

Welcome to SMSTC!

David Pritchard

SMSTC Director

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What is SMSTC?

SMSTC is the Scottish Mathematical Sciences Training Centre.

We provide graduate mathematics courses to all of Scotland.

There are eight member departments.



Why do we exist?

UK higher education in mathematics is traditionally

- **short** (typically 3 years UG + 1 year Masters + 3 years PhD);
- **narrow** (graduate study was highly specialised).

The 2004 International Review of UK Mathematics concluded that PhD graduates were often strong in their narrow field, but lacked breadth.

As a result:

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As a result:

- the standard PhD programme was **lengthened** to 3.5 years,
- with the first 0.5 years to be spent on **broadening** training.

This training is provided by six 'taught course centres' across the UK.

Who are we?

SMSTC is a community project. It includes:

- **Students:** mostly 1st year maths PhD, but also higher years, other subjects, other universities, postdocs, staff, . . .
- **Lecturers:** c. 50 per year, drawn from all eight universities.
- **Administrator:** Liam Holligan (ICMS).
- **Director:** David Pritchard.
- **Deputy Director:** Fraser Daly.
- **Theme Heads:** Victor Elvira, Heiko Gimperlein, Ana Lecuona, Richard Scott.
- **Technical staff** at each university.
- **Postgraduate co-ordinators** at each university.
- **Tutors** at each university.
- **External advisers** from outwith Scotland.
- **Student reps** at each university (**volunteers needed!**)

What courses do we offer?

We run **core modules** and **supplementary modules**.

Core modules:

- run every year;
- are aimed mostly at first-year PhD students;
- consist of two-hour lectures once a week for ten weeks;
- have graded assignments.

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Supplementary modules:

- are different every year;
- may be more advanced and taken by higher-year PhD students;
- may be shorter;
- don't always have graded assignments.

If you want a supplementary module to count towards your department's training requirements, talk to your supervisor or PG coordinator.

Themes

You can take any combination of modules you want, as long as:

- you have suitable prior knowledge (see the Prospectus);
- your department agrees.

For convenience, we organize the core modules into four themes:

- Analysis
- Applications of Mathematics
- Probability & Statistics
- Structure & Symmetry

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For convenience, we organize the core modules into four **themes**:

Analysis

Theme Head: Heiko Gimperlein (Heriot-Watt)

Core modules:

- Dynamical Systems and Conservation Laws (Semester 1)
- Measure and Integration (Semester 1)
- Elliptic and Parabolic PDEs (Semester 2)
- Functional Analysis (Semester 2)

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Applications of Mathematics

Theme Head: Richard Scott (St Andrews)

Core modules:

- Asymptotic and Analytical Methods (Semester 1)
- Continuum Mechanics (Semester 1)
- Numerical Methods (Semester 2)
- Mathematical Biology and Physiology (Semester 2)

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Probability and Statistics

Theme Head: Victor Elvira (Edinburgh)

Core modules:

- Foundations of Probability (Semester 1)
- Regression and Simulation Methods (Semester 1)
- Stochastic Processes (Semester 2)
- Modern Regression and Bayesian Methods (Semester 2)

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Structure and Symmetry

Theme Head: Ana Lecuona (Glasgow)

Core modules:

- Groups, Rings and modules (Semester 1)
- Algebraic Topology (Semester 1)
- Algebras and Representation Theory (Semester 2)
- Manifolds (Semester 2)

Supplementary modules

First semester:

- Calculus of Variations and Dynamics
- Fourier and Harmonic Analysis
- Geometry of Gauge Fields

Second semester:

- Advanced Methods for Stochastic Sampling (tbc)
- Classical and Quantum Integrable Systems
- Fluid Dynamics (tbc)
- Formal Groups
- Introduction to Geometric Group Theory
- Stochastic Networks and Processes

How do lectures work?

Lectures will be delivered via Zoom.

- Joining details will be emailed to enrolled students. Please don't share them further.
- Lectures will not (and must not) be recorded — exceptions by request to the Director only.
- Full notes are available on the website.
- It's up to you if you want video on/off and if you want to participate — but if you can participate, this should benefit you.

What happens outside lectures?

Material on the website: The website (www.smstc.ac.uk) is crucial!

Study the notes, do the exercises, follow up on suggested texts, etc.
Some modules are 'flipped': you're expected to read in advance.

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Ask your PG coordinator about your local arrangements.

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Assessment: Each core module is assessed in either one or two assignments.

You get written feedback, a grade for each assignment, and an overall grade for the module. All this is visible to your supervisor.

How many modules should I do?

Your postgraduate director decides what's required (not us).

- A 'typical' load (original EPSRC expectation): 6 modules.
- We don't require you to take them all in the same year!
- Your choices should be to widen your knowledge, not to support your research directly.

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Examples:

- Student A has started a PhD straight from UG. They take six core modules.
- Student B did a lot of high-level courses in their MSc, so only takes three modules: two core, one supplementary.
- Student C takes four core modules, but wants to learn some other subjects that SMSTC doesn't offer, so also takes a UG course and a reading course.

How much time does all this take?

Typically, about **75% of your time for the first six months of your PhD** is intended to be spent on training.

Make sure your supervisor doesn't overload you with other work.

Warning: You are likely to have clusters of assignment deadlines around the middle and end of semesters.

Plan ahead for this!

What doesn't SMSTC do?

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SMSTC doesn't provide tutorials.

These are the responsibility of your department.

Lectures are done centrally by videoconference—organized by SMSTC.

Tutorials are done locally in person—organized by your department.

If you're not being offered tutorial support, *complain to your department!*

Questions and feedback

Some mechanisms for asking questions or providing comments:

- **Local tutors:** e.g. specific mathematical points.
- **Lecturer:** e.g. points that your tutor can't answer.
- **Theme Head:** e.g. feedback on course provision.
- **PG coordinator and supervisor:** e.g. questions about your training.
- **SMSTC administrators:** purely administrative questions.
- **Director / Deputy Director:** questions / comments about SMSTC overall.
- **Student reps:** anything you'd like to be passed on anonymously.
- **Formal feedback process:** in March.
- **Me, now:** ...?

What now?

The rest of today:

- An overview of each theme, including content, prerequisites and assessment, and giving you
 - ▶ help to make up (or change) your mind on which modules to take;
 - ▶ a chance to broaden your knowledge, even if you've already chosen.
- Presentations on some useful stuff for PhD students to know
- Meeting students and staff from universities across Scotland

Later in the year there will be two follow-up events:

- Further research skills (provisionally 19 November)
- Supporting Postgraduates who Teach Mathematics & Statistics (provisionally 14 January)

We'll provide further details closer to the time.