

External MS Part II Briefing Notes

These notes are to give you some guidance only, on making arrangements for external Part II projects. They are not exhaustive and no two cases are quite the same. There are many pitfalls to making such arrangements and whilst it is your own responsibility to organise external projects yourselves, it is important that you keep the Part II Organiser (currently Prof Keyna O'Reilly) informed, such that she can offer guidance, can ensure that the arrangements (host institution, project) are appropriate for an Oxford Part II, can help to protect your interests if necessary, and ultimately approve the project. If you are interested in undertaking an external Part II project, the earlier you start organising it the better.

Note that although external projects are allowed, we do not necessarily encourage them, and particularly not for all students. You will need to secure the permission of your tutor to undertake an external project before progressing arrangements.

Timeline

- By the end of MT you should be aiming to have
 - secured approval from your tutor,
 - identified a host institution,
 - identified a supervisor at the host institution,
 - identified an internal Oxford academic supervisor,
 - have agreed an outline project description.
- By the end of MT you **must** have notified the Director of Studies and the Part II Project Organiser of your intention to proceed with an external project and at which institution. There are strict legal requirements that must be addressed before your project can be formally approved and it can be a lengthy process for the Department and your intended institution to finalise these.

Responsibility and Requirements for Organising External Projects

- Arrangements are entirely your responsibility - we can of course offer some guidance and help.
- You must keep the Part II Project Organiser in the loop, i.e. informed of all developments.
- External projects are attractive for your CV, but there are risks involved in such projects:
 - we may not know the external supervisor or how well respected they are,
 - we cannot guarantee that an external supervisor fully understands what is required of the Part II,

- we cannot keep a constant eye on the progress of you or your project, etc.
- Given those risks, we will only allow you to carry out your project externally if
 - we feel that the external supervisor is appropriately senior,
 - the project is appropriate for the length and standard of Part II,
 - that the college tutor, the Part II Organiser and the appointed internal Oxford academic supervisor feel that the student is academically able and sufficiently self-motivated and strong to work well away from Oxford.
- In the case of an external Part II project that is enabled by an exchange scheme between Oxford Materials and the external host, the Oxford Materials student's college must guarantee that they will provide the following for the student hosted by Oxford:
 - Visiting Student status and,
 - accommodation for two terms (Note: this may not map directly to the terms of the Oxford Materials student's external project).

Project Length

- The Part II year is longer than usual.
- At least 36 weeks long, over "extended" terms (longer than the normal 8 week terms).
- Mid-September to the end of June (The thesis is handed in on Monday of 7th week of Trinity Term).
- Whole of Trinity term in Oxford, and so must return to Oxford shortly after Easter, in time for the Part II talks.

Assessment

- The thesis is key to the assessment of Part II.
- The external institution is not required to provide any formal assessment of the project, but all supervisors are requested at the end of the project to make some comments on the way the student has dealt with the project, if any difficulties arose, how much help they had etc.
- After submitting the thesis you will be subject to a viva voce exam in week 9 or 10 of Trinity Term.
- In addition to the thesis all Part II students are required to give a presentation (early Trinity Term), but the presentation does not count towards the exam mark.

Lecture Courses and Training

- The Part II is a research project and you are not required by us to sit any lecture courses.

- We do encourage Part II students to attend some lectures that might be of use to their projects or be of general interest.
- In Oxford these often take the form of postgraduate lecture courses or departmental seminars/colloquia for instance.
- Part II students carrying out their projects in Oxford may be required to attend lectures associated with training for the use of certain experimental techniques, e.g. electron microscopy, or safety lectures.
- Essentially then you would be at the host institution there to do research, but it is likely that host institutions will take a similar approach to us and you should attend any courses necessary, as required by the host institution, for training on instrumentation and safety etc.
- You will need to check with the host institution how you will receive training etc

Publication

- There is no requirement to produce published works from your Part II project
 - although some research publications are produced after projects have been completed,
 - examiners may well consider if the work is publishable.

