

Department of Artificial Intelligence

Final Year Project Guidelines

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1. Introduction

This document has been derived from the Final Year Project Harmonisation Guidelines that were prepared for the Faculty of ICT by the different departments of the Faculty. Its aim is to provide a clear description of how these guidelines have been adapted for the B.Sc. in Artificial Intelligence Course that is offered by the Department of Artificial Intelligence (AI) – previously known as Department of Intelligent Computer Systems (ICS).

This document contains and refers to material:

1. Published on the ICT Website of the University of Malta (<http://www.um.edu.mt/ict>, last retrieved November 2018).
2. The document “A Short Guide to Dissertation Writing” published by the, then, Department of Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence.
3. The document “Notes for the Presentation of Final-Year Dissertations in the Faculty of Engineering” by Prof. Robert Ghirlando.

Students are encouraged to read the University’s official regulations on FYPs also.

2. Study Unit Description

Study Unit Coordinator(s): Various

Semester: 1 & 2

ECTS Credits: 30

Lectures: A series of lectures during the Semester 1 on research ethics, and on how to write a dissertation.

Seminar: The department of AI organises a yearly research symposium around March during which all students are expected to deliver a 10 minutes presentation about their FYP research

The final-year project is the largest single piece of work assigned to students throughout their degree. It is intended both to consolidate the skills gained throughout the degree programme as well as prepare students to undertake and participate in projects upon graduation. Thus, the aims as well as the criteria of assessment of the final-year project are rather wide-ranging.

There are two phases in a Final Year Project:

1. Phase 1 is the Preliminary Stage where students start discussions with potential supervisors on possible Final Year Project titles / areas to be undertaken.
2. Phase 2 is the Commencement Stage where students, following confirmation by the Faculty on the project selected, will start working on their Final Year Project.

Both phases involve deadlines to which students will be asked to adhere to.

The main components of this study unit will comprise the following:

1. A Review Report, in the form of a 6-page scientific paper, whose aim is to demonstrate the skills of the student in condensing the salient and relevant parts of his/her effort in the form of a review, highlighting the road-map of the scientific method that was adopted in tackling the issues that were exposed through the student's background research, (including the background research itself), work carried out, results obtained, and conclusions drawn. This can also serve as a summary of the student's work, as well as to guide the assessment process of the external examiner.
2. A written dissertation in the form of a report detailing the context, effort, reasoning and conclusions of the student's academic endeavor. The specific qualities expected in this dissertation are summarized below:

Work:

- Originality: to conceive of and develop original ideas and designs;
- Research methods: to use sound scientific methods of research;
- Problem-solving skills: to solve problems in a structured and rational manner;
- Achievement: to produce complete and correctly functioning artefacts.

Management:

- To work on one's own initiative, subject to a minimum of one (1) communication per month between student and supervisor;
- It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication will take place. Supervisors will 'raise a flag' when they notice that students are repeatedly ignoring meeting requests;
- To keep to deadlines;
- To adequately plan project work;
- To coordinate with third parties (including artifacts developed by such).

Communications Skills:

- To produce adequate user documentation relating to the artifact produced;
- To identify and explain the relevant concepts clearly;
- To report comprehensively on the work produced.

The recommended number of pages for the dissertation write-up is 35 pages. The maximum number of pages is 40 inclusive of the bibliography. The total number of words should be between 15,000 and 30,000 words.

This study unit also requires the production of:

1. A progress report (presented in the form of a 6-page *Work -in-Progress* paper, and a 1-page work-plan), which needs to be agreed upon, approved and signed off, by both student and supervisor(s). Further work on this study unit can only proceed after due sign off of this report.
2. A 10-minute presentation delivered at the AI research symposium. This presentation is delivered in front of all participants and guests at the symposium, and the students are expected to answer questions relating to their FYP following their presentation. This presentation should be considered as 'training' for the viva-voce.
3. A suitable poster displaying the highlights of the student's project is also required as part of the deliverables of this study unit (Further details about the format of this poster can be found online on www.um.edu.mt/ict). Students are obliged to submit the poster in terms of Regulation 79 of the General Regulations for University Undergraduate Awards, 2004. Students who fail to submit the poster may not be permitted to graduate. The poster will also be used by the student as a visual aid for the description of the project during the viva voce (oral defence).
4. A 1-page abstract for the ICT FYP Exhibition.

