7COSC012W Module Handbook

Last Revised: January 2024

Contents

The MSc Project

The postgraduate project is probably the most important module on the Masters degree. It plays a unifying role, and it aims to encourage and reward individual inventiveness and application of effort. It also provides an opportunity to develop your own personal and professional interests based on the materials covered in the taught modules and is allocated enough time to allow you to go into far greater depth than is possible in a taught module.

The module's importance is reflected in the number of credits allocated to the module; in particular, the MSc Project module is a two semester module worth 60 credits, i.e. three times the credits of a taught module, and hence it is represents a third of the Masters programmes; moreover, it is the module that you need to pass to be eligible for the MSc qualification award, i.e. it is not possible to be awarded the MSc qualification without completing the project successfully.

The project enables you to show the extent in which you can:

- investigate and explore in depth a particular topic of interest related to the subject of your studies;
- evaluate/analyse current standards, processes, principles of quality, the reasons for their relevance to the discipline and / or professional practice in the discipline including any legal, social, ethical and professional issues;
- combine previously acquired knowledge and techniques with newly researched ideas;
- assimilate existing knowledge in your chosen field and extend this knowledge to a new application or solution;
- produce a comprehensive piece of work covering a variety of activities related to a single theme, bringing together the academic content of and skills developed in a range of modules;
- change plans and or direction, depending on the effects of altered circumstances as your work proceeds;
- deploy appropriate tools and technologies to implement artefacts that satisfy specified requirements and test your use in a target domain;
- manage your work by confining the problem within limits, which will allow useful work to be done despite the constraining effects of time and other limited resources;
- Effectively communicate your work to others using appropriate means; and
- demonstrate an appropriate level of professional competence in the context of "real" life problem.

When am I going to work on my Project?

Typically, you are expected to work on your project during the last three months of your course. Thus, those taking the semester 2 offering of the project module are expected to spend part of semester 2 on preparatory work, to start work on their project in late-May / early-June and to submit their work in early-September; similarly, students taking the semester 3 offering of the project module are expected to spend semester 3 on preparatory for the project work, to start work on their project in early-September and to submit the project in December / early January.

Supervision of the project will be available only during the second of the two project semesters, while, during the preparatory semester, you are expected to have a couple of brief meetings with your allocated project supervisor to discuss your project ideas and to receive advice on how to develop them to a project proposal.

The assessment of the project involves a written project report followed by an oral examination (viva) that normally takes place typically within a month following the project submission deadline.

NB: If you are a Part time student, who may have work, family and/or other commitments during the summer months, then you may want to considered extending the duration of your students over a third year by opting to register the semester 3 offering of the project module (i.e. start preparatory for the project work in semester 3, start work on the project in early-September and to submit it in

December / early January). Please be warned that opting for this option will delay your graduation by at least six to nine months.

Types of Projects

The Postgraduate project should be an original and/or innovative application of ideas covered in (or relevant to) the subject / discipline of your course. Your project should demonstrate your skills of analysis, investigation, independent thinking, in relation to a problem, issue or requirement; moreover, the work **should not be just** the production of an artefact in isolation of investigation, analysis and critical assessment, which are all important to show competency and depth of knowledge. Projects are not normally expected to consist entirely of original research, at one extreme (that would be more suitable for a PhD), or simply be a standard application of an existing commercial product at the other; finally, your project **cannot** be a development for your own use/benefit, a collection of pieces of coursework, a literature review/survey and/or not related to the subject / discipline of your course.

Postgraduate Projects usually fall into one of the following three categories:

Projects proposed by students themselves

These are projects that are based on topics / ideas you, the students, propose". Working on such a project usually means that you have chosen any area relevant to your course for your project, you have come up with a topic (idea) for a project, and you developed this idea to a viable project. To make sure that your project idea(s) can be developed to a viable project, you are encouraged to discuss your project idea(s) with members of academic staff, who, at the proposal stage, can advise/help you select project idea(s) that can lead/be developed to viable project(s). The advantage of working on such projects is that they allow you to investigate and explore in depth areas/topics that related to the subject of your studies and which are of interest to you; they also allow you to combine acquired knowledge, techniques, and skills with newly researched ideas and/or extend your knowledge to new applications or solutions that are of interest to you.

Projects suggested by members of academic staff

These are projects that are based on topics members of academic staff suggested and which students have developed to projects. Typically, these projects are on areas/topics that are relevant to your course but which interest members of academic staff. The project topic(s) is/are likely to have been suggested to you by a member of staff you approached to discuss / exploit possible project ideas and as part of these discussions you expressed an interest in a particular area. Typically, staff-suggested projects start as not well-defined project topics; thus, you will be required to develop, with minimal help from the member of staff who suggested it, the project's topic to a fully-fledged project proposal. An advantage of working on such projects is that they allow you to investigate and explore areas/topics related to the subject of your studies that are also of interest to a member of staff; hence your project can be part of a wider project and it may result in publishable work; moreover, staff-suggested projects are likely to be supervised by the member of staff who suggested the project.

Work/Industry–based projects

These are projects done for / within an organisation. Quite frequently, your employer (especially with part time students) would the organisation that would offer / sponsor a work/industry–based project. In recent years, we also had work/industry–based projects that were initiated by industry-based contacts / partners; in such cases, you will not be employed by the organisation, but you will be working on a real-life problem / project that comes from the industrial partner. Work/industry–based projects can often be the ideal scenario for many of you, as they enable you to participate in a real life project; moreover, the experience of doing your project in a workplace environment, tacking a real life problem under the supervision of an industry supervisor with a strict timetable for deliverables and deadlines can help you develop a high degree of organisational skills, whereas the exposure to work ethics and

culture would enable you to enhance further your social, interpersonal and professional skills. A possible problem with work/industry-based projects is a potential conflict between the immediate needs of the workplace and the aims of your course.

