

Junior Research Associate Scheme

JRA Supervisor Information and Guidance

The Junior Research Associate (JRA) scheme aims to inspire and excite students about the idea of postgraduate study and a career in research, by allowing them to conduct an individual research project across the summer months. Although a main part of the scheme is to give students a taste of working in a research role at Sussex, please be advised that Junior Research Associates are not research assistants and we ask that they should not be treated as such. These individuals sole focus should be their research project, as they only have eight weeks to complete it.

JRAs are expected to work as full-time researchers for eight weeks between the beginning of June and the end of August. However, it is expected that the supervisor and student come to an agreement on the exact timing of these weeks, as they may have other commitments across the summer and can therefore choose to complete the project any when within this timeframe. Please note that the mandatory training sessions and optional social events are a large part of the JRA and therefore we expect supervisors to make allowances in order that their JRAs can attend.

Please see the below timeline, which provides an overview of the full JRA Scheme. Please note that this doesn't include specific dates, as these change every year, so please check the [application webpages](#) for the current application deadline.

Early February - JRA applications open

End of March – JRA application submission deadline and applications are sent to schools

April - applications assessed by Schools assessors/panels and ranked by DRaKEs

Early May - results of application assessment returned to Sussex Researcher School

Mid May - Sussex Researcher School notify applicants, supervisors and DRaKEs of allocation of JRAs

Early June - JRA projects start

End of August - JRA projects end

01 Sept - JRA posters submission deadline

October - Poster exhibition

Supporting your JRA

As a supervisor, you are expected to support your JRA throughout the application process and across their summer research project.

During the application process, as well as providing a supervisor statement which provides information on your view and participation in the proposed research, it may also be beneficial to work with your JRA on their research proposal. This will ensure that you are both aware of the scope of the project, as well as the overall aims and feasibility of competition within the timeframe.

Once your JRA's application has been successfully accepted, then you will need to plan out the timeline for their project and set up regular check-in sessions. We suggest that you meet once a week across the project to check progress and you may also wish to appoint a PGR mentor to assist with more regular checks and support as well.

When supporting your JRA across the summer, we advise that you follow the below steps to ensure that everything goes smoothly:

1. Prepare — Since JRA projects are only eight weeks long, a certain amount of preparatory work can be useful, such as scheduling a pre-project meeting, providing a short reading list, ensuring any ethical approval requirements are met, or proposing initial research objectives. These can all be used to ensure that the JRA makes the most of the eight weeks allotted to their projects.

A note on ethics: although it is the student's responsibility to submit any forms/claims needed for ethical approval, the supervisor has an ultimate responsibility to ensure such approval is attained in good time.

2. Advise — The principle role of a supervisor is to advise the JRA academically and make sure that they feel supported. As most of these students are new to research, they may require guidance to ensure that they meet their objectives and complete their project on time. It is important that students get a taste of research and are allowed to explore all possible options, but this can often be overwhelming or lead to overly ambitious goals, so keeping them on-track may be required.

JRAs may also run into various obstacles during their projects and may come to you for advice on how to re-write their objectives or re-focus their project. They may also require additional support, as understanding that research can often lead to these roadblocks or unanswered questions can be difficult for them. If you find that your student is particularly struggling, then please do get in contact at undergraduate-research@sussex.ac.uk or advise them to ask questions during our training sessions and drop-ins.

3. Report — In order to ensure that JRAs keep on-track with their projects, we require all supervisors to provide a short interim report halfway through the project. This report lets us know that the JRA is fulfilling their duties, and highlights any problems early in the process, leaving us enough time to resolve any issues before the progress of the project is seriously impacted. It is also a requirement in order for the JRA to receive their second bursary payment (along with attending the mandatory training). This form will be sent out by the Sussex Researcher School and a deadline given once the research projects are underway.

4. Celebrate — Upon completion of the JRA, all students posters will be displayed in a Poster Exhibition to celebrate the work that they have done and allow them to share their research. We encourage all supervisors to attend and support their students, as well as extending the invitation to other academics within their field. We also recommend that you encourage your JRA to connect with others within your subject and highlight any future opportunities to them.

5. Advocate — As our JRAs move on, a lot of them will draw on their JRA experiences, and as a supervisor you can act as a really valuable advocate, recommending their character and their research abilities to others as they progress through their lives and career. Many supervisors and their JRAs still keep in touch years after their projects have ended.

Beyond these 5 steps, we do recommend that supervisors support their students across all aspects of the JRA as well as the academic side, including encouraging the attendance of training sessions and social events. Many JRAs enjoy the experience immensely, but occasionally students do struggle so please feel free to reach out to undergraduate-research@sussex.ac.uk or point them in the direction of the Student Centre for [wellbeing advice](#). If your student has any EDI issues that we may be unaware of then please feel free to flag these to us, with their permission, and see the University's guidance [online](#) about supporting these students.