Informatics Dissertation Workshop

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Writing the UG4/MInf Dissertation: Assessment Criteria

How assessment works

- Your project will be marked by your supervisor and a second marker. (Plus a "moderator", if they disagree.)
- Marking is solely on the basis of your project report.
  - Your report must be self-contained and include all information relevant to the project.
  - If it isn't in the report, it doesn't count.

How marking works

- The marking is according to the following criteria.
  - Please take these into account when you write your report.
- The criteria are in three groups: Basic, Additional, Exceptional.
  - Your mark depends on your score (N/A, Inadequate, Adequate, Average, Good, Excellent) on each of the Basic, Additional and Exceptional assessment criteria.
- The result is not calculated by a formula – these are guidelines, but they are taken seriously.

Bottom line: you need to give the markers a reason to decide that you have performed well on these criteria.

Basic criteria

Assessment: Basic Criteria

- *Understanding of the problem*
- *Completion of the project* [1]
- *Quality of the work*
- *Quality of the report*

[1] *"Completion" covers achievement of the original objectives, achievement of modified objectives, or providing convincing evidence that the objectives are unachievable.*

Assessment: Basic Criteria

- *Understanding of the problem*
- *Completion of the project*
- *Quality of the work*
- *Quality of the report*

- Start by clearly explaining in the introduction what the problem is that you are trying to solve.
- Understanding is also shown throughout the rest of the report, by the way that you attack the problem and by what you say about what you've done.

Assessment: Basic Criteria

- *Understanding of the problem*
- *Completion of the project*
- *Quality of the work*
- *Quality of the report*

- In the introduction and/or conclusion, compare what the objectives say with what you did.
- If the objectives were not achieved, explain why, especially if your work demonstrated that they are unachievable or overambitious.
- You do not necessarily have to achieve all of the objectives.

Assessment: Basic Criteria

- *Understanding of the problem*
- *Completion of the project*
- *Quality of the work*
- *Quality of the report*

. . . . . .

- Robust, well-tested software,
- hardware that works,
- well-designed experiments producing solid results,
- ...

Assessment: Basic Criteria

- *Understanding of the problem*
- *Completion of the project*
- *Quality of the work*
- *Quality of the report*

- Structure your report well in terms of chapters and sections. Focus on readability.
- Ask for feedback from your supervisor.
  - Give them a chapter to read at a time.
  - Expect proofreading to take hours not days.
- Take care with the content, grammar, and spelling. Having a few typos is not a disaster, but many will be distracting.
- Proofread and check that your final changes don't affect something in the submission version.

Additional criteria

Assessment: Additional Criteria

- *Knowledge of the literature*
- *Critical evaluation of previous work*
- *Critical evaluation of own work*
- *Justification of the design decisions*
- *Solution of any conceptual problems*
- *Amount of work*

- Together, your mark on the Basic and Additional criteria largely determine your grade for the project.
- What you need to do for most of these depends on your project.
  - If in doubt, ask your supervisor.

Assessment: Additional Criteria

- *Knowledge of the literature*
- *Critical evaluation of previous work*
- *Critical evaluation of own work*
- *Justification of the design decisions*
- *Solution of any conceptual problems*
- *Amount of work*

- Determined mainly by your bibliography (extent and quality) and the accuracy of what you say about these sources.
- Look at the notes in `http://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/teaching/courses/proj/bibliography.html`
- Relatively easy to get right. Just a matter of including details.

Assessment: Additional Criteria

- *Knowledge of the literature*
- *Critical evaluation of previous work*
- *Critical evaluation of own work*
- *Justification of the design decisions*
- *Solution of any conceptual problems*
- *Amount of work*

- Determined mainly by your review of previous work.
- Not just what they did, but what was good, what was lacking.
- Often, the point of your work is that you hope to improve on something that is lacking in previous work.
- You should *criticise* previous work, but *not rubbish it!*

Assessment: Additional Criteria

- *Knowledge of the literature*
- *Critical evaluation of previous work*
- *Critical evaluation of own work*
- *Justification of the design decisions*
- *Solution of any conceptual problems*
- *Amount of work*

- Not just "I did this, isn't it great?" rather "I built this, here's *why* it is great".
- For software-building project, measures of quality (e.g. efficiency, security, perhaps compared with existing solution).
- For HCI-oriented project, often user trials, with proper analysis of results.
- For experimental work, probably analysis of results.
- For theoretical work, often proofs of theorems.

Assessment: Additional Criteria

- *Knowledge of the literature*
- *Critical evaluation of previous work*
- *Critical evaluation of own work*
- *Justification of the design decisions*
- *Solution of any conceptual problems*
- *Amount of work*

- Not just "Here's how I did this", rather "Here's *why* I did this the way I did".
- Software building project: present engineering choices, advantages and disadvantages of alternatives, justify your choices.
- Experimental project: consider alternatives for the design of your experiments, justify your choices.
- Theoretical project: justify the choice of your definitions and results (but not definitions/results that are not yours).

Assessment: Additional Criteria

- *Knowledge of the literature*
- *Critical evaluation of previous work*
- *Critical evaluation of own work*
- *Justification of the design decisions*
- *Solution of any conceptual problems*
- *Amount of work*

- Easy projects may have no significant conceptual problems. Or perhaps they do, but they come from going well beyond a basic solution or attacking challenging extensions. More challenging projects offer much more scope for solving conceptual problems.
- Sometimes, understanding a complicated framework or language/notation amounts to solving conceptual problems.
- Explain what the conceptual problems are, and what you did about them.