Method of Assessment:

Review Paper: (10%) Dissertation, Presentation & Oral Examination: (90%)

If the student fails to pass, and with the recommendations of the external examiner and the panel of supervision assigned, students will be allowed to re-submit their dissertation and redo their presentation & oral examination. In such case, the maximum grade that may be awarded shall be grade D, and the originally obtained marks for the Review Paper (Report) will be retained.

Important Notes:

- Final year project areas of interest will be made available online. However, students are allowed to approach lecturers to discuss any ideas regarding any titles they might have.

- Students must attend the students` annual project exhibition, which normally takes place sometime during the first two weeks of July.

3. Components of an FYP

This section lists the items that a student is expected to deliver during the course of an FYP. This list also includes components that do not necessarily contribute to the final grading of the FYP.

- Progress report - in the format of a *work-in-progress* scientific paper with a maximum length of 6 pages
- 10 minute presentation at the AI research symposium.
- First draft to supervisor.
- 1 Spiral-bound copy & electronic copy submitted on VLE
- Review paper.
- 1-page abstract for ICT FYP Exhibition.
- Poster.
- Hard-bound copies.

These deliverables are highlighted and placed on a timeline in the next section.

4. Important Milestones

Period (Approximate*)	Milestone	Notes
<i>Previous Year</i>		
May	Publishing of FYP Titles and Areas of interest.	Titles and areas of interest will be made available to students.
June	Student submits title.	After consultation with the potential supervisor, students will submit the title of their preferred FYP according to the departmental procedures. The selection of the title should be based on the specialization in which the student has enrolled.
July	Title accepted or rejected.	Official notification from departmental offices. The complete list of allocated titles will be made available online.
<i>Beginning of 'FYP Year'</i>		
October - January	Lectures about research ethics and on how to write an effective dissertation.	Attendance to these lectures is compulsory.
31 st October	Submission of research ethics form to FREC	More details in Section 12.
December, before recess.	Submission of progress report .	
January, Mid	Feedback by the examiners on the progress report. This is given through the supervisor .	
February, End (Week 4)	Submission of Background and Literature Review chapter/s to the supervisor for review.	Recommended Milestone
March	Presentation at the AI research symposium.	
March, Mid (Week 3)	Submission of Design and Methodology chapter/s to the supervisor for review.	Recommended Milestone
April, Mid (Week 2)	Submission of Evaluation chapter to the supervisor for review.	Recommended Milestone
April, Mid	Final chance to submit requests for changes in Final Year Project Titles.	
May, Beginning (Week	Submission of first draft to supervisor for	Review of work submitted

1)	review.	beyond this deadline is at the discretion of the supervisor.
May, Mid	Feedback by supervisor on first draft.	
May, End	Students submit a <u>spiral bound copy</u> of their report, and an electronic copy on VLE.	
June	Submission of <u>review report</u> .	
June	Submission of <u>1-page abstract</u> for ICT Final Year Student Projects Exhibition.	
June	Submission of <u>poster</u> .	
June	Oral Examinations and demonstrations.	
July	Submission of <u>hard bound copies</u> of report.	

* exact dates will be published yearly.

5. The Progress Report

Purpose

An ICT Final Year Project requires the production of a progress report, which needs to be agreed upon, approved and signed off, by both student and supervisor(s). Students are obliged to produce a report in the format described below by the specified deadline. Further work on this study unit can only proceed after due approval of this report.

