

4. PROJECT GUIDELINES

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As part of your MSc you are required to undertake an independent research project and dissertation. From August 2024 onwards, this project will be worth 60 credits and so students are expected to dedicate at least 600 hours to this element of the course.

- A research project is a systematic investigation involving a collection and analysis of data with the intention of resolving a problem and/or gap in knowledge.
- A dissertation is a written output of the research project.

4.1 Project Requirement

The topic must be relevant to the degree for which you are registered, as per the below:

Engineering Business Management

For the MSc in Engineering Business Management the project should normally be related to the management of:

- companies in the engineering sector,
- the engineering function within a non-engineering company *or*
- the supply chain within the engineering sector.

The project could address many different aspects such as operational, financial, human resource, technical or strategic management issues.

Where the project is of a technical nature, there must be clear evidence of business benefit from this technology.

If the focus of the project is outside the above industrial spectrum it **MUST** contain considerable comparative analysis of practices in the engineering sector.

The project should address sustainability issues in a relevant part of the dissertation.

Supply Chain and Logistics Management

For the MSc in Supply Chain and Logistics Management, the project should relate to supply chain or logistics management optimization with a view to improve performance across sustainability, resilience, or productivity. This can be done through developing a focus area around one or more of the supply chain functionalities of procurement, inventory management, distribution, returns management, supply chain design. This can also be done through investigating how new technologies are shaping and reshaping supply chains today.

4.2 Project Allocation, Supervision and Timeline

Normally, project selection should be done by the end of the first year of registration for full-time participants and at the beginning of the second year of registration for part-time participants. The project must be approved by the University. An academic supervisor will be appointed to monitor each project.

Part-time Students

1. Identify a suitable Project

During your first year of registration on the MSc course you should identify a suitable topic in consultation with your Managers and your Company Training Department. Your project topic can be selected from a wide spectrum of technical and engineering/process business subjects, however, choice may be constrained by your own company policy. The title of your degree programme is important to you and your employer. As a substantial part of the work is the project, this should reflect the main theme of your programme of study. It is not intended that your project should be solely on that theme, only that it should be central to the work.

In all cases the dissertation should be an exposition of your work and ideas. Where others have had an input (e.g. in a teamwork situation) this should be clearly identified. Since the subject areas of dissertations can be so diverse it is impossible to define a standard approach to content. However, this should include an introduction and definition of objectives, a literature survey, and a review of the problem followed by a description of your approach to solving the problem, your results or findings, an intellectual analysis of your results or

findings and, finally, a logical review of the conclusions you have drawn. Advice and guidance on company policy should be sought from your manager whilst advice on the University requirements and suitability of topics can be sought from staff at the local IGDS office

2. Identify a Suitable Industrial Supervisor

Having selected a subject area for your project it is your responsibility to find someone who is prepared to act as your **Industrial Supervisor**. The role of the Industrial Supervisor is as follows:-

- (i) To monitor progress on the project over a period normally of 1 to 2 years in order to be able to assess effort, competence and comprehension.
- (ii) To liaise with the Academic Supervisor to ensure that the project is directed so as to be industrially relevant and academically suitable.
- (iii) To read and assess the completed written report with regard to quality, content and presentation.

The Industrial Supervisor should be a suitably qualified, senior individual within the company who has a knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the project and who can judge the relevance of methods used and conclusions drawn in relation to normal company practices and current and future business objectives.

Since the Industrial Supervisor is responsible for deciding marks which affect the awarding of a degree, the University stipulates that the Industrial Supervisor should meet the following requirements:-

- (a) The person should normally have a degree or an equivalent professional qualification.
- (b) The person should occupy a significant position of authority and responsibility.
- (c) The person should have a significant awareness of the project and be in a position to assess an individual's performance on the project.

Points (b) and (c) above normally mean that an Industrial Supervisor should be in a fairly senior position but not so senior as to be remote from the detail of the project. As a guide, supervisor is usually 1 to 3 levels higher than the Participant within the management

hierarchy. Advice may be sought from the training department concerning suitable supervisors.

You should approach a prospective supervisor and should explain your requirements with the aid of "Information for Industrial Supervisors", issued with this note. You should obtain agreement on the content of the project and the supervisor agreement to fulfil the role outlined above.

If you have problems identifying a suitable person within your organisation to act as an industrial supervisor, you should consult with the local Director of Studies. They will be able to advise you and, if necessary, suggest someone outside your own company who could act as a supervisor.

3. Submit your Project Proposal

Having identified an Industrial Supervisor you should, with their agreement, write a brief synopsis of your project proposal headed with your name, your Industrial Supervisor's name, contact addresses and phone numbers together with your Industrial Supervisor's qualifications and company position. This should be followed by the project title and a clear statement of the objectives of the project and the way in which you will satisfy these objectives.

