

Computing Honours Project

(COMP10034)

Lecture 2

Managing your Hons Project
and Completing the Project
Specification Form

Managing your Honours Project

Worth 10% of Hons Project module marks

Based on how you manage your Hons Project and organise meetings with your supervisor

3 formal meetings per term are mandatory and documentation is produced for these meetings

You will have many other meetings with your supervisor but these will be less formal and not require the same documentation to be produced

Formal Project Management Meetings

These are scheduled for:

- **Weeks 4, 8 and 11 in Term 1**
- **Weeks 4, 8 and 11 in Term 2**

You should prepare:

- A single-page **progress report** and **plan**, and
- An **agenda** before the meetings, as well as
- Submit **minutes** after the meetings

Formal Project Management Meetings

You should schedule meetings with your supervisor

Before each meeting prepare a 1 page agenda:

- Summary of progress against previous plan
- Agenda items to discuss
- Email and send by Friday preceding meeting

Agenda items may include: tasks undertaken, deliverables, quality of work, progress, schedule, risks, contingencies, plan for next month

Formal Project Management Meetings

After each scheduled meeting write a 1 page report containing:

- Minutes of the meeting (outcomes of the agenda)
- Plan for the next month (tasks and schedule)

This should be emailed to your Supervisor by the end of the week of the meeting

Formal Project Management Meetings

The forms you should submit are provided as a Word handout, as well as posted up on the Moodle site

Attendance at formal project management meetings will be input on to the University's attendance system on banner

Could result in you being withdrawn from the module due to lack of engagement

Advice on Managing the Hons Project

Managing Time

Time is the main constraint in your Hons Project

Should be spending at least 13 hours a week

You need to plan how that time is to be used – it soon passes by

Block off specific days or specific blocks of time (e.g. 4 hours) in a day

Advice on Managing the Hons Project

Don't do nothing for weeks and then try and cram in all the work at the last minute

Tasks and Deliverables

Set milestones agreed with your supervisor as to when specific outputs, tasks, drafts and deliverables are to be completed

Advice on Managing the Hons Project

Tasks and Deliverables

Make them measurable

How will you know when it is completed?

How will you know when it is 50% completed?

Avoid being over-optimistic when estimating timelines time to complete tasks

Advice on Managing the Hons Project

Keys to working efficiently:

- Think and plan ahead for each day or part of day
- Understand what you are trying to achieve during each day or part of a day
- Get down to work as quickly as possible
- Prioritise tasks appropriately
- Avoid distractions
- Keep papers and workspace well organised
- Take breaks when you need to rest

Advice on Managing the Hons Project

Decide which tasks/deliverables are 'standalone'

Decide which tasks/deliverables are dependent upon the successful completion of others (**Critical Tasks**)

You can produce a **Gantt Chart** for your formal project management meetings with your supervisor

Advice on Managing the Hons Project

Identifying Risks

What are the most important risks in your project?

What happens if a company/participants pull out of your planned study?

Always have a back-up plan?

Advice on Managing the Hons Project

Identifying Risks

ALWAYS back-up your work – have back-up saved on flash/portable drive and/or on another computer

If your computer/laptop at home dies or is stolen and all your work was on it and it is not backed-up that your responsibility!

Back-up your work each time you work on your Hons Project

Advice on Managing the Hons Project

Identifying Risks

Take care when copying over files

Don't overwrite the most up-to-date version of your work with an older version – losing days/weeks worth of effort!

Make sure you have up-to-date anti-virus software on your laptop/home computer

Don't lose your portable drives – leave them on the train or in labs or they fall out of your pocket etc?

Working with your Supervisor

You will have probably found that after 3 years of being at UWS different staff have different 'personalities' and ways of working

Find out early...

