

COMPSCI 380 Projects

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Purpose. This document describes department-level guidelines and procedures for admitting, supervising, and assessing students in our undergraduate project course COMPSCI 380. University policies must take precedence over departmental guidelines, however at the time of this writing there are no known conflicts between University policies and the guidelines and procedures in this document.

Roles.

- **Project Coordinator:** projectcoordinator@cs.auckland.ac.nz
- **Academic Administrator:** enrolment@cs.auckland.ac.nz

Guidelines and Procedures.

1. Students must **use nDeva to enrol** themselves into a project paper. This action will place the student's name on a waitlist, where they will remain until the Project Coordinator has confirmed the following:
 - a. The student must have a **willing supervisor** and an **excellent academic record**:
 - i. Students with strong GPAs (A- or better) will be approved by the Project Coordinator automatically, in the understanding that the student will find a willing supervisor by the end of the first week of lectures. If the student is unable to find a supervisor, they should drop their enrolment, otherwise they will fail the course.
 - ii. Students with GPAs in the B range will not be approved until the Project Coordinator has consulted with the prospective Supervisor, and the supervisor has indicated some point of "excellence" in the student's academic record.
 - iii. Students with GPAs below a B- will *not* be approved for enrolment in an independent study paper, except in extraordinary circumstances.
 - b. The student must *not* have enrolled in any other independent-study paper (such as 380, 780, or a 691AB or 789AB dissertation) for their current degree.
2. After a student has found a willing supervisor, either the student or the supervisor should send an **email request** to the Project Coordinator. This message should be CC'd to both the student and supervisor, and should contain the following information:
 - a. The student's name and ID number;
 - b. The name of the supervisor;
 - c. The waitlisted enrolment, e.g. COMPSCI 380 S1 06 City;

- d. Any agreements between the student and supervisor regarding the project, such as its title, brief description, special arrangements for supervision, etc. See item 4 below.
3. The Project Coordinator will **acknowledge the email request to be taken off the waitlist**, typically within one week, typically by sending an email message (with a CC to student and supervisor) to the Academic Administrator (enrolment@cs.auckland.ac.nz) authorising the student to be fully enrolled in the desired project paper.
4. Every supervisor must inform their student and the Project Coordinator, in writing or by email, of any **requirement that deviates** from the guidelines in this document. Requirements should be set as soon as possible, to allow students a chance to drop the project enrolment if they do not find the requirements acceptable.
 - a. Supervisors may impose **additional requirements** (such as to create a webpage, see point 6 below) if these are documented to the student and to the Project Coordinator prior to the start of enrolment.
 - b. Unless special arrangements are made with the Project Coordinator (see item 2 above), only the project report can affect the student's grade, unless some additional requirement is not completed satisfactorily. In that case, the supervisor should recommend to the Assessor, in the Examiner's Report, that the student should be failed. The supervisor should also provide the Assessor with evidence that the student was adequately notified of the additional requirement.
5. By the end of the 6th week of a non-summer enrolment, every project student is required to make a brief [10-minute] **oral presentation on their initial research plan** for their project, either to their research group (where possible) or at a general session to be organised by the Project Coordinator. A student who does not make an oral presentation will not pass the project; however the oral presentation will not affect their final grade in any other way.
6. By the end of the 6th week of enrolment, every project student is strongly encouraged (and may be required by their supervisor) to create a **webpage describing their project**.
7. All project students must make a **final oral presentation**, briefly describing their preliminary conclusions. This presentation must be made either to a research group such as the CITR, or to a "general session" organised by the Project Coordinator for City students.
 - a. Any student who fails to make an oral presentation will fail the project paper.
 - b. Supervisors are encouraged to schedule final oral presentations to occur in the penultimate week of lectures, so that students can accept feedback in time for incorporation into their final report.
 - c. Note that two oral presentations are required in regular sessions, but only one oral presentation is required in summer sessions.
8. Supervisors are strongly encouraged to set up a **project schedule** that requires the early submission of a written (1 page) research plan, as well as one or more drafts of at least one section of the project report.
9. Supervisors should generally give **written and oral feedback** on all work submitted by a project student within two weeks of its submission.
10. The assessment of a project must follow the following procedures:

