Advice on 3rd Year Projects for Examination in Trinity Term of 2019

Final Honour School of Computer Science

Computer Science candidates are required to undertake a project in the third year; Mathematics and Computer Science and Computer Science & Philosophy candidates do not undertake a project. These informal notes are intended to supplement, but not to replace, the formal regulations in the grey book, and to amplify the advice given in the Course Handbook. Questions can be addressed to the projects coordinator, Dr Jonathan Whiteley (jonathan.whiteley@cs.ox.ac.uk) .

1 Amount of work

The project amounts to about one third of the work in the third year of the course, and one third of the examination credit, and so should be thought of as occupying about a term's work in total. For the project to go smoothly without you feeling under time pressure, it is important to settle on your project and find a project supervisor by the end of Hilary Term of your 2nd year, and make good preparation over the Long Vacation. The norm is that the first draft of your report is finished during the Easter vacation of the third year.

2 Choosing a project

You should begin by discussing your choice of project and the list of potential supervisors with your tutor. A project might involve the specification, design and implementation of a piece of software or hardware, or the use of existing computing tools to develop some proofs or similar pieces of mathematics. A list of outlines for suggested projects are published by the Department of Computer Science and can be found at

http://www.cs.ox.ac.uk/teaching/studentprojects/undergraduate.html

Projects need not be drawn from this list, but it may serve both as a guide to drawing up proposals and as a help in finding supervisors. Many supervisors are willing to discuss variations on the project topics they have suggested, or to consider different projects within the same general area that are suggested by candidates themselves. If you want to suggest your own project, then you should discuss the possibilities with your tutor and with potential supervisors. Your tutor may be able to supervise the project, or it may be better to choose another supervisor whose interests fit the project better. Note particularly that the Regulations require that the project be on a topic in *Computer Science*; this means that projects whose main focus is business or economic aspects of the use of computers are not likely to be accepted.

Please note certain supervisors are more popular than others, and supervisors may decide that they cannot take on any further students.

3 Proposing a project and registering

A project proposal must be approved by the Undergraduate Supervisory Committee for Computer Science; in practice this responsibility is delegated to a Projects Committee.

Whether you choose a project from the published list or propose your own, it is best to make contact with a supervisor and get his or her agreement before submitting your proposal. Supervisors are normally expected to be a member of the Faculty of Computer Science or Faculty of Mathematics or the Faculty of Engineering Sciences. If you are unable to find a supervisor, please indicate at least three projects from the list (from at least two different possible supervisors) and the Projects Committee will endeavour to find an appropriate supervisor.

Proposals should be delivered to Brenda Deeley at the Department of Computer Science, Wolfson Building, Parks Road, by **Monday of week 7 of Hilary term of your second year.**

4 Carrying out the project

You should expect to see your supervisor for half an hour per week, or for longer on a less frequent basis. You should contact your supervisor to arrange meetings, please do not wait for your supervisor to contact you. If you find that your supervisor does not respond please speak to your tutor in the first instance.

You will be asked to provide a self-progress report each term and you can raise any concerns you have about the project, these reports will be reviewed by the projects co-ordinator and sent to your tutor. They will also be sent to your supervisor unless you indicate that you do not want them to receive it.

What to do if things go wrong…

It is inevitable that not all projects will run smoothly or as expected. Please do not wait until Trinity term to raise concerns about your project, the sooner someone is made aware of any issues you have the more likely they are to be able to help. You should speak to your supervisor or tutor in the first instance please do feel free to speak to someone in the Computer Science Academic Admin team as well.

5 Reporting

In writing your project report, you will find it helpful to have a target audience in mind. You should write as if for another undergraduate who is going to continue the project. You may assume that they have the same knowledge from courses they have taken as you did when you started, but would benefit from a concise summary of the background reading you did as you began the project. They will also want an outline of how your software works, what the components do, and how they fit together, so that they get the big picture without being overwhelmed by detail.

Please find further information about how to report on your project in the handbook supplement for 2nd, 3rd and 4th years, which can be found at:

http://www.cs.ox.ac.uk/teaching/handbooks.html