



FINAL HONOUR SCHOOLS OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, CELL & SYSTEMS BIOLOGY AND NEUROSCIENCE 2024

THE RESEARCH PROJECT: NOTES FOR SUPERVISORS

1. Work for a research project is intended to occupy the student for a total of 8 full weeks, or an equivalent period (e.g. 16 half-time weeks).
2. The project should consist of original experiments and/or data analysis. Work should be carried out by the candidate alone or in collaboration with others where such collaboration is, for instance, needed to produce results in the time available. The contribution of the student within any such collaboration should be clearly defined in the supervisor's report.

The work should be original, and there is a reasonable expectation that it can reach a satisfactory conclusion in the time available. Occasionally, for instance for technical reasons, the experimental work for a project write-up has to be abandoned and very few results turn out to be usable. Unusable results in themselves need not invalidate a project, and we've had write-ups of such projects which have gone on to achieve very high marks in the past. Supervisors should consult the Undergraduate Studies Office if this problem arises.

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

If students intend to conduct *in vivo* procedures they will need a Home Office personal licence. A student wishing to do this would need to attend the approved training courses and pass the examination. There may be a considerable delay (in some cases several weeks) before the licence is granted by the Home Office. The laboratory supporting the student for their research project would need to provide the funds for both the Home Office training course and the licence.

Ethical approval from 'CUREC' is required for undergraduate projects involving human subjects: for details, see <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics>. **Please ensure that ethical approval is in place** before the student begins work on the project, otherwise this can cause serious problems.

Indemnity is normally 'automatic' under the University's insurance policy. For enquiries please contact Research Services via research.services@admin.ox.ac.uk.

3. Unless specifically agreed by the FHS committee, no PI should supervise or co-supervise more than three students and each student must have a clearly defined topic, which is solely his/her responsibility.
4. Timing should be agreed between you and the student before the project begins. Work can start as early as week 1, Trinity Term (24 April 2023) for Biomedical Sciences students and week 3, Trinity Term (8 May 2023) for Medical students. Data gathering and/or data analysis should occupy the student for 8 full weeks, or an equivalent period (e.g. 16 half-time weeks). Students have a complete academic year to complete and write-up their projects, but students will be fairly heavily occupied with lectures, seminars and tutorial teaching from October onwards. A small amount of Advanced Option lectures and seminars will be delivered in Trinity Term of Year 2, but students will still have the large majority of their time free to work on their research projects.

If you are going to be unavailable for any part of the academic year, please make this clear to students. If this is likely to occur in the middle of a project, please ensure that a well-briefed deputy will be available.

Many students like to use part of their summer vacation to work on their project: there is no routine provision to cover students' additional expenses, although some colleges may be able to offer some financial support.

- Please ensure that yourself, or an appropriately senior person, will be available to give the student help and guidance at the start of the project. Graduate students should not act as main supervisors in their own right, but can act as co-supervisors under the oversight of the main supervisor.

FHS 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

These meetings will be supplemented by brief discussions of the research on an ad hoc basis.

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.

Responsibility for the project rests with the student, who should be proactive in seeking support and guidance when necessary and in making use of existing written resources.

- Funding:** your University department will be allocated a proportion of the T-JRAM income associated with Year 2 of the student's course (usually an amount of c. £2,000) towards the cost of hosting the project. In Trinity Term 2017, the Medical Sciences Board agreed that departments should pass on at least £1,000 to the host lab/supervisor of each project, to offset project costs. Queries about this should be made to your Department's Finance Officer. If your Department's Finance Officer has any queries, they are welcome to contact kirstie.vreede@medsci.ox.ac.uk.

Payment for project supervision will be paid to the individual who claims the supervision fee from the student's College.

The rate of payment is as for 8 single tutorials at the standard rate as set by the Senior Tutors Committee of the Conference of Colleges (£231.28 for 2022-23). Supervisors submit a report and claim this payment from the student's college using TMS (further details will be sent to you at the appropriate time).

You can log in to TMS (<https://tms.ox.ac.uk>) using your Oxford University Single Sign-On username and password. If you have not claimed for payment using TMS before, you will need to contact the student's college to arrange for your authorisation as a tutor.

- Students are required to produce a project write-up for submission to the examiners of no more than 4,500 words including the abstract and figure legends, but excluding tables, footnotes, bibliography and appendices. The finished write-up must be submitted by 8th week, Hilary Term (8 March 2024).

The aim of the work should be clearly stated. Raw data should be presented where possible, or if normalised data are shown then the normalisation procedure should be clearly explained. A statistical analysis should be included where appropriate. Overall, the student should demonstrate an intelligent critical approach and arrive at a set of conclusions that are clearly justified by the results under consideration.

Supervisors are asked to advise students on at least one draft of their written work on the proviso that students hand in such a draft at least two weeks before the submission deadline. The individual identified as the main supervisor will be asked to submit a brief confidential report to advise the examiners of any special difficulties that arose during the project. Write-ups must not be published in advance of the final Exam Board meeting, as mandated by the University's Education Committee. After the examination, we inform supervisors of the mark awarded. Supervisors may request a copy of the write-up from the student (please note that Biomedical Sciences students may lose access to their Oxford email address shortly after graduating).

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All students are required to make an oral presentation and discuss their project with examiners in week 1 of Trinity Term (22 April 2024).

8. Biomedical Sciences students proceeding to the fourth year of the course may choose to conduct research in the same area during their Part C studies. They may have the same supervisor as for their Part B project if the supervisor is able and willing to offer a project. Medical students proceeding to the Oxford Clinical Course (Years 4-6) will have opportunities to return to their research project during their clinical studies if this is the mutual wish of the student and the supervisor. In Year 4 students undertake a 4-week Special Study Module which presents a very good opportunity for them to continue their research.

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