

## **Project title**

*Computer based support for PhD (pre-)submissions*

## **Supervisor**

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## **Subject Areas**

Databases, Internet.

## **Project description**

The goal of this Project is to create a software which will *support processing applications of potential PhD students* and should help to find a supervisor for each applicant. This processing should be automated as much as possible.

Currently PhD applicants fill in an Official University Application Form (call it OUAF) and submit it to the University Postgraduate Recruitment Team which pass this to Departments as a paperwork. (All the following steps which are done in our Department are desirable to automate.) In Computer Science Department some data from the form are entered to the special Departmental Database (call it DDB) and some additional form to be attached to the application is filled in manually. Then applications are passed to potential supervisors. If a supervisor is interested in an applicant (relying on the data in the application form, and, probably, on additional contacts with the applicant) then some Offer Cover Form is filled in and sent to the Faculty which issues either conditional or unconditional offer to the applicant. If no supervisor is found, a standard Rejection Letter is sent by the Department to the applicant.

In addition to automating the above steps (such as creating documents), and most important, the idea is to allow applicants to submit a Preliminary Departmental Application Form (PDAF) directly to our Department by using the Internet. The point is that PDAF could be handled electronically and be available to our potential supervisors on-line to make preliminary decision on the preliminary applicants whether to advise them to apply officially, or not. This preliminary procedure, which can be completely automated, would decrease the number of official applications and all the paperwork, but increase the number of (electronic) applications really considered on a preliminary level. Moreover, for official applicants a version ODAF of such PDAF could be created to be used for submitting electronically some information in addition to and alongside with the existing in OUAF and DDB which will be also possible to handle electronically within the Department (unlike the information in OUAF) making the process of finding a supervisor for the official applicants also automated.

Thus, available via WWW, Preliminary Departmental electronic Application Form (PDAF) and its version ODAF for the official applicants for submitting re-

quired information to a database of applicants by applicants themselves should be created. Applicants should also have possibility to choose themselves Research Groups in the Department which would receive their information for the consideration, that is, where the applicants hope to find a supervisors according to their research interests. Staff versions of these forms — corresponding URLs — are electronically and automatically distributed over the research groups with a deadline for the reply to the system (as everything should be done automatically). If at least one member of staff reacts positively within the deadline, the candidate is (automatically) invited to fill in the ordinary University Application Form, OUAF (if it was not completed yet). If nobody of the staff reacts positively (to a preliminary application), the candidate receives a polite electronic message saying that the department cannot offer him or her a PhD position, at this moment.

If an applicant applied in the ordinary way by OUAF (what will be fixed in the database of applicants upon receiving OUAF in the Department) he/she should be sent an automatic e-mail asking to fill in the above ODAF to facilitate processing his/her application.

Final decision on applicants submitted the ordinary University Application Form, OUAF, should be done differently, that is, in the ordinary way, but with the help of the system. Thus, a Rejection Letter or an Offer Cover Form (for the Faculty of Sciences) should be created automatically, upon the decision made by admission staff. .

Checking for duplicate applications (by the same applicant), exchange of the data between PDAF and ODAF, and may be some other transactions with the database, sending the necessary e-mails, and tracking the history of each official application in the physical form of OUAF should be also done automatically.

This work should be done in a close contact with the supervisor of this project Vladimir Sazonov (PhD Admission Tutor of the Department of Computer Science) so that it would be really used in the Department.