

Part II Project Information for Supervisors in Oxford Department of Biochemistry

1. General

- Students are required to do project work under supervision and to present to the examiners an account of their work in the form of a dissertation and an oral presentation. During the project, the student should work about 4.5 days per week in the research group (they will have additional skills training and course work to do alongside their project).
- The project should take place over 23 weeks during the extended Michaelmas term (which starts three weeks before the normal start of full term and ends one week after the finish of full term), full Hilary term and the first three weeks of full Trinity term. The Department can give permission for these dates to be varied, subject to a maximum of 23 weeks being spent in the lab, but will not do so just to enable the student to finish their lab work early and so have longer than other students to write their dissertation. If there are circumstances beyond the control of the student or supervisor that have severely affected the research, an application can be made to the Department to extend the period spent in the lab beyond 23 weeks.
- There will be generic skills training for the students provided by the Department over the course of Michaelmas term (provisionally on Friday afternoons). In addition to the project, students will also have to submit a review article on a different area of biochemistry and it is assumed that they will spend about one afternoon per week working on this.
- Work done by undergraduates whilst being employed as paid technicians or summer students should not contribute towards their Part II project (this would give the student an unfair advantage over other students). If there is some unexpected overlap, the nature of this overlap should be indicated by the student in their dissertation **and** by the supervisor in their report to the examiners. Normally, students who have worked in your group for more than a total of eight weeks in the three years before the start of the Part II project would not be allowed to do their project in your group because of the advantage they would have knowing how the lab/techniques/equipment/etc worked, even if they were on a different project.

2. Designing and delivering a project

- Key elements of an MBiochem research project that fulfil the requirement for Masters are:
 1. Demonstration of a **knowledge and understanding of experimental design**;
 2. Demonstration of the **ability to generate data**;
 3. Demonstration of the **ability to analyse data critically and objectively**;
 4. Demonstration of the **ability to interpret data in the context of what is already known in the field**;
 5. Appropriate **presentation of outcomes** in the form of a dissertation.

The data concerned will usually be primary data generated by the student during the course of their project, but some/all of these elements could also be satisfied by analysis of data generated by others.

- The project is an important part of student assessment, with considerable weight, so care has to be exercised in designing a good project. Ideally this should be intellectually challenging but also likely to be tractable and productive in the time available. Some facet of ongoing research in the laboratory which is being pursued from a different viewpoint by other members of the group often provides a suitable subject as this ensures that close supervision and access to the necessary experimental techniques is available. It is difficult for the Part II students to tackle highly innovative projects outside the scope of the current projects in the laboratory, even if these are of particular interest. It is also important that the project includes the application of more than one technique since lack of interesting results with a single technique can produce a poor project. Please take care not to make projects too repetitive.
- We would recommend that online or electronic lab books are kept with day-to-day details of how time is spent, and warts and all descriptions of the progress with the wet lab work or data analysis. We hope this will provide a useful resource for both students and supervisors when it comes to writing up the dissertation and the supporting report. <https://uk-mynotebook.labarchives.com/login>
- Information on available supervisors and projects is provided to students online in Chooser (see Annexe A). Supervisors can update their entry in Chooser at the start of each academic year. [The general information given to students on Part II projects is available at <https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/119226/pages/preparing-for-part-ii>].
- Students need to submit their preference list of supervisors by the end of week 7 in Hilary term. Before this point: (i) a student should not tell any supervisor whether they are going to include them in their list; and (ii) a supervisor must not indicate to any student that they would be either accepted or rejected if the student were to include that supervisor on their list.

3. Ethical approval and safety

- It is the responsibility of the project supervisor to obtain any necessary ethical approval for the project, and to arrange for any necessary safety training for the student. There is no general induction course available to part II students.
- It is important to remember that part II students are still undergraduates and not full time research students, and thus may have different cover under your Departmental insurance scheme and/or be subject to different rules under your local health and safety policies (for instance, they may not be allowed to work unsupervised or be allowed in a building if there is no first aid cover). Again, it is the responsibility of the project supervisor to be aware of any local rules and policies. Scientific research is not a 9.00–5.00 job, and some experiments necessarily require attention outside normal working hours. Nevertheless, we would be grateful if supervisors did not insist that part II students regularly work for excessively long days or over weekends.

