

ECONOMICS

Proposed schedule for project work

The purpose for preparing this project paper is for the students to be able to apply in practice the theories they have learned and at the same time for them to observe the daily operations of a specific company. By focusing – with the assistance of their corporate consultant - on those aspects of the topic they have chosen students shall gain a deeper understanding of a given topic. This form of study increases student independence, problem solving skills and work morale

The examinees have approximately six months to prepare their examination paper. It is important that this project is to be carried out as independent research. The examinee – with the assistance of teacher consultations – shall choose a topic, research site and period independently.

The final product shall reflect the complexity of theories learned at an educational institution and the practical experience gained in the project.

Examinees shall choose one of the offered topics, list the phases of the project and the time of teacher consultations as well. Furthermore an external consultant shall be chosen as well..

Step one

Project topics shall be made public a minimum of six months prior to the beginning of written exams.

It is worthwhile to review the content of individual topics and possible genres– which can also be found at the web site listed above:

- Traditional paper 10–15 pages in length, in which the student discusses conditions of operations and management at the company chosen based on the chosen topic.
- Prepare, process and analyse a questionnaire where the student can examine the corporate environment of a potential company or the operational environment of an existing one and which reflects primary data.
- Prepare a written interview with a corporate expert which will allow the student the opportunity to gain information about certain sectors of a company from an authentic source.
- Prepare an audio-visual aid (advertisement film, photo series) with a written explanation and analysis.
- Any combination of the above genres is possible.

It is important to review the nature of project work (according to which the final product is the result of a process which requires the reading of professional literature, application of learned theories, research and creative work, consultation while continually recording the results of all such work.)

In addition to the following outline of the things to do, such as:

- Hold discussions to choose a topic
- Keep work log
- Choose related literature, reading materials
- Liaison with the chosen company. Choose an external consultant
- Prepare a project schedule
- Submit an outline with bibliography. The outline shall have an appendix with a list of questions to which answers are needed to complete the paper
- Submit a rough draft
- Submit final project paper
- Make corrections based on teacher and consultant observations
- Final product with appendixes, bibliography, interview and other materials

It is important that the teacher consultant informs the examinee about the manner in which assistance will be provided and the limits thereof. For example: consultation methods, help finding an external consultant and organize company visits, suggest reading materials, answer questions that arise during the project. However, the consultant shall not give ideas to the student or work out details in lieu of the student, they shall discuss “only” the examinee's work and ideas.

It must be stressed that **work shall be carried out in three phases**. First an **outline** shall be submitted, followed by a **rough draft** then **finished paper**.

The **outline** shall contain the concept of the final structure of the project: the main titles that the examinee wants to explore (e.g. when introducing a company what he intends to discuss regarding the company: its human resources policy, motivation system, marketing policy, organizational structure – these titles could even be the final titles of chapters.).

In the subsections the examinee shall show what he will discuss and in what manner (e.g. in the chapter on marketing policy he shall cover the company's marketing strategy, applied marketing tools and the reasons and efficiency thereof).

In addition to this the paper shall contain those questions which the examinee wishes to answer. The examinee should also point out which areas he is uncertain about or any questions he may have, what he needs help with, what doubts have arisen in his work.

It shall be called to the examinee's attention that he has to prepare the outline himself because further steps are based on this, and the outline can be used as an aid during consultations to clarify those things the examinee feels uncertain about, also the teacher and external consultant can use it to point out errors that need to be corrected.

Consultations will show the virtues and faults of the first draft and these can be used to prepare the corrected outline, on which the rough draft is based.

The **rough draft** shall contain answers to those points listed in the outline with the help of reading materials and research. It is important to prepare a rough draft because the teacher or the external consultant can correct mistakes and comment on the negative and positive aspects and the examinee

can make the necessary corrections in the final draft and make any additions necessary based on their advice.

As a work log has to be kept during the project it is important to say what **it should contain**: the examinee shall briefly note his motivation for topic choice, scheduling, problems that arise, questions, experience, methods used in the project, decision making situations, possible obstacles and solutions to these, project phases.

The examinee shall be informed of the **formal expectations** (expected length, deadlines, appendices, graphs, charts).

Part of this project paper includes making use of an **external consultant**. The teacher can provide advice pertaining to the choice of a consultant and say what help can be asked for from the consultant. (Whether examinees receive the expected help from the external consultant shall be decided by the consultant.) The consultant should be a person familiar with the topic chosen, i.e. an employee at the company the examinee wants to examine. It would be very good for the examinee to choose a person they already know who is an expert in the field. Another well trodden path is for the student to choose the company on their own and get in touch with a person there that can help in the project. Should the student not succeed in finding a consultant the teacher shall help.

An agreement should be made with the external consultant concerning how often and when he should evaluate the student's work. (It is expected that the external consultant and the examinee meet at least three times).

Once the questions have been answered the **deadline for topic selection** shall be set as well as the **first consultation**. We suggest that the deadline for submitting the outline should be two months following issuing of the topics and the deadline for the rough draft shall be two months after that. The final deadline for the paper shall be the beginning of the written examinations. Consultations should be held two-three weeks before deadlines.

Consultation 1

The first consultation shall be held by the teacher to evaluate the choice of topic and to decide whether the student has chosen an appropriate topic (location, access to information) and discuss possible titles (this can be finalized during the last phase).

