MSc Project Supervision: Guidelines For Students

The MSc project is an opportunity for you to produce a substantial piece of work, under the guidance of an experienced academic and with the support of the facilities available at King's College London. Having completed the project is part of what will make you attractive to prospective employers because this achievement conveys that you have developed a range of transferrable skills and the ability to work independently. But, in order to successfully complete the project, you must not only deliver a piece of work that is of a sufficient standard, but you must also have produced it relatively independently. This document explains what your responsibilities as a project student are and what kind of support you can expect.

You are entitled to the following support from your project supervisor:

- *The role of your supervisor it to advise you on your MSc project.*
  Throughout your project, you can discuss your ideas and your work with your supervisor. While you should not expect your supervisor to make decisions for you, your supervisor will help you by scrutinising your ideas and decisions, and by challenging you (e.g. by asking difficult questions). Your supervisor will *not* do any of the following: tell you what you need to do when, define your project, plan your project, schedule your work, assist in any software engineering or programming work, debug your code, test your code, edit your dissertation or proofread your dissertation.

- *Your supervisor helps you primarily by providing feedback on what you have produced.*
  You can expect your supervisor to search for weaknesses in your project and to try and dig up problems. However, you cannot expect your supervisor to find all the weaknesses of your work before you submit it. Your supervisor's effectiveness in finding problems will depend on how well you explain your work.

- *Feedback quality depends on the quality of your work.*
  The quality of the feedback you will receive depends on the quality of the document you provide. Do not force your supervisor to concentrate on deciphering what you are attempting to say, as that will limit the quality of the feedback you will receive. You should try to explain your ideas as clearly and concisely as possible, avoid language errors, run a spelling/grammar checker and proof read your documents before you submit them.

- *Turnaround times for feedback are proportional to the size of your document and your supervisor's workload.*
  You can expect feedback to be timely, assuming you are producing documents on your work throughout the project and you do not postpone the write-up until the final month of you project. Your supervisor's response time will depend on his/her other commitments and workload, and feedback on larger documents or during busier periods will take longer. It is not realistic to expect feedback on a draft of your entire dissertation 2-3 weeks before the submission deadline when all your peers may be requesting the same thing.

- *You can and should meet your supervisor regularly.*
  You are entitled to have regular meetings with your supervisor throughout the project phase. If your supervisor is away from the College during your project, e.g. to attend a conference, visit other institutions or to go on holiday, (s)he should give you advance warning and you should adjust your planning around that. If your supervisor is away for an extended period of time (e.g. four weeks or more), you are entitled to ask for alternative arrangements to physical meetings (e.g. meetings via Skype).

- *After the project, your supervisor should be willing to write letters of reference for you.*
  You can ask your supervisor to write letters of references for you after you have completed the project or towards the

end of the project phase. You cannot expect your supervisor to be dishonest in your appraisal or to make comments for which they have no evidence. Therefore, it is not advisable to ask your supervisor to write a letter of reference before (s)he has been able to scrutinise a substantial amount of your work.

As the project student, you have the following responsibilities:

- *You own the project.*
  Except where you rely on the intellectual property of others, you have full ownership of your project. This implies that you are responsible for the view expressed in your dissertation and for the quality of the work. You (not your supervisor!) must ensure that the project deliverables meet the requirements of MSc projects at King's College London. Your supervisor can advise you throughout your project in what areas your work could be improved. But your supervisor is not responsible for quality assurance of your project.

- *You should be capable of doing all the project work independently.*
  All MSc students are expected to have the equivalent of a UK First or Upper Second Class BSc Honours degree, and the project work skills that such a degree entails. This implies that you should be able to use library facilities, search for and read academic papers, perform all work required by your research methodology, and write a clear, concise and coherent dissertation in English with appropriate referencing of your source material. You should seek to address any potential shortcomings before you begin your project.

- *You must understand what is expected of you.*
  You must ensure that you understand the requirements of MSc projects as they are described in your course hand-books and on the MSc Project webpages. You should familiarise yourself with the requirements of MSc projects presented on the project webpage.

- *You must define your project.*
  Broad ideas for project topics will be provided by all prospective MSc project supervisors, but these will need to be elaborated on in a formal proposal document to be written by you. It is your responsibility to identify an issue that you will address, to delimit the scope of your project, to chose an appropriate methodology and suitable research methods, to assess the risks of the project and to ensure that the work meets the requirements of MSc projects. Your supervisor can help you by explaining the requirements of MSc level projects and by providing feedback on your project proposal document.

- *You do all the project work.*
  This responsibility is broader than you might expect. Although some supervisors may supply some reading material for some projects, you are expected to identify the relevant literature and ensure that your literature review is comprehensive. You should not limit yourself to papers given to you by your supervisor. You should not expect your supervisor to make any software design decisions for you, help you write your code or debug it. You must write and proofread your own dissertation

- *You must plan and organise your own work.*
  You must produce all deliverables and ensure that they are delivered on time. No extensions will be granted on the grounds of poor planning/organisation.

- *You must guarantee that your project work complies with all examination regulations.*
  In particular, you have to ensure that the work you present is your own, except where stated otherwise, and that the text of the dissertation is written by you, except where stated otherwise. All sources of ideas and concepts must be attributed appropriately. You may not submit work towards receiving credit at King's College London if you have already received credit for that work. Failing to adhere to these requirements is considered cheating and may lead to severe penalties.

- *You may be asked to help your supervisor help you.*
  You may be asked to undertake some administrative work to help your supervisor help you. For example, you may be asked to write meeting minutes after a meeting and a progress report (other than those required) prior to meetings.