Preparing for the project

You are expected to register the project in the last two semesters of your studies, when you will be finishing the taught part of your course. The project is a **two-semester module** and you are typically expected to spend the first of the two semesters preparing for the project (i.e. *preparatory semester*). What follows outlines activities, some of which we have planned, that can help you prepare for the project

Academic Engagement and Learning Development workshops

The Academic Engagement and Learning Development team offers throughout the year academic skills workshops aimed at helping you improve further your research, academic writing and study skills and they will strengthen / enhance the skills required for your final project and your professional development. The offered workshops have three main strands:

- Academic skills workshops accompanying the efforts of students during the term, including finding the motivation, time management, reading and note taking, and completing specific assignments like essays, reports, literature reviews, reflections, presentations, group work etc.
- "Dissertations": weekly workshops covering the stages of dissertation writing from identification of a topic to writing specific chapters.
- Information literacy including research, referencing, dealing with fake news, and avoiding cognitive biases.

The workshops offered include:

- Academic Language workshop
- Academic Skills to Succeed workshop
- Avoiding cognitive biases for more rational thinking workshop
- Cite This! Referencing Basics with the Harvard style workshop
- Critical Reading and Fake News Workshop
- Critical Thinking and Writing workshop
- Dissertations: Developing a Methodology workshop
- Dissertations: Doing your Literature Review workshop
- Dissertations: Identifying and Developing your Topic workshop
- Dissertations: Thematic Dissertations workshop
- Dissertations: Writing a Proposal workshop
- Dissertations: Writing Results and Discussion workshop
- Editing and Proofreading your Work workshop
- English Sentences and Punctuation workshop
- Essay Writing workshop
- Managing your Time and Studies workshop
- Mastering arguments workshop
- Reflective Thinking and Writing workshop
- Report Writing workshop
- Reporting your sources effectively workshop
- Reporting your sources ethically: plagiarism and referencing workshop
- Research and referencing for business workshop
- Scientific Reports and Scientific Writing workshop
- Writing a Literature Review workshop
- Writing Effective Introductions and Conclusions workshop

You are strongly advised to join/attend most (if not all) of the above workshops prior to starting your project.

For a more up–to–date list of workshops offered and to book your place visit the Engage website.

Meetups and Networking events

Coming up with a project topic is something that a lot of students find difficult, partly because you are not used to it and/or because you do not know what working on a Postgraduate Project involves.

Networking events

To help you start thinking about possible project topics/ideas for your project we typically organise and run (depending on external participations) a Projects Networking event. The aim of the event is to allow you find out more about academic staff expertise/interests, to learn more about what some of our recent alumni have done in their projects (and their project experience), to hear about project opportunities in the real world, to network with alumni and others working or interested in areas relevant to Data Science, Business Intelligence, Business Analytics, Big Data Technologies, Business Systems Design and Integration, Cyber Security, etc. and/or possibly to find potential project opportunities for your to work on.

The event is typically scheduled prior to the project commencement date during the preparatory semester. By then you should have adequate exposure to / understanding of the areas the discipline covers to start thinking about potential project topics. Please note, the networking event may not run every year/semester as relies on participation from recent graduates and external contacts.

Meetups

Another option that can offer a good starting point, especially if you are also interested in networking and finding out what others with similar interests to you are working on, is by joining various Special Interest Groups (SIGs), which organise and run meetings in various locations in Greater London (attending the groups meetings and joining these groups is usually free). A website where you can find more info about such groups/events is *Meetup*, whereas events organised by the *BCS* are typically advertised on your course Blackboard website.

Discuss potential project areas/topics with academic staff

Soon after the start of Semester 2 (Semester 3 for January start students), we expect you to approach your Course Leader and other members of academic staff to discuss your project idea(s).

The exercise is essential in developing your project idea(s) as the feedback you will receive would help clarify which of your initial project topic(s)/idea(s) you should drop/focus on and develop further; it may also identify potential supervisors for your project. The feedback you will receive, is likely to involve advice as to whether the particular the member of staff believes that:

- your project idea(s) is/are a non-starter (i.e. not likely to be developed to a viable project proposal);
- do not have expertise in your project idea/area and/or to assess the viability of your project idea(s), in which case you are likely to be advised who to approach next.
- your project idea(s) may lead to a viable project proposal but needs further work/development, in which case it is likely that you would be given advice/pointers on related work and/or further investigation.
- discuss possible project topics that they are working on/interested in supervising.

Finally, members of staff may also indicate whether they are interested in supervising your project idea.

Typically, most students approach members of academic staff that they think have expertise in the project area they are interested in and/or possibly those who they would like to have as supervisors for their project. Involving your Course Leader in the process is essential as, in addition to the above, s/he will also be able to advise you on the appropriateness of your project ideas for the course you are pursuing.

Please note: The above process has more to do with the development of a project proposal rather than the identification/allocation of your project supervisor. The allocation of project supervisors will be made after the submission of your Draft Project Proposal and it will be based on the type of project you want to do, staff expertise and staff resource/workload.

Where else can I look for project ideas?

The following websites may help you with your search for a project topic:

The Data Science Foundation (DSF)

The DSF is a professional body representing the interests of people working within the Data Science and advanced analytics sector. Its membership consists of accredited suppliers who offer a range of analytical and technical services and companies and individuals with an interest in the commercial advantages gained from big data. The foundation aims to raise the profile of data science in the UK, to educate people about the benefits of knowledge-based decision making and to encourage firms to make optimal use of their data.