The main aims of the progress report are:

- To establish a checkpoint between supervisor and student. The problem (aims and objectives), methodology and evaluation plan should have been defined by this point.
- Establish a plan of action milestones and as such to ascertain whether the timeline proposed by the student is realistic.
- An opportunity for the supervisor(s) to give feedback on the plan of action.
- A unique opportunity for the student to receive feedback from the examiners on the research being carried out.

Format and Expected Content

The Progress Report should consist of 2 main components:

- A work-in-progress paper (max. 6 pages) that provides a clear description of the Aims and Objectives, a description about work related to the chosen area (literature review), and a description of the proposed solution as well as an evaluation plan.
- A work plan (e.g. In the form of a Gantt Chart) (1 page) that describes the plan for the remaining months – start of coding, system design and implementation, evaluation, start of dissertation writing etc.

The work-in-progress paper must be written in scientific paper format and should be written in a style similar to that of a professional academic workshop or conference proceedings. The following structure is suggested:

- Abstract
- Introduction – Introduction to the area, motivation for the project, and a defense of why the problem is non-trivial.
- Aims and Objectives.
- Background research and Literature review.
- Proposed Solution – Methods and techniques used or planned.
- Evaluation Plan – The evaluation strategy and techniques that is being proposed.
- Conclusions including expected outcomes and difficulties/challenges.
- Bibliography.

The work-in-progress paper should not be longer than six (6) pages.

The work-plan should be a single page that describes:

- Identification of the subtasks and their dependencies.
- Arrangement of these subtasks and dependencies on a timeline/Gantt Chart.

6. The FYP Report

6.1 Proposed Structure

In general, the structure of an FYP report will consist of:

1. Title page.
2. Declaration (plagiarism).
3. Abstract.
4. Acknowledgements.
5. Table of contents.
6. Other tables and lists (e.g. list of figures, etc.).
7. Main content:
 - a. Introduction – Including section on Aims and Objectives.
 - b. Background (optional).
 - c. Literature Review.
 - d. Methodology.
 - e. Evaluation – Including a section on how similar systems in literature have been evaluated (if applicable).
 - f. Future work.
 - g. Conclusions.
 - h. Bibliography and References
8. Appendices:
 - a. Including user guides (if necessary), contents of the CD (or other digital media), questionnaires (if applicable), complete data collected or samples.

6.2 The Introduction Chapter

- Introduce the area and the FYP without assuming that the reader has any special knowledge in the area.
- The aims and objectives of the project.
- Any non-aims of the project (e.g. in a purely theoretical project, the development of an artifact would not necessarily be an aim).
- The approach used.
- Any assumptions.
- A high level description of the project.

It is of utmost importance that the Aims and Objectives are structured properly. FYP research typically has a generic aim, and a set of objectives that would collectively help to reach that aim. The objectives should be measurable objectives that you manage to evaluate.

6.3 Background

The purpose of the background section is to provide (where applicable) the typical reader with information that they cannot be expected to know but which they will need in order to fully understand and appreciate the rest of the project.

This section may describe such things as:

- the wider context of the project,
- the anticipated benefits of the system,
- the likely users of the system,
- any theory associated with the project,

- the software/hardware development method(s) used,
- any special diagramming conventions used,
- existing software (or hardware) that is relevant to the system,
- Etc...

Note on the “Typical Reader”: in the case of an FYP the potential readers would usually be:

- The supervisor(s).
- An external examiner.
- Other ICT students.

Since projects will likely include different kinds of theory, programming language choices, compilers, software/hardware components, APIs, development boards, IC technologies, one cannot always assume that the reader will be familiar with the details of all of them. Certain assumptions *may* be made on the background of the potential reader (e.g. it would be fair to assume that the audience will be familiar with general programming concepts, object oriented principles, basic circuit theory and system design). However, when more esoteric choices are made (e.g. dependency on a proprietary image processing library or design kit), the author will want to elaborate and use references to guide the reader.

