are available free of charge to all full-time international/overseas students completing a full degree. They offer support with academic cultural differences; learning styles; what is meant by plagiarism, argument and critical analysis, as well as looking at English for academic purposes.

The Sussex Language Institute runs free 'English Language and Study Skills Support' sessions for International students, including in-depth guidance on referencing. There is also advice on how to reference using the Harvard, Vancouver, Numeric and MLA referencing styles.

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/english/acadev>

Learning

This course is offered as a one-year full-time course, or as a part-time course over two academic years. The course begins in September in the autumn term and finishes at the beginning of September in the following year.

Term dates are available here

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/aboutus/keydates>

Course modules are spread across the Autumn and Spring terms, and are taught in lectures, seminars, workshops and practical sessions according to the requirements of the module.

Over the summer period students take on a major research project for their MSc dissertation which they must hand in by the specified date in August.

Assessment

Module assessment

The course uses a number of different modes of assessment including one or many of unseen examinations, coursework, project work and essay writing. In order to pass a particular module you need a total mark of at least 50% on that module. This total mark's calculation depends on the module and is the weighted average of several units of assessment (unseen exam, coursework, etc.). Coursework is submitted during the period of the module and submission dates are notified to you in advance. Formal submission dates are noted on your Sussex Direct pages.

Individual module convenors or tutors are not allowed to provide extensions nor condonement to submission deadlines. You must contact the School Office if you are seeking condonement or resits, for justified reasons.

Most modules will also have a final assessment in January (Assessment Block A1) and May (Assessment Block A2). Exam resits (or sits), in case of fails (or justified absence) are offered in August (Assessment Block A3). The assessment details for each module are listed online:

www.sussex.ac.uk/mps/internal/departments/mathematics/pg/pgcourses

Assessments and Deadlines for Formal Submissions

Full details about the assessment deadlines for each module are available on your personal Sussex Direct study pages.

Exams take place in three assessment periods. Term 1 modules will be examined in January, and Term 2 modules will be examined in May/June. There is also a formal period for resitting assessments in June (T1 modules)/August (T2 modules). We encourage you to regularly check your study timetable in Sussex Direct and e-mails. The MSc Dissertation is handed in on a specified date during August. Your Sussex Direct account will tell you how to submit the dissertation (usually via Canvas).

Please note you will have assessment deadlines. Each one of your core and option module assessments and deadlines for submission appears in your study timetable on the Sussex Direct web page. It is your responsibility to be aware of these deadlines.

Submitting your work

You must submit your work to the module Canvas page via the Assessments tab, unless otherwise specified on Sussex Direct. This is marked by the tutors and you can view your feedback online. If you do not understand the tutor's comments, please discuss them with the tutor or lecturer.

It is important that such deadlines are met; the University applies a system of penalties to assessments that are handed in late. For more details, please consult the University

Examinations and Assessment Regulations:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/standards/examsandassessment>

The assessment of the MSc research project/dissertation includes a dissertation and, for some modules, an oral presentation. Supervisors for MSc research projects/dissertations are allocated in due course after conclusion of the spring term, in consultation with the relevant MSc convenor.

Feedback on your work

There are a number of ways in which you will receive feedback regarding your progress:

- Marked coursework - You will get feedback each time you have a piece of coursework marked, which can be picked up in lectures or during a lecturer's feedback/office hour.
- Lecturers' feedback hours - For details, please search Sussex web pages for the relevant staff member and their feedback hours for the week will be displayed.

Support for your learning

In addition to your MSc course convenor, you will have a dissertation supervisor. If you have any queries with a specific module, you can visit the module lecturer during their advertised feedback/office hours. You can also get valuable information, advice and support from the Student Life Centre. They can help you with many issues including:

- Personal concerns affecting study progress or well-being
- Funding and finance including scholarships, bursaries and hardship funds
- Sources of help to improve academic performance – identifying obstacles to learning
- Understanding university systems and regulations in relation to assessment, services, complaints, conduct, and discipline.
- Progression, intermission and withdrawal processes - discussion and support
- Referrals to other professional services on campus
- Exceptional Circumstances

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre/>

Study Skills and Resources

Turnitin

Turnitin is an online 'text matching' tool that compares a student's work to a huge database of other files and shows where there are strong similarities. It is often referred to as plagiarism detection software.

Skills Hub

The University's Skills Hub gives advice on writing well, including hints and tips on how to avoid making serious mistakes. Visit and make use of the resources there. You will also find helpful guides to referencing properly and improving your critical writing skills.

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/skillshub/?id=1>

Referencing

These are some useful websites and places to go to for advice on how to reference essays and dissertations:

- Skills Hub website on referencing <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/skillshub/?id=251>
- Use the resources on your Study Direct pages associated with your modules.

Academic Integrity and avoiding Academic Misconduct

Academic Integrity

The University of Sussex has a set of Academic Integrity Values which all students are expected to follow. These values are:

- **Honesty:** The work you produce for assessment is your own and where you have used other's work, this is clearly acknowledged: this is done by adding references to your assessments.
- **Trust:** Your tutors and fellow students can trust you to be honest about the work you produce and submit for assessment.
- **Fairness:** You agree that all students should be fairly treated and that you do not try to gain advantage by not producing your own work for assessment.
- **Respect:** You treat other members of the academic community with respect: fellow students, your tutors and the admin staff.
- **Responsibility:** You take responsibility for your own learning and follow the University of Sussex Academic Integrity values and assessment regulations.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is legalese for "cheating". It includes

- Collusion
- Plagiarism
- Personation
- Misconduct in unseen exams
- Fabrication of results
- Online (AI or human) help to produce texts, and in some cases code
- Misappropriation of data and other resources

There are strict rules on academic misconduct and penalties are severe.

The University's regulations and policy on Academic Misconduct are published in Section 2.9 of the Examination and Assessment Regulations Handbook available on the following web pages: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/standards/examsandassessment>

Guidance on avoiding academic misconduct can be found on the Study Success and the "Skills Hub" at Sussex webpages.

Ethics approval

When using sensitive data (human, health, animal) it is important to follow the

<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/apply>

Practical Help and Advice

For practical help and guidance please refer to “Skills Hub”, where there is a wealth of information regarding skills to avoid academic misconduct. See:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/skillshub>

Feedback on your modules/course

Your student feedback is important to us, we use it to improve your student experience and it helps us improve our courses.

Each module will have a feedback period, and your lecturer will explain when and how to give feedback. You can talk to your lecturers during their office hours, if you have any concerns about the course. You can also discuss this with the MSc Course Convenor, or the Head of Department. All staff contact details are available on the University web pages.

You can also give feedback to your student representative. Student reps are democratically elected to represent their peers. They enable a useful and effective communication link between staff and students. They provide helpful feedback to staff on modules and courses; raise concerns in a constructive manner; give feedback to other students on why particular decisions are made; and can help to pre-empt concerns becoming serious issues.

To find the details of your student rep, please check the noticeboard in the School, or visit:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/mps/internal/departments/mathematics/studentreps>