Visiting the website you will find out more about the organisation, the work they engage in, how they operate, their Steering Group, commitment to professional standards within the industry and their sponsors and supporters and how to become members. You will also find links to various resources, forums, articles, whitepapers, news, use cases.

The Consumer Data Research Centre (CDRC)

The Consumer Data Research Centre, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, is offering an annual collaborative Masters Dissertation Scheme. Every year in the past decade, businesses, government and third sector organisations have been being invited to collaborate with universities throughout the UK, in order to allow Masters students to use their dissertations to develop practical solutions to problems through applied research, often using commercial or public sources of data that are not usually available for student projects. Participating students obtain real world problem-solving experience, and many students have gone on to work for the organisations which sponsored their research projects. Companies that in have participated in the CDRC scheme include Virgin, Sainsburys, Boots, Experian, Zoopla, Beauclair, Barbour ABI, CBRE, etc.; every year we have a number of our students who apply for these projects, and so far at least 2 of our students have been offered projects.

To find out more about these projects and for info on how to apply visit the CDRC webpages. Please note, the nature of the projects and the companies that are behind them means that lots of students from various HEI apply and so getting one can be very competitive.

Datasets for potential Projects

Irrespective of whether you already have a project, it is very likely that you will need a dataset (particularly important for MSc BDT / BI&A / DSA projects) for your project. Browsing the following websites and looking at the possible datasets available and/or projects offered can help you come up with potential project ideas:

- [Kaggle competition](#) or one of the [Kaggle datasets](#) as a basis for a project
- [Google Dataset Search](#)
- [CDRC dataset](#)
- [Open Data Blend Datasets](#)
- [Tweeter dataset](#)
- [Machine learning datasets](#)
- [Carbon Disclosure Project dataset](#)
- [Urban Big Data Centre](#)

Draft Project Proposal

We want you to start thinking about what you would like to do for your project as early as possible in your course and to engage you in discussions that will help you clarify your ideas and form a project proposal. At the end of the taught semester (typically in March for those who start their project in semester 2 and June for those who start their projects in semester 3), you will be asked to submit a Draft Project Proposal.

Your **Draft Project Proposal** must provide a brief outline of the work you intend to complete, who you have discussed it with and the feedback you have received. The purpose of the draft proposal is three-fold to

- gauge the progress you have been making in relation to your project;
- assess the resource requirements for the project module, but most importantly to
- allocate you a supervisor who (a) will discuss and help you develop your project idea further to an MSc level project proposal and (b) will supervise your project work until you complete and submit it.

The **Draft Project Proposal** is **not** assessed, i.e. you will not be penalised if you submit it late. However, all late submitted proposals will be considered **after** all other proposals (that were submitted in time) have been processed and allocated supervisors; moreover, late proposals will be processed in the order they were submitted; thus, delaying the submission of your proposal will lead to delay in allocation of your supervisor and the commencement of your project.

Please note,
- the draft proposal is submitted electronically via blackboard.
- the draft proposal consists of a form with a small set of questions about your project idea. These questions cover your initial idea, which members of staff you have spoken to about your project and your proposed methodology. You should complete all sections.
- the Submission Deadline for the Draft Project Proposal can be found at the module's Blackboard webpage

Supervisor Allocation

In the days following the Draft Project Proposals deadline, the Projects Co-ordinator along with the Postgraduate Course Leaders will review all Draft Project Proposals submitted and they will meet to discuss/agree the allocation of supervisors.

The purpose of the supervisors' allocation meeting is to match you (your project) with a member of academic staff who has the expertise and/or expressed willingness to supervise your project.

The main criteria in allocating project supervisors are the area and type of project you want to do, staff interest in supervising your project, staff expertise and staff availability and the info used for the allocation of supervisors will be that you have provided in your draft project proposal.

After you are allocated a project supervisor, you are expected to work with your supervisor to develop your project idea further to a project proposal; moreover, your supervisor will guide your project work throughout the period you work on your project, and s/he will be one of the two examiners who will assess your project.

Please note,
- if you do not submit a Draft Project Proposal, you will be randomly allocated a supervisor with spare availability.
- you will be allocated a university supervisor even if you are to work on a work-based project.

Final Project Proposal

Once you have been allocated a supervisor you need to put together a *Final Project Proposal* and have it approved.

In addition to the Project Proposal you should also fill in, and submit through the *Virtual Research Environment (VRE)*, for approval, a **Research Ethics application**.

The purpose of the project proposal is to set up a framework to enable the project work to be managed, achieved, and documented efficiently and successfully. You will need to understand the project's requirements to provide enough information to show how those requirements are to be met.

Although project proposals do not have a fully prescribed structure, your proposal should include

- a description, at an appropriate level of detail, of your project's problem domain; i.e. a description of the topic you propose to investigate, including a brief description of why you chose the particular project, and possibly any external involvement;
- the project's aims, objectives, scope and likely deliverables, i.e. a short overview of your project's aims, an outline what you expect to achieve (which should be something measurable), the likely boundaries of the proposed work (such as what you expect not to be covered), the likely project deliverables/outputs and where these might be used in the future.
- survey and critical evaluation of relevant to your project work, citing/providing appropriate references that support arguments made.
- outline (providing appropriate justification) your proposed methodology/approach, this should include issues project management, analysis and design, implementation, and testing.
- provide a well thought plan of activities (covering literature review, analysis, design, implementation, testing, etc.) and their timescale.
- identify, analyse & evaluate possible risks.
- consider potential legal, ethical, societal and professional issues.
- identify the resources required to undertake the work and it should demonstrate either that these are/can be available at the University or that you have access to them.

Please note
- the submission deadline for Final Project Proposals is published on the module blackboard site.
- you cannot start work on the project unless your Research Ethics application is approved.

