



# **Graduation Guide IB**

**Academic year: 2020-2021**



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## 1. Introduction

You have reached your final semester of your Bachelor program! Since you study at a university of Applied Sciences, you will spend this semester in an international company (the internship) writing your thesis and reflection report. In this thesis you will be advising your company on a complex business issue. The graduation internship is the minimum 15-week period that you will spend working on the business issue at the company. The IB graduation project consists of two deliverables:

1. **A graduation thesis**, which will weigh 80% in your final mark and consists of a written thesis and an oral defence.
2. **A reflection report**, which will weigh 20% in your final mark.

The aim of the graduation internship and its two deliverables is for you to demonstrate your ability to solve a complex business issue in practice by applying the competencies you acquired during your IB studies. Through this graduation project you will have the opportunity to showcase the competencies you have acquired at ASIS and demonstrate that you are ready to graduate.

The IB Handbook (Chapter 6) provides the threshold for Graduation. The Graduation Guide provides information on the organization of the graduation, assessment of the graduation, eligibility for the graduation internship, role and task of the student and the supervision of the graduation internship. Additional information on the outline of the graduation project in the introduction, the graduation thesis, the reflection report and the oral defence are also in this guide.

## 1.1. Aim and content of the graduation

In the final semester of the 4-year study programme, students conduct their graduation project. For the graduation project students need to:

1. Work at a company (this is the graduation internship)
2. Write a graduation thesis while working at the company.
3. Write a reflection report.
4. Defend their graduation thesis in an oral defence.

The aim of the graduation project is for students to demonstrate their ability to independently solve a complex business issue in practice, by applying the acquired competencies, also called programme learning outcomes, of the IB study programme during a period of one semester. Upon successful completion of the graduation assignment, the student will obtain 30 ECTS.

The objectives of the graduation are:

- Independently solving a complex business issue by setting up and carrying out a research project within a business environment, during a period of 15 weeks minimum
- Applying a methodological approach in business research for the purpose of decision-making
- Research project planning
- Cooperating and communicating with others
- Demonstrating strong oral and written communication skills
- Developing general business skills and skills that increase cultural competence
- Building on the acquired competencies of the IB programme

## 1.2. Conditions to start with a graduation project

In order to be permitted to start with the graduation internship, the student must meet a number of requirements:

1. The Avans contract must be filled in by the student and approved by the graduation coordinator.
2. The graduation threshold must have been met.
3. Incoming double degree students must meet the graduation requirements of the double degree contract.

To be allowed to start with a graduation project, students need to meet those requirements before the graduation project starts. The student is responsible for checking whether or not they meet the requirements. More information on these conditions can be found below and in chapter six of the IB handbook.

### 1.2.1. Avans contract

The student, the internship company, and ASIS (represented by the IB graduation coordinator) must have signed the Avans internship contract. This contract thus must be approved by the graduation coordinator, *before* the student starts with the graduation project.

It is very important to take note of the following contract requirements:

- Contracts must cover the exact IB graduation period, as stated in the graduation guide.
- Only the Avans internship contract can be approved. This is Avans policy, which ASIS adheres to. Therefore, company contracts cannot be approved.

*Confidentiality contracts*

Confidentiality contracts are not compulsory to start with a graduation project but nevertheless companies often want confidentiality contracts. There are two contractual confidentiality guarantees which the graduation coordinator can approve:

1. The optional confidentiality clause which is part of the Avans internship contract.
2. An additional ASIS confidentiality agreement.

The graduation coordinator cannot sign any confidentiality contracts of companies. This is Avans policy, to which ASIS adheres.

### 1.2.2. Graduation Threshold

To start Graduation in 2020-2021 Quarters 1 and 2 the threshold of 2019-2020 applies:

<b>Year 1</b>
The student must have passed all the units of study of the propaedeutic phase (60 ECTS).
<b>Year 2</b>
The student must have passed all the units of study of Year 2 (60 ECTS).
<b>Year 3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student must have obtained at least 24 ECTS from the IBO course (30 ECTS).</li> <li>The student must have obtained at least 24 ECTS from the minor/semester exchange (30 ECTS).</li> </ul>
<b>Year 4</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student must have obtained at least 6 ECTS from the SBD International Business Case exams. The four International Business Case exams are worth 12 ECTS in total.</li> <li>The student must have obtained the 2 ECTS of the SBD module exam Consultancy Skills.</li> </ul>

To start Graduation in 2020-2021 Quarters 3 and 4 the threshold of 2020-2021 as stated in the Education and Examinations Regulations of 2020-2021 will apply:

<b>Threshold before starting with the graduation project:</b>
Obtained P certificate
Obtained 60 ECTS of Y2
Obtained 60 ECTS of Y3
Obtained 24 out of 30 ECTS of the SBD course including two out of four SBD case exams (= 6 ECTS) and 2 ECTS of Consultancy Skills

Please note that the SBD module Consultancy Skills is mandatory for being eligible to start your graduation. This 2 ECTS course replaces the factsheet and the research proposal during the graduation project. Students will write a research proposal during this course for which they receive either a 'PASS' or a 'FAIL'. Only with a 'PASS', meaning an approved and solid research proposal, students can start their graduation internship.