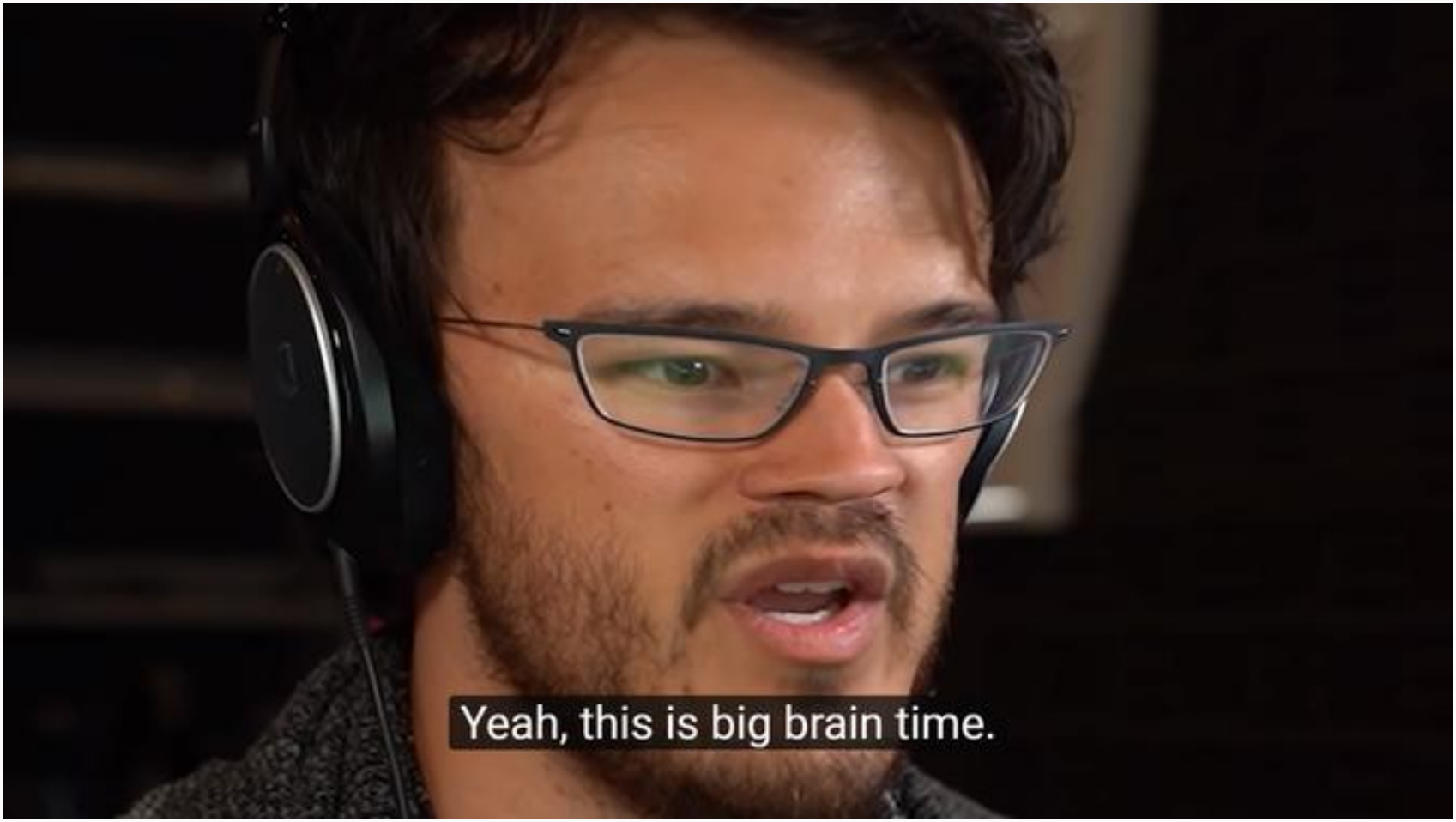
Assessment: Additional Criteria

- *Knowledge of the literature*
- *Critical evaluation of previous work*
- *Critical evaluation of own work*
- *Justification of the design decisions*
- *Solution of any conceptual problems*
- *Amount of work*

- Try to include all of your work.
  - Emphasise the main achievements in the introduction (say as a bulleted list).
- Include also paths you followed that didn't work out, especially if they involved a lot of work and the fact that they did not work out is due to circumstances beyond your control. Markers can take these problems into account, *but only if they know about them.*

Exceptional criteria

Assessment: Exceptional Criteria



Assessment: Exceptional Criteria

- *Evidence of originality*
- *Outstanding scholarship and/or publishable research*

- Most projects will not score well on these because there is little scope for originality or publication.
- For projects that do well on the Additional Criteria, these are used to decide scores in the 70–100 range.
  - If you don't do well on the Additional Criteria, the Exceptional Criteria don't really count for much.

Assessment: Exceptional Criteria

- *Evidence of originality*
- *Outstanding scholarship and/or publishable research*

- Originality here needs to be *significant*; new but easy doesn't really count.
- The work presented in the project should go well beyond what already exists.

Assessment: Exceptional Criteria

- *Evidence of originality*
- *Outstanding scholarship and/or publishable research*

- The work presented in the project makes an original contribution to knowledge.
- Publishable research means:
  - a paper in a conference ($\star\star\star$) or a journal ($\star\star\star\star$);
  - published software or data that is likely to be used by other people.

Thank you! **Any questions?**