Project Proposal Approval & Formative Feedback

Your project proposal will be reviewed by your allocated Project Supervisor, and, where necessary in consultation with, the Projects Coordinator and/or your Course Leader. As part of the evaluation, we will try to identify/evaluate/assess (a) whether the proposed work can lead to a successful MSc level project; (b) potential problems that may affect your ability to complete the proposed work within the stipulated timeframe.

To have your project proposal approved, the following conditions need to be met:

- your project proposal needs to form a basis for a viable and suitable project (i.e. it would demonstrate your skills of analysis, investigation, independent thinking by applying these skills to solve a problem, address an issue or requirement);
- the resources required to undertake the project are either available at the University or you have access to them; and
- satisfactory arrangements can be made for the supervision of your project;

In addition, for work-based projects or externally sponsored projects:

- the company providing / sponsoring the project needs to submit a formal specification that will be discussed and agreed with your university supervisor (this step is essential to minimise such conflicts and to ensure that your contributions can be clearly identified);
- any Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) between your (the student) and the company that provides / sponsors the project indemnifies the University, in relation to the issues related to storage handling of proprietary data / software licences, etc. Please note, these issues are usually addresses as part of your *Research Ethics application* (for more info on this please visit the next item in this section titled *Legal, Ethical, Societal, and Professional (LESP) issues*); moreover, as such issues may take some time to be resolved you may need to discuss them with your supervisor early who may advise you to fill in an ethics application form even before your complete your project proposal.
- the company understands / accepts that the project report that you will submit will be accessible to all those involved in the assessment of the work (e.g. internal/external examiners, university staff, etc.)

Soon after your project proposal is reviewed / evaluated, your supervisor should at least informally advise you whether your proposal was approved. Feedback on your project proposal will be made available to you once all submissions have been assessed.

If your project proposal has been approved then you must fill in and submit, through the *Virtual Research Environment (VRE)*, a **Research Ethics application**). Please note, you **cannot start work on** the project until your Research Ethics application is approved.

If your project proposal has **not** been approved, then you will need to work with your supervisor to improve/revise your proposed project (possibly changing your topic / scope) and resubmit as soon as possible.

My project proposal has been approved but now I want to work on a different project.

If you decide that you want to work on a different project topic, after you had your project proposal approved, then you need to contact the Projects Co-ordinator as soon as possible and seek his/her advice. As the implications of a change in the project topic can be significant and can impact your ability to complete (within the given timeframe) the module and possibly your course, such cases will be considered *only* if there are valid/exceptional reasons for the request. Moreover, if your request for a change in the topic of your project is allowed, then you will be required to put together and submit a new full project proposal (and Research Ethics Application) for your new project. Your new full project proposal will be evaluated by the Projects Co-ordinator and/or your Course Leader and **only** if your new project proposal (and Research Ethics Application) is approved you will be allowed to start work on the new project.

Legal, Ethical, Societal, and Professional (LESP) issues

As part of your project (incl. the project proposal stage) you are

- required to demonstrate your understanding of Legal, Ethical, Societal, and Professional (LESP) issues. Thus, as part of **both** your project proposal and your final project report you need to consider LESP issues in the context of your project, which as a minimum should include issues related to Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), Copyright, GDPR/Data Protection, use/ownership of data, anonymisation of data, use of personal information, and adherence to the laws of the land.
- directed to consider codes of conduct such as those offered by professional bodies, such as British Computer Society, ACM, IET and/or IEEE.

Moreover, all projects are subject to the Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research (for more info on Research Ethics issues, please visit the university's Research Governance webpage). According to this code, by the time you will submit your project proposal research, you should have also filled in and submitted, through the Virtual Research Environment (VRE), a draft copy of Part A (and if applicable Part B) of the research ethics application form and uploaded all supporting documentation. Your project supervisor and/or your Course Leader and/or the Projects Co-ordinator will review your submission and if appropriate approve your application. Those that have ethical implications above a certain threshold (as defined by the code) will have to apply for full ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee.

Please note, given the nature of our Postgraduate Projects, it is not likely that the ethical implications of the projects will exceed the set thresholds, i.e. it is not likely you will have to apply for full ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee for your project.

Useful Relevant Link(s)
- Virtual Research Environment (VRE)
- VRE Guides (Ethics Section)
- Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research
- Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)
- Data Protection Act (2018)
- EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Progress and Research in Cybersecurity
- Online Research Methods for Cybersecurity Research
- Ethics Guidelines for Internet-Mediated Research
- AI, Ethics and the Law: What challenges and what opportunities?

Analysis, Evaluation and Management of Risks

You should also provide a risk analysis as part of which you should consider, identify, analyse, evaluate, and manage possible underlying risks in the context of your project. A risk is a threat, which if it materializes can potentially jeopardise the successful completion of a project. Different types of projects carry different types and grades of risk your risk assessment processes should reflect this.

Risk analysis, evaluation and management is a key aspect of project management and aims to ensure that the least number of surprises occur while you are working on your project. The idea is to consider / identify as many uncertainties as possible in relation to your projects and devise appropriate risk mitigation and contingency that would allow you to take appropriate / preventive action to minimize the occurrence / impact of these uncertainties. The early identification, analysis and evaluation of risks will allow alternative approaches to be considered and would improve the chances of the successful and timely completion of your project.

Some of the issues that you are likely to need to consider, in addition to those relate to possible underlying Legal, Ethical, Societal, and Professional (LESP) issues, may include: (a) your ability to do the work due to software hardware issues, availability of data, etc; (b) the quality of your work and output; (c) management of data, incl. potential breaches of anonymity, confidentiality and invasions of privacy; (d) failure to comply with recognised good practice, as set out in the University's Research Code of Practice.

