MPhil ACS / CST Part III Projects

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MPhil Course Director

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http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/teaching/masters/projects/
An *independent* piece of work

- Based on faculty suggestion or own idea
  - Look on the project web page for suggestions
  - Beware of old proposals from previous years
  - Talk with Michaelmas Term lecturers
  - Talk with Lent Term lecturers
- Must have a member of academic staff to supervise (normally “UTO” – University Teaching Officer)
  - UTO signs off on the project, and examines it
  - *May* have a day-to-day co-supervisor or help
A research project

- The word research describes an aspiration...
  - A successful project should be something that could lead to a paper submission to a decent venue
  - Perfectly acceptable to do a measurement study or to reproduce (or not!) previous results

- Aim is to show you can:
  - find a problem and area (perhaps with help),
  - produce a research proposal,
  - effectively carry out a decent amount of work, and
  - write it up coherently.
A proposal has three parts

- **Coversheet**
  - with signatures of supervisor and course adviser
  - and word counts!

- **Proposed research area and plan**
  - An abstract (<100 words; optional)
  - Introduction, approach and outcomes (<500 words)
  - Work plan (<500 words)

- **Resources form**
  - What equipment, software, network etc you need …
  - … even if you are using your own machine
... *unless* you want to do an NLP project

- Choose 3 projects from 3 *different* supervisors
- Submit full proposal based on one of these by 28th January
Introduction, approach & outcomes

- Motivate the work and explain the context
  - General background
  - Key references to related work
- What’s the basic idea and approach?
  - What are you thinking of doing, and how is it going to solve the problem (or need) you’ve identified?
- What are you going to “produce”?
  - Try to name the specific things (and describe them) in this part of the proposal – this will allow you to refer to them in the work plan
Work plan: what you will do and when

- Total of approximately 28 weeks
- One approach would be to divide the time available into 14 two-week chunks:
  - Each chunk describes work to be done and milestones achieved (as appropriate)
  - Leave two chunks for writing dissertation
  - Leave one chunk for contingencies
  - If you plan holidays, sports trips, travel to interviews, account for these
**Deadlines** *(check web page for definitive dates)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Part III</th>
<th>MPhil</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial proposal</td>
<td>13th November*</td>
<td>20th November*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review feedback</td>
<td>20th November</td>
<td>27th November</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revised proposal</td>
<td>27th November</td>
<td>4th December</td>
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<td><em>Research begins</em></td>
<td>30th November</td>
<td><em>7th December</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>(NLP full proposal)</td>
<td>28th January</td>
<td>28th January</td>
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<td>Progress reviews</td>
<td>~29th February</td>
<td>~7nd March</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title changes</td>
<td>20th May</td>
<td>1st June</td>
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<td>Presentations</td>
<td>6th June</td>
<td>21st June</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission <em>(hard deadline)</em></td>
<td>noon, 3rd June</td>
<td>noon, 10th June</td>
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- Self-proposed project deadline is 7th (Part III) or 11th November (MPhil).
- NLP projects – nominate top three preferences
Risk management

- Intellectual
  - Hard deadline means you must produce something!
- Practical
  - Do not rely on speculative work of others, such as untested software and flaky hardware
- Legal
  - We do not accept dissertations with NDAs
- Ethical
  - Ethics Committee reviews research with human participants
The dissertation

- MPhil: 15,000 words
- Part III: 12,000 words
- The word count excludes the bibliography, photographs and diagrams but includes tables, footnotes, and appendices (with a few exceptions)
- Writing this much text is **hard** work: make sure you leave enough time to do it well
Take care not to plagiarise others

- The declaration of originality states everything is your own work except where explicitly stated
- Your results should be reproducible
  - You will need to upload an electronic copy of your source code together with your dissertation
- Examiners reserve the right to call a student for a viva voce examination for any reason
  - In Cambridge, on 10th June / 23rd June
Remember severe penalty for missing deadlines

- Coursework penalty = \( \frac{n}{10} \times \text{mark} \)
  - where \( n \) is the number of days late, rounded up to the nearest integer
- Take-home tests: no submission, zero marks
- Project or essay: no submission, outright failure

- No deadline extensions save for exceptional circumstances (illness or other grave reason)
Questions?

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