

# **MSc Dissertation Project Frequently Asked Questions**

November 2021

[Q] I am really really interested in that project!

[A] If you are interested in a particular project, let the supervisor know

- Popular topics will have a lot of students interested in
- After the student ranking period, staff will rank students – if you really want to do a particular project, you want that supervisor to rank you high

[Q] I am interested in that project but I don't have a recommended skill ...

[A] If a skill is recommended, you don't have to have it as long as you are prepared to do some extra work to develop that skill

[Q] I have found one topic that is interesting, but I would like to do something slightly different ...

[A] You may contact the supervisor and discuss your idea – they are usually flexible

[Q] How can I communicate with a supervisor of my interest?

[A] Contact them by email to start communication

- It is a good idea to discuss the project with them so that they will have some idea who you are
- You may even meet them in person (or online) if they are available

[Q] Is the project selection process ‘first come, first served’?

[A] No — but you must complete ranking of your favorite projects by the ranking deadline in early December

[Q] How many project should I rank?

[A] If you don't rank enough projects, there is a risk you will be assigned randomly

- The more projects you rank, the better chance you will be landed on a project of your choice
- However it is impossible to say precisely how many is 'enough'

[Q] How does the matchmaking algorithm work?

[A] It is essentially a variant on the Gale-Shapley solution to the stable marriage problem

- If you rank a project #1 and staff ranks you #1 for that project, it is most likely that you are assigned to that project
- There is then a trickle-down process, until all projects and students are paired, e.g.
  - Student A ranked project X #1, project Y #2
  - Student B ranked project Y #1, project X #2
  - Staff members for X and Y both rank Student A #1, Student B #2
  - Student A will get project X, Student B will get project Y



[Q] Why could I not get that project, even though it has not been allocated to anybody?

[A] It can happen – the most likely situation is that the number of project students has reached the upper limit by that supervisor without having another student for the project of your interest

[Q] I am assigned a project supervisor randomly – can I change to other supervisor?

[A] It is unlikely any change of a supervisor can be made, because most staff members are fully loaded with their new project students up to the limit

- If randomly allocated, you should contact the assigned supervisor immediately to discuss the topic, then either
  - You agree with one of projects suggested by the supervisor, or
  - You propose your own idea that is agreed by the supervisor

[Q] Can I work on my project remotely during the summer?

[A] To receive guidance it is expected that you are able to meet your supervisor **in person** during the summer

- Individual arrangement may vary — eg, staff, as well as students, may be off (for holiday, personal study, trip) for some weeks at various timings in the summer

[Q] Do I have to attend the project presentation?

[A] Yes — it is an integral part of assessment

- It is scheduled in early September, typically a week before submission of final dissertation
- Presentation format will be announced later (it is likely run by a conference style at computer rooms)
- Attendance is required
- Plan well — presentation itself as well as your housing and travel schedule