Informatics Project Proposal (IPP)

Lecture 2: MSc Project Selection Guidance

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Overview

- Introduction
- Interaction of IPP & MSc Project
- MSc Project Selection Guidance
- MSc Project Allocation
- Q&A
Introduction
Introduction

• MSc project is a BIG part of your degree programme
  • **Deep specialisation** in a particular area
  • Demonstration of **independent learning**
  • Exercise **research skills**
  • Culminates in a **dissertation** due in August
• Project topic is **algorithmically allocated**
  • You can express **preferences**
  • You can **self-propose** a project
• Typically students are anxious about MSc project selection at this stage of their degree programme!
Interaction of IPP & MSc Project
IPP & MSc Project

• IPP
  - Runs in semester 2
  - You prepare a plan for YOUR personal MSc project
  - IPP supervisor is your MSc project supervisor
  - IPP marked by both by IPP tutor and supervisor
    • Supervisor can veto!

• MSc Project
  - Runs over the summer (June - August)
  - You work on YOUR personal MSc project
  - MSc project is marked by supervisor & second member of staff (potentially also by a moderator)
MSc Project Selection Guidance
Good Practice

- **Spread** your project choices widely
  - Different fields (ML, NLP, Systems, …)
  - Different supervisors
  - Include less popular projects as backup
- **Read** the project descriptions thoroughly
- **Reach out** to project supervisors and be prepared!
  - **Questions** about project?
  - **Evidence** that you have the required background/skills!
- **Provide** reasons why you are **suitable** for the project
Bad Practice

- Select only very **popular projects**
- Select only projects from a **single supervisor**
- Select only projects from very **popular supervisors**
- Select a project **without sufficient background**
- Select only **“easy”** projects
- **Waste supervisors’ time**
  - Not read the project description
  - Not meet the prerequisites
  - Be unprepared for meeting with supervisor
Project Difficulty

• What does it mean?
  • easy, moderate, hard, very hard, challenging, variable

• What are “easy” projects?
  • May require fewer/no specific prerequisites
  • May have a lower initial passing hurdle

• Are project grades capped for “easy” projects?
  • No, but…
    • Requires novel additions (beyond specification) for higher marks

• What does “variable” mean?
  • Project has scope for adjustment (stages, objectives)
ML/NLP

• **Very high demand** for ML/NLP projects
  • Albeit Edinburgh ML/NLP research groups are large
    • Staff number and project supervision workloads are **limited**
  • Mosts ML/NLP projects are likely to be extremely popular
  • Not everyone who selects ML/NLP projects will get one
    • Don’t select ML/NLP projects only!
  • Keep less popular projects as a **backup**
Project Allocation
Project Allocation

- Allocation is done **algorithmically**
  - Supervisors have no influence on this process
- Supervisors can mark you as
  - **not suitable, suitable, highly suitable**
- You must **submit 5 projects** for which you have been marked as suitable!
- Many projects have **capacity** for >1 students
Self-proposed Projects

- Self-proposing a project is **not enough**
  - Project must also be **endorsed** by a supervisor
  - It’s **your responsibility** to find a supervisor
  - If you can’t find a supervisor, project will not go ahead
- Given **priority** in allocation, but…
- **No guarantee** that you will be allocated your self-proposed project
- Keep regular projects as **backup**
MSc Project Guide

- Authoritative Guide on everything related to MSc Project
- Compiled by MSc Project Organiser
  - Richard Mayr, rmayr@inf.ed.ac.uk