**Resit students that did not follow the module Consultancy Skills will have to hand in a research proposal before the start of their graduation internship similar to the format used in Consultancy Skills. This research proposal does not count for 2 ECTS but needs to be approved by the graduation coordinator.**



### 1.2.3. General requirements graduation internship

There are several conditions for a graduation internship:

- In principle, students must find a full-time position at a company, according to the company standards (which can vary from 36 to 50 hours per week). However, exceptions are allowed to take the five-week optional internship (see below).
- Students must find a placement at a company for a minimum of 15 weeks and a maximum of 20 weeks.
- The difference between the minimum and maximum number of required weeks can be explained as follows. There are 5 weeks of optional internship. The student is free to decide if they want to spend those weeks on the internship or on writing the thesis or reflection report. The student can decide themselves if and when they want to take those weeks (can also be taken in individual weeks or days throughout the graduation period).
- In principle, students must be physically present at the company during all working hours.
- The company must allow the student to work on tasks related to the thesis for a minimum of 3 to 4 days per week.
- The internship must take place within the fixed IB graduation period, exactly as stated in the graduation guide.

#### Company requirements

There are several conditions which the internship company must meet.

- The company needs to have a minimum of 10 employees (interns do not count).
- The company is not in the start-up phase anymore.
- A maximum of 1 student per company department is allowed.
- In principle, students cannot do the internship in a business of their own, or of their own family.
- The company must be a different company than where the student did the work placement in year 2 unless the graduation internship is in another division or department. This is up to the graduation coordinators to decide.
- The company is not involved in illegal activities or products. If there is any doubt about this, the graduation coordinator will disapprove the proposal.

#### Project requirements

**The graduation project must have an international character.** This international character can be realised either because the student does the graduation internship in a foreign country or the topic of the graduation thesis concerns an international business issue.

If the international character lies in the content, as a minimum requirement, the business issue dealt with in the thesis must have an international aspect, which is clearly shown in the project objective section and which is clearly explored in the exploration and concluded upon in the conclusion.

In addition, the student must ensure that the international character of the graduation project is sufficiently guaranteed so that they can reflect upon all the assignments and programme learning outcomes in the reflection report. The student must find or create situations on which they need to reflect, such as a situation in which he collaborates with people from different cultures. See the graduation guide for further information about the reflection report.

This international character can be realised either because the student does the graduation internship in a foreign country or the topic of the graduation thesis concerns an international business issue. This means that if the student does not go abroad for the graduation internship, the subject of the

thesis must be an international business issue. As a minimum requirement, the business issue must have an international aspect which is clearly shown in the project objective section and which is clearly explored in the exploration and concluded upon in the conclusion.

### 1.3. Outline & Assessment graduation project

The graduation project is one project of 30 ECTS, which consists of several deliverables as stated above, which will be assessed separately. The student passes the graduation project if he is fit for defence (he passed the final thesis and the reflection report) and the final (overall) mark is 5,5 or higher. The thesis has to be assessed with a 5,5 on every criteria. Only then will he receive the 30 credits for the graduation project. The final mark is the overall mark for the graduation project. It is the weighted average of two marks: the mark for the thesis (which weighs 80%), and the mark for the reflection report (which weighs 20%). The final mark can be no more than 10 points.

#### Overview graduation project

- 1 Graduation thesis
  - 1a Final thesis
  - 1b Oral defence
- 2 Reflection report

#### 1a The final thesis

The final thesis is the main deliverable in the graduation project. It is assessed with a fit or unfit for your oral defence. Passing the final graduation thesis is a condition to passing the graduation project; only if your thesis is preliminary graded with a 5.5 or higher mark on every criteria, you are fit for defence. If you are 'unfit for defence' (5,4 or lower mark) you have failed the graduation thesis and you are not invited to an oral defence and therefore cannot receive an overall pass for the graduation project. In the graduation project you have two opportunities to pass your final graduation thesis. See section 2.9.4 'Assessment graduation thesis' below for further information about assessment of the graduation thesis.

#### 1b The Oral defence

At the oral defence, your mark for the thesis is determined and together with your mark for the reflection report, your final mark for the graduation project will be communicated. The final mark can be no more than 10 points. The oral defence is a condition to passing the graduation project; only if you defended your thesis, will you receive the final mark for your graduation project and be able to pass your graduation project.

You are only allowed to an oral defence if the following conditions are met:

- The final graduation thesis is fit for defence.
- The mark for the reflection report is 5.5 or higher.

