

For the First Year Students of the Astrophysics Sector

Welcome! to SISSA and to the Astrophysics Sector. The Staff, all of the Sector members and I myself look forward to meeting you and getting to know you individually. These few notes are an attempt to give you some useful information about scientific and logistical aspects of life here. Please take a moment of your time to read them carefully, ask about anything which is not clear and give us suggestions about how to improve them. Note that as we recently moved to our new location/building, some of the information below might be not fully updated. There is also a Student's Wiki page http://wiki.sissa.it/students/index.php/Main_Page which provides useful information.

* * *

TUTOR – Each of you will soon be assigned a tutor: a member of staff who will be your reference person for the first year of your stay in SISSA and be responsible for following your progress as well as giving advice about courses, exams and any problems which might arise (this person may or may not subsequently become your PhD supervisor). Please, do keep in touch with your tutor and do not hesitate to contact them for any doubt/question/need which you may have. You should be also assigned a SISSA tutor, namely a staff member of another sector who is going to be a reference person should you feel you need to talk to someone outside the Astrophysics sector.

COURSES/EXAMS – The lectures will start at the beginning of November and take place typically on 4 days of the week (Mon-Thur, in the morning), continuing until April-May. The current Lecture plan (content and timetable) can be found at www.sissa.it/ap/teaching.html , but note that the timetable is subject to occasional changes due to other commitments of the lecturers (and of the students). The lectures aim to cover a range of the most important topics in astrophysics and you are asked to attend all of them. Take advantage of this opportunity (probably your last one) to have someone available to teach you about this wide range of topics, also by asking questions. As integral part of the lectures in May we will have a 'brainstorming' meeting to discuss more broadly on the inter-connections of the different topics. At the end of the lecture courses we will ask you for feedback on what can be improved.

You are required to take a number of exams, following a 'credit' system, as detailed on www.sissa.it/ap/teaching.html (ask each lecturer on what is required to pass his/her exam). They have to be completed before the end of the first year and need to be registered by the Lecturer on a register hold by the Student Secretariat. It is necessary to attain a satisfactory level (as well as showing a satisfactory overall performance) in order to continue to the second year of the PhD. Students admitted via the pre-selection procedure (without doing the standard entrance exam) have to take a special additional exam at the end of the first year in order to proceed further.

As integral part of the training you are also requested to regularly attend the (free of charge) English classes/course, organized by SISSA (ask the Student Secretary about details) during the first and/or second year.

SEMINARS – The Sector organizes seminars, journal clubs, brainstormings etc., (some jointly with other Institutions in the Trieste area) giving an opportunity to learn about various current aspects of Astrophysics and to share our own research expertise. You are requested to attend these events as an integral part of your training. The seminar plan can be found at www.sissa.it/ap/seminars.html. SISSA also offers opportunities to learn about research in other subjects through SISSA Colloquia, interdisciplinary seminars and the lectures for the Master's course in Science Communication (see its web pages for details): do not underevaluate these possibilities to broaden your knowledge and learn different skills and techniques.

RESEARCH - During the first few months (while the courses are taking place), you should talk to all of the staff members about possible projects for your PhD, so as to decide on what interests you most and who might be your supervisor (it is primarily your responsibility to find out about this). Collaborations with external advisors are possible in principle and are generally welcomed but your main supervisor must be a member of the SISSA staff and your project must be mostly focused in SISSA. You will start on your research immediately after the end of the courses (concurrently with completing the exams which you decided to take). The PhD project is expected to take three years, a fourth one can be asked if motivated (and requires the approval of the School Senate). In the spring of your second year (and third if the fourth year has been granted), you will be expected to give a seminar to the whole group illustrating the progress made in the project. This will be a relevant element for the approval of your passage to the following year of PhD.