Confidentiality and Intellectual Property

- Host institution will be concerned with issues of confidentiality and IP, e.g.
 - project may be part of a large research programme that has restrictions on what information can be released,
 - or you may be working as part of a team that invents something that could be of commercial benefit to the host institution.
- Better to avoid such projects if possible
 - but if these issues are apparent then a research contract will need to be drawn up between the host institution and the University of Oxford which will establish what measures need to be taken to preserve confidentiality and to assign the ownership of any IP that might be developed during your project, and to protect your interests in ensuring that you are not prevented from fulfilling the requirements of your degree.
- Such negotiations can be very protracted and it is best that we know if this is likely to be an issue at the earliest possible stage.
- Do NOT sign any such agreements the host institution before getting advice from the Part II Organiser or Director of Studies.

Oxford Academic Supervisor

- It is likely that the time spent abroad would be for practical work and reviewing the literature, whilst the bulk of the thesis will be written once you have returned – no later than Monday of week 0 of Trinity Term.
- As a result, and to ensure that your progress is being monitored continually, we insist that an internal (Oxford based) supervisor is appointed to the project.
- The internal supervisor should be knowledgeable in the field in which you will be working.
- It is up to you to find an internal supervisor who is willing to oversee your progress remotely, and to give guidance during the preparation of the thesis (of course you should keep in contact with the external supervisor during this period).
- We will also ask the internal supervisor to comment on the suitability of the project in the first place.
- If an internal supervisor cannot be found, the project will not be approved.

Project Management

- All Part II students are required to complete a series of project management forms during the project, to encourage you to think periodically about your objectives and progress.
- You should discuss the completion of these forms with **both** your external and internal supervisors – both will be required to sign these.
- If you are away from Oxford, you will miss the Project Management Workshop given to Part II students by an external professional project manager,

Costs

- Any costs associated with carrying out the project externally, e.g.
 - travel,
 - maintenance,
 - health insurance,
 - course fees required by the host institution must be met by you.
- We can offer some assistance in applying for funding to contribute towards the costs.
- No fees are to be paid to the external institution; you will still be liable for Oxford fees and your college will require fees for the full year.
- Your college may be able to help financially, but you will have to investigate this with your particular college.

- It is quite possible that you will meet students from other Oxford departments at the same host institution. They may be there under a specific scheme and may be receiving funding. You will not. (Princeton is an example.)
- MIT do not currently charge a fee – if your potential supervisor there tells you they do, ask them to speak with Juejun Hu.
- **There may be implications for your fee status and your student loan. It is very important you understand this fully before you commit to an external project.**

Checklist

- Identify host institution.
- Identify supervisor at host institution.
- Inform the Part II Organiser of your plans (she will seek confirmation from your College tutor on your suitability for an external project).
- Approach host institution. Make the host supervisor aware of the MS Part II Course Handbook, so that s/he can familiarise themselves with the course requirements.
- Obtain one or more project descriptions (one side of A4 for each project should be sufficient).
- Identify an internal Oxford academic supervisor who would be willing to act.
- Discuss project descriptions with Part II Organiser, College Tutor and Oxford supervisor.
- Put your proposed host institution supervisor in contact with the Part II Organiser to discuss any confidentiality/IP issues.
- Identify personal costs for the project, and apply for supporting funds.
- Alert the Director of Studies that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be required between Oxford and the host institution.

Later in the process

- There will be another checklist dealing with such items as flights, health insurance etc.
- You will have to take out appropriate **travel** insurance and **health** insurance, **including travel insurance cover through the Oxford University block policy.**
- In order to obtain the University Insurance you will need to do a risk assessment for your project. Adrian Taylor will provide some initial guidance on this, but it will be your responsibility.
- You may need to take out additional insurance to that provided via the University if you intend to take holiday while away or take part in potentially dangerous leisure activities.
- You will need to take out additional health insurance – the insurance via the University only covers you in case of emergency.

- Adrian Taylor will check with your host institution as to **their insurance cover for you** while you are working there. This is known as their *liability insurance*. If we have concerns over the adequacy of this cover and are unable to arrange appropriate independent cover **it may be necessary to cancel your external project**.