Note that the Background is not a core chapter that should be included in all FYPs. It may be the case that a Background chapter is not required in your dissertation. However, such a decision should be discussed with your respective supervisor/s.

6.4 Literature Review

The literature review component of the report should include:

- An extensive study in the area of interested, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of existing methods.
- A review of the state-of-the-art (Description of similar systems) published material in the area.
- A summarization of the published material in the area.
- A critical analysis of exiting material and methods.
- An explanation showing why the literature chosen to review is relevant to the FYP.

It is important that your literature review builds mainly upon peer-reviewed published research, and that it includes references to recent research (research published within the last 2-3 years). Note that this does not mean that you should not include research from previous years, but you need to make sure that you are presenting a state-of-the-art relevant to the present time – i.e. you are including some of the latest developments in your review.

6.5 Methodology

The purpose of this section is to give the reader a clear picture of the system/artifact/project/work that has been created in the FYP and **why** it has been created in the way chosen. It is important that you provide a link between the research discussed in the literature review and your proposed solution.

Details:

- Fine details, specifically details of the system (software or hardware) should be left out. Any complete rigorous specification is better relegated to an appendix.
- Using diagrams (including but not limited to flowcharts and system level block diagrams) is strongly recommended.
- Any design choices have to be justified (e.g. by discussing the implications of different design choices and then giving reasons for making the choices made).
- The design of the project will almost certainly have evolved during development. Focus should be made on the project as it is in its final state but often there are good reasons for describing intermediate states too (e.g. to discuss details of the design method used).
- In case of a software development describing of all the code in the system should be avoided as well as large “pieces” of code. Complete source code listings should be put on the accompanying digital media (e.g. CD or DVD).
- One must be especially critical to the operation of the system.
- Mentioning unforeseen problems encountered during implementation.
- Explanation of a seemingly disproportionate amount of project time taken up in dealing with such problems. The implementation section gives you the opportunity to show where that time has gone.

One may opt to first provide a Specifications and Design section whereby the design of the overall system is discussed from a high-level including the specifications of the inputs and outputs of the overall system. Then, each component can be described in more detail providing a link to the big picture presented earlier.

6.6 Evaluation

The evaluation component of an FYP is critical.

- One has to make sure and explain why all tests used to evaluate the system are relevant, using evidence from the literature about similar systems, and justifying any deviations from standard approaches;
- Demonstration that system works as intended (or not, as the case may be);
- Include comprehensible summaries of the results obtained;
- If a complete evaluation was not possible or feasible, the student should describe an ideal evaluation scenario, and how the evaluation performed fits into this ‘ideal’ scenario;
- The student must also critically evaluate the system in the light of these results obtained, describing its strengths and weaknesses;
- Ideas for improving it can be carried over into the Future Work section;

6.7 Conclusions and Future Work

The Conclusions section should be a summary of the project and a restatement of its main results, i.e. what has been learnt and what it has achieved. An effective set of conclusions should not introduce new material. Instead it should draw out, summarise, combine and reiterate the main points that have been made in the body of the dissertation and present opinions based on them.

Your conclusion chapter should contain a section describing potential future work. Whether by the end of the project all the original aims and objectives have been completed or not, there is always scope for future work. Also the ideas will have grown during the course of the project beyond what the student could hope to do in the time available. The Future Work section is for expressing these unrealised ideas. It is a way of recording 'I have thought about this'. A good Future Work section should provide a starting point for someone else to continue the work which has been done. Note that the focus in this section should be more on future research (and research questions coming out of the current research) rather than just on ways how to enhance the developed artefact.

The Conclusions and Future Work chapter marks the end of the dissertation proper.

6.8 Supporting Structures

6.8.1 The Title Page

The title page should include:

- The title of the dissertation,
- The name of the author,
- The name of the supervisor and the co-supervisor,
- The name of the department and college,
- The date of the completion of the dissertation,
- The qualification for which the dissertation is a part.