STAFF – The current faculty consists of: Carlo Baccigalupi, Annalisa Celotti, Luigi Danese, Stefano Liberati, John Miller, Francesca Perrotta, Paolo Salucci, Riccardo Valdarnini and Sam Leach, Joaquin Gonzalez-Nuevo as contract senior researchers (please have a look at our web pages www.sissa.it/ap/research.html to see the research interests of each of us). We also have a number of close collaborators, some of whom are quite often at SISSA, like Alessandro Bressan and Gianfranco De Zotti. We aim to be an integrated research community and we strongly encourage you to interact with the people named above as well as with our postdocs, visitors and other students (and also with colleagues in other sectors of SISSA). Interaction is a key resource in research and is invaluable for broadening your knowledge and developing new ideas as well as for getting specific help.

DESK – You will be located in room 521 for the first year (while you are mainly following lecture courses) and will then move to one of the smaller, quieter offices at the beginning of the second year. There should be enough computers for all of you in room 521 and also sockets/cables are available for those of you who want to connect your own laptops.



PUBLICATIONS – It is considered a rule of common sense that if you write a paper which is not in collaboration with a SISSA staff member, you must receive formal “approval” from your supervisor/tutor (or any staff member if you do not have yet a formal supervisor) before submitting it for publication or uploading it to the physics arxiv.

PRESENCE IN SISSA - As a SISSA student, you are required to be present in SISSA and to take part actively in the life of the School and the Sector. Apart from authorized situations (such as for missions, illness) you are expected to work in SISSA or to inform your tutor/supervisor of your absence. For your own safety, you are warmly encouraged to give to Dr. Lorena Bencina the name and phone number of a reference person we could contact in case of emergency or your (unjustified) absence.

MISSIONS – We will try to support your needs in terms of travelling for meetings and collaborations; however, this must always be subject to your supervisor’s agreement and our budgetary situation. Whenever you plan to go on a mission – whether to be paid for by SISSA or not – you will always need to ask in advance and, if the mission is approved, fill the mission forms: M1 before leaving and M2 after coming back. The forms can be found on the SISSA web page, under Administration > Mission Forms. These cover possible financial requests but are also necessary for insurance purposes. Once filled, these forms should be given to the Astrophysics secretary, Dr. Lorena Bencina (see below). There are administrative rules about what expenses can be reimbursed by SISSA. If in doubt, please ask in advance. Please do not present the M1 form at the last minute (your mission might not be approved); also the M2 form should be given to Dr. Lorena Bencina very soon after the mission is completed.

SECRETARIAL HELP – Contact the Student Secretariat (room 222) at your arrival to be registered, getting magnetic cards to enter SISSA out of working hours etc. and subsequently for any general matters concerning administration and/or fellowship. For mission forms or matters strictly related to the Astrophysics Sector, contact our Secretary, Dr. Lorena Bencina (bencina@sissa.it, room 402).

SOCIAL EVENTS – We occasionally organize social events within the Sector (typically coffee breaks in connection with seminars and a couple of dinners per year). Please consider them as an opportunity to know the members of the Sector and thus make it easier to interact and work together.

LOCATION – We very recently moved to a new location, the Santorio, sited in the small town of Opicina, just above Trieste, with a very beautiful view of the town and sea. The area comprises a main building – where we are all located – plus a few smaller buildings in a significantly large and beautiful park. You can find information on how to reach the site at <http://www.sissa.it/ap/visitourgrou.html>. Here you can also find a map of the area and the main building.

SISSA RESOURCES – Please use all SISSA resources with intelligence and honesty. Unfortunately there have been some cases of abuse of money for travelling, phone facilities, printing, mailing, library use, requests for stationery items, etc.

COMPUTING – For computing needs, there is a Helpdesk provided by the SISSA Computing Centre (<http://sis.sissa.it>). When necessary, write to them at helpdesk@sis.sissa.it with detailed, constructive and polite requests for help. Keep in mind that often it may be faster for you to ask around within the Sector for help with your computing needs. For matters regarding computing within the Sector, contact Sam Leach (leach@sis.sissa.it) or Stefano Liberati (liberati@sis.sissa.it) for hardware needs or the two students computing assistants, currently Goffredo Chirco (chirco@sis.sissa.it) and Stefano Finazzi (finazzi@sis.sissa.it), for software needs. Lots of information about the Computing Centre facilities can be found on the SISSA web pages. In order to get a central and a sector account, please contact Sam Leach. You might also take advantage of a financial contribution from SISSA to buy a personal laptop - please ask the Student Secretaries about details. Also do not forget to subscribe to the mailing lists of the Sector (for instance apsem and apsector) and of SISSA to receive information, announcements of seminars etc.

