

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE**

**GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING PRS ASSESSED WORK**

**Requirements**

As part of your training and preparation for research, if you are intending to transfer from Probationer Research Student (PRS) status to DPhil status, you are required to complete three pieces of assessed work in your first year. If you are planning to transfer to MSc by Research status, you are required to complete two pieces of assessed work, both of which may be lecture courses.

An assessment is either a taught (lecture) course, a term paper or a reading course; at least one must be a term paper, and at least one must be a taught course, as described in the Graduate Research Student Handbook.

You are permitted to take more than two taught courses, if supported by your supervisor. In this case your three best pieces of work, including 1 term paper would be used for your transfer.

**Selecting and registering for courses**

Lecture courses can be selected from the [MSc in Advanced Computer Science](#) or [MSc in Mathematics and the Foundations of Computer Science](#) (MFoCS administered by the Mathematical Institute) or advanced undergraduate courses in the Department of Computer Science. The course selected should normally be characterized as Schedule C within the Department of Computer Science. Students may request to take a Schedule B course provided DGS approval is received.

PRS may also select advanced undergraduate or graduate courses offered by other departments, such as Mathematics, Statistics, Engineering Science, Physics, and Economics. Students who take such a course need to discuss with their supervisor how it will be assessed. If it is not possible for the PRS to sit an examination with other students on the course, your supervisor is expected to set and arrange for the marking of a piece of written work based on the course followed. Please note that the taught course should be marked by someone other than the supervisor as it is important that at least one of the Transfer requirements serves as an independent assessment.

For courses in the Department of Computer Science, your tutorial class problem sheets, practical exercises and end-of-course assessment will be marked as for MSc students. Your attendance and marks will be recorded in the Minerva system and will be made available to your supervisor and the DGS.

You will need to register for each of the Computer Science courses you intend to take via the Minerva system.

If you wish to take one of the one week courses on the Professional Master's Programme then you will need to complete this form but also register separately with the Office Manager for Professional Master's Programme, [pro@cs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:pro@cs.ox.ac.uk). Any such requests will be subject to approval from the Director of the Software Engineering programme and will need to be accompanied by a short justification from both student and supervisor as to why the course would be beneficial and how it is relevant to your DPhil topic.

Any changes to coursework and term paper selection, as the year progresses and interests focus, should be recorded by emailing the Graduate Studies Administrator.

**Assessment**

In most cases you will be required to undertake the same summative assessment as MSc students for a course in the Department of Computer science, this is normally a take-home mini project or a timed written

examination. However, if the same form of summative assessment is not deemed appropriate by the supervisor (or lecturer), the supervisor should advise an alternative (such as essay, viva or end-of-course exam) and indicate it on the PRS Assessed Work form.

A specially designed reading course, based on a selection of research papers on a theme related to a student's research, may provide an alternative to a lecture course. Your supervisor would then expect you to produce some written work based on these papers.

You are required to achieve an average of 65% across all three pieces of assessed work with at least 50% in each piece.

### **Assessment of Term Papers**

A term paper is a mini-project set by your supervisor, which can be completed in a term. Its aim is to test the student's ability to carry out advanced study and independent research; its format is intended to be flexible. A term paper may take the form of a case study, or an essay designed to explore and formulate a research topic, or an MFoCS-style mini-project. There is no formal word limit, but as a rough guide, it should be around 12 LNCS pages (or about 7000 words).

A term paper can be a workshop or conference paper (or an early version thereof) (co)authored by the PRS. However, there is no requirement that a term paper be publishable.

Term papers are usually assessed by your supervisor. An assessment pro-forma should be completed and submitted with the term paper when you apply for transfer.

The following marking scheme should be used.

- 90-100: *Outstanding*. Publishable in first-ranked conferences in the field (e.g. LICS, STOC, FOCS, OSDI, POPL, PLDI, etc.)
- 80-89: *Excellent*. Publishable in good conferences.
- 70-79: *Very good*. Publishable in serious workshops.
- 60-69: *Good*. The candidate has demonstrated a good understanding of some state-of-the-art ideas and techniques, and an ability to apply his or her understanding.
- 50-59: *Adequate*. The work submitted, while sufficient in quantity, suffers from major defects to show a lack of adequate understanding or ability to apply results.
- 0-49: *Unsatisfactory*.

### **Assessment of Reading Courses**

Your supervisor may create a specially designed reading course, based on a selection of research papers on a theme related to a student's research which may provide an alternative to a lecture course. This would be assessed by a paper and would be expected to contain:

- a critical analysis of the development of ideas, and connections between ideas
- a view of the key questions driving the area
- a collection of open problems.

It should also contain

- worked examples and/or case studies and may even contain problems and their solutions

PRS ASSESSED WORK FORM

**Please return the completed form via email to the Graduate Studies Administrator, [graduate.studies@cs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@cs.ox.ac.uk) no later than Monday of third week. Please remember that you also need to register on Minerva for each taught course (details will be emailed to you shortly)**

Name:

Supervisor:

Assessed Work:

<b>Type of Assessed Work</b> (Term Paper, Taught Course, Reading Course)	<b>Title of Course/Paper</b>	<b>Term taking place</b> (MT/HT/TT)	<b>Method of Assessment</b> (Mini-project/Sit-down exam/Supervisor marked)

Student's signature: ..... Date .....

Supervisor's signature: ..... Date .....

Approval of Director of Graduate Studies: .....