Project Interim Report

The Interim Report

The aim of the project interim report is twofold:

1. To provide a document that your second marker can use as a basis for discussion on your project plan and progress to date.
2. To provide a substantial body of text, primarily the project background and related work, that you can use in your final report.

By the time the interim report is due you should have a clearly defined project, understand well the motivation and issues to be addressed, know the background work in detail, have the main ideas for how to tackle the problem and have started the development. You should also have a plan for the remainder of the project and, importantly, how to evaluate the project.

The interim report should contain the following sections. An approximate page count is suggested for each section, but there are no hard limits either way:

1. **Introduction (1-3 pages).** It's a good idea to *try* to write the introduction to your final report early on in the project. However, you will find it hard, as you won't yet have a complete story and you won't know what your main contributions are going to be. However, the exercise is useful as it will tell you what you *don't* yet know and thus what questions your project should aim to answer. For the interim report this section should be a short, succinct, summary of the project's main objectives. Some of this material may be re-usable in your final report, but the chances are that your final introduction will be quite different. You are therefore advised to keep this part of the interim report short, focusing on the following questions: What is the problem, why is it interesting and what's your main idea for solving it? (DON'T use those three questions as subheadings however! The answers should emerge from what you write.)
2. **Background (10- 20 pages).** This should form the bulk of the interim report. You should consider that your objective here is to produce a near final version of the background section, as it will appear in your final report. All of this material should be re-usable, so it is worth getting it right at this stage of the project. The details of what to include can be found in the Project Report guidelines.
3. **Project Plan (1-2 pages).** You should explain what needs to be done in order to complete the project and roughly what you expect the timetable to be. Don't forget to include the project write-up (the final report), as this is a major part of the exercise. It's important to identify key milestones and also fall-back positions, in case you run out of time. You should also identify what extensions could be added if time permits. The plan should be complete and should include those parts that you have already addressed (make it clear how far you have progressed at the time of writing). This material will *not* appear in the final report.
4. **Evaluation plan (1-2 pages).** Project evaluation is very important, so it's important to think *now* about how you plan to measure success. For example, what functionality do you need to demonstrate? What experiments to you need to undertake and what outcome(s) would constitute success? What benchmarks should you use? How has your project extended the state of the art? How do you measure qualitative aspects, such as ease of use? These are the sort of questions that your project evaluation should address; this section should outline your plan.

You are free to write up any additional material that will appear in the final report, for example a section or chapter describing a significant component of the design/implementation that you have already completed. Avoid any additional material that is *not* re-usable in the final report.

As always, use diagrams and examples (e.g. code) wherever appropriate.

If you need inspiration, take a look at the Distinguished Projects from previous years, focusing in particular at this stage on the introduction, background and evaluation sections.

Timetable

There are different deadlines for MEng4, JMC4, and BEng3/JMC3, in particular to account for the time taken by group projects in the third year. See the project timetable page. The report needs to be submitted as a pdf file in CATE.

The Project Review

You must have your project reviewed by your second marker by the specified deadline. The onus is on you to arrange the review meeting and ensure that the second marker's progress summary is entered on CATE by the specified review deadline. Note that your second marker is allocated by your supervisor; if you don't have a second marker please ask them to arrange it.

Feedback

You will receive feedback from your second marker on the progress you have made so far. This feedback will primarily be verbal, although the second marker will also assign your project a 'traffic light' status on the 'project portal'. At the end of the review deadline, you will get an email with regards to the status: No concern, Some concerns or Major concerns. These would have been discussed with you in the review anyhow. After the review you should discuss the second marker's feedback with your supervisor, particularly if your progress status is 'Some concerns' or 'Major concerns'. If you have met with your second marker and haven't received this email a week or so after the review deadline, please remind them to update it as soon as possible.

Your supervisor may also provide you with verbal and/or written feedback on your interim report.

Interim Report Assessment

There is no mark for the report or review, but you should take the exercise seriously:

1. It is designed to help you to produce a better project than you might otherwise achieve. The second marker can provide an independent source of advice and inspiration and can also assess whether your project is over/under ambitious and advise you accordingly. The feedback you get on your interim report will help you to improve it before it is incorporated into the final report.

2. It is an important milestone in your project. An inadequate interim report and/or an unsatisfactory review is likely to be reflected in the project management component of your final assessment.