In a graduation project you will have two opportunities for an oral defence.

#### 2 The reflection report

The reflection report is the second deliverable in the graduation project. It is assessed with a mark which accounts for 20% of the final mark of the graduation project. Passing the reflection report is a condition to passing the graduation project; only if your reflection report is assessed with 5,5 or higher mark, you are fit for defence. If you are 'unfit for defence' (5,4 or lower mark) you have failed the reflection report and you are not invited to an oral defence and therefore you cannot receive an overall pass for the graduation project. In the graduation project you have two opportunities to pass your reflection report. See section 3.4 'Hand-in & assessment reflection report' below, for further information about the assessment of the reflection report.

**Final mark and credits**

The final mark is the overall mark for the graduation project. It is the weighted average of two marks: the mark for the graduation thesis (which weighs 80%) and the mark for the reflection report (which weighs 20%). The student passes the graduation project if he was fit for defence and the final mark is 5,5 or higher. Only then will he receive the 30 credits for the graduation project. The final overall mark can be no more than 10 points.

The following figure shows the outline of the deliverables. It is included in the IB handbook.

	<b>Graduation component</b>	<b>Assessed with</b>	<b>Assessed by</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Weighting in final grade</b>
<b>A</b>	Graduation thesis	Grade 1 - 10	Two ASIS examiners, advised by external advisor	At the oral defence, the grade for the thesis is determined. A thesis is fit for defence with a minimum of 5.5 for every criteria.	80%
<b>B</b>	Reflection report	Grade 1 - 10	One ASIS examiner	Minimum of 5.5 is a condition for being allowed to defend the thesis	20%

## 1.4. Program Learning Outcomes

As stated in the introduction, there are three deliverables for your graduation project. Each deliverable has various program learning outcomes (PLO's):

1. In the thesis, the following PLO's are assessed:
  - LW 9 (Personal & professional development)
  - LW 11 (Intercultural proficiency)
  - LW 12 (Intercultural proficiency)
  - WT 1 (Critical thinking)
  - WT 2 (Innovation & Creativity)
  - WT 3 (International Business Awareness)
  - WW 4 (International business communication)
  - WW 7 (Management of information as digital citizen)
  - TWM 23 (Organisation & People)
  - TWM 24 (Business research)
2. During the oral defence, the following PLO's are assessed:
  - WT 1 (Critical thinking)
  - WW 4 (International business communication)
  - WW 7 (Produce management information)
  - LW 8 (Personal & professional development)
  - TWM 17 (Marketing & Sales)
3. In the reflection report, the following PLO's are assessed:
  - WW6 (Collaboration)
  - LW8 (Personal & professional development)
  - LW9 (Personal & professional development)
  - LW10 (Ethical & Social responsibility)
  - LW11 (Intercultural proficiency)
  - LW12 (Intercultural proficiency)
  - LW13 (Intercultural proficiency)

The complete overview of the PLO's in the IB program can be found in appendix 3.

## 2. Graduation Thesis

In a nutshell, in your graduation thesis you should analyze the business problem and its causes and effects, use this analysis to propose a solution, and after developing that solution, validate (test) it by doing research.

This implies that you need to setup and carry out a research plan. For this you will need to use the knowledge and skills acquired during the Business Research Skills/ Business Research Methods courses in your study program. This methodological approach used by ASIS also implies that the layout of your graduation thesis should always be in line with the layout given in the graduation guide.

Your thesis must include seven chapters:

- 1) a description of the **project objective**, describing what you are trying to accomplish and why it is important
- 2) an analysis of the problem, its causes and possible solutions in the **exploration**. The exploration consists of a situational analysis (what has the company already done, what have others tried, what has not yet been tried?), a theoretical background (what are the known causes of the business issue, what are relevant factors, what can I learn from theories, academic articles and best practices?) and a visualization of all relevant factors and how they relate.
- 3) a **proposed solution** based on the exploration. What creative idea can help you solve the issue and how?
- 4) a description of the research method in the **methodology** section (how are you going to gather primary data to solve your business issue?)
- 5) the research **results** (what have you found about the business issue and its solution?)
- 6) a **conclusion** (what do your results mean? What is the answer to your research question?)
- 7) **recommendations** to your company (based on your findings, what should the company do?)

If your company requests it, or if you find it convenient, you can write a slightly different report for them, or present your research e.g. in a presentation.

**Table of content graduation thesis**

Your thesis needs to include all content elements as named above. Your thesis will be assessed on all of these elements according to the assessment matrix, which you can find on Blackboard. In the next paragraphs you will find more information on these content elements.

Besides these content elements, your graduation thesis should include some other elements, to meet the requirements of a professional report, such as a cover page and a table of contents for example. The following table gives you an overview of the desired structure of your final thesis, showing all the required elements.

