

## **FEATURES OF BRITISH HIGHER EDUCATION. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FINAL YEAR PROJECT**

The UK offers students the opportunity to gain an internationally recognised and respected academic qualification, whilst at the same time experiencing life in a culturally rich and diverse environment. Many of the leading UK universities boast world-class research facilities and produce research of the highest standard, enabling both taught and research students to benefit from the knowledge and expertise of some of the world's most acclaimed specialists. British universities encourage students to think creatively and independently in a stimulating learning environment, providing them with the confidence, knowledge and ability to excel in their chosen career. Studying and living in the UK also provides international students with an excellent opportunity to improve their English language skills, further enhancing their future employment.

Entry requirements differ at each university. Typically, those universities with higher rankings will have higher entry requirements. For Masters programmes most universities require a good first degree and evidence of English language ability. Students who have not been educated in English would usually be required to have an internationally recognised English language qualification such as IELTS or TOEFL before joining the university. The exact English requirements will depend on the university and course, but typically range from IELTS 5.5 to IELTS 7.5 (TOEFL 525-625).

In the most of the UK universities Masters programme starts in October each year. The course may be completed in one calendar year (October to September) of full-time study or two calendar years of part-time study. Full-time students attend lectures four days/evenings a week. Part-time students attend lectures three evenings a week. The academic year is divided into 3 terms. Usually MSc students study just for the first two terms and should start project implementation and pass exams in the third term.

The MSc course in the field of Information Technologies normally consists of 8 modules. There are compulsory and optional modules, which differ depending on the course. The optional modules can be chosen from a large variety of subjects, including subjects from different departments.

The highest mark that can be gained is 100. To pass the module you should get minimum 50, it's where mark C starts. To get B the mark should be in a range of 60 to 70. And to get A you should gain more than 70. Even though the standard of getting A is lower than in Ukraine, to get 70 your work should be almost perfect and just few students get marks over 70.

The final mark for each subject consists of the mark for the coursework and the exam. Usually the coursework is 10-20% of the final mark for the module. Each subject can have 1 to 3 courseworks. They should be submitted using the open source learning. Moodle is a website that contains all learning materials for each module specifically for each student depending on the course. The electronic version of the coursework is checked for plagiarism using special plagiarism detectors. If the student has plagiarism and it's less than 10%, the student will get warning for the first time. If a student is gets the second warning or work contains more than 10% of plagiarism, the student will be withdrawn from the course. For the academic year a student should submit around 14-17 courseworks. Before every lecture lecturers download learning materials to this system. So it can be accessed by each student during the lecture, which helps students to follow the lecture material, so there is no need to make notes. These materials are accessible by students till the end of the course.

The first two terms of studying are followed by the examination session and the implementation of the master's project. The time of passing exams differ depending on the college and even on the department inside of the same college. In two week time a student should pass 8 exams and sometimes exams take place one after another, so students should be prepared to each of them in advance as there is no time in between. All exams are written exams lasting for 2 or 3 hours. Results of exams are known to students in approximately 2 months after passing exams as they are checked by 3 different independent examiners. The 3rd examiner is an external examiner from a different university. All exam papers don't have students' names, they just have special anonymous numbers given to each student, so people who are marking exam papers don't know whose work they are marking.

Even if the most important material on each subject is given to students by lecturers it's still not enough to pass the module, so students need to search for an extra material. The best source of the material is obviously internet, but to get some very specific information, students need to use the library. Library is open for very long hours and for example on weekdays it's open until the midnight and at weekends until 10 pm.

One interesting fact about studying at the department of the computer science and information technologies is that all lectures and practical classes are held in computer classes. Each computer room has around 40 computers and every student is using a computer during the lecture. A unique username and a password are given for every student. These computer rooms are open for 24 hours 7 days a week, so students can study any time they want. There are as well printers in every room and 3000 pages for an academic year are given to each student to print out for free. It is very convenient for students who find it difficult to read from the screen or for students who like to read in the public transport on their way home.

**Project implementation.** At the end of the first term each student should decide on the topic of the project and choose the supervisor. Supervisor is one of the teachers from the department, who can help to implement the project on the specific topic. Usually students meet their supervisors just 2-3 times during the project implementation. It is quite hard to decide on the topic of the project and students normally choose subjects related to their hobbies and not compulsory innovative. I chose the topic related to music, so I made a decision to do a music website as my master's project.

The project proposal should be written first and submitted in the beginning of April. The project proposal is a small introduction to the project and should consist of around 3000 words, which is approximately 10-14 pages. This stage is followed by the technical implementation of fully functioning system. Usually it takes up to 2 months to finish the system. After that a student should write the report, explaining the whole system. There are many requirements on the content that

should be included to the report and for which sections it should be divided. The project report should consist of 10-14 thousand words, which is approximately 40-60 pages. Usually it takes 1-1.5 months to write it. Project reports should be submitted in the middle of September and the programming system and all code should be provided on the CD or USB. So students have 3 months for the project implementation after finishing exams in June.

My project develops a social media music website based on an underlying database containing music information. The implemented system gives users the ability to register and log in to the website. Logged in users are able to search for singers, view singer pages, create their playlists and libraries, recommend videos related to specific tracks, find other users and follow them, rate albums, play videos, discover singers based on the same music genre, change their profile settings and delete their profile if it is required. A recommendation system is implemented to provide suggestions to users based on their current music libraries. The data shown on the website is retrieved from the database, with any changes based on user activity being stored. The background research performed for the project is based on the analysis of existing applications, together with a review of the technologies that can be used to create applications of this nature.

This topic was chosen in order to employ and learn new technologies that are related to web development including social aspects, database creation, retrieving data from the database and displaying it within web pages, and saving data to the database as a result of all user interactions.

The design of the system focused on the user experience, allowing for a website which provided the user with the ability to navigate easily throughout the site. A significant number of web pages was provided allowing for a rich user experience. The system was implemented using a wide range of software technologies including PHP, HTML, MySQL, CSS, JavaScript and AJAX.

The implementation resulted in a website which is accessible from PC browsers as well as mobile devices. The system was fully tested by a number of different users to ensure that all of the functionality performed correctly across different devices and browsers, including correct updates of the database and correct presentation of the layout and content of the pages.

It was quite challenging and in the same time interesting to implement this project. It is nice that students can decide to chose topics related to their hobbies as it gives them an opportunity to get more knowledge in the field they are really interested in. It helps as well to find a good job that they will enjoy.