MSc Dissertations

Introduction

MSc Dissertations

On Moodle - you will find:
- Project guidelines (pdf)
- Poster guidelines + UCL templates (ppt)
- Project time-table
- Instructions on how to format your disseration

- Read them carefully!

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You will find - Project Guidelines:

- Process overview (project timetable)

- Project selection

- Writing the report

- Submitting your project

- Assessment

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Expectations

- Approx 1 month literature review
- Approx 1 month 'doing something'
    - Programming
    - Data gathering
    - Experiments
- Approx 1 month write up

NB: This will vary depending on the project

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Expectations
- Your second examiner could be from any discipline in the department – fluids, concrete structures, transport, geomatics, environmental etc.
- The write-up and the poster are the only things that will be seen by your second examiner
- Good communication is important

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Expectations

- 10-12k words
- 1/3 of the course mark
- You are expected to work hard
  - Some people take a week off – not recommended
- Be engaged with the project
  - This not only includes your supervisor but also the teaching and technical support staff
- Be proactive – this is your project, it is up to you if it succeeds or fails

Expectations

- This is an independent project – a chance for you to show what you're capable of to prospective employers
  - You will receive limited help – meetings are once a week for a relatively short amount of time
  - By now you've probably got some great problem solving skills

- ** Up to you to work independently and lead this project – we can't do the work for you **

- This is an MSc – so literature, and understanding what others have done in your area – is very important

Meeting Schedules and Holidays

- You should all have received a number of diary invitations for meetings with me over summer
  - More or less once a week, for 30 minutes (with some gaps when I am away e.g. giving a virtual summer school (or maybe even travelling somewhere!)
- Some people plan holidays – check with me, up to 1 week is probably OK but more than that could be too long

Things to Do #0

•Do you have your data?!

Things to Do #1

- Read sample dissertations in your topic area (more than one!)
- Look for these via Moodle
- When you are reading, keep an eye out for
  - The overall structure of the document
  - How does the student motivate their work – i.e. describe who the work is for, and why it is important
  - How much literature review is included, and what topics are covered, how do they reference
  - What do they provide in terms of data and methods descriptions
  - How are the results presented
  - What do they include in their discussion?

Things to Do #2 – Create a Week by Week Plan

- What do you plan to do each week until September
- Is it realistic
- Think about: what you need (data, software, people/meetings) for each week
- Likely that the plan will be more detailed for weeks 1-4, less so for later in the project, so update the plan on a regular basis
- Plan forms the basis of your weekly report
- BE AS DETAILED AS POSSIBLE!

- Submit by the 21st May at 5pm

Things to Do #3 – 5 pages of literature review

- You are only assessed on the report, so writing is very important
- I want to see if you can write good academic English
- Select one or two topics from your literature review and write 5 pages about that topic
  - Is the writing structured well
  - Do you know how to cite papers correctly (you can see the previous dissertations on how to do this)
  - Can you summarize the literature appropriately (it is not just –Author X said ABC and Author Y said DEF and Author Z said GHI .. You need to summarize, compare and contrast and also see where the gaps are –i.e. what did these authors not cover that you are going to do?)
- **Submit to me by the 27th May at 5pm so that I can give you feedback in our next meeting**

Things to Do #4 – Annotated Table of Contents

- Draw up an annotated table of contents for your dissertation
  - Will allow me to check whether you are covering the right topics
  - Will allow you to be more focussed on the things you need to do for the write up
  - See examples – the more detail you give the better
  - Again, early chapters – e.g. literature – will be more detailed for now

- Submit to me by the 3rd June at 5pm so that we can discuss it during the following meeting

Things to Do #5 – One Chapter for Review

- We will look at the table of contents now, and again at the end of July to make sure that you have a good structure for your dissertation

- I am also allowed to review one chapter for you
  - You choose which chapter
  - You need to give it to me if I am your first supervisor (along with the revised table of contents) by **the 11th August at 5pm** (so that I can give you feedback during our last meeting on the 17th August)

Things to Do #6 – Prepare for Every Meeting

- We have 30 minutes for our weekly meetings

- That means that you will need to be focussed and come prepared for the meeting
  - Send an agenda (with timings) the day before
  - If possible send me questions in advance (the day before)

Things to do #7 - Weekly Project Report

- By e-mail
- Starting from end of May
- **1 day before we meet**
- Link to your project plan
- Sections (typical report you might also find in industry)
  - Work carried out this week
  - Variations from planned progress
  - Resources required
  - Work planned for next week
  - Issues and concerns

Things to do #8 – Ethics and Data Protection

- Are you working with people or data that includes information about people?

During our first one-to-one meeting we will

- Go over any resource requirements
  - Make sure you have everything you need – data, software, computers etc
- Discuss the project to make sure you have clarity on what you need to do – in particular what areas of literature you need to cover
- Make sure that any ethics approval process is kicked off ASAP
  - Needs to be in place before you start working with people
- Discuss Research Questions

In the next few weeks

- Look out for writing sessions over summer with Dr Manni Bhatti