After clearing the proposal with your company you should **send the proposal to the Director of Studies at the local IGDS office, before the deadline.**

Your proposed topic will be considered along with your nomination of an Industrial Supervisor. If both are acceptable a suitable **Academic Supervisor** will be appointed and you will be notified asked to contact both supervisors to arrange an inaugural meeting. If the project proposal is unacceptable you will be asked to submit a new one, or revise the original.

NOTE: If you have not proposed a suitable project by the end of your second year of registration, successful completion of your project may be at risk.

4. Meeting your Supervisor

The initial tripartite meeting to discuss your project could ideally be arranged at your place of work so that your Academic Supervisor can become acquainted with the environment in which the project is to be conducted. The meeting should allow the project to be discussed thoroughly, for all parties to resolve any outstanding questions and to specify project milestones and agree a timetable for their achievement. It is useful at this stage to discuss proposed chapter titles and contents to give both supervisors a feel for the extent of coverage and depth of the planned work.

Following the initial meeting, the **Participant should regularly report progress to the Supervisors**. In the event of a major problem a tripartite meeting should again be initiated:

e.g. if the direction of the project has to be changed as the result of new findings or a change occurring in company circumstances, etc. Regular liaison with the Academic Supervisor is advisable in order to ensure the project attains a suitable academic content and tripartite progress meetings are encouraged.

5. Progress

You should aim to have gathered all the necessary information to complete the project by the end of the second year of registration. This should include a literature survey in the chosen area of your project. The literature survey can be carried out through your company Library or elsewhere. Advice on literature searches can be sought from your Academic Supervisor or from your local IGDS office staff.

You should plan a timetable for "writing up" your dissertation starting at the end of your second year of registration with a planned completion date well in advance of the end of your registration period. You should submit, in draft form, a substantial portion of your dissertation - for instance the introductory and literature survey chapters together with the proposed page of contents, to your supervisors to make comments on the content, structure, style and presentation of the dissertation and allow you to incorporate their suggestions into subsequent chapters. You are encouraged to continue submission of all of the chapters of your dissertation in draft form prior to finalising to ensure that the dissertation adequately reflects the quality of your efforts on the project.

During the last year of registration careful time management is essential. You are encouraged to plan to submit your dissertation well before your end of registration period i.e. several months. This will allow for unforeseen problems such as minor illness, rewriting draft chapters, typing delays, typing corrections. In particular you should liaise with your

supervisors regarding their availability to carry out the proof reading task during this period. Experience has shown that the submission of your dissertation in draft form to supervisors for comment is a valuable practice in achieving a high quality of presentation and content.

Allocation of time and facilities for project work is at the discretion of the individual company but there are minimum commitments expected to ensure that participants are enabled to successfully complete the project and dissertation requirements within the allotted time span. The Training Department should advise the participants and their managers as to the degree and form of the Company commitments.

Full-time Students

As you are expected to dedicate around 600 hours to the project it is highly recommended that you begin your project as early as possible after it is allocated to ensure the highest chance of success. Do not wait until your modules have concluded to start work on your project. Due to the intensity of full-time study, effective time management is essentially.

1. Project Selection

At the start of your course a list of individual project titles which have been proposed by members of PolyU Staff or by collaborating companies will be issued. These will provide a wide range of topics to choose from. During the first few weeks of your registration you should identify those projects which seem of most interest to you. You should then obtain more in depth information concerning each of these projects by approaching the member of Academic Staff who has proposed the project and by attending any relevant seminars, etc. that may have been arranged. If any such project is not available you are advised to attach yourself to any industry of your choice for carrying out your project.

If you or your sponsoring company have a particular interest which falls within the industrial subject area, but which is not represented in the project listing, then you should contact the PolyU IGDS Administration Unit with your alternative project proposal. This should include the proposed title and a synopsis of the content and proposed approach. Your proposal will be considered and you will be advised as to its suitability. They will assist you in identifying an appropriate member of staff who would be prepared to act as your Supervisor. Please note that your own project proposals will only be considered BEFORE the general project allocation procedure begins.

During your first month or so, you need to seek out the supervisors of the projects in which you think you might be interested, gain further information from them about the project and ascertain the method by which they plan to select the student to undertake their project. You

should note that the selection process is two-way; supervisors are selecting project students as well as students selecting projects. To assist supervisors in their selection process, they may ask for written information to support your application.

2. Progress

At your inaugural project meeting with your Supervisor you should discuss overall project objectives and agree a timetable to meet those objectives based around your other course work loadings. It is essential that you should plan and progress the work effectively and also maintain regular contact with your supervisor to keep them informed of your progress and to seek his/her guidance and advice.

4.3 *Supervision Expectations*

There are various things that you can expect from a supervisor (industrial or academic), and various things that they will expect from you. What follows is an indicative list, which we suggest you discuss with your project supervisor(s) early in the course of your study so that both are clear on what to expect.

