**Honours and Masters Projects**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

This document is about 30 and 45 point research projects taken by Honours and Masters students in the Department of Statistics.

**How do I find a project/supervisor?**

Each year, I send out a request to academics and we produce a list of available projects. This is put online at <https://www.stat.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/our-research/postgraduate-research-topics.html>, which is the first place you should look. There’s also a link there to another list that I maintain.

If a project sounds interesting, email the academic to inquire if it’s available. In the email, provide some information about yourself (such as what stats courses you’ve taken). Once you’ve agreed, please email me ([bj.brewer@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:bj.brewer@auckland.ac.nz)) so I can update my list of who is supervising whom. It’s good to lock one in as soon as you can. Many students find it difficult to spend much time on the project during busy weeks of the semester, so if you can start early, that is beneficial.

Sometimes, academics will have projects available (or ideas for projects) that are not on the list, for whatever reason. You can look on the department website to find out our research interests, and try contacting someone who sounds interesting to you.

**How often do I meet with my supervisor?**

This may vary depending on the style and availability of your supervisor, but typically a meeting is held once per week or once every two weeks.

**What should a dissertation look like?**

Hard copies of past dissertations are available for you to inspect or borrow. See the stats office and one of the staff there will give you access. Most dissertations are between 25 and 50 pages, though in exceptional cases they can be longer. Basic templates are available for Microsoft Word and LaTeX at <https://www.stat.auckland.ac.nz/~brewer/postgrad/>. It’s a good idea to start writing as soon as possible, even if you don’t have results yet, or only understand a few aspects of the project. For example, even if you only have a rough idea of what your project will end up like, you can still start writing chapter and section headings which will help keep you organised. If you make notes about the basic concepts in your area, these can often become part of the introduction of your dissertation.

**When is the due date?**

The due date can vary and will be confirmed (by email from me) for sure in about week 4 of your second semester. However, it is almost always **the Tuesday immediately after the end of lectures**. You should aim to have at least a rough first draft around the middle of your second semester, to give time for your supervisor to provide feedback.

**Are extensions available?**

Yes. There are two mechanisms for this. If you only need a short extension (up to one week), I can handle those informally. Email me as soon as possible if you think you will need one. Being busy with assignments and other courses is not sufficient grounds for an extension! All postgraduate students are in that situation.  
  
If you need a longer extension, you can get a two-month one by filling out the AS-503 form. These go through the faculty of science, not the statistics department, and you will be liable for extra tuition fees.

**How are the projects graded?**

At the end of semester, your supervisor writes a one-page document describing how things went and recommending a grade. Separately, an academic from another university reads the dissertations and decides whether the recommended grade is reasonable. If so, the grade goes through. In the case of a substantial disagreement, the postgraduate advisers meet, discuss the supervisor’s and assessors comments, and decide on a final grade.

**When are the presentations, and are they graded?**

Part of the project involves a 15 minute presentation, attended by academics and your fellow students. The date of these is more difficult to confirm in advance because it depends on when the external assessor can travel to Auckland to watch them. Typically they are held towards the end of the exam period, or just after the end of the exam period, i.e., a few weeks after the dissertation is due.  
  
The talks do not influence the grade for most students, but if there is some uncertainty about the appropriate final grade (for example, if the supervisor recommended A- but the assessor recommended B+), then a very good (or bad!) talk will be considered when we make the final decision.