


MSc Thesis Orientation

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Thesis research

- Objectives are to show that:
 - You can work independently on a significant project
 - "Master" a topic in detail
 - Work in a methodical and scientific manner
 - Present your results or findings in a professional manner
 - (...training for PhD research...)

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Thesis research

- 1st time you've not had
 - Regular lectures
 - Assignments
 - Hand-in deadlines
 - Exams
 - Regular feedback
 - Colleagues


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Thesis research

- Thesis research can be
 - Lonely
 - Disorientating
 - Confusing
 - Frustrating
 - ...
 - Very rewarding

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Thesis research

- To counter the negative aspects you need
 - Structure
 - Planning
 - Discipline
 - Motivation
 - Support

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Thesis myths

- If I pay my fees I get the MSc
- Everyone who is admitted gets the degree
- My supervisor will do the hard work
- I can take as long as like writing up

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The CS Dept. & You

- The CS Dept. provides:
 - A desk
 - Access to computing facilities
 - Access to the Internet, printing and photocopying
 - Technical support
 - A supervisor

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You & Your Supervisor

- This relationship is crucial
- You should meet regularly
 - Once a week or so
- Quality time is important

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You & Your Supervisor

- You should
 - Go to meetings with a list of items to cover
 - Take notes
 - If required give your supervisor something to review in good time before the meeting
 - Make a date and time for the next meeting

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You & Your Supervisor

- Your supervisor will:
 - Provide you with guidance
 - Instruct you where to start researching
 - Give you feedback
 - Encourage you
 - Criticize you

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You & Your Supervisor

- Your supervisor will NOT:
 - Do work for you
 - Give you a step-by-step plan
 - Debug your code
 - Correct your English

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Writing a Thesis

- The hardest thing you've ever done?
- The Thesis is the goal
 - If your program is 100% perfect
 - But your thesis is poor

YOU FAIL !!!

- There is no 2nd chance

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Writing a Thesis

- Plan (and keep to it)
- Work backwards from submission date
 - 2 weeks for binding
 - 2 months to *finish* off the write-up
 - 1 month for evaluation
 - 2 months for coding
 - 1 month for design
 - 2 months for literature review
 - 1-2 months to decide on topic
 - ~ 11.5 months

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Writing a Thesis

- Do not leave the writing until the end
 - Perfect code + poor thesis = fail
 - Poor code + good thesis = pass
- Write regular reports at each stage
- Give them to your supervisor (even if he/she doesn't ask for them)
- These will become the basis of your thesis

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Writing a Thesis

- Keep a research diary or journal
 - Record what you read (and surf)
 - Takes notes when you read
 - Record what activities you do each day
 - Jot down ideas, notes to yourself
 - Periodically read back through

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Writing a Thesis

- Give each chapter to your supervisor one at a time
 - Write chapters in this order:
 - Background
 - Design
 - Implementation
 - Evaluation
 - Conclusions
 - Introduction
- Finally write the abstract

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Writing a Thesis

- Before submitting have a friend proof read the thesis
 - (perhaps you could offer to proof read theirs)
- Spell check and grammar check
- Don't assume that the examiners will "*figure out*" what you mean

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The Examination

- Deadlines (full time)
 - Start 1st semester, deadline = 15th Dec
 - Start 2nd semester, deadline = 1st May
 - Part-time students get an extra year
- Short extensions
 - Start 1st semester, extension = 28th Feb
 - Start 2nd semester, extension = 15th July
 - Short extensions are granted automatically by the HoD


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The Examination

- Special Extensions
 - Granted by Dean of Science
 - Requires a *good* reason
 - Sickness
 - Absence of supervisor
 - Academic reasons
 - Can be granted for 1 or 2 months or a semester
 - Can result in losing eligibility for MSc Honours


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The Examination

- Submitting your thesis
- Follow the instructions in the UoA *Guide to Theses and Dissertations*
 - The University requires 2 hardbound copies
 - The Department requires 2 bound copies (which we pay for)
 - You probably want some copies
- Submit 2 hardbound copies of the thesis to the Graduate Centre (Clock Tower Building) by the deadline


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The Examination

- The examination process
 - 2 Internal Assessors read your thesis
 - Each Internal Assessor writes a short report
 - And recommends a grade
 - An External Examiner reads the Internal Assessment reports
 - Reads your thesis
 - The External Examiner decides if the Internal Assessment is correct and recommends a grade
 - The External's recommendation is final
 - Takes about 6 weeks

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The Examination

VERY IMPORTANT

- The External Examiner
 - Does not know you
 - Has never seen your computer program
 - Doesn't know you're an A+ student
 - Judgement is made **ONLY** on your thesis
 - Perfect program + poor thesis = **FAIL**

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Any Problems ☹

- 1st talk to your supervisor
- Then talk to me (I'm independent & confidential)
- Talk to the Graduate Centre
- You can change supervisors midway
- You can have two supervisors (even from different departments)

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How to be a bad student

- Do an MSc because it allows you to postpone your entry to the real world
- Or because your best friend is doing one
- Assume that your supervisor (being more than 30 years old) doesn't understand current techniques, and is not (and never was) as smart as you are

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How to be a bad student

- Never come to a meeting with your supervisor prepared with an agenda
- Don't take notes
- Assume if it's important you'll remember it
- Assume that what you're doing is so new that there's no point in going to the library because there will not be anything of relevance to you there.

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How to be a bad student

- Expect your supervisor to give you a good thesis topic
- tell you exactly how to carry out the work, step by step
- Corollary: If your thesis is not going well, it's your supervisor's fault, not yours

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How to be a bad student

- Regard any ideas that your supervisor gives you for your thesis as your own
- and present them to the world as if you alone thought of them
- Frequently cancel meetings with your supervisor with little notice
- Assume that you can write-up the final thesis in a week or two

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How to be a bad student

- Don't bother checking any of your results or proofreading anything you write - that's your supervisor's job isn't it
- Regard your graduate education as a 10 to 4, Monday to Thursday job
- Plan to "get started tomorrow" – after all you have a whole year!

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How to be a bad student

- Give the draft of your thesis to your supervisor on a Friday, so that they can give you feedback on Monday (after all your supervisor is a bit of geek and can't have much personal life)
- Assume that because your computer code works really well and the interface is so cool that you don't really need to write much of a thesis anyway

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How to be a bad student

- Assume that your examiners will be able to figure out what you mean because they're smart people aren't they?
- Assume that paying your fees to the University means you must get some sort of degree, isn't that the deal?



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