Welcome to SISSA!

Dear first-year PhD students,

first of all, congratulations for your choice of SISSA for your graduate studies: here in Trieste you will find a welcoming and stimulating environment, both for your academic and social life.

With this note, we would like to share some tricks with you on how to get the best from your experience here in SISSA.
SISSA and Trieste

Firsts things first: some history of SISSA

As of this moment, you might be wondering: where do I am now, exactly?

Well, you're at the Scuola Internazionale Superiore di Studi Avanzati, or SISSA (International School of Advanced Studies, or ISAS), located in the Santorio building on top of the hills of Karst (this is a Slovenian word, in Italian it's “Carso”) above the city of Trieste. SISSA used to be located near Miramare Castle, on the sea, next to the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP). SISSA moved some years ago to the present building, which used to be a hospital for people suffering from tuberculosis (the “Sanatorio Santorio Santorio” – it's no joke: you may find a bust of Santorio Santorio in the hall just outside the Cafeteria). The beautiful park surrounding Santorio building is also owned by SISSA, although it has been made open and accessible to the public – during certain days and hours, this is still a working place after all! – since May 2011. You should definitively seize the occasion of having a walk around it, if “bora” (the strong, extremely cold wind that sometimes blows in Trieste) permits!

Doing science in Trieste

Apart from SISSA and ICTP, Trieste and its surroundings host many other scientific institutions, like INAF-OATS (the Astronomic Observatory of Trieste), AREA Science Park, ICGEB (International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology), OGS (the National Institute for Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics), and the University of Trieste. SISSA collaborates actively with most of this institutes.

Settling in Trieste

Other useful and practical information on life in Trieste can be found on the SISSA Students' Wiki page or later in this note.

1 [http://wiki.sissa.it/students/index.php/Main_Page](http://wiki.sissa.it/students/index.php/Main_Page)
Research and academic life

Academic life

So, now that you know where you are, you are probably willing to ask: what am I here for?

The School's main job is to train you as an independent young scientist. From an academic viewpoint, research in SISSA is divided in three Areas: Physics, Mathematics, and Neuroscience.

Being a first year PhD student in Italy you are supposed to attend a number of lectures and take the corresponding exams, as well as attending the seminars offered in your PhD course. These will also serve the purpose of letting you know which research topics are active in your Area, and “who works on what”: participation in your PhD course activities will offer you guidance in your choice of a PhD project. More interdisciplinary seminars, delivered by experts in the fields of research active in the School and open to the whole SISSA community, are organized in the form of the monthly SISSA Colloquia. Prepare for the abundant variety of seminars which are given daily here at SISSA, there is something for all tastes! More specific information regarding teaching and seminar activities can be found on the website of your PhD course, accessible from the SISSA website\(^2\).

Shortly after your arrival to SISSA, a meeting with the staff and the students' representative of your PhD course will take place, where topics regarding your life as a SISSA student like the above will be discussed.

Your office, printing, and binding

You will soon be assigned your office. In your office, each of you will have a desk and access to a workstation, running a Linux or Windows OS and with much software already installed, both for scientific (e.g. various LaTeX editors, Mathematica, Matlab, R) and non-scientific (e.g. Skype) purposes. All the computers are connected to a common server; you can access your account from “any” computer (that is, all the ones that are affiliated to your Area) by just logging in with your SISSA credentials (username and password). The correct functioning of your machine is a responsibility of the ITCS\(^3\) (IT and Computing Services): contact them if you have any problems or questions. They are also the ones you should go to in order to have your SISSA account and credentials activated.

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2 [https://www.sissa.it/phd-courses](https://www.sissa.it/phd-courses)
3 [http://www.itcs.sissa.it/](http://www.itcs.sissa.it/)
Your computer will obviously be connected to the Internet, but it will be recognized, especially from Journal websites, as affiliated to a SISSA account. This will grant you the access to many articles (virtually all the ones you may need), making your bibliographical researches sooo much easier. More details on this can be found on the Library website (see below).