1. How your Supervisor likes to work
2. How much time they will or can give
3. What they expect of you

Make best use of feedback you receive

Working with your Supervisor

Sort of help you might need:

1. Advice on assessment and marking
2. Deciding and scoping topic
3. Searching the literature
4. Formulating research questions
5. Advice on research design/methodology
6. Help in solving problems and issues
7. Advice on appropriate software and hardware
8. Check on your progress
9. Comment on drafts

Working with your Supervisor

Try and be specific as to what help you need or what questions you might have

The more specific you are and the more information you provide, the more help and advice your supervisor should be able to provide

Overall Advice

Try and not panic and get too overwhelmed

The more organised and the more consistently you work the less chance of this happening

Everyone has doubts and goes through 'bad patches' – you get through these. Talk with your supervisor

Create yourself an artificial deadline ahead of the formal submission deadline – buys you more time to review work and get feedback

Overall Advice

Prioritise the items on your 'to do' list

High Importance / High Urgency	High Importance / Low Urgency
Low Importance / High Urgency	Low Importance / Low Urgency

Overall Advice

URGENCY = length of time before the task must be completed

IMPORTANCE = weighing up benefits of completing a task against the losses if the task is unfinished

Overall Advice

Which personality type are you?

- **THE LATE NIGHTER** – 2am and panicking - too tired to review and polish work
- **THE EXTENSION SEEKER** – always a good reason for being late and never your fault – wears rather thin with supervisor
- **THE LAST MINUTER** – can only get motivated when things get close to the wire and adrenaline is flowing – shows lack of organisation

Overall Advice

Which personality type are you?

- **THE KNOW-IT-ALL** – has it all under control, no need to get worked up. Gets caught out by underestimated size, scale and time needed.
- **THE PERFECTIONIST** – aims high – looking for that A(1-3). Can get caught out trying to get perfection on one part at expense of another more important part.

Overall Advice

Putting things off is too easy (some signs):

- Convincing yourself that low priority work is more important or preferable
- Switching frequently among tasks and not making much progress
- Talking about your work rather than doing it
- Planning for too long rather than working
- Can't get started (writers' block)
- Spending too long on presentational elements
- Finding mundane TV programmes fascinating

Ethical Approval

Any research that involves working in sensitive areas requires a detailed form to be completed and the proposed study to be put forward for consideration by the University's Ethics Committee

This process can take up to 6-8 weeks to complete and can delay the start of your research

Ethical Approval

Research that may fall into this category can include:

- Working with children, schools, vulnerable or at risk adults or groups
- Work involving access to personal records or data protection issues
- Work involving content and issues that might be likely to cause offence

Ethical Approval

The overwhelming vast majority of Honours Project students are likely to be novice researchers who are **‘learning the ropes’** and working on investigative or development project not likely to be ‘ethically sensitive’

Research in ‘ethically sensitive’ areas should really be left to experienced and qualified researchers rather than novices or at least involve a very high degree of guidance and supervision

If you are considering undertaking an Hons Project that may involve issues requiring ethical approval you should discuss this with your Supervisor who should then contact Mark Stansfield (Module Coordinator)

Ethical Approval

Issues that need to be considered include:

- Are the participants and subjects from any vulnerable group or (e.g. NHS patients, children)?
- Are the participants and subjects of the study in any way unable to give free and informed consent within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 to the best of your knowledge?
- Are you asking questions that are likely to be considered impertinent or to cause distress to any of the participants?
- Are any of the subjects in a special relationship with the applicant (e.g. family members)?
- Does your project pose any risk to either yourself or the participant?

Ethical Approval

If the answer is 'Yes' to any of those questions then you must contact Mark Stansfield

It is highly unlikely that ethical approval would be granted in these circumstances

Ethical Approval

It is vital that:

- Participants will be/have been advised that they may withdraw at any stage if they so wish
- Issues of confidentiality and arrangements for the storage and security of material during and after the project and for the disposal of material have been considered
- Issues of confidentiality have been considered in relation to the writing up of results e.g. anonymising participant and company names if necessary
- Arrangements for providing subjects with research results if they wish to have them have been considered

Ethical Approval

The University has deemed it vital that anyone undertaking research with human participants must produce a '**Plain Language Statement**' for their work and get a '**Participant Consent Form**'

The forms should be completed where it is practical to do so, for example, if you are conducting interviews, evaluations etc or any other type of activity with people as part of your Honours Project

This is what both forms look like.....

Both forms are available on the Honours Project Moodle site

Ethical Approval

Completing the two forms is fairly straightforward – just a case of inserting the text relating to your research into the forms and then getting them signed

All completed consent forms should be kept safely by the student

Ethical Approval

All completed Hons Project Specification forms will be reviewed in order to identify possible issues requiring ethical approval