

OR/ORwCO/ORwDS/ORwR/SOR Projects

General Information

The project gives you the opportunity to apply skills developed earlier in the programme to real operational research problems. 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.

If at any time during your project, you feel there are problems with the supervision you are getting, let the project coordinators know immediately by sending an email to or-projects@maths.ed.ac.uk, or email Sergio Garcia Quiles.

Starting the Project

By the end of the exams, you should have received your project allocation and 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 initial meeting with your supervisor(s) should happen before 5 June (ideally, in the last week of May). At the end of the first full week in June send an email message to the project coordinators at or-projects@maths.ed.ac.uk confirming that you have had a meeting with one of your supervisors and that your project is underway.

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 projects 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 25 August (4pm BST).

Meetings with your Supervisor

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 at least 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 more regular contact because otherwise you will not be able to make progress.

Be professional in your meetings and emails. Do not cancel or postpone or skip a weekly meeting unless there are extenuating circumstances (e.g., medical emergency). If you feel that the supervisor is not responding to your emails within a reasonable amount of time (such as a few days), 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 expect they will be away for 1 – 2 weeks in summer), and if they will be away for any period of more than 2 weeks ask them to suggest somebody you can contact if difficulties occur while they are away. You are encouraged to pre-arrange an offline week during summer when there will not be any meetings and minimal or no email exchange.

Writing the Dissertation

See the 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 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.