

BSc (3rd. Year) PROJECTS/ESSAYS GUIDELINES

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1. Introduction

Third year laboratory projects provide an important opportunity for you to develop a combination of experimental, analytical, numerical, organisational, and presentation skills. These skills are difficult to acquire within the strict confines of a set experiment of the type you will have encountered in the first and second year labs. The projects provide an essential part of the training of final year BSc students.

Projects can also be taken in the form of Essays. Students will work with a supervisor to carry out mainly literature-based research on a specified physics topic and write an essay on it. The student will also give an oral presentation to the supervisor and a non-supervisory assessor.

Projects are weighted at 9 ECTS and at 25 hours/ECTS this means you should expect to put in approximately 225 hours of work for the entire project including work and write up.

2. Assessments

The assessment stages are identical for Projects and Essays:

- a. **Project Plan.** This is a short report submitted in week 3 of term for single term projects, and week 5 of the first term for projects lasting two terms. It should include details of (a) the aims and objectives of the project (b) a brief summary of what you have found out so far (c) a plan for the remainder of the project. The plan has a limit of 800 words and two figures. Use a minimum 12-point font size. The project/essay plan does not contribute towards the final project mark BUT **5% will be deducted from overall project mark if not submitted.**
- b. **Progress Report.** The progress report does not contribute towards the final project mark BUT **5% will be deducted from overall project mark if not submitted.** Once again, this should include the cover sheet provided and be submitted to the system by 5pm on the day of the deadline. You will receive formative feedback within two weeks.
- c. **Continuous Assessment (20%).** This is submitted by the supervisor. You will receive formative feedback.
- d. **Project Viva (20%).** All students will give a short presentation (15 minutes plus questions) in **weeks 9-11 of term.** This provides an opportunity for students to explain what they have been doing to and audience of the supervisor, an independent assessor and any other invited parties. The supervisor and assessor will provide formative feedback on the presentation which the student can use to help the final version of the report. **You will arrange the Viva with your supervisor and assessor directly.**
- e. **Final Report (60%).** The project report (**maximum length 6000 words excluding figures**) will be marked independently by the assessor and a panel member. You will receive summative feedback along with a joint mark for the report. Completed reports with the cover sheets attached **MUST** be submitted to Blackboard by 5pm on the day of the deadline. You

may also wish to email a version to your supervisor. **If you have any questions about essay projects, please see the Head of Projects as soon as possible to discuss them.**

3. Deadlines and Submission Points 2019-2020

All deadlines at 17:00 local time. **Blackboard submissions are highlighted in red.** Vivas must be held by the end of term but ideally in weeks 9/10.

Term 1 Projects	Term – Week	Deadline	Weight	Assessed by
Project Plan	1 – 3	Fri 18 Oct 2019	(-5% Penalty)	Supervisor (Feedback)
Progress Report	1 – 6	Fri 8 Nov 2019	(-5% Penalty)	Supervisor (Feedback)
Continuous Assessment	1 – 9	Fri 29 Nov 2019	20%	Supervisor
Report outline	1 – 10	Fri 6 Dec 2019	Optional	Supervisor (Feedback)
Viva	1 – 11	9-13 Dec 2019	20%	Supervisor + Assessor
Project Report	2 – 2	Tue 14 Jan 2020	60%	Assessor + Panel

Term 2 Projects	Term – Week	Deadline	Weight	Assessed by
Project Plan	2 – 3	Fri 24 Jan 2020	(-5% Penalty)	Supervisor (Feedback)
Progress Report	2 – 6	Fri 14 Feb 2020	(-5% Penalty)	Supervisor (Feedback)
Continuous Assessment	2 – 9	Fri 6 Mar 2020	20%	Supervisor
Report outline	2 – 10	Fri 13 Mar 2020	Optional	Supervisor (Feedback)
Viva	2 – 11	16-20 Mar 2020	20%	Supervisor + Assessor
Report	3 – 2	Tue 5 May 2020	60%	Assessor + Panel

Two Term Projects	Term – Week	Deadline	Weight	Assessed by
Project Plan	1 – 3	Fri 18 Oct 2019	(-5% Penalty)	Supervisor (Feedback)
Progress Report	1 – 10	Fri 6 Dec 2019	(-5% Penalty)	Supervisor (Feedback)
Continuous Assessment	2 – 6	Fri 14 Feb 2020	20%	Supervisor
Report outline	2 – 10	Fri 13 Mar 2020	Optional	Supervisor (Feedback)
Viva	2 – 11	16-20 Mar 2020	20%	Supervisor + Assessor
Project Report	3 – 2	Tue 5 May 2020	60%	Assessor + Panel

Continue below for detailed further guidance.