Once you have thus downloaded your Gigabytes of articles, why tiring your eyes reading them on the screen rather than on paper? You can use SISSA printers, located at any floor. Notice that, as SISSA users, you will have unlimited printing, but please don't push it too far! If one of the printers runs out of paper and you are able to replace it yourself, you can find those in the deposit rooms which are usually located near the toilettes. (Incidentally, toilettes at all floors are marked by the yellow walls.)

Photocopiers are also found near the printers. You can also use them to scan your documents and have them sent to you by email in pdf format, following the instructions on the machine. You can also bind the articles you just printed, by means of the binding spirals you can ask at the Store (see below) and the binding machine you will find at the 2nd floor, in front of the Students' Secretariat.

From the Office, you can also make free telephone calls to the area of Trieste: calls outside have to be authorized by the Coordinator of the PhD course. Moreover, if you have to call someone in the SISSA building, just look the number up on the Phonebook4: you will only need the last three digits of his/her phone number. Speaking of telephones, the SISSA building is located very near to the border with Slovenia, so your mobile phone may connect automatically to the roaming line: set your cellphone accordingly to avoid spending lots of money unwarily.

Missions

If you plan to attend some interesting School or Workshop, you can ask SISSA for a reimbursement of your expenses.

The mission forms you have to fill in are found on the SISSA Web Services page5, to which you can log in with your usual SISSA credentials. First of all, read the mission rules6 to get more information about what can be refunded, and up to how much. Before you leave for your mission, fill in the form by opening a new mission. Here you will state which conference you

4 http://services.sissa.it/phonebook/index.php?r=site/people
5 https://services.sissa.it/online/
6 http://www.adm.sissa.it/missioni/english (in English)
   http://www.adm.sissa.it/missioni/indice (in Italian)
wish to attend and how much money you plan to spend. As a first year student, you will probably want to travel on your group's funds, by selecting the appropriate tab, unless you are able to find a different funding source (read below). You will have to fill out this form at least one week before your mission starts, but, as always, the sooner the better. During your stay away, keep all documentation of your expenses (train/plane tickets and boarding passes, receipts, bills and so on); don't forget to get also a certificate of attendance for the event to which you participated. Once you come back, you will have to close the mission with the online form, with a detailed description of how you actually spent your – or indeed SISSA’s – money, and then hand out the compiled form and all your documentation of expenses to the Secretary of your Area.7

Speaking of funds, you may also be interested in joining one of the national scientific institutes, that can provide an alternative source of funding. Some of these different sources include for example:

- IndAM8 (Istituto Nazionale d'Alta Matematica);
- INFN9 (Istituto Nazionale di Fisica Nucleare) and INAF10 (Istituto Nazionale di AstroFisica);
- Progetto S.H.A.R.M.11, a project financed by FSE FVG.

For long visiting periods in EU (3-6 months), there are also Erasmus Job Placement Fellowships: the official announcements are forwarded by Students' Secretariat in September-October, with a deadline of about one month.

7 http://wiki.sissa.it/students/index.php/SISSA_staff
8 http://www.altamatematica.it
9 http://www.infn.it
10 http://www.inaf.it/en?set_language=en
11 http://www2.units.it/fse/corsiext/?file=content.corsiext.inc
SISSA Facilities

The Library

Our Library\textsuperscript{12} is located at the ground floor, “behind” the reception. It has many books and journal collections in all fields of pertinence of the three Areas of Physics, Mathematics, and Neuroscience. Some dictionaries, non-scientific books and newspapers can also be found. By means of the SISSA Catalog on the Library website, you can check whether the book you need is currently available. You can either read it in the Library itself, where a number of desks is available and the atmosphere, as you can imagine, is very quiet, or loan it and take it with you. You can have up to 5 simultaneous loans. A self-loan service, which can be used also outside working hours, is available upon registration of your badge (see below).