Your Responsibilities

- To develop and justify your project idea, using appropriate academic and industrial sources
- To be proactive in searching for credible literature, including use of available support, databases, and resources from the Library
- Discuss with your supervisor the type of guidance and comment you find most useful and agree a schedule of meetings for your period of study
- Provide your supervisor with your schedule of modules/work commitments and inform them of any changes as they arise, so your supervisor may assess your progress in the light of these other commitments
- Be prepared to devote approximately 600 hours to the 60-CAT project, including researching of and applying for relevant projects; planning and execution of the project; application for ethical approval; preparation of the project documentation¹

- Take the initiative to raise questions, problems or difficulties, however elementary they may seem
- Maintain the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with the supervisor/ coach, such as sharing written work as required in sufficient time for comment and discussion
- Check with your supervisor if you are unsure about any of the project stages
- Discuss and receive confirmation from your supervisor, in advance, any external correspondence relating to your project
- Refrain from signing any Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDA) or similar until you have had advice from your supervisor about this
- Follow, always, safe working practices and adhere to the University and Departmental Safety Guidelines
- Read all project-related content on the student webpages, including but not limited to guidance on project requirements, selection and allocation, ethical requirements, and final submission. It is your responsibility to ensure you are familiar with expectations and requirements of the project

What you can expect from your supervisor

- Provide advice and guidance to potential candidates for the project during the project selection stage
- Maintain contact with you through regular tutorial meetings, to ensure the meetings are largely uninterrupted and to make appropriate alternative arrangements when they are working away
- To be accessible to you at other appropriate times when you may need advice on academic and personal matters
- To inform you of when they will be away for any extended period of time so you may plan accordingly
- To give guidance about the nature of research and the standard expected, about the planning of research, about literature and sources and about requisite techniques (including arranging for instruction where necessary)
- To ensure that the correct safety procedures are followed if you are working with

dangerous equipment or materials

- To give detailed advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the work so that the whole may be submitted within the scheduled time
- To make you aware of forthcoming events which would benefit your development
- To request written work as appropriate and return such work with constructive criticism and in reasonable time
- To ensure that you are made aware if either your progress or the standard of your work is unsatisfactory and arrange any necessary supporting action
- To submit a report to the Programme Management on your progress in the spring and summer if applicable
- To encourage and assist you to publish the results of your work if appropriate
- To be willing to provide references to future employers, if requested

Please note that it is the duty of your supervisor(s) to help you carry out research and to present your results to the best advantage. However it is YOUR work, not your supervisor's, that will be examined and your supervisor's agreement to the submission of your dissertation is not a guarantee that the examiners will deem it satisfactory.

4.4 Data Collection and Ethical Approval

Ethical approval must be sought by all students to ensure that the research you are conducting is ethical.

Data **MUST** not be collected without first obtaining ethics approval for your research, or this being formally waived for your project. If you submit a project that includes data gathered from or about people without ethical approval this may be treated as academic misconduct and could lead to a mark of zero being awarded for your project.

Prior to applying for ethical approval, you should also complete the following two courses available via Moodle:

- Information Security Smart
- Epigeum online research integrity training course

Please see the following page on the Student Portal for the current links and information on how to apply for ethical approval:
<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/wmg/overseas/projectinformation/>

4.5 Submission

Drafts

You will have **one opportunity** to submit a draft of your project dissertation to Turnitin via WMG's Academic Integrity Moodle page and to view the similarity report. You should not submit drafts to Turnitin via any other method (e.g. via a personal account) as this will generate a high similarity score against your final submission. The link to do so will be available via the Student Portal:
<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/wmg/overseas/projectinformation/>

Presentation

For the latest guidance on how to present your project please see the Student Portal:
<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/wmg/overseas/projectinformation/>

Final Submission

The project will be due for submission during the final month of your registration and the exact deadline will show on Tabula where you will submit your final project.

Late penalties

The penalty for late submission of the project is 5% per working day, up to a maximum of 10 working days, after which a mark of 0 will be recorded.

Extensions to deadlines

In the event of **exceptional** mitigating circumstances that have significantly affected the progress on your project, you may request an extension to the deadline. If approved, this will however result in the need to extend your student registration. As there are 2 awarding exam boards each year this may therefore delay your graduation.

Please note that short term illness would generally not constitute grounds for a project deadline given that work on the project should span a number of months.

Self-certification extensions are not permitted for the project.

4.6 *Assessment*

Your project will be assessed by 2 assessors as well as going through WMG's moderation process. It can take some time for this to be completed, but your mark and feedback is expected to be returned to you via Tabula shortly before you are considered by the Awarding exam board. Your supervisor will not be able to advise on a mark earlier than this as marks must go through the moderation process first.

You will be assessed against specific marking guidelines which will be available on the Student Portal: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/wmg/overseas/projectinformation/>