6.3. Project processes & guidelines

6.3.1. Introduction

The project element has been clearly identified by graduates of this and similar programmes as being of great benefit to them. Often, this is the first time that students have had the opportunity to perform an independent body of work. The planning, execution and writing of the project gives students an opportunity to appreciate the importance of literature review, time management, interpretation of data and concise, clear presentation of scientific information.

6.3.2. Nature and Structure of the Project

This element of the programme comprises a two-semester research project (including write-up). The project will allow the student to undertake an independent study of an area of research relevant to an industrial partner or the research interests of the School. Initial preparation for project work is carried out early in semester one and includes some lectures – project management, building on the material already covered in professional development activities in Stages 1, 2 and 3. There is an interim assessment towards the end of semester one and a final assessment at the end of semester two. The final report is presented in typed, bound form with a typical length of 40 – 80 pages (not including appendices etc).

6.3.3. Project Approval

Projects proposals for full-time students will be provided by members of staff of the School of Mathematics & Statistics or sourced from industry. Students are also encouraged to source their own external projects.

All project proposals must be presented for approval, not later than early September of Stage 4. The project proposal must include the aims and objectives of the project, the research methodology and the expected outcomes.

Following consideration of a project proposal the programme may (i) approve the project, (ii) seek clarification/amendments to the proposal (iii) reject the proposal and request a new submission.

An approved project list will be circulated to students and the Programme Team. Selection of students for projects is normally by lottery.

6.3.4. Project Management

Projects are supervised by a member of the Programme Team. The supervisor is responsible for:

- monitoring the progress of the work,
- advising the student on any problems associated with the work,
- maintenance of appropriate academic standards in the work,
- encouraging the student to complete the work within the established time and
- providing a final report detailing the student's performance over the project period, any problems encountered, and indicating the level of achievement by the student.

It is the responsibility of the programme to notify students in good time of the project timetable, deadlines for submission of reports and timing of oral presentations. Where difficulties arise in relation to completion of projects or submission of project reports the programme management team will be consulted and act to resolve the matter.

6.3.5. Project Assessment

The project is assessed under the headings:

i.	Interim Assessment	(20%)
ii.	Project Report	(50%)
iii.	Understanding, Conduct & Initiative	(10%)
iv.	Oral Presentation & Questions	(20%)

Oral presentation of projects is assessed by at least two members of the Programme Team but may be attended by other staff of the School. The oral presentation is normally of 10 to 15 minutes duration followed by 5 minutes for questions.

The project report in typed, bound form will be assessed by two internal examiners (one of whom is the project supervisor). All final dissertations will be moderated by the external examiners to ensure that they meet the required standards and are of a broadly equivalent level between candidates and topic areas. The project work is given a weighting of 3 in the calculation of the Stage 4 average.

The project supervisor will report on the understanding by the student of the material in the project. The supervisor will also report on the conduct of the student during the period involving the project.

6.3.6. Project Report Guidelines

Students are given clear guidelines for the project report and requirements of all assessments which includes information on: report structure, style, content, length, page layout, numbering of tables, references, appendices, etc.