In case you cannot find the book you need at our Library, check also the ICTP “Marie Curie” Library\textsuperscript{13}. As was mentioned above, until a few years ago SISSA and ICTP were very near, so they shared the “Marie Curie” Library. Consequently, it is very big, and is full of books not just about Physics but also in all the research areas of interest in the School. Ask the staff of the “Marie Curie” Library for instructions on the loan procedure; if you don’t want to get to Miramare, you can also ask here in SISSA for an inter-library loan.

More information, for example on how to access Journal websites with a remote SISSA account from your PC or on how to request the acquisition of a book, may be found on the Library website.

Cafeteria and ARDISS discounts

Feeding rats makes you feel hungry yourself? Or maybe you need some coffee to turn into theorems?

The Cafeteria\textsuperscript{14} is located at the ground floor: it usually stays open Monday to Friday, from 8.00am to 7.00pm. The bar offers a variety of snacks and beverages: but beware of the “triestino” way to give name to coffees...

- a normal coffee (“caffè”) is called a “nero”;
- a cappuccino is called “caffellatte”;

\textsuperscript{12} http://library.sissa.it
\textsuperscript{13} http://library.ictp.it
\textsuperscript{14} https://www.sissa.it/cafeteria
• a “capo” is a small cappuccino, served in a normal (small) coffee cup; you can also have it in a small glass, in which case you should ask for a “capo in b”;
• a “gocciato” is a coffee with just a drop of milk (i.e. a capo with much less milk).

The bar serves two brands of coffee, Cibao and Illy: the second one is more expensive.

The canteen service is active Monday to Friday from 12.00am to 2.30pm. They serve a wide variety of meals, including vegetarian options. In principle you can have whatever you want, but there are two “combo meals”:

• “speciale” (reduced meal): ½ portion of first course, ½ portion of second course, a side dish and a dessert;
• “intero” (whole meal): one whole portion of first course, one whole portion of second course, a side dish and a dessert.

You can have discounts on your lunch, too! You should get your ARIDSS card15, or “tessera mensa”, at the University of Trieste. You will have to go to the ARDISS office, declare your ISEE (a certificate that determines your family yearly income) and they will give you a magnetic card, that allows you to have ulterior discounts. Even tough the canteen works only at lunch-time, you can use this card twice a day, to get food from the bar.

Later during the year, when the Secretariats of SISSA and the University will “synchronize” (around January), you may also ask the “Trieste Universitaria” card at the ERDISU office: you will get student discounts in some shops, cinemas and other places around Trieste.

The Store and the Post Office

Remember the days in which you had to buy pens, pencils and notebooks? Well, these days are finally over!

At floor -1, stair C, you will find the Store16, where you can get all your stationery for free. When you need something, just send an email specifying the quantity and codes of what you need, your name, your Area and PhD course, and your room number; then go to the store and you will be given what you asked. Please notice that the Store has the following opening hours: Monday to Friday 9.00am – 12.00am.

15 http://wiki.sissa.it/students/index.php/ERDISU
16 http://services.sissa.it/store/, e-mail address: store@sissa.it
Just in front of the Store, you can find the **Post Office**. You can send all your letters (also registered mail, or “raccomandata”) just putting them in the “Mail Out” box, without any charge: envelopes are found at the Store. You can also have mail delivered to you directly at SISSA: you will find your correspondence in the alphabetic boxes. In the Post Office, you will also have your photo printed on your badge. You will receive your **badge** shortly: ask for it at the Reception. It will grant you the access to the external door at the second floor, and more generally to the SISSA building and the Library outside working hours.

**Other facilities: Gym, Music Room, Kindergarten**

But enough with this courses and exams already! SISSA cares also about your leisure activities.

In the park (more precisely, in the B5 building), you may find the **Gym**. There you can work out and exercise, following the Latin motto “mens sana in corpore sano” (“a sane mind in an healthy body”). You can find more information, including fees and classes, on its website.

