



# UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

School of Engineering,  
Computing and  
Mathematics

School of Engineering, Computing and Mathematic

PROJ518: MSc Dissertation and Research Skills

Project Proposal



## **Introduction**

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March – **Full Project proposal submission** (10 % of the module grade)

The dissertation proposal prompts you to use the PROJ518 taught sessions as best as possible to prepare yourself for the dissertation proper. You should start thinking about potential dissertation questions and talk to members of staff about your ideas. Begin reading the scientific literature on topics of interest in week 1 and continue reading throughout the year, even if you only manage one paper, or a few introductions and abstracts, per week.

By 14<sup>th</sup> February you just need to have settled on a proposed project title or topic, found a supervisor, and submitted this information to the DLE. The full project proposal is then due on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March. The dissertation proposal is not a firm commitment to a project, i.e. you may change the details for your final dissertation. However the more clearly you can identify your project in your proposal, the more time you have to prepare for your independent work.

### **Dissertation proposal requirements:**

Your dissertation proposal should be a maximum of 6 pages long and be submitted electronically in Word or PDF format. Title pages and reference lists are not counted in the page limit.

The dissertation proposal must include the following:

#### **Brief introduction to the research area**

This should set the scene for the proposal. It should include some references to the literature but is an introduction to the topic, not a review of the literature.

#### **Aims and objectives**

Following from the introduction, identify the over-arching aim of the work. The objectives should state how the aims will be achieved.

#### **The research context, in the form of a summary review of relevant literature**

This should cover key papers relevant to your research area. You will build on it further in your final dissertation.

#### **The proposed research design**

Relate the research design to your aims and objectives. You should consider questions such as what data do you need? How will you acquire this data? What type of analysis are required in order to achieve your aims and objectives? etc.

#### **Project Risk Assessment**

Describe the risks associated with your proposed project, their likelihood of happening and your risk mitigation strategies. This does not need to be a formal risk assessment for a specific data collection activity at this stage (e.g. laboratory activity, site visit, field work etc.), but instead identifies the risks to the completion of the project. Examples of these could include inability to access data from a company, lack of responses to a questionnaire or failure of a piece of laboratory equipment.

#### **Ethics**

With reference to the University Research Ethics and other sources provided on the PROJ518 DLE webpage identify whether your proposed research will require ethical approval and why. Please discuss with your supervisor if you are unsure.

If you do require ethical approval, please state whether you have applied for approval on the Plymouth Ethics Online System (PEOS) – assessable here [www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/governance/research-ethics-policy](http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/governance/research-ethics-policy) . If you require approval but have yet to apply please outline your timeframe for doing so.

## **Impact**

Describe the potential impact of your research and identify steps that could be taken to achieve this impact (noting that you will not be expected to carry out these steps during PROJ518). Impact can take many forms include social benefit, economic growth, environmental benefits and scientific advancement.

For example could the results of your dissertation contribute to a commercially exploitable product? Does your research have the potential to change government policy? Could your research improve people's safety? If so, what steps could be taken to maximise these potential benefits and get your research findings known to people that can act on them.

When considering potential impact you should consider the UN's 17 sustainable development goals and whether your research has the potential to contribute to these. These can be found here: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

## **Formative feedback on the dissertation proposal**

At Masters level, it is expected that your dissertation supervisor will guide you, but not dictate what is to be done. For the proposal as for the final dissertation, you can negotiate a one-time feedback session of a draft prior to submission from your supervisor. Please note that adequate time must be given for your supervisor to provide feedback. Please negotiate timings with your supervisor. The marking criteria for the dissertation proposal are based on the criteria used for your actual dissertation.

## **Marking criteria & grade descriptors**

Your proposal will be judged on:

Clarity of aims and objectives;

Research/experimental design;

Scope and relevance of the literature review;

Grammar/formatting of references.

**Fail: <50%:** The work fails to adequately address the points above and is not of masters standard. The proposal contains errors and omissions. The proposal fails to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the subject area and may have inadequate referencing and/or be poorly presented. The project may not be feasible as it is presented in the proposal. Any work that includes plagiarised material will be referred as an Academic Offence

**Masters Pass: 50% or above:** The work addresses all of the points above to a satisfactory level and demonstrates a sufficient knowledge of the subject area for the project to proceed. The work is generally accurate, perhaps containing some minor errors or omissions. The project is viable but may need some refinement.

**Masters Merit: 60% or above:** The proposal addresses all of the points above to a good level. The proposal is accurate and without technical errors (some small typographical errors are permitted). The proposal is well presented, structured and researched and is based on appropriate and correctly referenced peer-reviewed sources. The project is viable as presented.

**Masters Distinction: 70% or above:** The proposal is of exceptional quality, addressing all of the requirements to a high level. Excellent subject knowledge is demonstrated, including substantial background research. The proposal is very well presented and structured with only one or two very minor typographical errors permitted. The project is very well planned and is viable as presented.