Assessment of MSci Projects - Guidelines for Students, Supervisors and Readers

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Introduction

The proposal will be assessed by the supervisor and the project will be assessed by two examiners, who will normally be the project supervisor and an assigned reader. The assessment will be based on the technical content of the work and in addition will include components relating to professional conduct and presentation skills.

Assessment Criteria

The assessment criteria for MSci proposals and projects, together with their weights, are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Proposal Marking

The supervisor mark the proposal in detail, by deciding a band for each criterion (from which the overall band is computed automatically). Additionally, the supervisor must justify their marks by addressing each criterion explicitly in their written comments.

Project Marking

The following guidelines apply to the marking of projects by supervisors and readers:

- the supervisor and reader must first assess the student's work independently

- both markers must mark the project in detail, by deciding a band for each criterion (from which the overall band is computed automatically);

- both markers must justify their marks by addressing each criterion explicitly in their written comments.

In arriving at bands, supervisors and readers should exercise their judgement regarding the difficulty level of the project. (There is no explicit criterion in the marking scheme for this issue.)

Presentation Marking

The presentation will be given to the research group relevant for the project (i.e. the research group of the supervisor) and will take place at the end of the project. The supervisor will mark the presentation based on the grade descriptors given in Figure 5.

Criterion	Meaning	Weighting
Problem Statement	Has the student analysed the research problem, stated it clearly, and justified its importance?	0.2
Literature Survey	Has the student surveyed the relevant research literature? Has he/she critically reviewed the articles? Does the bibliography indicate wide reading?	0.3
Approach and Work Plan	Has the student devised a feasible approach, and a realistic work plan, for solving the problem?	0.2
Report	Is the report complete, well-organised, clear, and literate? Does it clearly explain the research problem? Does it contain a bibliography and proper citations?	0.2
Conduct	Did the student attend meetings, and engage effectively with the supervisor?	0.1

Figure 1: MSci Research Proposal Assessment Criteria

Reconciliation and Arbitration

The supervisor's and reader's independent assessments must be reconciled as follows:

- If their overall bands differ by 0 or 1, the supervisor's band is taken as agreed.

- If their overall bands differ by 2 or 3, the supervisor and reader must confer to decide the agreed mark. If agreement is not possible, the Projects Coordinator will invoke arbitration.

- If their overall bands differ by 4 or more, the Projects Coordinator can invoke arbitration.

- The projects coordinator has the discretion to invoke arbitration for any other reason, for example: where the two marks fall on either side of a critical borderline; where the agreed mark is a fail; or where the agreed mark seems unreasonably high or low.

Arbitration can entail requesting that the supervisor and reader discuss their assessments and try to reach an agreement. Alternatively, arbitration can entail the Project Coordinator engaging a second reader (third marker), who marks the projects independently. The supervisor and both readers must then confer to make a final decision.

Grade Descriptors

Proposal, project and presentation grade descriptors are presented in Figures 3-5. The descriptors are in the form of a matrix, with one row for each grade and one column for each of the standard criteria identified above. The matrix includes a column for the overall standard of work. It can be seen from the row corresponding to grade A that only truly challenging projects are eligible for the very highest bands.

Criterion	Meaning	Weighting
Analysis	Has the student surveyed relevant research literature? Has he/she analysed the research problem, and devised a suitable approach for solving the problem?	0.10
Product	Has the research been conducted well? Does it show evidence of original thinking? Are there any significant errors? Might the research be worthy of publication, perhaps after revision?	0.40
Evaluation	Has the student critically evaluated and analysed the research results? Does he/she understand their significance? Does he/she have good suggestions for further work?	0.15
Research paper	Is the research paper, well-organised, and literate? Does it clearly explain the research problem, and how it was solved? Does it contain a bibliography and proper citations?	0.25
Conduct	Did the student attend meetings, and engage effectively with the supervisor?	0.10

Figure 2: MSci Research Project Assessment Criteria

Grade (Band)	Problem Statement	Literature Survey	Approach and Work Plan	Report	Conduct	Overall
A (A1–A5)	The problem statement is excellent and fully justified.	The survey is comprehensive, and the reviews are incisively critical.	The approach and work plan are clearly feasible and innovative.	The report is complete, very well organised, very clear, and highly literate.	Excellent.	An excellent proposal of MSci 1st class standard. (A1 or A2 signifies truly outstanding work.)
B (B1–B3)	The problem statement is very good and properly justified.	The survey is wide, and the reviews are critical.	The approach and work plan are feasible.	The report is complete, well organised, clear, and literate.	Very good.	A very good proposal of MSci upper 2nd class standard.
C (C1–C3)	The problem statement is good and justified.	The survey is adequate, and the reviews are moderately critical.	The approach and work plan are largely feasible.	The report is nearly complete, fairly well organised, mostly clear, but occasionally less than literate.	Good.	A good proposal of MSci lower 2nd class standard.
D (D1–D3)	The problem statement is fair and partly justified.	The survey is patchy, and the reviews are rather uncritical.	The approach and work plan are partly feasible.	The report is partly complete, not very well organised, clear in parts, and often less than literate.	Fair.	A fair proposal of MSci 3rd class standard.
E (E1–E3)	The problem statement and justification are rather inadequate.	The survey is inadequate, and the reviews are uncritical.	The approach and work plan are rather infeasible.	The report is incomplete, disorganised, mostly unclear, and mostly less than literate.	Weak.	A weak proposal below MSci pass standard.
F (F1–F3)	The problem statement and justification are inadequate.	The survey and review are poor.	The approach and work plan are ill-conceived.	The report is scrappy, disorganised, unclear, and illiterate.	Poor.	A poor proposal well below MSci pass standard.
G (G1–G2)	The problem statement and justification are very inadequate.	The survey and review are very poor.	The approach and work plan are very ill-conceived.	The report is very scrappy, disorganised, opaque, and illiterate.	Very poor.	A very poor proposal well below MSci pass standard.
H	No significant attempt.					