To look after your “right side of the brain”, SISSA has made available for its students also a **Music Room**. There you will find a piano, drums and some amplifiers and equipment to use with your guitar, free at your disposal. In order to access this room, you have to subscribe to the Students' Secretariat, and then you can book the room at your pleasure.

The **“SISSA per i piccoli” Kindergarten** is open to all SISSA staff, thus including students, to take care of your small children during your working hours. More information can be found on its website.

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17 [https://www.sissa.it/gym](https://www.sissa.it/gym)
18 [https://www.sissa.it/kindergarten](https://www.sissa.it/kindergarten)
Support and contributions

Financial subsidies to the students

SISSA contributes to the expenses of its students. In addition to the fellowship, you can get:

- a contribution for your rent;
- a contribution if you buy a laptop;
- a contribution towards health care expenses (especially dental care);
- “150 hours” fellowships, where you are paid €10 per hour for various projects, lasting 50 to 150 hours depending on your availability, such as helping out in the Library, keeping the website updated, and so on; notice that first year students cannot apply, but keep this in mind for the next years;
- a contribution for non-EU students to travel back home.

Moreover, SISSA helps foreign students to deal with the Italian bureaucracy, for example:

- to get your permit of stay;
- to get your health insurance.

As additional benefits, ARDISS (a regional institution for education) offers, apart from the already mentioned discounts on meals at SISSA cafeteria:

- a partial reimbursement on monthly/yearly subscription to the bus service;
- housing in ARDISS-owned apartments.

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19 https://www.sissa.it/financial-support-phd-students
20 http://wiki.sissa.it/students/index.php/Contribution_towards_living_expenses
21 http://wiki.sissa.it/students/index.php/Laptop_contribution
22 http://www.adm.sissa.it/_media/documenti/regolamento-assistenziale.pdf (in Italian)
23 http://wiki.sissa.it/students/index.php/150_hours
24 http://wiki.sissa.it/students/index.php/Travel_grant_contribution
25 http://wiki.sissa.it/students/index.php/Permit_of_stay
26 http://wiki.sissa.it/students/index.php/Health_insurance
27 http://wiki.sissa.it/students/index.php/ERDISU
Extracurricular activities

But enough with this courses and exams already! SISSA cares also about your leisure activities. Apart from the Gym and the Music Room, these are some of the other extracurricular activities in which you can entertain.

SISSA Club and Language Courses

SISSA Club\textsuperscript{28} offers you the possibility to attend many different activities: some examples include several sports, drawing class, acting lessons, dancing courses, photography classes, and a weekly cine-club. Language courses, including Italian for foreigners, are also among the available options. A subscription fee is required to join the Club: it will also cover your insurance if you participate in the sport activities. Usually, classes that are taught by people from outside SISSA require some small fee to be paid extra.

SISSA for School

SISSA also opens its doors to guided visits to the School and the park for schools (ranging from primary to high school). This project, called “SISSA for School”\textsuperscript{29} ("SISSA per la Scuola" in Italian), is organized in collaboration with SISSA Medialab, a SISSA spin-off company involved in communication of science and many different activities. Children and young adults are offered small seminars and other entertaining activities, with the aim of popularizing science. You are welcome to join the program and become a lecturer or a guide for the tours.

Welcome Day and SISSA Parties

In November, a presentation of SISSA – probably less interesting that the one you are reading… ;) – will take place in the Aula Magna in the garden: this is the Welcome Day. This is only one of the many social occasions where you will be able to get to know all your colleagues and new friends from SISSA, like the celebrated SISSA Parties. Remember that, among the secret mottoes of SISSA, there is: Study hard, party harder! (The official one is “ma per seguir virtute et canoscenza”, that is “to follow virtue and knowledge”, a quote from Dante's Inferno.)

