

Guidance on Projects: Presenting an Application

Monday, 12 October 2009

Oxford FHS in Mathematics and Joint Schools

- **Introduction**
- **Choice of Topic and Supervisor**
- **Formalities: the Proposal**
- **Appropriate depth and content**
- **Questions, discussion and a.o.b.**

Introduction

Plan for this session: to offer general advice and suggestions, with time for questions, discussion, disagreement, as we go along and at the end.

Assumption: that you are beginning your 3rd or 4th year and keen to do a Project.

Assumption: that you are aware of the options: BE essay, OE essay in third year (H-level); whole-unit dissertation (CD or OD), half-unit dissertation (CD or OD) in fourth year (M-level).

Warning: Inevitably there will be some overlap with the seminar in Trinity Term.

Choice of topic and supervisor

- Choose a topic that interests you!
- If supervisor is hard to find then perhaps your topic is unsuitable.
- With supervisor ensure topic is suitably mathematical and suitably substantial. (Come back to this later)

Formalities

- **Address applications for approval of a proposal to:**

**Secretary to Projects Committee,
Mathematical Institute**

- **Submit application on standard form**
- **Application must be received by 12 noon on Friday of Week 3**
- **Projects Committee sometimes seeks modifications before approving—in which case it gives guidance. Most applications are approved by MT Week 5; all by Week 7.**

The proposal

- **Should be \geq 100 words (but at most one page)**
- **Should be understandable by non-expert members of Projects Committee**
- **Should have sufficient information for committee to judge scope and content**
- **Should include main references—to help give context and idea of scope and content**

Appropriate depth and content, I

It is impossible to be specific on appropriate depth and content but here are guidelines.

- The H-level essay is 7500 words; the M-level dissertation is 10,000 words (or half-unit 5000 words)
- It is equivalent to two (or one) 16-lecture courses
- H-level essay should be Part B level material (or exceptionally Part A); M-level dissertation should be Part C level material (or exceptionally Part B).
- Projects Committee more often worries that a proposal is too big than too small.

Appropriate depth and content, II

- The subject should be adequately mathematical:
- For OE essays or OD dissertations, a project closely related to mathematics is fine
- In all other cases the project should be mathematical
- But this does not preclude historical or philosophical topics, nor topics where the focus is on applications outside mathematics (such as advanced applications of relatively non-advanced mathematics), etc.

Presentation

The essay or dissertation must be typed, word-processed, or type-set. We strongly recommend you to use some dialect of T_EX, such as L^AT_EX.

You are also expected to give an oral presentation a week or two before submitting the work (by noon on Friday of Week9 of HT).

More on this later in the Term.

Questions, discussion and a.o.b.

How often should I see my supervisor?

How much and in what form can my supervisor help me?

Does the mathematics all have to be at H-level or M-level?

How rigid is the length restriction?

AOB