4. Project dissertation, oral presentation and assessment

- Students must submit their dissertations, of not more than 8,000 words, with an extensive introduction of around 3000 words, by the Thursday of the 5th week of Trinity full term. It is expected that students will start writing the introduction to their dissertation during Michaelmas term and present their supervisors with a first draft of their abstract, introduction, aims and methods by 1st week of Hilary term. [The guidelines provided to the students to complete their dissertation are available at https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/221772/modules#module_381347 and some example dissertations are available for them to look at].
- It is essential that the dissertation represents the student's own work. While it is recognised that supervisors will wish to see the work from their laboratories presented in the best possible way, it is the student who is being examined not the supervisor. Students are encouraged to show supervisors individual chapters of their dissertation as they write up. However, supervisors are reminded that they should carefully read over the complete dissertation once at the draft stage and no more.
- All students in the Part II examination will be required to make an oral presentation to one examiner and an assessor (subject specialist). Presentations will be held during weeks 7 and 8 of Trinity Term. It is helpful if the student has had the opportunity to present their research to their group before having to make the oral presentation.
- The examiners will request a report from the supervisors on the student's performance in the Part II project to assist them with their assessment. It is important that this details any significant problems that the student encountered which were beyond their own control.
- Neither examiner nor assessor will be the student's project supervisor, or College tutor. The dissertation and supervisor reports will be read by examiners who may not be experts in the areas of study presented. Supervisors should ensure that the students are aware of this when preparing their dissertation and presentation. In particular, techniques which are commonly used in some laboratories, and therefore not described in detail, may not be quite so familiar to the examiners. These techniques can be described in an Appendix which does not count against the word limit.

5. Bench fees and payments to supervisors

- Following discussions between Heads of Departments, we can no longer pay any bench fees directly to research groups. Instead, fees are paid to your Department and it will be up to your Head of Department to decide how they are then used.
- Supervisors can also claim personally payment for 23 tutorial hours from the student's College through TMS (see Annexe B). If you wish, this entitlement can be split with, or passed on to, a day-to-day supervisor (if there is one).

Mark Wormald
11th September 2023

Annexe A – Using Chooser

Log on to Chooser via Canvas at,

<https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/courses/182586>

You will need to be logged on to Canvas using your usual Single Sign On username and password to access the page. If you do not have a user account in Chooser, contact The Teaching Office (teachingoffice@bioch.ox.ac.uk).

Follow the instructions in the Editor's Guide to see your current information and to make any edits/create new project.

Important: each supervisor can only have 1 'option' published at a time. If you have more than 1 project option to offer, you can include up to 3 project fields under your entry.

Annexe B – Using TMS

The web-based Tutorial Management System (TMS) is used:

- (i) for making reports to Colleges on a student's work;
- (ii) to arrange payment to tutors by the Colleges for class teaching.

You must submit a report through TMS at **the end of each term** in which you have taught a student. Without a report in TMS, the College will not pay the tutor.

Web address: <https://tms.ox.ac.uk/>

Login: TMS uses the same single-sign-on Webauth username and password as Webmail, Weblearn, etc.

There is extensive documentation on the web site <https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/tms>, but it is all fairly intuitive. If you have any problems or need help, then please contact me (mark.wormald@bioch.ox.ac.uk).

Content of the report

The report is read by the student as well as the tutor, and the more information that the report contains to more useful it generally is to the student. This can include comments on:

- the student's time-keeping and commitment;
- the student's technical ability;
- the student's degree of understanding;
- areas of weakness that the student needs to address;
- future goals and time-lines for the student.

Please **do not give** an "Estimate of the term's work" or suggest a grade for the student based on their lab performance, as this is only one component of their final assessment and thus can be mis-leading for the student.

Instructions

Hopefully using the site is fairly self-explanatory. To start with, just a few comments on the general process:

- In order to use TMS, a tutor needs to be authorised. *This has been done by the College.*
- A teaching arrangement needs to be created for each class that each student takes and assigned to the correct tutor, either by the course organiser or by the tutor concerned. *This has been done by the Department.*
- An academic report is not visible to anyone other than the tutor for whom the teaching arrangement was created until it has been submitted.

- The tutor can edit a report as many times as they like (and so can use it to keep notes on individual students during the term which will not necessarily appear in the final report).
- Once a report has been submitted it can no longer be changed.
- After submission, the report has to be approved by the College Tutor in that subject, before being passed to the College and released to the student. The tutor can keep track of the status of the report in TMS.

Here are just a few comments on some of the specific menu pages:

My Profile: You need to edit your payment details, including Bank Details and NI number, before you submit any reports if you have selected “Pay me directly” (see below). This gives the College the details it will need to pay you. Without these the report cannot be approved.

My Teaching Arrangements

- *Arrange Teaching:* You should not need to do this unless the Department was not notified that you are supervising the student.
- *Academic Reports:* Please ensure that you enter the following information to complete a project supervision report –

1. “Tutor’s Comments” - see advice above for content

2. “Payment Claim”

- i. “Payment method” - enter “**Pay me directly**” under the payment method if you want to receive payment rather than have this count against your teaching stint.
- ii. “Payment rates” – select “Manage Hours” to add the group size and number of hours – It is **very important** that you put the correct information in, as this is used to calculate your payment. Part II supervisors can claim 12 hours at the single tutorial rate (Group Size 1; Hours 12) for Michaelmas Term, 8 hours for Hilary Term and 3 hours for Trinity Term (reduced pro-rata if the student is jointly supervised and both supervisors are claiming payment).
Please select “**Standard rate**” under Payment rate.

Also note –

You can find individual reports to complete from your dashboard page, either under ‘not edited’ or ‘draft’ depending on the status of your progress.

Please submit reports by **Monday of 8th week** of each term.