**Final Thesis**

Cover page with title
Executive summary
Table of content/Figures
Introduction
Chapter 1 Project Objective (see 2.2)
Chapter 2 Exploration (see 2.3)
Chapter 3 Proposed Solution (see 2.4)
Chapter 4 Methodology (see 2.5)
Chapter 5 Results (see 2.6)
Chapter 6 Conclusions (see 2.7)
Chapter 7 Recommendations (see 2.8)
Reference list
Appendices

## 2.1. Project Objective

Your first step will be to describe the business issue that you are researching, formulate an objective, and motivate why your research is relevant, timely and important. The project objective will also contain your final research question (usually in the last paragraph of this chapter). Together, these elements form the project objective of your report.

You should formulate (and sometimes reformulate) a project objective after consulting your company mentor and your school mentor. In order to be able to formulate your project objective you will most likely have several meetings with your company mentor and other stakeholders. You may find that your project objective has changed since your factsheet was approved. You do not need to resubmit a factsheet, but your school mentor needs to agree with the changes.

You can find additional information on the project objective in Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (6<sup>th</sup> Edition): attributes of a good research topic pg. 28-30, generating and refining research ideas pg. 30-36, Writing research objectives pg. 43-44.

Your project objective will be assessed on 5 standards. In the table below you will find the grading criteria of the assessment form per standard. From left to right the columns represent good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable.



**Assessment form project objective chapter**

(From left to right in columns good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable).

<p><b>1 Business issue</b> This section provides a <u>completely clear</u> description of the business issue (the problem)</p> <p><b>2 Company objective(s) regarding the business issue</b> * The objective(s) of the company (dependent variable) is <u>completely clear</u>; precisely formulated, specific, measurable and realistic, and <u>clearly related</u> to the business issue. * It is completely clear in which timeframe the objective should be realised.</p> <p><b>3 Relevance and urgency</b> Why the business issue and company objective(s) are relevant and urgent for the company, is <u>argued thoroughly, based on</u> observations and facts and a complete description of the situation.</p> <p><b>4 Critical analysis</b> The student shows a thorough <u>critical analysis</u> of the business issue and the information presented by the company.</p> <p><b>5 Research question</b> * The research question is <u>completely clear, specific, measurable and realistic, and focused on</u> solving the business issue and attaining the company objective(s). * The scope of the research is <u>limited clearly</u> and the used terms (variables) are defined clearly. * The research question is <u>focused on</u> solving the business issue and attaining the company objective(s).</p>	<p><b>1 Business issue</b> This section provides a <u>sufficient</u> description of the business issue (the problem).</p> <p><b>2 Company objective(s) regarding the business issue</b> * The objective of the company (dependent variable) is <u>clear</u>; mostly specific, measurable and realistic) and <u>related</u> to the business issue. * It is clear in which timeframe the objective should be realised.</p> <p><b>3 Relevance and urgency</b> Why the business issue and objective(s) are relevant and urgent for the company, is <u>argued to a large extent, based on</u> some observations and facts and a description of the situation.</p> <p><b>4 Critical analysis</b> The student shows <u>some critical analysis</u> of the information presented by the company.</p> <p><b>5 Research question</b> * The research question is <u>clear, specific, measurable and realistic, and focused on</u> solving the business issue and attaining the company objective(s). * The scope of the research is <u>limited</u> and the used terms (variables) are defined. * The research question is <u>focused on</u> solving the business issue and attaining the company objective(s).</p>	<p><b>1 Business issue</b> The description of the business issue (the problem) is <u>not entirely clear</u>.</p> <p><b>2 Company objective(s) regarding the business issue</b> * The objective of the company (dependent variable) is <u>not entirely clear</u>; only partially specific, measurable and realistic, and / or only <u>partially related</u> to the business issue. * It is not entirely clear in which timeframe the objective should be realised.</p> <p><b>3 Relevance and urgency</b> Why the business issue and objective(s) are relevant and urgent for the company, is <u>argued only partially</u>, and / or only <u>partially based on</u> observations and facts and a description of the situation.</p> <p><b>4 Critical analysis</b> The student shows <u>little critical analysis</u> of the information presented by the company.</p> <p><b>5 Research question</b> * The research question is <u>not entirely specific, measurable and realistic and only partially focused on</u> solving the business issue and attaining the company objective(s). * The scope of the research is <u>not clearly limited</u> and the used terms (variables) are only partially or not clearly defined. * The research question is only <u>partially focused on</u> solving the business issue and attaining the company objective(s).</p>	<p><b>1 Business issue</b> Description of the business issue (the problem) is lacking or <u>unclear</u>.</p> <p><b>2 Company objective(s) regarding the business issue</b> * The objective of the company is not described or is <u>unclear</u> (not specific, measurable and realistic) and / or is <u>not related</u> to the business issue. * It is not or hardly clear in which timeframe the objective should be realised.</p> <p><b>3 Relevance and urgency</b> Why the business issue and objective are relevant and urgent to the company is <u>hardly argued</u>, and / or <u>not supported by</u> observations and facts and a description of the situation.</p> <p><b>4 Critical analysis</b> The students shows <u>no critical analysis</u> of the information presented by the company.</p> <p><b>5 Research question</b> * The research question is <u>not specific, measurable and realistic and hardly focused on</u> solving the business issue and attaining the company objective(s). * The scope of the research is not or <u>hardly limited</u> and the used terms (variables) are not defined. * The research question is <u>hardly focused on</u> solving the business issue and attaining the company objective(s).</p>
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## 2.2. Exploration (Situational analysis & Theoretical background)