LIBRARY – You will soon have a meeting with someone from the Library Staff who will explain the available resources and the formalities for accessing them. See also the SISSA Library website. For needs related to the Astrophysics Sector (e.g. getting a book or a volume of a proceeding) you may contact Francesca Perrotta (perrotta@sis.sissa.it).

PHONE, MAIL and FAX – If you need to call outside Trieste for work, you will need to ask first for authorization from the Sector coordinator (and then call through the reception). You can send (ordinary) mail related to work through the SISSA mail office, marking any envelope with your name. Personal pigeons holes as well as out-mail holes are located at level -1. A fax machine is also available.

POSTERS - SISSA has a plotter which can be used to print posters for conferences. This is quite expensive, so again use it with intelligence. See <http://sis.sissa.it/services/internal/plotter> for information on requesting a print.

STATIONERY – SISSA provides basic (and limited) amounts of stationery items (pens, pencils, notepads, etc); to see a list of available items go to <http://www.adm.sissa.it/store/>. If you need something, you should send an e-mail request to store@sissa.it. You will then be able to collect the items directly from the store, which is located on level -1. Their opening hours are: Mon–Fri, 09:00–12:00 and also from 15:30–17:00 on Tue and Thur.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES – There are two elected representatives of the Astrophysics students, currently Goffredo Chirco (chirco@sissa.it) and Nicola Bassan (bassan@sissa.it) – but there will be soon elections for the new representatives. There are also elected representatives for all of the students at SISSA. The charter of SISSA and other official documents regarding the school can be viewed at <http://www.adm.sissa.it/> (available only in their original Italian version though). In particular, the School Council has established an ethical code regarding different types of harassment and nominated Confidential Councillors, who can be contacted for any situation involving harassment, mobbing, and other forms of psychological pressure.

150 HOUR FELLOWSHIPS – These are small supplementary bursaries paid to some students in return for them doing jobs which are important for the smooth running of SISSA (eg webmaster, library assistance, computing software support, etc.). Every year there are official announcements of the available posts and the most suitable candidate is selected for each job from among the applicants. You can ask the Student Secretariat or members of the Sector for more details.

FINANCIAL ISSUES AND DOCUMENTS. Accomodation cost around 200-400 euro/month, depending mostly on the accomodation you choose (room vs apartment). Each year students have also to pay the 'Tassa per il diritto allo studio' to the Regional Authority for the University Study (ERDISU). It costs about 100 euro and allows you to use the university cafeterias and obtain discounts for sport activities through the Sport University Center (CUS).

TAXES FOR PENSION. Taxes for pension are paid in part by SISSA and in part by the student. According to the Italian law, you cannot get them back at the end of your PhD studies, even if you are not Italian. If you come from a country which has a convention with Italy, you will have to reclaim them in future.

ITALIAN RESIDENCE AND IDENTITY CARD. Foreign students can ask for an Italian domicile (residenza) and an Identity Card (Carta d'Identita'). The Card is a valid identification document in Italy. You have to submit an official translation of your birth certificate to obtain them. Note that without a certificate of 'residenza' you cannot buy a car, convert your driving license and apply for residential rates for your electricity bills. It is also required in order to invite a spouse (if married).

BANK – The Unicredit Bank is the SISSA bank. You might consider opening an account with them. An ATM is available in the entrance hall.

HOUSING – SISSA provides a free housing service, which can help you in finding accommodation. All information on how to get assistance can be found on the SISSA web page (Contacts > Housing, http://www.sissa.it/main/?p=A7_B4). If you need you can also call them (tel: 040-3220204, from 9.00 to 13.00 and from 15.00 to 19.00 from Mon to Fri).

PhD students can apply for a University Apartment at ERDISU. For that you need the same documents as to apply for an ERDISU card (see below) plus a certificate issued by SISSA that confirms your student condition. The houses are a few and priority is given to those with lower income. Moreover students can ask for partial refund of their rent, by providing the rental contract plus the SISSA certificate when applying for the ERDISU card. Please note that without a formal rental contract, this partial refund can not be granted.