6.8.2 The Abstract

This is a summary of the dissertation. It must be less than 300 words long. It should give enough information to allow a potential reader to decide whether or not the whole dissertation will be of interest to them. It should briefly describe the main features of the dissertation including the aims and conclusions, brief overview of the results obtained and a critical statement of the success of the approach. It should be both self-contained and self-explanatory, and it should refer to anything not mentioned in the rest of the dissertation.

6.8.3 Acknowledgements

This section should be used to record any debt for the use of facilities or help from particular sources. You should mention any organisations that have helped fund the project. Also, for placement students, it would be diplomatic to include the name of the supervisor in the host organisation where the student was placed and any of his or her colleagues who helped you.

6.8.4 Appendices

Appendices are repositories for material which the student wishes to include in the dissertation but which would seriously obstruct the flow of ideas put anywhere in the main body. Printouts of the final version of any code should be avoided – the code must be available digitally on accompanying media.

Examples of items that could go in appendices are:

- A glossary of terms,
- Fundamental and basic theory,
- Schematic Diagrams,
- Detailed notes on the programming language chosen,
- A user's guide.

Important notes:

- Students are to submit 1 copy of their FYP dissertation/report to the Department's office, and upload an electronic version on VLE.
- Assessment will take place on the basis of the contents of the spiral-bound/electronic copy copy and any accompanying material. Any final artifacts, documents, source code, an electronic version of the report itself, etc... should be included in a CD with the spiral-bound copy submitted.
- The electronic copy submitted on VLE will be tested for plagiarism using TurnItIn. Students will have the opportunity to test 1 draft version on TurnItIn prior to uploading the final version for assessment.

6.9 Formatting and Layout

Paper Size:	A4.
Printing:	One-Sided.
Line Spacing:	1.5.
Font Size:	12pt for main content, 10pt allowed for auxiliary content.
Font Type:	Serif font (e.g. Times New Roman) for main content and headings. Monospace font (e.g. Courier New) for algorithms, procedures.
Margins:	25mm top, bottom, right, and 37mm left (to allow for binding).
Page numbering:	Arabic numerals, bottom of page, centred.
Maximum length:	The recommended number of pages for the dissertation write-up is 35 pages. The maximum number of pages is 40 inclusive of the bibliography.

You are strongly advised to use latex2e to type your dissertation document using the template provided by the department. New chapters should always start on a new page. Note that Page 1 of the dissertation should be the first page of the Chapter 1 (the Introduction chapter).

The numbers of pages within the dissertation may be distributed as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Introduction | 4 pages |
| 2. Background | 3 pages |
| 3. Literature Review | 7 pages |
| 4. Methodology | 10 pages |
| 5. Evaluation | 8 pages |
| 6. Conclusions and Future Work | 3 pages |

6.10 Sample Title Page

<Final Year Project Title>
<Author's Full Name>

<Department Name>
University of Malta
<Month and Year>
<i>Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of <Degree Name></i>

7. The Review Paper

Purpose

The aim of the Review Report, in the form of a 6-page scientific paper, is to demonstrate the skills of the student in condensing the salient and relevant parts of his/her effort in the form of a review, highlighting the road-map of the scientific method that was adopted in tackling the issues that were exposed through the student's background research, (including the background research itself), work carried out, results obtained, and conclusions drawn. This can also serve as a summary of the student's work, as well as to guide the assessment process of the external examiner.

Format and Expected Content

The review paper must be written in scientific paper format and should be written in a style similar to that of a professional academic workshop or conference proceedings. The following structure is suggested:

- Abstract,
- Introduction
- Aims and Objectives,
- Literature Review / Related Work,
- Methodology,
- Evaluation and Results,
- Conclusions and Future Work,
- Bibliography.

Important notes:

- One copies of the Review Report is required and should be submitted to the Department's office, and an electronic copy should be uploaded on VLE.
- The electronic copy uploaded on VLE will be tested for plagiarism using TurnItIn.