The Role of the Supervisor

Your supervisor can have a crucial role in the development of your project:

- helping you decide on the scope of your project;
- helping you produce a plan of work for the project;
- checking up on the progress you are making throughout the project;
- being available to provide informed discussion and guidance about the project;
- advising on the contents and style of the project report.

The role of the supervisors does not include:

- guiding every detail of your work on your project;
- coding or designing.
- (proof) reading and checking your proposal and/or project report before you hand it in.

Your supervisor may not be totally expert on all the technical aspects of your project; however, this is not that important as (a) the job of the supervisor is primarily to provide general guidance and support and (b) there are other members of staff can be available to give specific help and advice as and if necessary.

Often, the role of your supervisor is that of a critical friend who will guide you about the size / scope of your project, advise / discuss (but not decide on your behalf) possible approaches / options available to you when stuck, as these are some of the main issues project students face.

Please note, if your project is a work-based project, then in addition to your university supervisor, you will, most likely, have an external (industry) supervisor from the company who provided / sponsored your project. Although industry supervisors will be typically supervising the work you will be doing for your work-based project, they will not participate in the marking/assessment of your project; instead, they may be asked to submit a brief report (e.g. one A4 page) evaluating the quality and extent of the work your carried out. Your university supervisor would also be involved in the supervision of your project and should be given a contact number for the industry supervisor in case of problems; your university supervisor involvement in the project will be more focused on making sure that (a) all is progressing well; (b) any conflicts between the immediate needs of the workplace and the aims of your course will be kept minimal; and (c) you will be able to complete your project in time, delivering a project that meets the academic for the level standards.

Contact with the Supervisor

You should maintain regular contact with your supervisor. Exactly how often such contact takes place is up to you and your supervisor; depending on the project, many students/supervisors find a regular fortnightly/monthly meeting appropriate. Make sure you know how to contact your supervisor (and vice versa), either by mail, telephone, or electronic mail. It is not wise to rely on just being able to turn up and knock on the office door.

You should also make note of the fact that project supervisors will be taking their annual leave during the summer months, or they may be away at conferences during the period you will be working on your project and hence they may not always be available to return e-mails and meet you in person to discuss your work. However, quite frequently nowadays, meetings with supervisors are not taking place on campus; it is very likely that you will have online (MS-Teams / Zoom, etc) meetings, which in most cases resolves access issues to your supervisor even when they are away. However, it is essential to establish with your supervisor the opportunities to and the way you will meet during the period you will be work on your project. In cases where your supervisor will be unavailable for an extended period and will be able to meet you or email you, a second supervisor will be identified and will arrange meetings with you.

Project Diary/Blog

As a helpful aid to yourself and to keep track of any discussions with your supervisor you are strongly advised to keep a project diary or blog where you will keep notes of meetings, discussions and issues raised.

Please note, a well-kept project diary can prove invaluable when writing your final report, as it will help refresh your memory on all issues that need to be covered.

Final Project Report

The Project Report is the main instrument for the evaluation of your project work. Thus, it is essential to showcase in it all aspects of your project work including your critical literature review, a thorough discussion of your analysis/design/implementation (incl. handling of associated risks, and Legal, Ethical, Social and Professional issues), a critical interpretation/evaluation of your findings/results and a detailed evaluation of the way you contacted your project work (incl. that of project management).

Writing up your Project Report is a mundane task that will take you longer than you think to complete. As a rule of thumb, you should always allow 3-4 weeks of full-time work for the writing up, but this may differ depending on your mastery of the content and your report writing skills. Moreover, to produce a quality report it is important to allocate sufficient time to your writing up that would enable you to produce and revise drafts of your report.

A good way of discovering whether your writing is at the right level is to get somebody else on your course, who will have general background knowledge of the subject but who would not necessarily be familiar with your special subject, to read a sample chapter or two. Your supervisor would also review and comment on a draft copy of your project report, but to be able to use effectively feedback received, you should aim to provide your supervisor with a draft of (most of) your report well before the hand-in date.

A typical report should be **between 10,000 and 15,000 words**, *excluding cover pages, acknowledgements, abstract, tables of contents, references, and appendices*. Project reports are expected to be succinct, i.e. clear, and concise. You will not get extra credit just for producing a lengthy report, on the contrary, you may be penalised. Moreover, it is important to take care over the presentation of the report as you may be penalised for a poorly written report, even when the technical achievement is satisfactory.

Plagiarism

The use of words, ideas or work of other people and passing them off as your own (i.e. without acknowledgement), is considered a form of cheating (assessment misconduct). Hence, whenever you use some other book or article (even if you change the words slightly) you are required to cite the source. Moreover, copying an un-attributed odd paragraph or quotation or a diagram/figure from a public source, including the internet; copying, without acknowledgement, material from other people, e.g. colleagues; copying or reuse of designs, programs, or other source material without acknowledgement; submission of work jointly produced with someone else as if it were entirely your own work constitutes plagiarism. Thus, the correct use of citation & referencing enables you to

- acknowledge that the work/idea belongs to another person.
- provide evidence of your own work/research.
- illustrate a particular point.
- support your arguments and/or theory.
- allow others to locate the resources you have used; and to
- avoid accusations of plagiarism, but also to:

The University employs text-matching software, such as Safe Assign and Turnitin, to help identify and detect potential cases of plagiarism; as the software does not detect plagiarism per se but does highlight text similarities, examiners are required to comment on the reported similarities of your project report, decide whether potential plagiarism exists and whether the case should be reported for academic misconduct for further investigation. If you are reported for academic misconduct, you will face disciplinary procedures the outcome of which can ultimately result in your expulsion from the University. For more info on academic misconduct incl. penalties, visit the following page: www.westminster.ac.uk/academic-misconduct.

