

Level 4 Project – General Information

2024/25

Durham University, Department of Physics

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You should consult with your project supervisor as soon as possible after the start of term in order to establish an initial work plan and thereafter consult at least once per week during term time in order to ensure that appropriate progress is made, which may include agreeing milestones.

1. Summative Assessment

The summative assessment of the project consists of four separate components which are

1. The Report Mark (40%). Further details concerning the expected form of the report are given below).
2. A Supervisor Mark (30%), based on your supervisor's assessment of your performance during the course of the project, supported by evidence from your Teams posts.
3. An Oral Examination Mark (25%), based on a ~30 minute oral examination in the presence of an Examiner, who takes the lead in the oral examination, your Supervisor(s) and a project Moderator – the latter is present to chair the examination and to ensure fair and consistent marking between projects.
4. A Seminar Mark (5%), based on a 25 minute talk including ~5 minutes for questions.

Please consult with your supervisor if you have any general questions concerning these components. General information on the examining and moderating of the projects is available in the Physics Department assessment policy, available via the [Assessment and Feedback](#) page on SharePoint. Further detailed information concerning the assessment criteria is available from the same page, or via Blackboard.

You are required to produce a ~10 page progress report (which is not part of the formal summative assessment of the project) for your supervisor over the Christmas vacation. You will need to submit this via Turnitin by the published deadline on the first day of Epiphany Term. This formative progress report is a valuable opportunity for feedback. It is anticipated that much of it will consist of background information which can be utilised in the final report. Note that neither your supervisor nor any other members of the research group/Department will be able to comment on draft

versions of your final report, so you should aim to take maximum advantage of the feedback opportunity provided by the progress report.

In the early stages of the project, it can be useful for students to prepare a short informal presentation outlining the project objectives; this is a matter for discussion between individual students and supervisors and is not compulsory. At the start of the Epiphany Term each student will give a practice seminar (which is not part of the formal summative assessment of the project), arranged informally with your supervisor, around the time when you provide your interim progress report. This is a valuable opportunity for feedback.

You should not expect to receive supervision outside term time, i.e., during the Christmas and Easter breaks (sending the occasional quick query to your supervisor is generally fine, although your supervisor may not be able to respond quickly). The period of supervised project work ends at the end of Epiphany Term.

2. Important dates

Your final project report must be submitted by 2.00 p.m., **Wednesday 23 April 2025**, electronically, via Turnitin. Note that this deadline is shortly *before* the start of the Easter Term. **If the Report is not submitted by the deadline, it will be subject to a cap (maximum mark) of 40% if up to five working days late; for work submitted more than five working days late a mark of zero will be given.**

Some advice on managing deadlines is available on the [Deadlines](#) page on SharePoint. The electronic submission system allows you to submit multiple versions before the deadline, then the last one submitted before the deadline counts as the assignment to be assessed. Our strong advice is to submit drafts of your report as you are writing it, so that, in the worst case scenario, e.g., if your file gets corrupted on the day of the deadline, you will still have submitted something.

Project seminars will take place in the period **3–7 March 2025**.

Project oral examinations (also known as project interviews or vivas) will be held in the period **28 April to 6 May 2025**.

3. Preparation of the Project Report

Level 4 Project reports should comprise a maximum of 30 pages of A4 including figures, tables and references. The text must be word-processed but need not be double-spaced. Each page should have margins of at least 2.5 cm with text of no less than 12 point font size. Additional material of a supplementary nature, including computer code, may be placed in appendices to the 30-page report; this supplementary material will not be formally assessed and there is no obligation for examiners to view it, but it may be useful during the oral examination.

The report should start with a title page, abstract and list of contents. It should be arranged in clearly-defined sections including an introduction, sections on the background description of the work undertaken, the results and their interpretation, discussion, conclusions and references. Acknowledgements may be placed after the abstract or after the conclusions. In order to avoid plagiarism, the work of others must be appropriately acknowledged.

Figures may be given as line drawings, computer-generated graphics and/or photographs, each to be clearly designated with a figure number and caption. On the front cover of the report you should ensure that the following information is included: your full name, the title of the project, the name

of the degree for which the work is submitted and the month and year of submission. It is also helpful to include the supervisor's name.

Summary for a General Audience: You are required to include a brief, 200-word summary of your report for a non-scientific audience. This should be contained on a separate single page immediately after the main 30-page report document, before any appendices. This is the only assessed item which is not included in the 30-page limit.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (gAI): If gAI has been used in your work, please include a brief statement outlining how this has been used, as described in the departmental [Guidance on the use of gAI](#). If you have not used gAI then a gAI statement is not required. The absence of such a statement will be taken as meaning that you have not used gAI tools in the production of the report. The gAI statement does not count towards the 30-page limit.

Digital Object Identifiers (DOI): In your References, include the DOI of each journal article, and of each book if it has one, as described in the departmental guide to [Referencing](#).

The report should be submitted electronically, in pdf, via Turnitin. You should save a copy for your own use.

