

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: “creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications”. As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the “principal researcher”.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Imam Hossen
2	Student Number:	2505843
3	Email address:	2505843@student.uwtsd.ac.uk
4	Programme of Study:	MBA International Business
5	Supervisor:	Haoran Liu

SECTION B: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.		
1	UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice		☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy		☒
3			☐
4			☐

SECTION C: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	The Role of AI-Driven Personalisation in Enhancing Customer Experience in Luxury Fashion E-Commerce		
2	Proposed start date:	10 June 2026	Proposed end date:	25 September 2026
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words in each section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the three points below: • <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> • <i>Proposed Research Question</i> • <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> • <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i>			

	Demonstrate, briefly, how Existing Research has informed the proposed activity and explain • <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> • <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i>
3	Purpose of Research Activity This research aims to examine how AI-driven personalisation shapes customer experience in luxury fashion e-commerce. It will explore how personalised recommendations, digital styling services, product customisation, and tailored brand interactions influence satisfaction, engagement, exclusivity, prestige, and trust. The study also seeks to understand consumers' concerns regarding privacy and data use, helping luxury fashion e-retailers develop personalised experiences that remain premium, authentic, and consistent with luxury brand values. (this box should expand as you type)
4	Research Question 1. How do luxury fashion consumers experience AI-driven personalization in online shopping? 2. How do AI-driven personalized recommendations influence customer satisfaction during the online luxury shopping experience? 3. How does AI-driven personalization influence consumers' perceptions of exclusivity in luxury fashion e-commerce? 4. How does the use of customer data for AI-driven personalization influence consumer trust in luxury fashion e-commerce? (this box should expand as you type)
5	Aims of Research Activity The aim of this research is to explore how AI-driven personalization influences the online customer experience of luxury fashion consumers, particularly in terms of customer satisfaction, perceived exclusivity, and consumer trust in luxury fashion e-commerce. (this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity 1. To explore how luxury fashion consumers experience AI-driven personalization in online shopping. 2. To examine how AI-driven personalized recommendations influence customer satisfaction during the online luxury shopping experience. 3. To investigate how AI-driven personalization influences consumers' perceptions of exclusivity in luxury fashion e-commerce. 4. To explore how the use of customer data for AI-driven personalization influences consumer trust in luxury fashion e-commerce. (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed data collection methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity to collect data, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	The use of semi-structured, one to one interviews with about 15 participants will be used to obtain primary data. Adults of 18 years or older who have purchased, or thought about purchasing, luxury online fashion products within the last 12 months, will be recruited using purposive sampling. The respondents should be those who have been using official luxury fashion brand websites, mobile apps, or well-known luxury e-commerce sites. Aspiring participants will be provided with an information sheet about the purpose of the research, how the research will be conducted, confidentiality, voluntary participation, data security and withdrawal protocols. Informed consent will be added (written or electronic) prior to every interview.

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	Turning down to respond to any of the questions, the participants have the right to withdraw until the given withdrawing period. The interviews will take about 30-45 minutes and will take place in Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or Google Meet online. A semi-structured interview guide will be employed to ensure consistency and yet enabling the respondents explaining their experiences in more detail. The follow-up questions can be employed to make clarification or to delve deeper on pertinent issues. The interviews will centre around how the participants had experienced AI-driven personalisation in e-commerce of luxury fashion. Some of the topics will be customised product recommendations, personalised homepages, virtual styling services, customised brand content, product customisation and co-creation opportunities. The respondents will also be requested to share their views on how these characteristics impact on their satisfaction, engagement, trust, exclusivity, prestige, authenticity, and perceptions of high-quality services. Additional questions will investigate the issue of privacy, personality tracking, information gathering, openness and over-personalisation. Interviews will be recorded to capture the data with precision; in the case of audio-taped interviews, this can only be done with their express permission. There will be no need to video record. The audio records will be treated as personal data covered by the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 and will thus be covered in Section H. The brief field notes will also be recorded during or immediately after each interview. Transcription will be done correctly and anonymised. Participants will have the names, contact information, account details and other identifying information substituted with participant codes. The transcripts will then be entered into NVivo to be organised and coded. Thematic analysis will be applied in analysing the data. The researcher will read the transcripts a number of times, develop initial codes, cluster similar codes into themes, re-read and refine the themes and finally formulate their definitive meanings. NVivo will aid in management and comparison of coded data although all interpretations will be done by the researcher. The results will be reported in the terms of the research questions and they will be backed with the anonymised quotes of the participants.
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SECTION D: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☐	☒
2	Use of interviews?	☒	☐
3	Use of focus groups?	☐	☒
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☒	☐
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☒
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☒
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒

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14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.	☐	☒
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)		

If you have ticked NO to every question then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and you may skip section E and continue to section F.

