

**POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE (PGIS)
University of Peradeniya**



**GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS AND
SUPERVISORS
UNDERTAKING RESEARCH PROJECTS FOR
M.Sc. PROGRAMMES**

(Effective From 2006)

1. INTRODUCTION

Students following an M.Sc. Programme at the PGIS are required to undertake an independent research project related to their area of specialization. This is a compulsory requirement for all students registered for an M.Sc. Programme. The research project is equivalent to 6 credits and the students are expected to carry out the project and write a report under the guidance of a supervisor within a period of 3 – 6 months. The ability to select a project of their interest in consultation with a supervisor, carrying it out independently with minimum guidance from the supervisor adhering to acceptable scientific standards, and completing it within the specified time frame are recognized as important skills in the world of work.

2. THE PROCESS

- (i) Only those students who have successfully completed their course work and obtained a GPA of 3.00 or above are allowed to undertake the research project. However, in some programmes the projects may be undertaken prior to the release of the GPA with the understanding by the student and supervisor that the project may be discontinued or not counted unless the student obtains a GPA of 3.0 or above from his/her course work.
- (ii) The tentative title and the outline of the project and the assignment of the supervisor must be approved by the relevant Board of Study and the Coordinating Committee of the PGIS.
- (iii) The PGIS will appoint the project supervisor recommended by the Board of Study and approved by the Coordinating Committee.
- (iv) The student will undertake the project under the guidance of the supervisor. The programme coordinator may arrange a group seminar for the presentation of project outlines and literature survey within about 2 - 3 weeks of assigning the projects.
- (v) The student and the supervisor will meet periodically, at least once a week, to review the progress of the project.
- (vi) If there are problems encountered in adhering to the time frame and other constraints, they should be brought to the notice of the supervisor or the M.Sc. Programme Coordinators without delay.

- (vii) The student will present the status of his/her project, at a mid-term Progress Review (Group) Seminar arranged by the Coordinator about 2 months after assigning the projects.
- (viii) The student will complete the project and write a draft report and submits it to the supervisor for comments / corrections. The number of pages of this report should be limited to 50 – 75 pages and students are expected to read and follow the instructions and guidelines given in the PGIS Handbook when preparing their reports. Students are strongly advised to participate in a Scientific Writing Workshop organized by the PGIS twice a year in order to improve their knowledge on scientific report writing and also to read books on scientific writing.
- (ix) The student will submit two copies of the soft bound form of the project report (written according to the guidelines given in the Handbook) to the PGIS through the supervisor, M.Sc. Programme Coordinator and the Chairperson of the relevant Board of Study. They are strongly urged to correct English grammar before submitting the draft of the project report to the examiner.
- (x) The project report will be evaluated by an external examiner and after receiving his/her recommendations, an Oral Examination will be arranged for the student to present and defend the project report.
- (xi) Details of the final submission of the project report and the award of the M.Sc. Degree are given in the PGIS Handbook (2002 edition, p. 10 – 15).

3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT

The students carrying out an M.Sc. research project at the PGIS are expected to undertake the following responsibilities :

- (i) It is a requirement that the students engage in their project work on a **full-time basis**, and complete it (including the report) within a period of **3 - 6 months**.

- (ii) Before starting the project the student should have preliminary discussions with the supervisor and the M.Sc. Programme Coordinator, do a literature survey and prepare a brief outline of the work plan (spend about 2 – 3 weeks for this). The student may be asked to present the project outline and the work plan at a group seminar, during the first month of the project period.
- (iii) The student should start to carry out the project on a full time basis under the guidance of the supervisor. Meet the supervisor regularly (at least once a week) by prior appointment. It may be useful to exchange the contact tel. nos. and e-mail address with the supervisor.
- (iv) The student should maintain a work diary of all the activities completed and the important decisions taken after discussions with the supervisor.
- (v) Students should continuously use library facilities and other literature sources throughout the project. Remember that it is not enough to get results. Their interpretation is equally important.
- (vi) The student should ensure that each step of the project is completed as planned and within the expected time frame.
- (vii) The student should keep the supervisor and the M.Sc. Programme Coordinator informed promptly of any problems that may cause delays in carrying out of the project as planned.
- (viii) The student should maintain cordial relationships with all people interacting during the project phase, be ethical in all conduct and maintain good discipline in the laboratory, field and other work places.
- (ix) The student should make a 20-minute presentation of the progress of his/her project at the mid-term Progress Review Seminar, arranged by the Project Coordinator after about 2-3 months of starting the project. At these seminars, for each student, a panel consisting of two reviewers will be assigned to assess the half-way progress of the project and to make comments/suggestions.
- (x) The student should divide the available time frame (maximum 6 months) appropriately so that the project can be completed on time. A suggested time frame for a 6 months' project is given below:

