

MSc BIOINFORMATICS RESEARCH PROJECT SUPERVISOR GUIDANCE 2022

This document provides information for supervisors about how individual research projects are expected to run on the MSc Bioinformatics programme.

Key dates and project schedule

Projects start: Monday 14 March
Presentations: 20-21 June (at Mile End – arrangements TBC)
Thesis hand-in: Friday 26 August (i.e. the total project duration is 5½ months full time)

First month: It is expected that the student will spend the first month familiarising themselves with the project background, by undertaking a literature review directed by their supervisor. It is recommended that the student produces a written report of this review, to help collate their thoughts and to allow the supervisor to assess their writing skills. This report should be around 5-10 pages, which can later be adapted as the first chapter of the dissertation.

Final month: It is expected that the last month of the project will mostly be dedicated to writing the project dissertation. However, writing may begin earlier and continue in parallel with practical work if that suits the project better. The final dissertation accounts for 80% of the module mark and should not exceed 10,000 words. More detailed guidance on the format and content of the dissertation is provided to the students via QMplus, but the general idea is that it should be similar to a research paper in terms of content and structure. The supervisor is expected to provide feedback on a draft of the dissertation, at a time agreed between student and supervisor. In September, the dissertation is marked by the supervisor and independently by a second marker recruited by the supervisor.

Location of the student and frequency of contact with supervisor

Depending on prevailing circumstances and supervisor preferences, students may be physically based within the host group, work fully remotely, or some mixture of the two. Given the short timeframe of the project, and the relative lack of research experience held by most students on the programme, weekly contact with the supervisor is recommended – at the very least an email or call from student to supervisor each week explaining what they have done. Inviting students to lab meetings, seminars and journal club are also strongly recommended to enhance the student experience.

If problems arise

If a problem occurs that threatens successful completion of the project, the programme director (Conrad Bessant, c.bessant@qmul.ac.uk) and programme administrator (Natalie Holland, n.holland@qmul.ac.uk) should be made aware as soon as possible. Such problems may include poor performance of the student, illness, or extended absence of the supervisor.

Annual leave

Students are permitted to take reasonable leave during the project (typically not totalling more than three weeks) by mutual agreement with the supervisor.

Presentations

In June, each student must give a 15 minute presentation (10 mins talk plus 5 mins questions) on their work to date. This accounts for 20% of the module mark and a mark of 50% must be achieved to pass the module. Supervisors are encouraged to attend the presentations.

Conrad Bessant, February 2022