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION E: Intended Participants

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☐	☒
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18?(Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.	☐	☒
	Details of any other participant groups: Complete this only if your participants cannot give consent. This includes animals (this box should expand as you type)		

	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	Ballpark figures are fine but make sure that you explain how you will identify and contact your participants. Approximately 15 participants are expected to take part in the study. (this box should expand as you type)
11	Who will the participants be?	Participants will be adults aged 18 years or above who have purchased or seriously considered purchasing luxury fashion products online within the past 12 months. (this box should expand as you type)

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12	How will you identify the participants?	Participants will be identified through purposive sampling. Recruitment invitations will be shared through personal networks, social media, and relevant online fashion communities. Interested individuals will complete a brief eligibility check before receiving the participant information sheet and consent form. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
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	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☒
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☐	☐	☒
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	You should be able to tick YES for all of these questions. If not, then explain why not in this box. Questions 17 and 19 are marked as not applicable because the study will not use participant observation or questionnaires. Data will be collected only through semi-structured interviews. Participants will be informed that they may decline to answer any interview question and may withdraw before the stated withdrawal deadline. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☐	☒
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	You should be able to tick NO for most of these questions. For any cases that you have ticked YES then provide details in this box. If you are using cameras/voice recorders to record interviews, then please state that in this box. N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

SECTION F: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them.	
1	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information. If you have identified in section D that there are no participants, then enter N/A and go skip to question 3.	
	Risk to participants: There are always risks. Do not write N/A unless you have no participants. Participants may feel uncomfortable discussing luxury purchases, spending habits, online tracking, privacy concerns, or personal experiences with AI-driven personalisation. Audio recording and collection of contact details may also create confidentiality and data-protection risks. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: Participants will receive an information sheet and provide informed consent. They may refuse questions, pause the interview, or withdraw before the stated deadline. Interviews will be anonymised using participant codes. Recordings and transcripts will be securely stored in password-protected files and accessed only by the researcher and authorised supervisor. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
2	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	The study does not intentionally investigate illegal, highly sensitive, or distressing activities. However, participants may feel uncomfortable discussing personal spending, privacy, or data-tracking experiences. They will be reminded that they do not need to disclose financial amounts or identifying account information. Participants may skip questions or end the interview without providing a reason. The researcher will pause the interview if distress occurs and provide appropriate university support information where necessary. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
3	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: There are always risks. Do not write NA. Possible risks include emotional fatigue, extended screen use, inappropriate participant behaviour, misunderstandings regarding the research, and accidental mishandling of personal data. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator: Interviews will be conducted through secure university-approved platforms during reasonable hours. Professional boundaries will be maintained, and the researcher may end an interview if inappropriate behaviour occurs. Regular breaks will reduce fatigue. Data-handling procedures will follow university ethical and data-protection requirements, with supervisory support available throughout the research. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
4	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: There are always risks. Do not write NA. Potential risks include data breaches, failure to follow ethical procedures, participant complaints, and reputational damage arising from poor research conduct. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: Ethical approval will be obtained before recruitment begins. University policies on consent, confidentiality, data storage, retention, and deletion will be followed. Findings will be reported accurately and anonymously. The University's name or resources will not be

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		misrepresented, and any research concerns will be reported to the supervisor. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
5	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

SECTION G: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

If you have identified in section D that there are no participants, then enter skip this section and continue to section H.

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when? <i>You don't need to email your participants with your final report. A good alternative is to set up an email address that they will be able to contact for further details or results.</i> Participants will receive a short verbal debrief after the interview. They will be reminded of the study's purpose, confidentiality arrangements, and withdrawal deadline. A researcher contact email will be provided so participants can request further information or a brief summary of the findings after the study is completed. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation. <i>If you are using a paper questionnaire then you should have the participants sign an appropriate consent form. These forms will count as personal data and should be noted as such in section J. If you are using an online questionnaire, then you should have a screen before the questions start that acts as a consent form, informing participants that by clicking on the NEXT button they are providing consent.</i> Potential participants will receive an information sheet before taking part. It will explain the research purpose, interview process, audio recording, data use, confidentiality, possible risks, and withdrawal rights. Participants will have sufficient time to read the information and ask questions. Written or electronic consent will be obtained before the interview and audio recording begin. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case. <i>Do not collect names unless you really need them. Do not name participants or organisations in any research publications (including the thesis) without their explicit permission.</i> Participants' names will not appear in transcripts, analysis, or the final dissertation. Each participant will be assigned a code, such as P01 or P02. Identifying details will be removed from quotations. Consent forms, contact information, audio recordings, and transcripts will be stored securely and separately in password-protected files. Only the researcher and authorised academic supervisors will have access to the data. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	

SECTION H: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 "GDPR" and the Data Protection Act 2018 "DPA")?	YES	NO
1	"Personal data" means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in	☐	