A template (LaTeX and Word versions) is available on Blackboard for you to use when producing your project report. Its use is not compulsory, but if you choose not to use it then you are responsible for ensuring that your report complies with the above formatting requirements (font size, margins, etc.). Note that the template is different from the lab report template used in previous levels.

Note:

1. Marks may be deducted for reports not conforming to the above instructions and recommendations. In particular, students should be mindful of the instructions concerning the length of the report. The departmental policy on penalties for over-length work is included in the assessment policy, available on SharePoint.
2. The University policy on plagiarism:
"Students should take care to acknowledge the work and opinions of others and avoid any appearance of representing them as their own. Unacknowledged quotation or close paraphrasing of other people's writing, amounting to the presentation of other person's thoughts or writings as one's own, is plagiarism and will be penalised. In extreme cases, plagiarism may be classed as a dishonest practice under Section IV 5(a)(x) of the General Regulations and may lead to expulsion."

Your supervisor will be able to provide guidance on correct methods of referencing, and some advice on avoiding plagiarism is available via the [Plagiarism](#) page on SharePoint.

3. Please be aware of the guidance on the use of generative AI and related technologies in summatively assessed work, which is available via the [Assessment and Feedback](#) page on SharePoint.
4. Note that the assessment criteria include the clarity of the student's contribution. In your report you should make clear what you have done, and what has been done by others. For example, if your project included simulations, did you write the simulations, or did you deploy simulations written by someone else?
5. Examples of good reports from previous years may be found on Blackboard (Course Materials). Please note that the detailed requirements for the format of project reports

(such as length, line spacing, etc.) have changed in recent years, so the example reports may not conform exactly to the current requirements.

4. Talkyard

In response to previous student feedback, a Talkyard community has been set up for the use of Durham University students conducting Level 4 projects in the Physics Department. This forum is intended for you to post questions you have regarding Python programming related to your project. You can see questions and answers posted by others, provide answers to other students' questions and flag the best of the answers provided. You can also start and contribute to discussions of various Python-related topics. A member of demonstrating staff will also spend a couple of hours a week answering questions that have been posted on the forum. The Talkyard community is available at <https://talkyard.dmaitre.phyip3.dur.ac.uk>. For more information see Blackboard (Course Materials).

5. Using Teams for recording progress in Level 4 projects

Guiding principles

- Forms evidence to support the supervisor's mark; not assessed directly.
- Forms a permanent record that can be made available to the external examiners as evidence of the continuous interaction between student and supervisor.
- Not significant extra work for the student or supervisor.
- The system is a support for current supervisory arrangements, not a replacement.
- Encourages good practice (reflective thinking, effective communication with supervisor, knowing what's important, good record keeping).
- Flexible to suit different students/staff/projects.

The system

- Teams has been set up with one team per student. The student's supervisor(s) have been enrolled as members of the team.
- Periodically the student either types and submits directly to Teams a short summary or uploads a document. This becomes a permanent record.
- The minimum frequency is once every three weeks. For some projects students and supervisors may agree to upload more frequently, e.g. weekly. Students may choose not to upload in some weeks but must not let a gap of more than three weeks occur without upload.
- Teams will log the date of upload, and will provide notifications.
- Students and supervisors are encouraged to come up with appropriate arrangements that suit a given project (see examples below).
- Supervisors should provide feedback on uploaded material through the normal weekly meetings – there is no requirement to provide written feedback.
- The rationale and flexibility of the system will be explained to students in the Course Director's briefing in October.

Examples

- The student and supervisor could keep a Googledoc on which the student posts plots and descriptions and the supervisor adds comments. The student then periodically uploads this as a pdf to Teams.
- The student uses GITHUB for code development and dialogue with the supervisor (e.g. using tickets) and then captures this periodically to Teams to provide an indelible record.
- Periodically (every one, two or three weeks) the student writes a short reflective progress report outlining progress against aims, and uploads this to Teams.

6. Frequently-asked questions

1. Should I provide paper copies of my project report?
No. You should submit your report electronically only.
2. Am I allowed to change the title of my report from the original title of the project?
Yes, minor changes to the title are fine, with the agreement of your supervisor. Such changes should be submitted via the Physics Student Portal before the end of Epiphany Term.
3. Should I include my anonymous exam code on my project report?
No. Please use your name. The nature of the project assessment process means that it cannot possibly be conducted anonymously. There is a comprehensive moderation process to ensure fairness.
4. Am I allowed to use “et al.” in my list of references, or must I list all the authors of every source?
Using “et al.” is fine for sources with large numbers of authors.
5. In the bibliography, is it acceptable to omit article titles, and just include abbreviated journal names/numbers?
Yes, this is acceptable if you are short of space.
6. What is included in the page limit?
Any material which is to be assessed should be included in the 30 pages. Thus, based on the criteria in the assessment proforma, elements such as the title, authorship details, abstract, references, etc. should be included in the 30 pages. The only exception is the summary for a general audience, which does not count towards the 30-page limit and should be contained on a separate single page immediately after the main report document and before any appendices. (The gAI statement, if present, is not formally assessed and therefore does not count towards the 30-page limit.)
7. Do Acknowledgements need to be included in the 30 page limit or can they be on page 31?
Any material which is to be assessed should be included in the 30 page limit. Thus if you wish the Acknowledgements to be read by the examiner then they should be included in the 30 pages.
8. Am I allowed to put the abstract on the front cover of my report, or must it go on a separate page?
Either is fine.