The exploration is your critical analysis of information relevant to solving the problem. You should analyze possible causes to the problem in this section, and explore possible solutions. To do this, you need to analyze the business and the context in which it is operating (situational analysis). Besides, you also need to analyze scientific theory relevant to understand and solve the problem (theoretical background). Do not forget to cite your sources, even if they are internal!

### 2.2.1. Situational analysis

The situational analysis consists of examining and analysing company and industry information. Company information can be obtained by conducting interviews with colleagues, managers and other company stakeholders, by observing company processes and by examining company documents. This might yield information about who is involved in the issue, what research has already been conducted by the company in this matter, what actions have been taken already to solve the issue, and how effective these actions have been. This information should be analyzed to yield insights into the causes and potential solutions of the business issue. Depending on your topic, you might also look at information from the industry or other industries. It could be that other companies within or outside your industry have had to deal with similar issues. Depending on your topic, you may also need to gather information about competitors, suppliers or other relevant companies.

### 2.2.2. Theoretical background

The theoretical background reports on contemporary scientific theories relevant to your research and should be used to generate new insights about the business problem. You should use theories to identify factors affecting the outcome(s) that you are interested in. This will also help you identify factors and variables that the company has yet to consider. You should use these sources to justify why the actions the company has taken so far were (or were not) successful. Finally, you should adopt a multi-disciplinary perspective and examine different theoretical angles. For example, even if your graduation project is about improving process efficiency, employee motivation could be an important factor impacting the number of employee errors, which in turn reduce process efficiency.

Additional information can be found in Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (6<sup>th</sup> Edition): Planning your literature search strategy pg. 90-96, Obtaining and evaluating the literature pg. 108-111, Recording the literature pg. 113-114 but the entire chapter 3 is worth reading.

Remember that a **theory** is a “formulation regarding the cause and effect relationships between two or more variables, which may or may not have been tested” (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012, pg. 683). Theories will form the basis for your conceptual model. A conceptual model is a schematic representation of the cause and effect relationships relevant to your research, this is the next chapter of your thesis.

**Models** (e.g. Ansoff’s Product-Market Expansion Grid, BCG’s Growth-Share Matrix, SWOT, Porter’s Five Forces, PESTEL/STPEL) are used to present and analyze information in a certain way. If you do decide to use models, you should select them carefully and use them to structure your analysis. In other words, models are tools, so you should select the right tool for the job.

### ***Combining Situational Analysis and Theoretical Background***

While working on your exploration you may find that the situational analysis and theoretical background complement each other. In that case, you may want to combine these two sources of information in one section. One way to do that is by structuring your exploration according to the factors that are relevant and include both situational and theoretical information. Your references should make clear what information is situational (e.g. references such as “personal communication” and what information is theoretical (e.g. references from academic journals).

Alternatively, you will find that the situational analysis and theoretical background give you entirely different perspectives on the business problem. Then, you will probably find that you will have one section including mostly situational information and one section including mostly theoretical information. Do not feel like you have to give them titles such as “situational analysis” or “theoretical background”. Give your sections/paragraphs informative titles.

In all cases, we expect you to be critical towards the information that you choose to include in your report. In other words, just because you read an article does not mean you should include it in your report. You should only include information that is relevant. Also, it should be clear to the reader where the information originated. This implies the use of appropriate referencing when presenting facts, findings and theories and when expressing ideas and opinions that are not your own. Please see Appendix 2 for important information about referencing.