How to avoid plagiarism

The following simple points can help avoid being accused of plagiarism:

- Give credit in the "Acknowledgments" section of your report to colleagues or others who may have helped you with your project work explaining what their help contribution to your project is/was; this way you can state what is your own work and what is the work of others.
- Try to avoid using quotations and if this is not possible use them sparingly; if you quote directly from a source, then you should surround the quotation with quotation marks and cite precise source (i.e. the author's surname, year of publication and the page number of the quotation, or URL and the date you visited it) either in parentheses directly after the quotation or in a footnote. Any figures, tables, drawings that you have taken from other sources and included in your report need to be treated as quotations.
- Irrespective of the sources you have used, the structure and presentation of the argument should be your own. If you are using electronic sources, please do not cut/copy and paste sections into your work.
- Try to avoid re-using any part of work you have submitted for an assignment elsewhere. If you have to look back at old assignments for information
1. do not copy and paste;
2. rephrase /make minor changes to your answer;
3. make a brief note of the information beforehand work from that note;
4. reference any work you re-use (even if it is your own).
- If you are reusing code or design information from another source, never remove any annotation that identifies the original author, even when you are modifying the code.

Useful Links – Support with Academic Writing
- Avoiding Plagiarism module on Blackboard
- Library Services
- Library Guides
- Guide to Citation and Referencing
- Guide to Citation and Referencing: Plagiarism
- Library's Guide to Referencing Your Work (pdf)
- Academic Misconduct web page
- Support with Academic Skills and Training webpage

Submission of Your Final Project Report

By the set deadline, you **MUST** submit, using the provided blackboard submission links:

1. a copy of your **project report** in PDF/Microsoft Word (DOCX) format

The report should include: a Cover Page including the signed Declaration, *Abstract*, any *Acknowledgements* you may have, a *Table of Contents*, the various *Sections/Chapters* that make up your report (including a literature review), a list of *References and Bibliography* and any *Appendices* you may have. Pages should be numbered.

2. a copy of your **prototype** or implementation.

This should be a *single* ".zip" file that should contain a copy of the prototype or technical implementation you have devised as part of your project work. If your project did not involve the creation of prototype, then you should use the link to submit a comment (in the submission box) confirming that no prototype/implementation has been devised.

NB 1: Failure to submit both items may result in you failing the project module.

NB 2: The maximum size of a file you can submit through blackboard is 100MB, if (**and ONLY if**) the size of your prototype ".zip" file is larger you should

- *upload* your prototype ".zip" file to a cloud storage service (such as Google drive, OneDrive, etc),
- *share* your prototype ".zip" file access rights, giving *full ownership* rights to the Module Leader,
- *paste and submit* the link (URL) to the file/folder, finally,
- *do not access/edit* your prototype ".zip" file *after* submission deadline.

The first page of your project report should consist of the Cover Page. You should use the template provided on blackboard.

You **MUST** complete the Cover Page by inserting the title of your report, your name, the name of your supervisor, the month and year of your submission and the course you are enrolled.

You **MUST** also:

- fill in and sign the declaration.
- fill in and sign the consent form.

Tip 1: If you have problem(s) integrating the cover pages with the rest of your report, store both the edited cover pages document as a PDF file and do the same with your project report; then merge the two files using either Acrobat or any of the free services that you can find available online.

Tip 2: To sign the declaration pages, use a digital signature (if you have one) or take a picture of your signature, crop it and paste it to declaration pages.

Project Assessment

Soon before your submission deadline a member of staff (other than your supervisor) will be appointed to act as the 2nd marker of your project. The two examiners will assess your work independently; in particular, they will read your report, test your prototype (if applicable), evaluate your work, and reach an independent decision about the value (mark) of your project. Each marker will document and justify his/her decision on his/her copy of the project evaluation form **before** any presentation/viva takes place.

Following the independent marking of your project report, **your project supervisor** will contact the 2nd marker to discuss whether a presentation/viva is required. All students at their first project module attempt are required to attend a presentation/viva.

During your project presentation/viva, the examiners will be assessing you independently and they may produce a revised (increased or decreased) mark for your project. The revised mark produced will reflect the examiner's initial (before the viva) evaluation of your project report but also how they assessed the quality (depth and extent) of your work and/or prototype following your viva, your ability to defend your investigation approach/decisions and/or articulate concepts, ideas, and your findings/results. Comments related to your presentation/viva, including your responsiveness to questions, will also be recorded on the project evaluation form.

Following your presentation/viva, the two examiners will discuss your project work to determine a mark for your project. If a mark is agreed, then the agreed mark will be recorded on the project evaluation form along with a brief report/comment explaining how the agreed mark was reached.

If the two examiners cannot agree on a project mark, then your project report along with the project evaluation/comments that each of the two examiners produced independently will be passed to another member of staff (not involved in the assessment of your project until then) who will review your project report and the related paperwork and who will make a final decision that will be reported to the subject board. All relevant paperwork that the two (or possibly three) examiners produced will be compiled to a single document that will be uploaded to Blackboard for external scrutiny.

In the period before the Assessment Boards all projects and associated assessment material will be made available to External Examiners for review/scrutiny; in particular, the External Examiners will be given access to all material you submitted through Blackboard along with the marks and the project evaluation reports the examiners produced. The aim is to enable external examiners to review/scrutinise students' project work, our marking practices, to query reported marks and/or raise any concerns in relation quality and standard of students' projects.

You will be given **feedback on your project** through the module's Blackboard site. **After** the ratification of the results, you will be able to access the project evaluation report that contains the examiners comments on/evaluation of your work.

