CSC3094 Coursework Specification: Project Proposal

You are required to submit a short document that describes your intended project.

Page Limit: Four pages of A4, **not including** Sections 4 and 5 (Ethics and References).

Font size: 11pt throughout

Your proposal should consist of the following sections:

1. **Context**
   o **Introduction.** Give the motivation and rationale for the project. What need is it addressing and why is this significant?
   o **Key Background Sources**: a table summarising key background sources and identifying their relationship to the project.
2. **Aim (or hypothesis) and Objectives**. What will the project try to accomplish? Which key objectives will need to be achieved to realise the overall aim or prove/disprove your hypothesis?
3. **Planning:**
   o **Diagrammatic Work Plan**: a diagram (e.g., Gantt chart, timeline) detailing how the project will be carried out, e.g., which activities/tasks will be carried out when.
   o **Brief explanation**: Why is the work plan structured as it is?
   o **Risks:** Identify the most significant risks that might compromise achievement of your objectives, and briefly say how will you manage or mitigate them.
4. **Ethics**: Confirmation of ethical approval and any ethical considerations the project raises.
5. **References**: a list of references that were used so far (which must include all sources used in the background section), correctly cited.

Guidance on Length

The length of each section may vary within the overall 4-page limit. As a rough guide, the Motivation and Rationale could be 1 page, the Key Background Sources 1.5 pages. The Aims and Objectives could be about half a page, and the Planning section 1.5 pages. The Ethics and References sections are unconstrained.

Submission

Submit your project proposal as a Word or PDF document through NESS by **16:00 on Friday 23rd February 2024.**

Marking

The proposal will be marked by your supervisor with reference to the Assessment Rubric provided on Canvas. The marking scheme used here aligns with Faculty guidelines on marking criteria and degree class descriptors for undergraduate programmes.

Each aspect of the proposal will be graded, and an overall mark will be computed from the section marks using the following weighting scheme:

Context	40%
Aims and Objectives	20%
Planning	25%
Ethics	0% **but must be completed**, see **Ethics** in Section Contents below.
Form and References	15%

Each section will be graded in one of the following categories:

Degree Category + Mark Range	
Outstanding	80 - 100%
First	70 - 79%
Upper Second	60 - 69%
Lower Second	50 - 59%
Third	40 - 49%
Borderline Fail	30 – 39%
Fail	0 – 39%
Missing	0%

The assessment will consider the level of challenge associated with the project. The level of the objectives will be setting a (virtual) cap on the maximum mark achievable – a proposal that describes a straightforward project very well will not guarantee an 'outstanding' mark.

Section Contents

To help you characterise the sections of the proposal more accurately, here are some brief descriptors of what needs to be included to get "Upper Second" or better. The full marking criteria are given in the Assessment Rubric available on Canvas. Note that these are just examples and might vary depending on the project. For example, it would not make sense to mention software lifecycle models in a project investigating the impact of a technology on a specific group of users.

Context

The **Introduction** should clearly motivate the project by identifying which specific need it addresses, what problem it solves and who will benefit from it. It should lead logically to the project aim.

The **Key Background Sources** should be a table summarising the key sources that have been identified so far. Each entry in the table should consist of three elements: a citation of the source (which must be included in detail in the list of references); a sentence or two summarising the content of the source; and a brief explanation why this source is relevant to the project. Do not include so many sources that you must reduce content to fit them in. A rough guideline would be at least 4 but no more than 8.

An "upper second" section of this type would identify the points where the proposed project will go beyond existing work and discuss the reasons why this is desirable. The table will discuss sources from all areas relevant to the project, provide summaries for each that clearly state the key content of the source, discuss its validity and a explains concisely how it is relevant to the project. Focus on the quality of explanation, not the quantity of sources.

Aim (or hypothesis) and Objectives

This should be a list of points concisely and precisely identifying the overall aim or hypothesis and resulting objectives of the project. Objectives can include both technical and (at most two) personal objectives, and if all achieved, should result in the overall aim being realised.