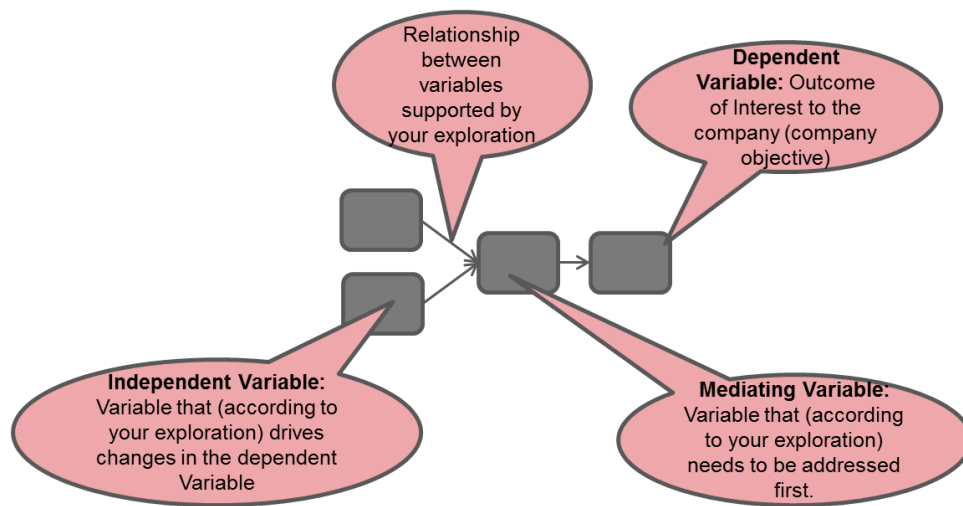
Your exploration will also be assessed on whether you were critical towards your sources. In other words, just because a theory has been reported in an academic journal does not mean it has been tested (satisfactorily). You therefore need to be critical towards these theories when deciding to include them in your research. Similarly, just because a manager in your company believes he knows what the cause of the problem is, does not mean that he is right. You should (politely of course) question these kinds of assertions.

An important criterion when assessing the Exploration is the quality of the sources that you use. Obviously, sources such as Wikipedia, Investopedia, Businesspedia etc. are never acceptable sources. Conversely, academic journal articles can be considered to be the highest quality sources. However, for many other types of sources (e.g. blogs, books, websites), there are no black and white rules. In those cases, how you use the source is paramount. For example, a blog entry can be a good source for an anecdote illustrating a point (situational analysis), but not as evidence supporting a cause-and-effect relationship (theoretical background). Additional information can be found in Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (6<sup>th</sup> Edition): The critical review pg. 73-80.

### 2.2.3. Visualization

The factors that you identified as influencing to the business issue (in your exploration) should be summarized in a visualization. This shows how these factors (represented by variables) are related to each other (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010).

In your research, the principal dependent variable should be the outcome of interest to the company. Depending on your research, there may be a mediator variable that you need to consider first.



**Assessment form exploration chapter**

(From left to right in columns good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable).

