

Guidelines for MSc Project Proposal

We do not have in mind a specific structure for an MSc project proposal, but there are a few issues/points which if they are missed they will result in a unsuccessful proposal; the following guidelines aim at making clear what should be included in a proposal:

- **Proposer's details:**
Name and id of student.
- **Project Title:**
It should not be more than 150 characters long (and it can be provisional).
- **Abstract:**
This should be a brief summary (4-7 lines) that describes what the problem domain is and the work you propose doing, the possible deliverables and the likely contribution of your project.
Note: it is advisable to do this part last, as it summarises info contained in the rest of your proposal.
- **Background & the problem domain:**
Here you should to introduce the topic of your project and explain its academic and/or industrial context. You are also expected to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of any work that has/is been done in the area.
The criteria in evaluating the quality of an MSc level proposal include the “originality” and “novelty” of the proposed work and the quality of the likely contribution of the project to the particular discipline. Thus, it is important to describe your proposal in the context of any work done previously (by you or others) in the area and to establish the appropriateness and distinctiveness of your proposed approach. In doing this, you should outline the findings of any relevant key publications that cover similar work and/or the merits/shortfalls of existing products/artefacts.
Remember, if you are unable to describe the novelty and appropriateness of your approach and the likelihood of its success when compared to others, then the value of your proposal may be questioned. To put it more bluntly, the majority of the projects are about tackling a known problem which in vast majority of the cases others have also tried to tackle in the past (some more successfully than others). To be allowed to have a go you should establish that your approach is different from that of others and/or that you are going to either extend the work others did or to apply it in a different subject/way; if you do not then you would be repeating work that others did and thus you will not have a project.
- **Objectives:**
Here you should set out your project idea or hypothesis and the likely outcomes of your work.
In your proposal you should be making a clear and convincing case for the “distinctiveness”, “originality”, “novelty” and the MSc Level quality of the work; this should involve considering and defining the main objectives of your project (in order of priority) and how the proposed work fits with any work done (by you or others) previously. Here you should also include and justify any objectives that have to do with enhancing your knowledge and understanding of topics and it is important to make sure that these objectives can be met/achieved within the duration of the project.
- **Project:**
Regardless of how exciting the objectives are, your proposal should be aiming at convincing the reader that the approach and methods proposed are technically feasible and achievable within the resources that have been defined. In this part of your proposal you should describe the methods and techniques you plan to use, you should also indicate possible alternatives that you have considered and show that the likelihood of success has been assessed. In addition, it should explain what the outputs will be, give a clear indication of how the project is to be managed (time-wise, but also by setting milestones that can be used to measure progress) and how the various steps relate to the

stated objectives. Remember, this is about an MSc Level Project and thus what you propose should be completed within 10 – 12 weeks; please note that due to the relatively short duration of the project devising detailed project plans and GANTT charts may not be essential.

- **Resources:**

Adequate, realistic and appropriate resources for the work should be requested and must be clearly and concisely justified, including any software/hardware resources, library resources any other resources (e.g. info or resources provided by a third party) who may also be a stakeholder in the project.

- **References:**

A list of references should be included in the proposal and they should be in a format included in the guidelines.

Criteria for the evaluation of the MSc Project Proposals

These criteria aim at establishing the means of evaluating different project proposal and are as follows:

- a. **Quality of the proposal:** It focuses on assessing the complexity originality, novelty, contribution of the proposed work, and whether the objectives set are of appropriate level.
- b. **Research Planning and Practice:** How well researched the proposed work is, whether the proposed objectives are clearly defined and feasible within the time scale of the project, whether likely deliverables have been clearly identified, whether appropriate approach to tackle the problem has been identified and justified, whether an appropriate plan of activities have been devised whether appropriate project techniques have been considered for the management of the project and associated risks.
- c. **Potential Impact:** The significance of the proposed work and its potential impact in relation to work already done and/or products already developed.
- d. **Potential benefits:** The level and extent in which the proposed work will enhance and deepen student's knowledge and understanding.
- e. **Communication:** How clear, well defined and complete the proposal is and how well researched, documented and supported by references the proposed ideas and plan of activities is, i.e. how good and well written the proposal is as a piece of academic writing.

A copy of the proforma that will be used for the evaluation of your project proposals has been/will be made available through BB.

Typesetting Guidelines:

The average proposal should be 4-5 A4 pages long (**no project proposals should exceed 6 A4 pages**) excluding cover pages, references and appendices.

The proposal document should be typeset in Arial font size 11, line spacing should be 1.5 and it should have a 1" margin (all sides); the header of each page should contain your name and your student identification number, whereas the footer should have only the page number (pages should be numbered in sequence, the first page does not need to be numbered).

The proposal should have an additional cover page (not included in the page count) that should contain your project's title along with your details and those of your supervisor.

NB: Proposals that exceed the page limit and/or do not adhere to the specified typesetting guidelines, indicates that you cannot follow set guidelines and may impact the evaluation of your proposal.