MEALS – There is a cafeteria and a bar in SISSA (level 0), providing a range of food, from full lunches to sandwiches and salads. PhD Students have the right to obtain the ERDISU card to obtain coupons to eat with a discount. To get the discount a student has to submit the following documents: a) a certification of the family composition; b) income and property declaration of her/himself and his/her family; c) fill out and print the form you can get at <http://www.erdisu.trieste.it/>. The first two documents must be in Italian (or translated into Italian at the Tribunal, Foro Ulpiano 1). Please ask the student representatives for further details. Also the pizzeria/restaurant just opposite to the main entrance provides a discount if you present (for yourself only) a SISSA card.

MEDICAL ISSUES – First aid is available within SISSA: contact any of the secretaries for information. For more serious (urgent) medical problems, there is a medical room in Building B4. Details to be provided. It is possible to obtain sanitary assistance for foreigner students. It is sufficient to request it in the ASL (Sanitary Local Authority, via Stock 2, Trieste). It costs about 150 euro/year and includes family doctor and hospital service.

LANGUAGE LESSONS – SISSA offers free Italian and English language courses. If interested ask for details about the Italian ones. The English courses are thought at two levels. As mentioned you are instead required to follow the English classes if English is not your mother tongue, before the end of the second academic year



OTHER/EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

SISSA CLUB – You may ask your colleagues about the SISSA Club, which provides sporting facilities, a piano, a table tennis (ping pong) table, cultural events, etc. There is also a SISSA choir and a Cineclub, showing movies in English. There is a music room in Building B4.

UNIVERSITY SPORT CENTER. Students can subscribe to the University Sport Center (CUS) in order to obtain discounts for various sport activities. The cost is about 15 euro/year. There will be a gym in one of the SISSA buildings in the park. Not yet available.

KINDERGARDEN. A kindergarten, located within the Santorio area, is open to SISSA employees. Please ask the Scientific Secretary about it.

DISCOUNTS IN CINEMAS. Students can obtain a discount at all cinemas in Trieste. It is necessary to show either a International Student Identity Card (ISIC) or the SISSA student card. The first can be obtained at the CTS (Piazza Dalmazia 3/b) and costs about 15 euro/year; the SISSA card can be obtained for free, by bringing a photo to the Student Secretary.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES. Information on cultural activities in Trieste can be found in: ICTP newsletter, NTWK monthly journal (freely distributed in many bars), Il Mercatino (first issue of each month), and on the websites of: Teatro Miela, Rossetti, Teatro Lirico Verdi and on Trieste.com.

MIRAMARE CAMPUS – SISSA is one of the several Scientific Institutions in Trieste. In particular there is a daily shuttle service to/from the ICTP (ask the reception for the timetable). ICTP has scientific connections with SISSA (e.g. joint seminars, congresses,..) and provides various facilities (library, cafeteria etc). You might be interested in looking at their web pages (<http://www.ictp.it/pages/info/visiting.html>) as well as in subscribing to their mailing list “ICTPLINK” which informs on Weekend activities, Concerts, Sale Announcements, ...).

* * *

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY – All of the above is about practicalities, “regulations” and what we can provide to help you to work (hopefully well) in the coming years. Please do not forget that we are here for you, but also that you are a full member of the Sector and we will be relying on your contribution to the life of the Sector scientifically and socially. We will always welcome any constructive suggestion from you for new initiatives or for improvements to any aspect of our life and work here.

Students have to comply with the SISSA Codice di Condotta (Ethical Code) and Safety Regulations.

SISSA



SCUOLA INTERNAZIONALE SUPERIORE DI STUDI AVANZATI - INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

Via Bonomea 265, 34136 Trieste (Italy) - tel.: 040-37871 - telefax: 040-3787528

Finally, please do not hesitate to contact me directly about anything which concerns you. I hope that you will learn a lot, have a successful start to your PhD and above all will have fun doing science at SISSA.

Annalisa Celotti, Sector Coordinator

[room 508, phone 519, email: celotti@sissa.it]