Project Presentations/Vivas

Typically, the role/purpose of a viva/presentation is two-fold:

- to enable the examiners to re-affirm their evaluation of your work and/or to allow them in the interest of fairness to revisit aspects of your project where the extent and depth of your work was not clear from the submitted report;
- to give you a last opportunity to explain the depth and extent of your work, to defend your project approach/decisions and to articulate your findings and results.
- to enable to examiners to confirm that the work carried out is the original work of the student.

In particular, there have been instances where the quality of students' project reports did not do justice to the work students did; in the majority of cases, this was due to language problems, but we also had instances where students had problems handling a report of such a length, and/or the report writing was rushed and/or the submitted report did not reflect the quality of work completed.

It is important to understand that what the examiners will be trying to establish during your project viva / presentation are the quality (depth and extent) of your work and/or prototype following your viva, your ability to defend your investigation approach/decisions and/or articulate concepts, ideas, and your findings/results. Referred students are not normally invited to a viva / presentation.

Project vivas/presentations are held in the weeks following the project submission deadline. Student are expected to make themselves available during this period.

During a project presentation/viva, you will be expected to present/discuss your work with your supervisor and your project's 2nd marker. **Your supervisor is responsible to organise your viva/presentation** and so you should liaise with him/her regarding the date and time of your viva/presentation. Please ensure that you are contactable.

Project vivas/presentations normally last about 30 minutes. In most cases, at the start of project viva/presentation you will be asked to give a brief overview/presentation (not more than 5-10 mins long) of your project work, demonstrate important aspects of any prototype you may have developed, and discuss your findings/results. This typically forms the basis for the discussion that follows as the presentation may lead to several questions about the work you carried out, you approach and decisions and the evaluation of your findings / results. The discussion during your project presentation

/ viva is normally led by the 2ⁿᵈ Marker, who is as familiar with the work you did, and who needs to establish the quality of your work and the extent of your knowledge and understanding.

Knowing that it is likely to be asked to give a brief overview/presentation, you may want to prepare and bring with you a MS-PowerPoint presentation that you will use during your viva/presentation and/or to prepare aspects of your prototype that you would like to demonstrate.

Finally, there are occasions where the examiners may decide that they do not wish you have a presentation, but they would prefer to have a discussion with you about the work you did.

Late Submission

The project is treated as any other module; thus, if you submit your project report late, then the usual university penalties for late submission of coursework will apply. That is,

- your work will be marked and a mark will be reported to registry;
- if you submit your project report late, but within 24 hours (or one working day) of the set project submission deadline and the reported project mark is over 50%, then the registry will have up to 10 marks deducted to a minimum of the pass mark, i.e.50%. For example, registry will apply a 10 marks penalty for late submission to a project submitted within 24hrs after the set deadline if the project mark is above 60%; whereas the project mark will be reduced to 50% if the late project's report mark is in the 50% to 60% range.
- if you submit your project more than 24 hours after the deadline then you will be given the mark of zero.

The penalties for late submission or non-submission are rather severe; if you are going to submit late or not submit at all <u>for reasons beyond your control</u>, then you are advised to consider filing an MC claim.

<u>Please note</u>: University Regulations do not allow us to agree the deferral or the extension of project deadlines for individual students. The only way your project submission deadline can be extended/deferred is though the Mitigating Circumstances Route.

<u>Please note</u>: If you do not follow the submission guidelines and you do not submit *all* required items then your project submission may be considered as late.

Mitigating Circumstances (MCs)

University Regulations prevent members of academic staff giving/agreeing deadline extensions to individual students. Thus, if for reasons beyond your control the quality of your work / performance has been affected and/or you cannot submit your project within the set deadline, then the advice is to make an MCs claim and to inform the project co-ordinator, your project Supervisor, and your Course Leader that you are/will be making an MC claim. More information on the MCs process and a MC claim form can be found at <u>westminster.ac.uk/mitigating-circumstances</u>

Your MC claim will be considered by an MC panel that will decide whether your claim should be accepted or rejected. Normally, MCs claims need to be supported by appropriate documentary evidence that should be submitted to Registry in *original* form; if you need the originals of the documentary evidence supporting your claim, then you should present the originals to Registry and ask them to take copies. Please also note that this year the university has relaxed MC claim rules; it allows a limited number of self-certification MC claims.

<u>Please note</u>: Supporting your MC claim with appropriate original documentary evidence is essential for the success of your claim, as there have been instances, where quite valid MC claims have been rejected because original documentary evidence supporting the claim had not been submitted. If you do need to submit an MC claim and you do not have access to the appropriate original documentary

evidence, you are strongly advised to state in your MC claim what sort of evidence you are/will be submitting in support of your claim and submit the evidence to Registry Office as soon as it becomes available.

To improve the chances of having your MCs accepted, your MC application should explain clearly why and how you have been affected by reasons beyond your control and what these reasons are/were. You should also state clearly what your claim is about, i.e.

- to be allowed a **late submission** – this usually means that you ask permission to submit your work up to five working days after the set deadline (provided that no feedback/marks have been released to students), if your MCs are accepted then your late submitted work will be treated as if it was submitted in time; please note, if you submit your work even a few seconds after the extended deadline then, you will be awarded the mark of zero;
- to be given an **extension (deferral) to the set deadline** – this usually means that you cannot submit your work within five days after the set deadline and you seek permission to submit your work at a later time, if your MCs are accepted then the Assessment Board will determine a new deadline for the submission of your work after taking into consideration your supervisor's advice regarding your progress; please note, supervision arrangements will cease after the initial deadline;
- to be allowed to **defer the module as a whole** – this usually means that for reasons beyond your control you were not able to do much work on the module and you are asking to be allowed to have a fresh start at the module, if your MCs are accepted then you will need to re-register the module.

Publication of Results

Results of the project, and the overall award of your degree, will be published after the postgraduate assessment board (PAB) meets to confer the marks at the end of the academic year. The exact date is published on blackboard in the section on key dates and project timeline.