\textsuperscript{28} http://club.sissa.it/
\textsuperscript{29} http://medialab.sissa.it/sissaperlascuola/en
Neuroscience experiments

An easy way to get some money and contribute to the advancement of science is to participate to the experiments that your colleagues from the Neuroscience Area conduct every day. These are announced on the Facebook group “Esperimenti SISSA” 30; if you choose to help a neuroscientist out, you will be also paid for your participation.

30 https://www.facebook.com/groups/144096472323480/
Who should I ask?

**Students' Representatives**

In case you are facing some issues with your life in SISSA or you are simply curious about how the School works, the **Students' representatives**\(^{31}\) are there to help. Each PhD course has its own representative, who sits in the Area council where all the important matters about your scientific Area are discussed. You will meet him or her at the presentation of your PhD course. You can find the names and photos of all the representatives on the board in the Cafeteria.

In addition to the Students' representatives in the Area councils, there are representatives also in the **governing bodies** of the School, namely the **Senate**, the **Board of Directors** and the **Evaluation Unit**. Together with the President of the **Students' Council**, they are in direct contact with the Administration and the Director, with whom they discuss all issues which are relevant to the whole students' body.

It is the duty and pleasure of all Students' representatives to help you get the best from your experience as a SISSA fellow. Feel free to contact them, either in person or dropping them a line.

**Administration**

For most bureaucratic questions, you can turn to the Area Secretariat or the Students' Secretariat.

- The **Students' Secretariat**\(^{32}\) is concerned with “general” problems, like enrollment to the School, housing, tax declaration, etc.

- The **Area Secretariat**\(^{33}\) administrates all issues (missions, booking of lecture rooms, etc.) which concern your Area specifically.

For more specific issues, related to your PhD or Area, the people in charge are the following:

- The **PhD Coordinator** (together with the Professors' Council) is in charge of all the administrative issues of your PhD course, like for example coordination of teaching activities, approval of plan of studies, qualifying/progress exams, approval of missions (when funded on the

\(^{31}\) [http://students.sissa.it/](http://students.sissa.it/), e-mail address: studentreps@sissa.it

\(^{32}\) E-mail address: phd@sissa.it

\(^{33}\) [http://wiki.sissa.it/students/index.php/SISSA_staff](http://wiki.sissa.it/students/index.php/SISSA_staff)
specific PhD course funds), etc.

• The **Area Coordinator** administrates your research Area as a whole.

**Support to students on the workplace**

To analyze and possibly resolve various problems that students may experience during their academic life, the School has introduced several institutional roles.

• The **Ombudsperson** is the person to go to whenever one encounters a problem with their supervisor, on a scientific or personal level, e.g. inconclusive research project, hampering of one's personal approach to pursue their career, and so on.

• The **Confidential Consultant** ("Consulente di Fiducia" in Italian) deals with mobbing, discrimination on the workplace, or sexual harassment episodes.

• The **Committee for the Wellbeing** ("Comitato Unico di Garanzia" in Italian, or CUG) proposes and verifies the results of positive actions for the realization of equal opportunities, and promotes improvement of the organizational wellbeing.

• The **Health and Safety Management** is in charge of issues like emergencies and buildings evacuation, as well as health security (for example in laboratories).

Again for your well being, ARDISS offers a **free psychological counseling** service.

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34 The three people filling this position are prof. Emilia Mezzetti (mezzette@units.it), prof. Alessandro Laio (laio@sissa.it) and prof. Daniele Amati (amati@sissa.it).

35 E-mail address: cug@sissa.it; more info on the website http://www.sissa.it/administration/committee-for-the-wellbeing

36 E-mail address: safety@sissa.it; more info on the website http://www.sissa.it/administration/prevenzione-e-protezione

37 Email address: psicologo.trieste@ardiss.fvg.it, see also http://www.ardiss.fvg.it/contenuti.php?view=page&id=46 (in Italian)