

Chapter 4

Preliminary Report

At the conclusion of the first trimester, students are expected to submit a preliminary report which outlines the progress they have made, and identifies any outstanding issues where feedback is required. This report should be considered a first step towards the final report - including a good treatment of the introduction and related/background work. However, as a primary purpose of the preliminary report is to give the examination committee the opportunity to comment on the student's progress (and identify any areas of concern), it will also include sections on work done, requests for feedback, and a revised timeline.

Students are also required to give a 5 minute presentation at the beginning of trimester 2 to talk about their progress and to get feedback.

4.1 Suggested Organisation

A sensible outline for the preliminary report is as follows:

- **Introduction / Proposal Review.** This should briefly outline the project and if necessary reevaluate the original plan in light of what has been learned in the interim. In particular, any significant deviations in the problem being addressed, or the solution being developed should be clearly highlighted and justified.
- **Background Survey.** This should discuss any existing solutions to the given problem, and may reference academic papers, books and other sources as appropriate. Care should be taken to identify key differences between these solutions, and that being developed in the project.
- **Work Done.** This should discuss what progress has been made on designing, implementing and evaluating the artifact. Care must be taken to ensure that any discussion of technical points are clearly explained, with diagrams being used where appropriate. In many cases, the evaluation proper will not yet have begun. However, it is important to demonstrate that sufficient thought has been given to the evaluation.
- **Future Plan.** This should highlight the main components which remain to be done, and provide a proposed time-line in which this will happen. In putting together a time line, students must take into account upcoming examinations, coursework deadlines and other disruptions.
- **Request for Feedback.** This should highlight any difficulties currently faced, and make specific requests for guidance from the examination committee. For example, a student may be unsure how best to evaluate their artifact, and would appreciate suggestions for alternative methods.

The report does not have to confirm exactly to the above structure. For example, in some cases, students may wish to present preliminary experimental results, or include a more detailed literature survey.

NOTE: in the event of an aegrotat application, the preliminary report may be used as a significant assessment item.

4.2 Format

The following points clarify the main requirements of the preliminary report:

- The report should be written using the ECS report templates provided (available for latex and MS Word).
- The report is expected to be around 8 pages in length. As a rough breakdown, a page of introduction and three to four pages on background/related work. An additional page each on progress and future plans would be appropriate. Longer (or shorter) reports are permitted, but students are advised to ensure all necessary detail is provided.
- The report should be written in such a way that any 4th year student in your specialisation can understand. Since the report will be assessed by a panel of examiners (i.e. not just the supervisor), it is critical that all examiners can properly understand what has been achieved.
- The report should include the original project proposal as an appendix.

Finally, the preliminary report must be submitted via the *online submission system* on or before the given due date (which is usually set as the last day of trimester one).

4.3 Assessment Process

The preliminary report will be read by three examiners, one of which is the primary supervisor. Students are required to give a 5 minute presentation at a specialisation meeting of the primary supervisor. Constructive feedback should be given after the presentation. We may record the sessions, so students can reference feedback. The presentations will be scheduled in the first week of trimester 2.

The examiners are expected to attend outside specialisations. If the examiners can not come to the presentation, they should read the preliminary reports and give feedback to the supervisors. The supervisor is responsible for collating feedback from the other examiners, and communicate it to the student after the presentation.