9. For the submission date, should I put the official submission date?

We ask that you include the month and year of submission. There is no requirement to include an exact date of submission, but if you wish to do so then that's fine.

10. Can I decrease the font size for the figure/table captions to 11pt or 10pt, just to distinguish captions from the rest of the report?

Yes, if you wish, but bear in mind the assessment criterion for clarity of captions.

11. Can I likewise reduce the font size for the references?

Yes, if you wish, but again bear in mind the need for clarity.

12. Can I likewise reduce the font size for footnotes?

Yes, if you wish, but again bear in mind the need for clarity. Don't over-do the use of footnotes.

13. LaTeX's default font size for the abstract is very slightly smaller than 12pt. Is this ok or do I need to force the abstract font size to be 12pt?

Using the LaTeX default for the abstract is fine.

14. Am I allowed to have a different typeface (e.g. the default LaTeX typeface) rather than 'Times New Roman' that has been set in the template?

Yes: There is no rule about the typeface, as long as the font size is consistent with the rules.

15. Is there a minimum page limit?

No. Do not feel obliged to add unnecessary 'padding' to your report just to bring it up to the maximum page limit. One of the assessment criteria is conciseness.

16. Does the 2.5 cm margin requirement include both margins? I.e., should the total of the left and right margins be 2.5 cm or is the 2.5 cm rule just referring to the left one?

The 2.5 cm requirement relates to each margin, not to the total margin. So, the left margin should be at least 2.5 cm and the right margin should be at least 2.5 cm and the top margin should be at least 2.5 cm and the bottom margin should be at least 2.5 cm.

17. The margin is stated as 2.5 cm, but does this include page numbers?

You can put the page numbers in the header/footer. If the header in the supplied template is within the 2.5cm margin then please regard this as ok. These are the only things that are permitted to appear within 2.5 cm of the edge of the page, if you wish.

18. Are there any specific requirements about the formatting or position of the page numbers?

No.

19. Should I use one-column or two-column format?

This is your decision – there is no departmental rule.

20. If I am using a two-column format, are there any requirements for the spacing in between the columns?

No.

21. Is the line spacing for me to choose?

Yes. Double line spacing is not required. Bear in mind the need for clarity and readability.

22. Is there a required indentation size at the start of each paragraph?

No.

23. Does my report need to be produced in colour?

There is no requirement for your report to be in colour – this is your decision – although the careful use of colour can add value to figures, etc.

24. Am I allowed to use the Durham University logo on my project report?

There is no rule against this.

25. What can I include in appendices?

You are required to include a summary for a general audience on a separate single page immediately after the end of your main report. Other than that, anything that you include in the appendices should be purely supplementary (typically computer code or long derivations). In other words, the report should make complete sense without having to look at the appendices. No marks are assigned to the content of appendices. However, they can sometimes be useful in the oral exam, either to the examiner when asking questions or to you when answering them.

26. Is there a limit on the length of appendices?

No, there is no limit, although if the appendices are extremely long (compared with the main report) then it might look a bit odd.

27. I understand that the report must make sense without the appendices, but can they be briefly referred to in the body of the project?

Yes, as long as the examiner does not feel compelled to look at them. In other words, the report should make complete sense without having to look at the appendices.

28. In my report can I include URL links to animations and short videos?

We advise against attempting to embed animations in the pdf. The report is supposed to resemble a scientific paper where, in the mainstream scientific journals at least, animations are not permitted. By extension, we would not expect to see them in a project report. If you wish to include links then we would advise including these as references in an appendix. However, just as with other material in the appendix, the report should be self-contained and not rely on this information. You therefore cannot expect the examiner to have read and/or marked any material listed in an appendix.

29. Are we allowed to use chunks of our interim report in the final report, i.e., copy and paste sections, or would this count as multiple submission ('self-plagiarism')?

This is fine. It is generally anticipated that much of the formative progress report will consist of background information which can be re-used in the final report. The University's multiple submission rules apply to multiple *summative* assessments. Turnitin will be set up so as not to compare your final summative report with your formative interim report.

30. Will my project oral examination be based on my project report or just generally on my project?

Your project oral exam is about your project as a whole. The examiner will have read your report and will use this as a basis for the interview, but will almost certainly ask you relevant questions about things even if these are not explicitly mentioned in your report.

The assessment proforma is available online, via Blackboard, and you are encouraged to consult this in advance.

31. What are the rules on taking supplementary materials into the oral exam? Are we only allowed to take in a blank copy of the report, or can we, for example, bring an annotated copy, or larger reproductions of graphs, or animations to refer to?

There is no rule specifically forbidding taking particular things into the oral exam, although you may want to bear practical considerations in mind (you don't want to be spending time leafing through lots of stuff during your interview). You should certainly take a copy of your project report (either paper or electronic) – this can be annotated if you want.

A.M. Skelton, Level 4 Projects Organiser, September 2024.