

# Final Honour Schools of Medical Sciences, Cell & Systems Biology and Neuroscience 2022

## GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING A RESEARCH PROJECT

Feedback from previous students suggests that the research project is a particularly worthwhile and rewarding part of the undergraduate course, and we hope you enjoy the experience.

An online **introductory session on the research project**, led by Prof. Helen Christian, Associate Director of Pre-clinical Studies and Biomedical Sciences, will help you start thinking about this aspect of your forthcoming FHS work. This talk is available at: [https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/82103/modules#module\\_185553](https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/82103/modules#module_185553)

You are also strongly encouraged to consult information posted to the FHS / FHS Part II Canvas site when planning your topic of study, for guidance on the form your work should take, and to read the regulations to be followed throughout the process: <https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/82103>

### 1 Defining a topic for study

Some care is needed in defining a suitable topic. The work should be original, and, obviously, the topic has to be chosen so that there is a reasonable chance that it can reach a satisfactory conclusion in the time available. Of course, there can be no *guarantee* that a project will 'work', but supervisors and students should be aware that the examiners' task is to reward intelligent, honest and critical work; reports for projects that fail to yield results can nevertheless achieve high marks. An example of such a project can be found at: <https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/82103/pages/research-project>.

FHS Neuroscience and FHS Cell & Systems Biology students must undertake an experimental project.

Timing can be decided by you in discussion with the supervisor, but you are advised to begin work as early as possible in Trinity Term of your second year while you are relatively free of other commitments. You should expect the experimental work for a project to occupy you for a total of 8 weeks full time (or equivalent, e.g. 16 half-time weeks), and you will then need to spend time preparing your project report for submission.

### 2 Intellectual property rights

Proposed FHS research projects that are likely to have intellectual property or related sensitivity should not be undertaken by students, as this may lead to difficulty in release of the dissertation to the examiners.

### 3 How to register a project

As a result of the unpredictability of laboratory capacity and lockdown restrictions in Trinity 2021, there will be no central allocation round this year. All projects should be arranged privately, which will allow students and supervisors to remain in dialogue about how the project will be conducted and adjust it in response to the prevailing circumstances. Students should show the document 'Research project: notes for supervisors' to their potential supervisor before submitting the online 'Request to Seek Approval of a Research Project' form available on Canvas by **12 noon on Friday 12 March (8<sup>th</sup> week, Hilary Term)**.

To help get you started, a list of project titles registered by students taking the FHS examination in recent years is available on Canvas.

The list will give you an idea of the topics explored, and potential supervisors and research labs to approach. Although you may draw on the same topic or field as one of the previously registered project titles for your project, you should propose a different title. Once you have

chosen a specific topic, you should approach a member of University of Oxford academic staff (not a graduate student) requesting that they serve as your project supervisor. To help you, you can also go to the list of departments at <http://www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/departments> and browse through the details of teams operating within both clinical and non-clinical departments at the University. Web information usually covers research area, current work and collaborations. You are encouraged to search across the University for an expert in the area you have chosen; your college tutor, Course Director and Associate Course Director will be happy to provide guidance on request.

#### **4 Projects to be undertaken in laboratories outside Oxford**

Students are normally required to carry out their FHS project in a University department or unit, with supervision provided by a member of academic staff or research staff. However, students may be permitted to undertake research in a non-Oxford University Laboratory in a few specific circumstances. If you wish to explore this possibility, please read the document 'Policy and procedure for students wishing to undertake their FHS Research Project in a laboratory outside Oxford University' and follow the guidance. You will need to complete the online 'Request to Seek Approval of a Research Project (External)' form which requires information to be provided from you, the proposed External Supervisor, and the proposed Oxford Supervisor.

#### **5 Assistance from your Supervisor**

1. Students should be proactive in seeking support and guidance when necessary and in making use of existing written resources.
2. Students should expect to hold regular meetings with their supervisor. These will normally be held at agreed intervals for the duration of the project but significantly more intensive support is usual in the initial and final stages of the project. The support given by the supervisor at these scheduled meetings may include direction to relevant literature, formal discussion of the research projects progress, feedback on the student's data, analyses of results, written drafts etc. that have been read by the supervisor.
3. These meetings will be supplemented by brief discussions of the research on an ad hoc basis.
4. Support will be given in the techniques required for the student to carry out their research. Examples include the use of equipment, performance of experimental techniques, training on software and guidance in statistical methods.

If you experience any difficulties, or wish to raise a query or concern, please contact the Undergraduate Studies Office ([fhscourseadmin@medsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:fhscourseadmin@medsci.ox.ac.uk)).

#### **6 Other Prerequisites**

1. Please note that the FHS Committee has agreed that graduate students should not act as supervisors in their own right, but that they may act as a co-supervisor.
2. In addition, unless specifically agreed by the FHS committee, no Principal Investigator should supervise or co-supervise more than three students.

**For further help or information** please contact [fhscourseadmin@medsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:fhscourseadmin@medsci.ox.ac.uk).

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