- a. The **due date** for project reports is the **Monday immediately following the end of lectures**. Supervisors can *not* give extensions to this deadline. Compassionate grounds for late submission may be considered by the Head of Department or the Project Coordinator in exceptional circumstances. (Note: our University's Aegrotat/Compassionate Consideration procedures for coursework is not applicable to research projects.) The student must apply in writing for compassionate consideration as early as possible, but in any event within three days of the due date. Late submission due to equipment problems associated with either producing or printing of the report will not be considered under the category of compassionate grounds.
- b. The project report must be submitted in both **electronic and hardcopy form**. The electronic form must be submitted as a PDF file to the Assignment Drop Box (ADB), <https://adb.ec.auckland.ac.nz/adb/>. It is recommended that the files are no larger than 5 MB. The hardcopy form should be submitted to the supervisor. Late material will not be accepted once a report has been submitted.
- c. **Assessment is based solely on the written project report**, which is typically about 10,000 English words (without appendices), with six or more scholarly references in an accepted bibliographic style such as the APA. The quality of presentation is important, and care should be taken with English grammar and spelling.
- d. Undergraduate projects (COMPSCI 380) will be held to a similar **grading standard** to postgraduate projects (COMPSCI 780), but with somewhat lower expectations for the breadth and depth of their literature review, and for placing their project work into the context of the published literature.
- e. The supervisor must communicate the name of **the proposed internal Assessor** to the Project Coordinator before the due date of the report.
 - i. Best practice would be to nominate an Assessor who is not involved in supervising the project. Our University is insistent on external assessment for 780 projects, 691/789 dissertations, MSc theses, and PhD theses. However, the nomination of a co-supervisor as an internal Assessor is currently deemed acceptable for a 380 project.
 - ii. If you are supervising a 380/780 project or a 691/789 dissertation, you should be willing to examine or assess another report or dissertation produced in the same term, upon request by the Project Coordinator or another supervisor.
- f. The project report will be examined by the supervisor, who will assign a tentative grade in an Examiner's Report. The examiner's report should be a brief written (or emailed) document with the following content:
 - i. A one-sentence summary of the report being assessed;
 - ii. Assessment of the student's capacity for independent thought, as expressed in the report;
 - iii. Assessment of the report's literature review;
 - iv. Assessment of the analysis, criticism and problem-solving in the report;
 - v. Assessment of the report's overall presentation and organization;
 - vi. Overall assessment and recommended grade.

- g. The Examiner should transmit the student's hardcopy project report, and the Examiner's Report, to the internal Assessor with a copy to the Project Coordinator, by the Monday following the due date.
 - i. The internal Assessor should evaluate the project report, in the light of the Examiner's Report and their own judgment of the project report.
 - ii. The Assessor's Report should have the same content as the Examiner's Report, however in addition it should clearly indicate whether or not a consensus was reached on the recommended grade.
 - iii. If the internal Assessor disagrees with the Examiner's tentative grade, the matter is taken up with the Department Postgraduate Committee. Ultimately, the Assessor should return the hardcopy project report, and the chair of the Department Postgraduate Committee with the Head of Department must attest to the final result.
 - iv. Both the Assessor's Report and the Examiner's Report must be provided, in hardcopy, to the external assessor at the time of their visit to us. This visit is typically scheduled to occur sometime during the last few days before the final deadline for reporting grades to the examination office. Sufficient time should be allowed for forming a consensus (see item iii. above). Staff should refer to "Instructions to Examiners and Assessors" for deadlines and other University-level policy regarding assessment.
 - h. The Examiner and Assessor are expected to check the final report for signs of **plagiarism**, and to investigate carefully in cases where plagiarism is suspected. If plagiarism is suspected, appropriate departmental and university policies should be followed, as described in the "Departmental Policy on Cheating in Projects, Dissertations and Theses".
 - i. The Examiner's and Assessor's Reports, and the identity of the Assessor, are **confidential**: these should not be revealed to the student. The University will communicate the final grade to the student. The supervisor is nonetheless encouraged to give both positive and negative summary feedback to the student (indicating what was good, and what could have been improved in their report), without revealing the grade recommendation.
11. Supervisors are encouraged to **web-publish** excellent student work in their webarea, after obtaining permission from the student to do so. Obtaining a signed copyright release from the student would be best practice, however an email message from a student clearly stating their assent to web-publication is deemed to be sufficient documentation at present.

(end of Guideline)