<p><b>1 Exploration of company and industry information</b>  * <u>All</u> internal and external company and industry information, evidently relevant for business issue and potential solutions, is explored critically.  * <u>All</u> the presented company and industry information is relevant for the business issue.</p> <p><b>2 Theory</b>  <u>Contemporary</u> theory is presented from <u>different sources</u>, including academic ones, which are <u>relevant</u> for the business issue and <u>applied</u> to the situation at hand, to explore causes of and solutions to the business issue.</p> <p><b>3 Exploration of factors</b>  A complete overview of the factors influencing the business issue and potential solutions is provided.</p> <p><b>4 Critical analysis</b>  * The discussed factors and solutions are analysed <u>critically and thoroughly</u>, drawing inferences and conclusions which are well founded by arguments and evidence.  * Choice of presented theory and models is argued thoroughly.</p> <p><b>5 Combination of information from different sources</b>  Information from different sources and perspectives is combined, both from theory and practice, if relevant, from different disciplines, and <u>synthesized conclusions</u> are drawn.</p> <p><b>6 Coherent story</b>  This section is presented in a <u>entirely coherent</u> story, providing meaningful inferences and conclusions.</p> <p><b>7 Visualisation</b>  A visualisation is provided of the <u>most important described factors</u> for the business issue and potential solutions, in causal relations, which are correctly presented, <u>explained and operationalised</u>.</p>	<p><b>1 Exploration of company and industry information</b>  * <u>Most</u> internal and external company and industry information, evidently relevant for business issue and potential solutions, is explored.  * <u>Most</u> of the presented company and industry information is relevant for the business issue.</p> <p><b>2 Theory</b>  Theory from <u>different sources</u> presented, <u>mostly up to date</u>, <u>mostly relevant</u> for business issue, and to a <u>large extent</u>, <u>applied</u> to the situation at hand to explore causes and solutions to the business issue.</p> <p><b>3 Exploration of factors</b>  The different factors influencing the business issue and potential solutions are examined to a large extent.</p> <p><b>4 Critical analysis</b>  * The discussed factors and solutions are analysed <u>critically to a large extent</u>, drawing inferences and conclusions, which are generally reasonable and founded by arguments and evidence.  * Choice of presented theory and models is argued thoroughly.</p> <p><b>5 Combination of information from different sources</b>  On several points, information from different sources and perspectives is combined, both from theory, and practice, if relevant, from different disciplines, to draw conclusions.</p> <p><b>6 Coherent story</b>  This sections is presented in a <u>coherent story</u>, providing some meaningful inferences and conclusions.</p> <p><b>7 Visualisation</b>  A visualisation of the factors for the business issue and potential solutions is presented, but it is <u>general</u>, and/or shows most causal relations correctly.</p>	<p><b>1 Exploration of company and industry information</b>  * <u>Only part of</u> the internal and external company and industry information, which is evidently relevant to explore the business issue and potential solutions, is explored.  * The presented company and industry information is only <u>partially</u> relevant for the business issue.</p> <p><b>2 Theory</b>  <u>Little</u> theory presented, from one or very few sources, <u>only partially up to date</u>, relevant for business issue and <u>applied</u> to situation at hand to explore the causes and solutions to the business issue.</p> <p><b>3 Exploration of factors</b>  The different factors influencing the business issue and potential solutions are examined in part.</p> <p><b>4 Critical analysis</b>  * There is <u>little critical analysis</u> of the discussed factors and solutions, with few inferences and conclusions, or conclusions are partially unfounded by arguments and evidence.  * Choice of presented theory and models is argued partially.</p> <p><b>5 Combination of information from different sources</b>  Only little combination of information from different sources and perspectives takes place, or theory and practice are only partially combined, to draw conclusions.</p> <p><b>6 Coherent story</b>  The presented story is <u>not very coherent</u>, it provides only few meaningful inferences and conclusions.</p> <p><b>7 Visualisation</b>  A visualisation of the most important factors for the business issue and potential solutions is <u>presented only partially</u>, or it shows only some of the factors as described in this section.</p>	<p><b>1 Exploration of company and industry information</b>  Internal and external company and industry information, evidently relevant to explore the causes and solutions to the business issue is <u>hardly explored</u>.  * The presented company and industry information is <u>hardly</u> relevant for the business issue.</p> <p><b>2 Theory</b>  <u>Hardly</u> any theory presented, and/or the theory is outdated and hardly relevant for business issue, not applied to the situation at hand to explore the causes and solution to the business issue.</p> <p><b>3 Exploration of factors</b>  The different factors influencing the business issue and potential solutions are not examined or hardly examined.</p> <p><b>4 Critical analysis</b>  * The information is not or <u>hardly critically</u> analysed, there are no or very little inferences and conclusions drawn, or conclusions are often not founded by arguments or evidence.  * Choice of the presented theory and models is hardly argued.</p> <p><b>5 Combination of information from different sources</b>  There is no or hardly any information from different sources and perspectives combined, or theory and practice are only partially combined, to draw conclusions.</p> <p><b>6 Coherent story</b>  This section is <u>not</u> presented in a <u>coherent story</u>, hardly provides meaningful inferences and conclusions.</p> <p><b>7 Visualisation</b>  <u>No visualisation</u> of the most important factors for the business issue and potential solutions is presented, or it does not show the factors as described in this section.</p>
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### 2.3. Proposed solution

Based on your visualization, you should identify a course of action that is likely to achieve the company objective that you defined in your project objective. The variables that you identified will form the basis of your argumentation for why your proposed solution will help the company achieve the objective.

This proposed solution should be supported by the analysis presented in the exploration and your visualization. However, this course of action does not need to be based on all the factors that you identified. Instead, you can choose which ones you think are most interesting to consider and explain why.

We do place a premium on **creativity**. In other words, the solution that you propose should add something new or innovative to the current business practice. What can be considered “creative” is of course context specific. A practice that is common in marketing, may be creative in operations. Similarly, a course of action that is considered routine in the banking industry might be innovative in the context of the oil/energy industry. When you propose a creative course of action you should also explain what makes it creative.

After you have proposed a course of action that is supported by the relationships presented in your visualization, you describe an **expectation** linking the proposed course of action to the variables in your visualization, and **explain why you expect** that your proposed course of action achieves (or is likely to achieve) the company objective that you defined in your research objective.

A very common mistake students (and others) make is to propose a solution unrelated to the problem at hand. One possible reason for this could be that you (or the company) already decided on the solution beforehand. In that case, you should critically re-examine your work. Whichever changes you decide to make, your proposed solution should always be supported by your exploration and project objective.

Another common mistake is to propose a solution that covers all the factors that you identified as being of importance, or to try and test them all in your methodology. Keep it simple! Select the factors that you think are most interesting/relevant/important (and explain why) to base your proposed solution on and only test those relationships in your visualization.

**Assessment form proposed solution chapter**

(From left to right in columns good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable).