8. Abstract for FYP Brochure

8.1 Purpose

Students are required to submit an abstract of their FYP for inclusion in the yearly FYP brochure. The FYP brochure is handed out during the annual FYP exhibitions but is also used by the Faculty as a showcase of its work at conferences and in meetings with external stakeholders.

8.2 Format and Expected Content

- The abstract should consist of circa 250 words outlining the general purpose, methods and achievements of the FYP.
- Two relevant, high-resolution images must be submitted.

9. The Poster

9.1 Purpose

The Poster is intended to: be used as visual support during the viva voce; and to present the project in a poster session at a conference or exhibition. The emphasis should be on a visual style of communication with attention given to the, generally, short time span available to the reader.

Although the poster carries no marks, students are obliged to submit the poster in terms of Regulation 79 of the General Regulations for University Undergraduate Awards, 2004. Students who fail to submit the poster may not be permitted to graduate.

9.2 Format and Expected Content

- The poster should be presented printed on an A1 gloss 190GSM photo paper.
- It should be in portrait.
- It should be accompanied with two poster hangers (top and bottom).

Posters are usually expected to be in colour and use a combination of graphics, captions, diagrams and short text notes to describe the FYP as concisely, yet clearly, as possible.

The title of the project, the name of the student as well as that of the supervisor(s) should be clearly visible on the poster.

Note:

- *The posters will be displayed during the ICT exhibition. A requirement sheet will be made available to students where they will indicate any resources that they might require to exhibit their project.*

10. The Viva Voce (Oral Examination)

10.1 Purpose

The main purpose of the viva voce is to demonstrate the student's ability to summarise and communicate their work and achievements. In addition to this, it is also an opportunity for the student to demonstrate their artifact (if any).

Students will be graded based on the quality of the material they present, their communication skills, adherence to the time requirements of the presentation and demonstrating that they truly understand the FYP area.

10.2 Format and Expected Content

Each project will be allocated 30 minutes of presentation time, which will be subdivided as follows:

1. The first part (5 minutes) will be allocated to the actual FYP presentation. It consists of a poster presentation whereby the students will give an overview of the research performed.
2. The second part (5 minutes) consists of a demonstration of the artifact, or visualization of the obtained results developed as part of the research. In the case that the student does not have a demo to show, these can be used to
3. The third part will consist of questions from the examiner(s).

Students will be informed of the format and duration of each part according to departmental procedures and the examiners' requirements.

In the case that the student does not have a demo to present, the second part can only be used to present (a visualisation of) the obtained results. This means that the student can specify, for a number of cases, what input was provided and present a visualisation of the obtained output.

The official pages on the ICT website also strictly require that all demonstrations are to be conducted on a machine belonging to the student. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that their demonstrations are functioning before their actual allocated presentation time slot. In cases when students require departmental machines and resources for their demonstrations, the department will do its best to satisfy these requests. However, it still remains the responsibility of the student to ensure the correct functioning of their demonstration.

