

ACS Project Briefing - MPhil

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An independent piece of work

- Often in a general area discussed in admission interview
- Potentially based on faculty suggestion or own idea
 - ACS project web page has links with a variety of examples and suggestions
 - ✦ But beware of old proposals from previous years
 - Talk with Michaelmas Term lecturers
 - Talk with Lent Term lecturers
- **Must have a member of academic staff to supervise**
 - Normally “UTO” (University Teaching Officer) or Research Fellow
 - UTO signs off on the project, and examines it
 - *May* have a day-to-day co-supervisor or help

A research project



- The word *research* describes an aspiration...
 - A successful project should be something that could lead to a paper submission to a decent venue
 - Perfectly acceptable to do a measurement study or to reproduce (or not!) previous results
- Aim is to show you can:
 - find a problem and area (perhaps with help),
 - produce a research proposal,
 - effectively carry out a decent amount of work, and
 - write it up coherently.

Phase 1: Confirm topic and supervisor



- By Friday 26th October, provide details via Moodle form:
 - Course adviser
 - Name of proposed supervisor (may be same as course adviser)
 - *Provisional* title for project
 - Is this 'self-proposed'?
 - Has your course adviser already agreed this is suitable for you?
 - Has the supervisor already agreed to supervise?

Phase 2: Full proposal, in three parts

- **Coversheet**
 - with signatures of supervisor and course adviser
 - and word counts!
- **Proposed research area and plan**
 - An abstract (<100 words; optional)
 - Introduction, approach and outcomes (<500 words)
 - Work plan (<500 words)
- **Resources form**
 - What equipment, software, network etc you need ...
 - ... even if you are using your own machine

... unless you are one of the NLIP group

- **Choose 3 projects from 3 *different* supervisors**
 - Submit these for consideration in the NLIP group load-balancing
- **Submit your full proposal based on the assigned one of these by 25th January**

Introduction, approach & outcomes

- **Motivate the work and explain the context**
 - General background
 - Key references to related work
- **What's the basic idea and approach?**
 - What are you thinking of doing, and how is it going to solve the problem (or need) you've identified?
- **What are you going to "produce"?**
 - Try to name the specific things (and describe them) in this part of the proposal – this will allow you to refer to them in the work plan

Work plan: what you will do and when

- **Total of approximately 27 weeks**
- **One approach would be to divide the time available into 13 two-week chunks:**
 - Each chunk describes work to be done and milestones achieved (as appropriate)
 - Leave two chunks for writing dissertation
 - Leave one chunk for contingencies
 - If you plan holidays, sports trips, travel to interviews, *include* these

Project Briefing and Deadlines

| | MPhil Deadline |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Proposal Phase 1 | 26 th October |
| Self-Proposed Proposal | 16 th November |
| Proposal Phase 2 | 24 th November |
| Examiner feedback | 28 th November |
| Research begins | 3 rd December |
| Revised proposals | 7 th December |
| Progress reviews | 11 th - 15 th March |
| Last title changes | 31 st May |
| Presentations | 11 th and 12 th |
| Submission (hard deadline) | 11.00, 7 th June |

Risk management

- **Intellectual**
 - Hard deadline means you must produce something!
- **Practical**
 - Do not rely on speculative work of others, such as untested software and flaky hardware
- **Legal**
 - We do not accept dissertations with NDAs
- **Ethical**
 - Ethics Committee reviews research with human participants

The dissertation



- 15,000 words
- The word count
 - *excludes* the bibliography, photographs, diagrams and data listings, but
 - *includes* narrative text in tables, footnotes, and appendices
- Writing this much text is **hard** work: make sure you leave enough time to do it well

Take care not to plagiarise others



- The declaration of originality states everything is your own work except where explicitly stated
- Your results should be reproducible
 - You will need to upload an electronic copy of your source code together with your dissertation
- Examiners reserve the right to call a student for a viva voce examination for any reason
 - In Cambridge, on 26th June

Remember severe penalties for missing deadlines

- Coursework penalty = $n/10 \times \text{mark}$
 - where n is the number of days late, rounded up to the nearest integer
- Take-home tests: no submission, zero marks
- Project: no submission means outright failure
- *No deadline extensions save for exceptional circumstances (illness or other grave reason)*
 - Your college tutor can help ...
 - ... it is essential to keep us informed and keep records

Questions?

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