An "upper second" section of this type will define objectives fully and sensibly, identifying success criteria that are measurable as well as clearly linking objectives to the overall aim and the project. Ideally your objectives should be "SMART", although it is not essential that all of them are. Avoid listing tasks but focus on what you want to achieve. For example, instead of saying that you will "research into X", state that you will "identify six main attributes of X from the literature" (if that is a

desirable outcome of the research). Your objectives will form the criteria for success for your project. It is therefore essential that you can measure the extent to which you have satisfied them. If your objectives are clear and measurable then you will be able to scope and focus your project and it will make your evaluation much easier to define. In contrast a poorly defined aim and objectives often lead to a poor project outcome.

Planning

This should provide an overview of how the project will be carried out. The plan is a tool to help you and your supervisor structure your project and track progress. It therefore needs to include enough detail to identify activities at a weekly to bi-weekly level, so that at any point in time it should be possible to identify what you should be doing and what you should have achieved. It should include a breakdown of tasks to be completed that are specified in terms of their estimated starting/end time and the effort expected to carry them out.

An "upper second" planning section will include a visual representation of the plan that shows relationships and dependencies between tasks and incorporate contingency measures. Make sure that the plan is clearly legible, and that deadlines and task durations are clearly displayed. There should be an explanation that clearly links the work plan to the objectives. Finally, the planning section should identify a small number of significant risks associated with critical tasks and outline contingency (risk management or mitigation) included in the plan.

Ethics

All projects conducted in Newcastle University, including undergraduate student projects, must follow the University's Code of Good Practice in Research. This includes following the University's Policy and Procedure for Ethical Review. CSC3094 has block approval from the University Ethics Committee for all student projects to proceed **providing they are ethically low risk**. It is your responsibility, in discussion with your supervisor, to ensure that your project is ethically low risk or, if not, has been approved separately, and that you have identified any ethical considerations that should be dealt with. This section of your proposal provides the evidence that you have done this. It should consist of two sub-sections – ethics checklist and ethical considerations.

Ethics Checklist
Check that all the statements listed in the box below are correct for your project. Discuss with your supervisor if you are uncertain about any of the statements.

If each of the statements **will be satisfied** for your project, copy the statement into your Project Proposal.

If one or more of the statements **cannot be satisfied** for your project, you **must** apply for ethical approval via the University's online ethics form. Note that, if the ethics form determines that your project has high risk areas, your project may need to be reviewed by the Faculty Ethics Committee which can take 20 working days (~4 weeks). You **must not** begin work on the high-risk areas of your project until ethical approval has been given. You are therefore strongly encouraged to ensure your project is ethically low risk to prevent delays to your project. You should also monitor the ethical considerations of your project throughout such that it remains ethically low risk. If your project changes such that any of the statements below no longer apply, you **must stop work** on the relevant activities until you have applied for ethical approval via the University's online ethics form.

Ethics Checklist

My project:
1. Will *not* involve working with **animals** or users/staff/premises of the **NHS**
2. Will be carried out **within the UK or European Economic Area**
3. Will *not* have any impact on the **environment**
4. Will *not* work with populations who do *not* have **capacity to consent**
5. Will *not* involve work with **human tissues**
6. Will *not* involve work with **vulnerable groups** (Children/Learning disabled/Mental health issues, etc.).
7. Will *not* involve any *potentially* **sensitive topics** (Examples include but are not exclusive to body image; relationships; protected characteristics; sexual behaviours; substance use; political views; distressing images, etc.)
8. Will *not* involve the collection of any identifiable personal data

Ethical Considerations

Include a short description of any ethical considerations your proposed project raises that you will need to deal with and monitor during the project. For example, if you propose to work with users you will need to ensure informed consent, if you are using existing data sets or collecting data you will need to anonymise any personally identifiable data.

Form & References

References and citations should consistently follow one of the standard schemes and include all relevant bibliographical information. The list of references must include all sources discussed in the Key Background Sources table plus any others cited elsewhere in the proposal. The proposal itself should be a pleasure to read, nicely presented, well-structured with very few spelling mistakes or grammar mistakes, proper use of figures, etc. The document should make appropriate use of whitespace, have consistent margins (at least 2cm) and avoid cluttering. The text should be 11pt throughout (incl. within diagrams and tables) and the document should not run to more than 4 pages plus references.