

Computer Science: Expected Study Hours Notice

Like many science courses at Cambridge, the Computer Science Tripos is delivered intensively using three teaching periods: 8 weeks in the Michaelmas term, another 8 in the Lent term and 4 in the Easter term. This is a total 20 out of the 52 weeks in the year. However, the residence requirements for kept terms require students to be here for 25 weeks of the year (174 days), and supervisions do take place outside the lecturing period. Also, you are expected to continue your studies privately, or in correspondence with a supervisor, during the Michaelmas and Easter vacations.

Years 1 - 3

Each of years 1 to 3 of the Computer Science Tripos is organised in four strands and the amount of work in each strand ranges from 8 to 12 hours per week, meaning that, in the most intense periods of study, you would be expected to be working 48 hours a week. There are 168 hours in a week. Although there can be some variation, a maximal 12-hour strand might typically be composed of 3 hours of lectures, 2 hours private preparation for lectures, 1 supervision, 3 hours of private preparation for supervision, and 3 hours of practical work, including preparation for the practical.

Expected hours

If all strands were maximal, there would be $20 \times 48 = 960$ hours of study during the lectured part of Full Term. If we add on 84 hours of exam revision, 4 hours of exam supervisions, 12 hours of examination sitting and six weeks of vac work at 2.5 hours per weekday, the total for the year is 1135 hours. This is just under the HEFCE recommended 1200 hours per year. For comparison, a full-time job is nominally 1500 hours per year.

Student agreement

By applying to read Computer Science in our department, you are agreeing to work this hard when occasionally necessary. However, not all strands are maximal, and we are currently aiming for 9.25 hours per strand on average.