

Research Immersion Labs

Purpose: The Graduate School's preparatory phase is to allow doctoral candidates to broaden and deepen their background in computer science. During this period doctoral students should also identify a research field according to their interests, find an appropriate research group and match up with a suitable advisor who is willing to work with them and ensure financial backing. This is only feasible if students are able to get a feeling for the kind of research they would be doing as well as for the group and advisor they would be working with. Equally importantly, an advisor needs to get to know students well enough to gauge their strengths and weaknesses in order to gain the necessary confidence to commit advising effort and resources to a student. Research Immersion Labs (RI Labs) were created to facilitate and formalize the matchmaking process between doctoral students and advisors.

Contents: Obviously, the particular curricular requirements of an individual lab cannot be specified. The guiding idea is that the doctoral candidate should be actively engaged in the group's research activities and be involved as much as possible in all the regular goings on within the group. Ideally, the student should temporarily have workspace in the group and should be included in the appropriate mailing lists.

Format/Duration: An RI Lab counts for 6 ECTS ungraded credit points. This corresponds to "roughly" 180 hours of work. To put this in context, a student is generally expected to complete 30 ECTS per semester, a core lecture is worth 9 ECTS points. These 180 hours should be completed within 6 months (or less) and can be spread over this period as desired. Typically a student is also taking regular courses during this time and the RI Lab should not unduly interfere with their completion. This means full-time work on the RI Lab is only possible during the semester breaks. Possible time allotments are, for example, 12 weeks at about 15 hours (+/- 5 hours) per week, or 6 weeks at 10 hours per week during the semester followed by 3 weeks full-time (40 hours per week) during the semester break. Students required to complete the entire preparatory phase must take at least two RI Labs. These must be with different research groups. In well-founded cases, a third RI Lab may be taken in yet another research group.

Formalities: RI Labs are part of our doctoral curriculum and not part of the "official" university course program (yet). Therefore students cannot register for RI Labs via HISPOS. We require the student and the RI Lab advisor to enter a written "contract" listing the research project, time allotment, what is expected of the student, and the commitments of the RI Lab advisor. An addendum stating that the "contract" was fulfilled signed by advisor and student serves as proof of completion and should be filed with the Graduate School office. An example of such a "contract" is attached.

Please remember that only members of the Graduate School's faculty assembly, i.e. someone with the official right to advise doctoral students, may offer an RI Lab.

Final report: A final report may be part of the requirements listed in the "contract", but is not obligatory. In any case the student will be required to submit a brief half-page report on the RI Lab as part of the regular semester report.

Money: RI Labs are part of doctoral training during the preparatory phase. Students receive stipends during this period and therefore no remuneration is necessary. In fact, for reasons of fairness in the friendly competition between groups remuneration is prohibited.