4. Viva Guidelines

The student should prepare a talk on their Essay Project of up to 15 minutes in length. The content, language, level and style of the presentation should be such that another competent student at the same level of undergraduate physics education should be able to follow proceedings. It is recommended, but not required, that PowerPoint is used.

Practice is the best advice to anyone giving a presentation, preferably with an audience. Rehearse the talk with a housemate present if possible. Bear in mind 15 minutes is a limit, not a target, though it is difficult to see how a talk under 10 minutes could do work at this level justice.

The supervisor organises the viva and is responsible for setting the date, time, location and acquiring any necessary presentation equipment (a PC screen in their office will usually be used though a projector and screen may be preferable).

The viva will last up to 30 minutes as follows:

- a. A presentation by the student of up to 15 minutes.
- b. As much time as is necessary (so as not to run over 30 minutes in total) for questions and discussion of content.
- c. The student then leaves the room and the markers spend a short time discussing the presentation and how best to provide feedback to the student.
- d. The student re-joins the markers and is provided with verbal feedback to assist in preparation of the final draft of the Essay project. They may also provide written feedback, but this is not a requirement.

After the viva the markers complete the mark sheet which is returned to the undergraduate lab office. Students may see this on request.

The Viva is assessed along five, equally weighted, aspects:

- a. Overall structure and timekeeping.
- b. Use and quality of slides.
- c. Physics content.
- d. Quality of explanations and answers to questions.
- e. Inspiration.

5. Final Report Guidelines

The Project report or Essay offer an opportunity to develop research skills and one of the most important skills is the ability to communicate your work clearly and concisely in a written report. The projects cover a broad range of theoretical, computational and experimental topics, which differ greatly in scientific scope and potential. Hence, a few projects may lead to new results that can be published, and some may fail to work out, whilst the rest lie somewhere in-between. This is not unsurprising as research is about exploring the unknown. Therefore the assessment of the report cannot be based solely on the quality of the results obtained; it will be assessed on the efforts you made to tackle your research topic and the clarity and completeness of your explanation of this topic and what you have learned from it.

You should keep in mind that your report will be independently assessed by your project assessor and by a member of staff from the Marking Panel. Note that the Marking Panel member is not normally from the same research group as the project supervisor, i.e. the panel member is not an expert in the subject of the project. Therefore, it is very important that your report should be aimed at a physicist who has not worked in the area of your project. **Any reasonably experienced physicist should be able to read through your Project report or Essay and understand it.**

Word and page limits.

Report should be word processed using for example LaTeX or Word. The type size should not be smaller than:

- a. Times New Roman 12pt or Arial 11pt for single column format.
- b. Times New Roman 11pt or Arial 10pt for double column format.

The margins should not be smaller than those used in this document (2cm). The page size should be A4. The Report or Essay should be 4,000 – 6,000 words long, with 6,000 words being an **upper limit**. The word count excludes, title page, contents page(s), acknowledgements, appendices, bibliography. Everything else is included, i.e.; abstract, summary, figure captions, table captions etc.

This totals around 15 A4 pages in length (single column format) including figures and tables but excluding title page, contents page(s), appendices and bibliography. Only in exceptional circumstances may the report exceed the upper limit of 6,000 words and **only** after agreement from **both** the supervisor and assessor.

Structure of the Report

Title page with:

- a. A title that clearly identifies what the report is about [note: this does not have to be the original title of the project proposal if another one is deemed more fitting].
- b. The project code (Sharepoint).
- c. Student's name and CID number.
- d. The name of the supervisor.
- e. The name of the assessor.
- f. The word count.