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	<i>particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.</i>		
	If YES, provide adscription of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	This includes audio/video data of participants but can also include IP addresses and usernames. Names, addresses and emails also count, as do consent forms. The study will collect participants' email addresses or contact details for recruitment and interview scheduling. Signed or electronic consent forms and audio recordings of interviews will also be collected. These data are necessary to arrange participation, record informed consent, and ensure accurate transcription of interview responses. All personal data will be stored securely and separately from anonymised research transcripts. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	“Special category data” means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects’ – (a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life, (g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),		☐
	If YES, provide adscription of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	What counts as ‘sensitive’ will differ between cultures. Any information on behaviour that is not in accordance with cultural norms would count as sensitive personal data. N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	☒
6	University computers?	☒	☐
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☒	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
10	“Cloud” storage or websites?	☒	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymization and pseudonymisation: If possible, save your data on computers that are secure and regularly backed up. Many cloud services only provide GDPR-compliant storage for business customers. An example of suitable text is given below. All research data will be stored in password-protected University Office 365 cloud storage with access limited to the researcher and authorised academic supervisors. The researcher’s personal		

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	laptop will be password-protected, encrypted, and regularly updated with security software. Research data will not be stored on private company computers or public cloud services. Audio recordings will be transferred promptly to secure university storage and deleted from the recording platform or device. Interview transcripts will be anonymised by replacing participants' names with unique codes such as P01 and P02. Contact details and consent forms will be stored separately from interview recordings and transcripts. Any portable storage device used temporarily will be encrypted and password-protected. Files will be backed up through the University Office 365 system. Research data will not be shared through personal email accounts or unsecured platforms. All information will be retained and securely deleted according to university data-retention requirements. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
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Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☒	☐
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☒	☐
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☒	☐
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☒	☐
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and/or any international equivalent): <i>This includes data such as drafts of your thesis as well as experimental or survey data. An example of suitable text is given below.</i> Electronic data will be transferred only through secure, university-approved systems. Email addresses will be used for recruitment and interview scheduling. All files will be password-protected, encrypted, and anonymised. No identifiable information will be included in the dissertation or publications. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
20	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity: <i>Normally the principal researcher, possibly also the supervisor and, if the project has an industrial partner, a representative of that partner. Possibly also external examiner or second marker?</i> The principal researcher and academic supervisor will have access to the research data. Authorised University staff may access anonymised materials for assessment or moderation purposes. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
21	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity: <i>Usually the principal researcher.</i> The principal researcher will control and manage the data under the supervision of the academic supervisor. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. <i>All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected cloud storage on the University Office 365 system which will not be shared. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected, and will be reformatted at the end of the project in order to destroy the data. The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted.</i>		

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	Data will be stored in password-protected University Office 365 or OneDrive storage. Audio recordings, consent forms, and contact details will be stored separately from anonymised transcripts. Data will be retained according to University requirements and securely deleted after completion of the research and assessment process. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
22	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtسد.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	☒
23	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	☒

SECTION I: Use of AI tools

Use of generative AI and other AI-based tools		YES	NO	N/A
There are a number of ethical issues relating to the use of generative AI and other AI-based tools, including data security, output bias, and output errors. In general you should assume that any generative AI or other AI-based tool that you pay to use is more secure and accurate than one which is free to use. Will the research use AI tools to do any of the following:				
1	Capture data?	☐	☒	☐
2	Generate and/or edit text?	☒	☐	☐
3	Generate graphics?	☐	☒	☐
4	Generate video?	☐	☒	☐
5	Generate sound/music?	☐	☒	☐
6	Generate code?	☐	☒	☐
7	Generate synthetic data?	☐	☒	☐
8	Analyse data?	☐	☒	☐
9	Analyse personal or sensitive data?	☐	☒	☐
10	Classify data?	☐	☒	☐
11	Do you intend to use the free version of any AI tools?	☐	☒	☐
If you have answered YES to any of questions O1-O11, please provide justification detailing why this is necessary for the research.				
12	State which AI tool or tools you will be using, and where they are based (or store their data – you may need to check their webpages or user agreement for this). If you are planning to use Co-pilot then say if you're using the UWTSD version of it or the public version. You should also show how you are complying with current UWTSD guidance/policy of the use of AI. ChatGPT Plus, provided by the US-based company OpenAI, will be used only to support the structure, grammar, clarity, and wording of non-confidential research text. It will not be used to collect, transcribe, code, classify, or analyse interview data. No audio recordings, interview transcripts, consent forms, names, email addresses, or other personal or sensitive information will be uploaded. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

SECTION J: Declaration

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	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	Signature of applicant:	Imam Hossen	Date: 21 July 26
2	Supervisor:	Haoran Liu	Date: 16 July 26
3	Signature:	<i>Haoran Liu</i>	