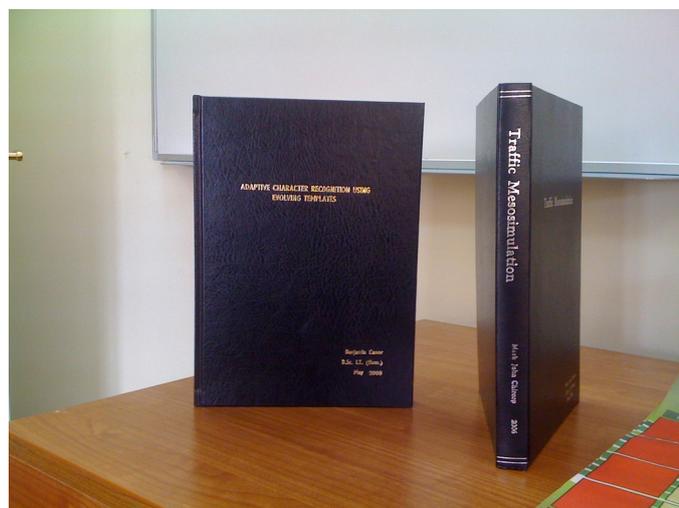
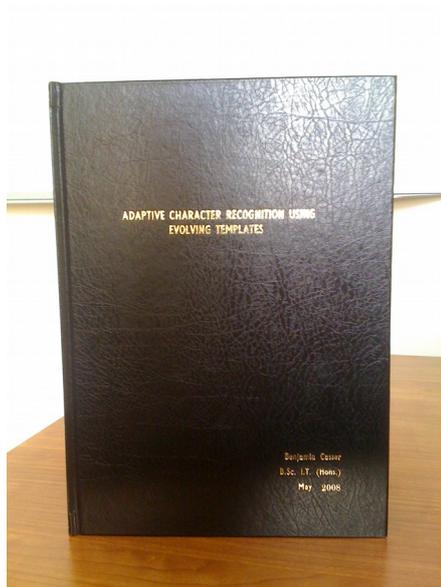
11. The Hard Bound Copies

Students are required to submit bound copies of their FYP report:

- One for each supervisor (students who are co-supervised must submit an additional copy of their report for the co-supervisor),
- The University library, and
- The Departmental archives.

Associated media must to be included with the supervisor's and departmental copies ONLY.

Hard Bound Copies covers should be black with silver or gold writing (see examples below).



12. Research Ethics and Data Protection Issues

All students working on dissertations are Principal Investigators. All Principal Investigators are required to familiarise themselves with the University's Research Code of Practice. In addition, all Principal Investigators must complete the Research Ethics and Data Protection (REDP) Form.

The Code of Practice and the REDP Form are available online at <https://www.um.edu.mt/urec>. Upon starting your research, prior to performing any data collection, you are required to complete the online form (<https://www.um.edu.mt/urec/onlineforms>). The online form contains 4 parts:

1. Applicant and project details – need to be provided by everyone;
2. Self-assessment checklist – helps you to determine if you need further research ethics evaluation;
3. Detailed evaluation – shown only if one or more issues have emerged from your self-assessment checklist; and
4. Submission details.

The third part (Detailed Evaluation) will be displayed only in cases where issues have emerged from the self-assessment checklist. Within this part, the principal investigators must elaborate further on the flagged issues and wait for the approval from the Faculty Research Ethics committee (FREC) before starting any data collection. In cases where no issues emerge from the self-assessment part, principal investigators need only to submit the form to FREC (for filing and audit purposes) and may proceed with the data collection.

It should be noted that FREC approvals may take up to 1 month. Therefore it is recommended that you submit your application by 31st October (latest). Note that the FREC forms you submit must reviewed and approved by your supervisor.

If, in the course of your research, you are using data/know-how/or material that needs to be protected; that requires permission from a third-party to use; and permission is granted through a contract of employment/promise of employment, a confidentiality agreement, and/or an intellectual property agreement, kindly note that: i) you must make the University aware of this agreement (through your supervisor), and ii) normally the University must also be a signatory to the agreement otherwise you risk being in breach of your agreement with the third-party when you have supervisions and/or submit your dissertation for assessment. If in doubt, ask your supervisor.

13. Miscellaneous

1. The FYP report should be submitted together with a digital medium which should contain:
 - a. A soft copy of the report and review paper in PDF format.
 - b. Any source code, system diagrams, etc. related to any artifact that has been developed.
 - c. Executable versions of the artifact (if any).
2. Acceptable digital media are 'USB pen drives' or Compact Discs. Submission of digital content on floppy discs (this is known to happen) is not acceptable.
3. The student may be asked, in writing or by email, by the supervisor/s, examiner/s or the Departmental or Faculty Office, to submit the report directly to a Moodle space for assignment.
4. With the exception of excerpts to illustrate algorithms, design and capabilities, full source code should not be printed in the report.