Evaluating Proposals

Outline

- How do you develop the IRP?
- Reflect on your IRP: evaluate against review criteria.
- Overall structure:
  - **Valid**: Is the proposal in scope for an MSc project?
  - **Scientific quality** – how good is the proposal?
  - **Planning** – how well planned is the project?
  - **Resourcing** – are necessary resources clearly identified?
  - **Completion Criteria** – is it clear when you can consider the project complete?

Validity

- In making a real life proposal a key element is to demonstrate the proposal is in scope for the call it is submitted to.
- An MSc project is valid if
  - It's primary goal is to research some topic in Informatics
  - The proposal is realisable in around 12 weeks of work by one person.
  - The goal is clearly defined enough to allow you to decide on the other two criteria.

Scientific Quality

- The proposal relates clearly to an established body of work and that body of work is clearly identified.
- There is some justification that the proposed goal of the work is of interest to researchers in the area.
- The methods chosen to tackle the problem are sound and likely to generate useful results.

Planning

- The plan should decompose the work of the project into coherent tasks with clearly defined goals.
- Tasks have duration, resources required and interdependencies.
- Regular milestones and deliverables should be identified.
- It should be clear that the combination of tasks is capable of achieving the project goals.
- Each task should be assessed for risks.
- Each significant risk should be mitigated or contingency plan identified.

Resources

- Each task should have all resources required clearly identified this includes effort, expertise, material things (that need to be borrowed or purchased), recruitment and payment of experimental subjects, ...
- The resouce use should be feasible (e.g. It does not require two copies of you to get done within schedule)
- There should be an overall budget for the project that identifies all the necessary resources and when they need to be available.

Completion Criteria

- This is an important part of the proposal since it is a sort of "contract" with the supervisor. It could be something like:
  - Establishing whether or not some hypothesis holds to some level of confidence.
  - Building some tool or component that demonstrably meets a specification or set of tests and has an associated qualitative or quantitative evaluation
  - Proving some result or demonstrating that it is more difficult to prove than you first imagined.
- The main characteristic of a completion criterion is that it should be fairly easy to decide if it has been met given appropriate evidence.

Summary

- Your IRP is your plan for the MSc project.
- The better the plan, the easier the project is to do.
- As you develop the plan, reflect on the plan and evaluate it against some criteria.
- The more critical you are now, the easier it will be to get the work done.
- Use the above as a skeleton and develop it for your IRP.