Figure 3: MSci Research Proposal Grade Descriptors

Grade (Band)	Analysis	Product	Evaluation	Research Paper	Conduct	Overall
A (A1–A5)	The problem statement is excellent. The survey is comprehensive. The approach is clearly feasible and innovative.	The research is excellent and innovative, producing valuable results, with at most minor errors.	The evaluation shows deep understanding of the results' significance. There are excellent suggestions for further work.	The research paper is complete, very well organised, very clear, and highly literate.	Excellent.	An excellent project of MSci 1st class standard, and possibly worthy of dissemination. (A1 or A2 signifies a truly outstanding and challenging project definitely worthy of dissemination.)
B (B1–B3)	The problem statement is very good. The survey is wide. The approach is feasible.	The research is very good, producing worthwhile results, but with some errors.	The evaluation shows very good understanding of the results' significance. There are very good suggestions for further work.	The research paper is complete, well organised, clear, and literate.	Very good.	A very good project of MSci upper 2nd class standard.
C (C1–C3)	The problem statement is good. The survey is adequate. The approach is largely feasible.	The research is quite good, producing some worthwhile results, but with a number of errors.	The evaluation shows good understanding of the results' significance. There are good suggestions for further work.	The research paper is nearly complete, fairly well organised, mostly clear, but occasionally less than literate.	Good.	A good project of MSci lower 2nd class standard.
D (D1–D3)	The problem statement is fair. The survey is patchy. The approach is partly feasible.	The research is fair, producing a few worthwhile results, but with significant errors.	The evaluation shows patchy understanding of the results' significance. There are unconvincing suggestions for further work.	The research paper is partly complete, not very well organised, clear in parts, and often less than literate.	Fair.	A fair project of MSci 3rd class standard.
E (E1–E3)	The problem statement is rather confused. The survey is inadequate. The approach is rather infeasible.	The research is weak, producing scant results.	The evaluation is weak. There are scant suggestions for further work.	The research paper is incomplete, disorganised, mostly unclear, and mostly less than literate.	Weak.	A weak project below MSci pass standard.
F (F1–F3)	The problem statement is confused. The survey is poor. The approach is ill-conceived.	The research is incompetent, producing no results.	The evaluation is poor. There are no worthwhile suggestions for further work.	The research paper is scrappy, disorganised, unclear, and illiterate.	Poor.	A poor project well below MSci pass standard.
G (G1–G2)	The problem statement is very confused. The survey is very poor. The approach is very ill-conceived.	The research is very incompetent, producing no results.	The evaluation is very poor. There are no worthwhile suggestions for further work.	The research paper is very scrappy, disorganised, opaque, and illiterate.	Very poor.	A very poor project well below MSci pass standard.
H	No significant attempt.					

Figure 4: MSci Research Project Grade Descriptors

Grade (Band)	Content	Use of Visual Aids	Questions	Delivery
A (A1–A5)	Choice of topics to summarise the research indicates an excellent knowledge and understanding.	Very attractive and informative visual aids, communicating effectively a summary of the key points to the audience.	Handles questions very well, revealing a depth of insight into the work.	Fluent, confident delivery. Good audience involvement by means of frequent and effective eye contact. Flowing narrative from one topic to next.
B (B1–B3)	Topics chosen indicate a very good knowledge and understanding of the research.	Visual aids are informative in general and succeed in communicating effectively a summary of the key points to the audience.	Handles questions well, revealing some insight into the work.	Mostly fluent, confident delivery. Good eye contact and narrative flow from one topic to next.
C (C1–C3) D (D1–D3)	Topics chosen indicate some knowledge and understanding of the research.	Visual aids are satisfactory to good, though some of the key issues are lost to the audience, perhaps because there are too many points to be covered in the time available, or the visual aids do not contain enough information.	Responses to questions betray little insight into the work.	Hesitant or somewhat hesitant delivery. Some eye contact in places, though mostly faces the OHP screen. Disjointed narrative flow from one topic to next.
E (E1–E3)	Topics chosen indicate a weak knowledge and understanding of the problem to be solved,.	Visual aids are weak, with the result that the audience is confused as to the problem being solved.	Answers to questions indicate a weak knowledge and understanding.	Halting delivery. Very little eye contact possibly reading entirely from notes. Little narrative flow from one topic to next.
F (F1–F3) G (G1–G2)	The content of the talk is minimal or largely inappropriate and reveals a significant lack of knowledge and understanding of the problem to be solved.	Visual aids are poor or non-existent, giving very little benefit to the audience.	Responses to questions betray no insight into the work.	Incoherent, disorganised delivery. No eye contact. No narrative flow from one topic to next.
H	No significant attempt.			

Figure 5: MSci Research Presentation Grade Descriptors