

All OR Programs Projects

General Information

The project gives you the opportunity to apply skills developed earlier in the programme. Projects sometimes take the form of a consultancy exercise for a sponsoring organisation, although they may also be desk/library based. Projects usually involve modelling the problem and applying existing packages and developing a computer program for a new application of OR. The webpage <https://teaching.maths.ed.ac.uk/main/postgraduate-taught/msc-programmes/operational-research/assessment/projects> contains some guidance.

If at any time during your project, you feel there are problems with the supervision you are getting, let us know immediately by sending an email to or-projects@maths.ed.ac.uk. Furthermore, SOR students should also CC their email to Daniel Paulin at Daniel.Paulin@ed.ac.uk.

The dissertation period runs from 3 **June** – 23 **August**. Full-time commitment is expected from the students. Therefore, university policies apply about being present in Edinburgh (or being mostly present, except for short absences) and we strongly discourage anybody of trying to do other part-time/full-time work whilst working on their dissertation. If you need any exception to the attendance policy for personal, medical, etc. reasons, then please contact the OR Programme Director Jörg Kalcsics at Joerg.Kalcsics@ed.ac.uk.

Starting the Project

By the end of the exams, you should have received your project allocation and the name(s) of the supervisor(s) for your project. If you are doing a project suggested by an academic, you will have that person as your sole supervisor. If you are doing a non-academic external project, then you will have a supervisor in the external organisation and a secondary supervisor within the University. You should contact your main supervisor and arrange an initial meeting with one or both of them.

Important Dates and Timeline

The official start of your dissertation period is **Monday, 3 June 2024**. The initial contact and meeting with your supervisor(s) should ideally happen in Week 0 (the week of 27 May) and certainly by 10 June. We will be asking your supervisors to inform us if you have not contacted them and had a meeting by the end of Week 1. So, **it is your responsibility to initiate contact and schedule regular meetings**, with both your **academic supervisor and external supervisor (if you are doing an external project)**.

It is good to draw up a timetable early on of what you plan to do and agree on this with your supervisor. It can be modified later in discussion with your supervisor. By the **end of June**, you should have a good understanding of what the project will achieve, and you should start preparing an outline of what will be in the dissertation.

By the **end of July**, you should have a clear outline of the different sections of your dissertation and you should have written at least 20% of it. This should be given to your supervisor so that they can comment on its content and style.

Give the material to be read to your supervisor by the end of the first week of August at the latest. The deadline for submitting your dissertation is **Friday, 23 August 2024 at 4pm.**

Meetings with your Supervisor

You should discuss with your supervisor whether you would like to have in-person meetings or on Teams. It is expected that at least some of the meetings will happen in-person, and the student will be present in Edinburgh most of the time.

It is important to manage your interactions with your supervisor to get the most out of the time they can give you. It is highly **recommended that you write a short report before each meeting** listing what you have done since the last meeting, and send this by email to your supervisor before the meeting. Keep copies of these reports.

At an early stage discuss the supervision process with the supervisor and agree on how often you will see them. You should aim to be in contact with your supervisor either in a meeting or by email on average about once per week for half an hour, but the pattern may vary as the project progresses. You may need to have more meetings than this initially until the project is well defined, and there may be occasions where you need fewer regular contact because you are working actively on the project but do not need any particular guidance for that phase.

Be professional in your meetings and emails. Do not cancel or postpone or skip a meeting unless there are extenuating circumstances (e.g., medical emergency). If you feel that the supervisor is not responding to your emails (that require a response) within a reasonable amount of time (such as up to a week), contact the project coordinators. Likewise, a supervisor may take action if you repeatedly fail to respond or cancel/skip meetings.

As part of the project, you have to show that you can work independently on the given topic for a period of between two and three weeks, not having meetings with your School supervisor during that time. Find out when your supervisor will be away, and if they will be away for any period of more than 3 weeks, then ask them to suggest somebody you can contact if difficulties occur while they are away.

The web page

<https://teaching.maths.ed.ac.uk/main/postgraduate-taught/programmes/operational-research/assessment-structure/projects/supervisor-roles>

gives some pointers on expectations from your academic supervisor.

Writing the Dissertation

A separate document giving guidelines for writing dissertations has been uploaded to Learn. Students can also visit the following webpage

<https://teaching.maths.ed.ac.uk/main/postgraduate-taught/msc-programmes/operational-research/assessment/projects/dissertations>

for more information on project dissertation, including assessment criteria, formatting, and sample dissertations.

Read carefully the University regulations on plagiarism. Ask your supervisor specifically to verify that you are citing other people's material in a way that is acceptable to Edinburgh University. We will ask you to sign a declaration when you hand in your dissertation to confirm that it is free of plagiarism.

Feedback from your Supervisor

The Academic Supervisor will give advice on the subject area, relevant literature, presentation format, methodology, the structure of the dissertation, and the scheduling of the work to be done. The final responsibility for the quality and content of a dissertation lies with the author of the dissertation.

Your supervisor should read and give you detailed comments on one or two chapters of your dissertation. Agree with them when you will give them this material and when you will get it back. You will probably need over a week to react to the supervisor's comments. Give the material to be read to your supervisor by **the end of July or the first week of August** at the latest. However, if you give work to the supervisor to read when it is at a very preliminary stage, where the structure is not clear or the English is bad, then the supervisor may find it difficult to read and not be able to give useful comments on its content. Do not expect your supervisor to correct your grammar, get help elsewhere for that and use the supervisor's time to get guidance on the content.