I have been Referred in the Project

Referrals are offered in cases where the project is not of passable quality, but the examiners believe that the work already done can be improved to reach the expected for the level standard.

When offered a referral, you will be allowed more time to work on your project; the deadline by which you will have to submit a revised version of your report will be decided at the time of the Assessment Board. You will also be given a definitive list of the remedial work that you will be required **as a minimum** to do to retrieve, i.e. achieve the pass mark. This list of the remedial work usually has the form of a list of points/issues that the examiners identified as weaknesses of your project, and which have not been resolved at the time of your viva. Thus, to pass the project you will need to address / revisit / improve adequately **ALL** points in the definitive list of the remedial work, failing to do so will result in you failing the project for the 2nd time and being excluded from the MSc qualification. Typically, the list detailing the required remedial work would appear in the "overall comments & feedback" section of your Project's Evaluation Report.

The resubmitted project will normally be assessed by the same people who assessed your first submission and who are familiar with your work. The decision on whether you will be passing will be made based on how well/adequately you addressed **ALL** the points identified in the list of remedial work you were given. Normally, you will not be invited to another presentation/viva and if you pass your project mark will be capped at the passing mark, i.e. 50%. A slightly simpler version of the Project Evaluation Proforma will be used to record and document the evaluation of your resubmitted project report.

The project is a module that you can attempt **ONLY** twice; if you take up the referral offer, then this will be considered as your 2nd and final attempt on the module; i.e. if you fail to adequately address

ALL the points identified in the list of remedial work included in your project evaluation report, then you will fail the project and you will not be allowed to retake it. If you decided not to take a referral opportunity, then you will need to re-register the project module and do a project on a different subject (normally under a different project supervisor); in the case you retake the project, you will not have a referral opportunity and your project mark will be capped at the passing mark, i.e. 50%.

I have been offered a Deferral in the Project

Most deferred projects are projects where you have successfully claimed MCs and you asked to be given a deferred (new extended) project submission deadline. Other cases of deferred projects concern projects where we have decided to offer you a deferred (new) submission deadline because typically because we believe that your ability to complete your project work has been affected by reasons beyond your/our control (hardware/software problems, availability of data, problems with the industry partners, etc.).

In all cases of Deferred Project, the new deferred submission deadline will be agreed/confirmed at time of the Assessment Board; the new submission deadline will be communicated to you by Registry and it will also appear in your student profile (SRSWeb, not Blackboard).

If you are offered/take a deferral opportunity then, your project will be assessed as if it is your first attempt, the reported mark will not be capped and it will be considered by the next possible Assessment Board, whereas the period of your studies will be extended accordingly.

I have Failed the Project – project mark less than 40%

You have failed the project, the assessment board after having considered your case decided, depending on the credits you have attempted / passed, to:

Offer you a retake opportunity.

You were offered a 2nd attempt on the project module. You will need to repeat the project module (2 semesters) i.e. submit a new draft project proposal for a new/different project; be allocated a possibly different supervisor; submit a new project proposal and research ethics application on a new project; and work on the new project when it is approved. Also, your final project mark will be capped at the passing mark (i.e. 50%), and you will have to pay the relevant project fees. Moreover, as this will be your 2nd and final attempt on the project you will not have a referral opportunity, i.e. if you fail the project for the 2nd time you will be offered the highest possible exit award (PgDip or PgCert) and you will be excluded. Please note, you need to contact registry to re-register the project module and if you are on a student visa you also need to contact the visa compliance team to establish whether they will be able to help you extend your visa. Finally, if retaking the project is not an option for you, you should contact registry and ask to withdraw from your course with the highest possible exit award (PgDip or PgCert).

Exclude you

You have failed the project, and you cannot re-attempt it. The Assessment Board has reviewed your student profile and decided to exclude you from the course and to offer the highest possible exit award (PgDip or PgCert). The main reasons that lead to such a decision are: (a) you have already attempted the project module twice (i.e. you can have no more than two attempts on the project module); and/or (b) you would have exceeded the maximum number of credits you are allowed to attempt (i.e. the number of credits you are allowed to attempt cannot exceed the 240 credits in total) that you are allowed to attempt). Please note the decision is final and you **cannot** re-attempt the project module and/or resume your studies.

When will I receive my Award Certificate?

Award Certificates are normally posted to your home address about four to six weeks after the publication of your results, but for some overseas addresses may take longer. If you have note received your award certificate within three months of the publication of your results, then you may want to find out more about award certificates and/or contact the Student Lifecycle Team.

To avoid postal issues, check that your name and home address are correct on My Student Record, **before** (or **soon after**) the publication of your results.

If you urgently need a document that confirms your award, then you should contact Registry.

Do I need to attend a Graduation ceremony to get my award certificate?

You do not need to attend a Graduation Ceremony to get your award certificate. Award certificates are not issued at the Graduation Ceremonies – they are posted to your home address within three months of the publication of your results.

When is my Graduation Ceremony?

Graduation Ceremonies take place at the Royal Festival Hall, and are for all undergraduate, postgraduate and research degree students who have been awarded a University of Westminster qualification.

Graduation Ceremonies are held twice in a year, i.e. in July and in November of each year. The July Graduation Ceremony is mainly for those who had their degrees awarded between November and June, whereas the November Graduation Ceremony is for all other students.

What do I need to do to attend my Graduation Ceremony?

You will receive your Graduation Ceremony invitation by email at your University email account. Once you receive this email, you will be able to book your place and purchase any guest tickets you require. If you do not receive an email inviting you to the your Graduation Ceremony, you should contact the Student Lifecycle Team.

Further info about Graduation Ceremonies