Declaration of work undertaken: If you worked with a partner, then you must state how the work was distributed between you and your project partner (even if it was evenly split across all aspects, this should be stated) You must also specify if you have had a summer placement or previous project/essay with the same supervisor and whether any of this project is an extension of that work. The declaration need not be done at the beginning but must be contained within the report somewhere deemed appropriate.

Abstract: The abstract should clearly and concisely identify the principal features of the work and the results achieved and the conclusions that can be drawn, if any.

Content page(s): The contents pages list the chapters, sections, and subsections.

Abstract or Summary of work undertaken: You must include a summary of your report (maximum half page). The summary should give an overview of the project and should be readily understood by any physicist. It can also be useful to summarise briefly the content of each chapter.

Introductory chapter: The BSc or Essay Project Report should have an introductory chapter in which the aims and objectives of the project are established and in which the work is clearly put into context. The introductory chapter will be very important for the panel marker.

Discussions of the methods employed: The methods may be experimental, computational and/or theoretical as appropriate to the BSc or Essay Project.

Results: A clear description and presentation of the results/observations obtained. Think carefully how to convey the results with clarity and in the most informative way. Figures must have clearly labelled axes and scales and a descriptive figure caption that states what is plotted and stresses what the reader should notice in particular.

Discussion of results: A critical discussion of the results and the experimental or computational errors, and the conclusions that can be drawn from the results should be included.

Conclusions: In your conclusions you should discuss to what extent the aims of the project that you gave earlier have been achieved and what further work would be appropriate.

Acknowledgements: In a formal acknowledgement section refer to the people you wish to thank; do not include the name of your project partner but refer to them as your project partner.

Bibliography: You must provide a clear and extensive set of references (bibliography) to which you have referred in the text. These should be in the standard format used in scientific journals usually Harvard or Vancouver style referencing) and I suggest that you should spend some time in the library to find out about this (see [Library Referencing](#) for further details).

Appendices (if appropriate): Lengthy mathematical derivations, computational algorithms, and large quantities of data that you wish to place on record should be included as appendices and do not count towards the page limit. **Those assessing the report won't normally read the appendices.**

It is most important that a reasonably experienced scientist should be able to read through your Project Report or Essay and immediately be able to follow in detail what you did, to put your work into context and from your report be able to reproduce your BSc or Essay Project. Hence, it must contain detailed descriptions of the equipment used, dimensions of components and experimental layouts, manufacturer, type numbers, the precautions you had to take, anything which would help you in repeating the work in another laboratory in say 5 years' time.

If your project is computational similar comments apply. You need to describe exactly how you approached the computation, how you modelled the physics, how you set it up and what precautions

you had to take to ensure computer rounding errors did not mess up the results or how you avoided inordinately long computational times, and perhaps most importantly how you verified that your programmes were correctly implemented (i.e., that they were doing what you thought they were doing) and that the results made sense.

In theoretical work details of and references to similar work are needed.

I must stress that reports must be complete and concise therefore avoid waffle and make sure that you back up any points you make. I leave it to you to make sure your Project Report or Essay is of a high quality and “professionally” written.

It is important for you to realise that most projects are never finished and so at the time you write your report, you will only be able to cover what has been done by that time, therefore plan to have achieved something by then if you can. In some cases, it may seem that little has been achieved, however this is no reason for not producing an excellent report covering many of the points made above.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism must be strictly avoided (penalties for this can be very severe). Therefore, never use the words or ideas of others (from whatever source they might arise e.g. published papers, the web or other student reports) without a proper attribution. Note that you may use material from your Progress Report. For further information on plagiarism, see [Library Resources](#). **Reports will be submitted to Turnitin.**

You will not be required to provide a hardcopy of your report. All submission will be via Blackboard. Back-ups. Keep back-ups of your report to avoid losing your work. Also, remember to provide your supervisor with a copy of the final report and any programming/coding that was developed during the project.

Finally, keep a copy of your BSc or Essay Project Report. It may be useful in, for instance, job or research studentship applications.