Consultants also have to discuss data collection methods with the student (how to collect literature, how to make a bibliography, what type of resource materials should be used, how to collect special information: posters, CD, web sites) as well as what has to be done by the next consultation (compile bibliography, prepare work schedule, prepare outline).

During this consultation the consultant should clarify the content of the work log and the format criteria (the examinee shall record motivations for choice of topic, the schedule, the phases and experience gained during this work) as well as how is best to prepare the outline (it is pertinent that the examinee understands that he does not have to make an outline because it has to be presented but because it will be a great asset later on).

Consultation 2

During the second consultation the teacher checks the progress in completing the following:

- outline (content and structure)
- schedule
- bibliography
- work log
- check the external consultant's evaluation of work so far.

Debate in great detail the layout and content virtues and faults of the work with the examinee. Make suggestions for corrections, review the schedule and if need be suggest modifications.

A time shall be chosen for the next consultation and what work that has to be done by then. (This includes making a rough draft and filling in the work log). Do not forget to stress the importance of keeping in touch with the consultant.

Consultation 3

During the third consultation the teacher shall check that the work discussed at the previous consultation has been completed. Check how the work log was filled in, the examinee's progress and how he keeps in touch with the external consultant.

This is the last chance for the teacher to discuss the positive and negative findings in the prepared material, how to make the final corrections, what else should be put into the paper and what should be left out. It should be pointed out to the examinee that the work log should include information on decision situations, personal experience.

This is a good time to remind the examinee of the importance of meeting the deadline and that there is no way to extend the deadline.

Duties of the teacher after project has been submitted

The teach shall prepare a brief evaluation concerning the professionalism and findings of the project. The evaluation shall be completed at the same time as the written examinations are corrected so the student can review it before oral exams.

Suggestions on teaching project work methodology

In those schools where the local curriculum allows it, it is worth incorporating lessons on project work, especially in those cases where there is more than one examinee and there are numerous mutual questions and problems that can be discussed and clarified together.

The optimum solution would be to implement similar material in year eleven for potential examinees (e.g. preparing simple business plans, carrying out small scale project work on various topics in economics) therefore the genre of project work will not be completely new to students. Students can capitalize on this experience when preparing their project work as part of their leaving school exams.

This type of work requires continual cooperation between teacher and students. The teacher shall guarantee all the necessary conditions to carry out the project; this requires a good working relationship between the teacher and student. The teacher too can learn quite a bit during such a process; it requires creativity from not only the students but from the teachers as well.

It is very important that the examinee receives continuous feedback and evaluation of his work. Teachers shall be careful to give the appropriate emphasis to the student's creativity and artistic freedom.

Proposed detailed scoring guide for the defence of intermediate level projects

An important aspect of the evaluation process is that the teacher has to evaluate the preparation process on the one hand and the finished product on the other. The choice of topics, schedule and bibliography, the outline and rough draft as well all have to be evaluated. Both content and results have to be evaluated. The student shall submit his work log along with the project.

- **Comprehension of task, focus on topic, sticks to the point (6 points)**
 - Concordance of title and content (1)
 - Key points emphasized (2)
 - Meets deadlines (1)
 - Appropriate length (2)

- **Clarity, grammar, structure of answer (7 points)**
 - Ratio of chapters relative to each other, professional aspect taken into consideration (3)
 - Table of contents, page numbering, grammar (1)
 - Format criteria (lay out, line spacing, font size) (1)
 - Style (2)

- **Use of jargon (4 points)**

- **Knowledge of theoretical and practical issues (9 points)**
 - Linking theoretical knowledge with practical experience (2)
 - Proper use of graphs, charts, images, appendices (2)
 - General knowledge in the chosen topic (3)
 - Precise documentation of sources (1)
 - Logical cohesion between paragraphs (1)

- **Exploration of key factors in the topic, problem-centred approach to the topic, independent opinion (14 points)**
 - Continuous working relation with consultants (2)
 - Maintain work log, record what experienced during the entire process (8)
 - Source materials and research results combined (2)
 - Phrasing of critical observations and suggestions (2)

MAXIMUM SCORE, 40!

Proposed detailed scoring guide for the defence of intermediate level projects

Defence of the project is part of the oral secondary leaving school examinations. The examinee shall briefly present his topic, explaining his choice and present his project paper as well as answer questions by the examination board.

- **Comprehension of task, focus on topic, sticks to the point (12 points)**
Precise explanation of topic, examinee discusses the topic at hand (3)
Examinee's answer is to the point (does not get lost in detail) (3)
Examinee covers all seminal aspects related to topic (3)
Examinee knows the content of his project well (3)
- **Clarity, grammar, structure of answer (6 points)**
Presentation is eloquent (4)
Answer is clear, logical (2)
- **Use of jargon (6 points)**
Precise use of appropriate terminology (knowledge of appropriate concepts)(6)
- **Knowledge of theoretical and practical issues (10 points)**
Linking theoretical knowledge with practical experience (3)
Proper use of graphs, charts, images, appendices (2)
General knowledge in the chosen topic (3)
Content (2)
- **Exploration of key factors in topic, problem-centred approach to the topic, independent opinion (6 points)**
Problem-centred answer to auxiliary questions (3)
Independent opinion (3)

MAXIMUM SCORE, 40!