<i>Suggested Time Frame</i>	<i>Activity</i>
1 st month	Preliminary discussions and literature survey; submitting the project outline; planning and starting the project (2 - 3 weeks) - If necessary, presentation at a seminar
2 nd to 3 rd month	Carrying out the project, analysis of data, preliminary conclusions etc. (~ 2 months). Presentation of work carried out at the Mid-term Progress Review Seminar
4 th month	Continue the project
5 th month	Completion of project work, preparation and submission of the draft report to the supervisor (~1 month) (Supervisor is expected to return the corrected project report within 2 - 3 weeks)
6 th month	Preparation and submission of the final draft (loose bound form) of the project report (2 copies) to the PGIS through the Supervisor. (After the submission, about 3 – 4 weeks would be needed for the external examiner to evaluate the report and send his/her comments.) During this 1-month period, the student can prepare for the oral presentation
7 th month	Oral Examination

Reasons for any major deviations from this time frame should be brought to the notice of the supervisor or programme Coordinator without delay.

4. ROLE OF THE SUPERVISOR

A project supervisor for each M.Sc. student project is appointed by the PGIS on the recommendation of the relevant Board of Study. The supervisor may be from the University of Peradeniya or any other University/research institute/organization. Depending on the circumstances, the Board of Study may recommend the appointment

of an internal supervisor as well as an external supervisor for a project.

The supervisors are expected to undertake the following responsibilities among other tasks when guiding the student to ensure the completion of a meaningful project of acceptable quality and standard :

- (i) Finalize a project title, an outline and a work plan after discussion with the student (if necessary in consultation with the programme coordinator). It should be a realistic project of an acceptable standard, which can be completed within about 3 - 4 months. Students are expected to work full-time on the project. Supervisors are expected to direct the students to the latest research publications on the area of the project undertaken.
- (ii) It is important that the supervisor meets the student assigned to him/her on a regular basis, at least one meeting every week on a pre-scheduled and agreed time. It may be advisable to exchange tel. nos. and e-mail address to facilitate communication.
- (iii) The initiative and independence of the student should be encouraged, and the supervisor should avoid giving excessive advice.

Student may be asked (by the coordinator) to present his/her project title, work plan and literature survey at a Preliminary Group Seminar, arranged by the Coordinator after about 2 - 3 weeks of assigning the projects.

- (iv) Results, data, analysis, discussion and conclusions should be periodically discussed and reviewed. If mistakes are committed and the correct procedures are not followed, action should be taken to rectify them. Any other problems or constraints that affect the progress of the project in relation to the scheduled time-frame should be brought to the notice of the programme coordinator immediately.
- (v) Advise and prepare the student to present his/her project results at the Mid-term Progress Review (Group) Seminar, held about 2 – 3 months after commencing the project.
- (vi) After the student completes the project (about 1 month after the mid-term Review Seminar) the outline of the project report should be discussed with the student. The student is expected to spend about 2 -

3 weeks to write the draft project report (50 - 75 pages), which must be handed over to the supervisor in a soft bound form. When writing the report, the student is expected to follow the format and guidelines given in the PGIS Handbook.

- (vii) The supervisor is expected to read through the draft report and make necessary corrections/suggestions/comments and return it to the student within about 2 – 3 weeks. Any major flaws are to be discussed with the student and corrective measures suggested.

5. GENERAL

- (i) After receiving the corrected project report from the supervisor, the student is expected to prepare the final soft bound copy within about 2 weeks, and submit two copies to the PGIS through the supervisor, Programme Coordinator and the Chairman of the relevant Board of Study.
- (ii) The PGIS will make arrangements to send a copy of the project report to the External Examiner, recommended by the Board of Study for evaluation. The External Examiner is expected to evaluate the report and return it with his/her comments to the PGIS within about 3 – 4 weeks.
- (iii) After receiving the report from the External Examiner, an oral examination will be scheduled by the Board of Study where the student's oral presentation is evaluated by a panel of examiners and a final decision on the acceptance of the project report is made.
- (iv) Details of the submission of the final (hard bound) version of the project report and the effective date of the degree are given in the PGIS Handbook.