<p><b>1 Proposed solution</b> The proposed solution is <u>completely clear</u>.</p> <p><b>2 Viable solution</b> * This section <u>convincingly shows, by thorough argumentation</u>, that the solution is a <u>viable solution</u> to solve the business issue and attain the company objective(s). * The viability of the solution is argued thoroughly, based on critical reflection of expected results and is supported strongly by the exploration.</p> <p><b>3 Choice of solution</b> This section <u>argues thoroughly</u> why the presented solution is chosen as the best or most useful solution, out of different options, <u>based on critical reflection</u> of advantages and disadvantages of the available options, and <u>strong support by the exploration</u>.</p> <p><b>4 Solution implementable</b> * The proposed solution is <u>clearly implementable</u> by the company. * The solution is described so precisely, with specific and concrete detail, that the <u>consequences of implementation are clear</u> and it is <u>argued thoroughly</u> that it is a feasible course of action for the company, considering the current resources.</p> <p><b>5 Innovation</b> The proposed solution is justifiably new to the business and the market. Appropriate examples and counterexamples fully support the newness, value, and usefulness of the solution.</p>	<p><b>1 Proposed solution</b> The proposed solution is <u>clear to a large extent</u>.</p> <p><b>2 Viable solution</b> * This section <u>shows by argumentation</u>, that the solution is a <u>viable</u> one to solve the business issue and attain the company objective(s). * The viability of the solution is argued to a large extent, based on critical reflection of expected results and is supported by the exploration.</p> <p><b>3 Choice of solution</b> This section <u>argues</u> why the presented solution is chosen as the best or most useful solution, out of different options, <u>based on reflection</u> of advantages and disadvantages of the available options and <u>support by the exploration</u>.</p> <p><b>4 Solution implementable</b> * The proposed solution is <u>implementable</u> by the company. * The solution is described specifically and concretely, the <u>consequences of implementation are sufficiently clear</u> and it is <u>argued</u> why the proposed course of action is feasible for the company, considering the current resources.</p> <p><b>5 Innovation</b> The proposed solution is completely new to the business, if not for the market. Provides appropriate examples and counterexamples to support the newness, value, usefulness of the innovation.</p>	<p><b>1 Proposed solution</b> The proposed solution is <u>not entirely clear</u>.</p> <p><b>2 Viable solution</b> * This section describes a proposed solution which is <u>only partially a viable</u> solution to solve the business issue and attain the company objective(s), or it <u>argued only limitedly</u>. * The viability of the solution is argued only partially, based on critical reflection of expected results and and/ or is only partially supported by the exploration.</p> <p><b>3 Choice of solution</b> This section provides <u>weak arguments</u> why the presented solution is chosen as the best or most useful solution, out of different options, showing <u>limited critical reflection</u> of advantages and disadvantages of the available options and <u>weak support in exploration</u>.</p> <p><b>4 Solution implementable</b> * The proposed solution is only <u>partially implementable</u> by the company, or it is unclear if the solution is implementable. * Only a little or few specific features of the solution are described, so that the <u>consequences of implementation are not very clear</u> and <u>limited arguments</u> are provided why the proposed course of action is feasible for the company, considering the current resources.</p> <p><b>5 Innovation</b> The proposed solution is somewhat new to the business and justifiably adds some value compared to the current situation revolving around the problem or opportunity identified.</p>	<p><b>1 Proposed solution</b> There is no proposed solution described, or it is <u>hardly clear</u> what it entails.</p> <p><b>2 Viable solution</b> * The proposed solution is <u>hardly a viable solution</u> to solve the business issue and attain the company objective(s), or <u>not argued</u> as such. * The viability of the solution is hardly argued and hardly based on critical reflection of expected results, and/or and is not supported by the exploration.</p> <p><b>3 Choice of solution</b> This section provides <u>hardly any arguments</u> why the presented solution is chosen as the best or most useful solution, out of different options, <u>not based on critical reflection</u> of advantages and disadvantages of the available options <u>or support in the exploration</u>.</p> <p><b>4 Solution implementable</b> * The proposed solution is <u>not implementable</u> by the company, or it is unclear if the solution is implementable by the company. * Hardly any specific features of the solution are described, so that the <u>consequences of implementation (of interest for the company) are not clear</u> and it is <u>hardly argued</u> why the proposed course of action is feasible for the company, considering the current resources.</p> <p><b>5 Innovation</b> The proposed solution is not justifiably an innovation (new to the business or to the market), does not add new value compared to other offerings that revolve around the problem or opportunity identified.</p>
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## 2.4. Methodology

Next, your thesis must include a validation of your proposed solution. To validate your proposed solution you need to set up a research method first.

In your methodology chapter you describe the process by which you will validate the proposed solution; how you designed your research to do that validation. You must describe which research method you used, how you selected your sample (if applicable) and you analyzed your research results. The methodology is defined as the “framework for the collection and analysis of data to answer the research question and meet research objectives providing reasoned justification for choice of data sources, collection methods and analysis techniques” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). You will find how your methodology chapter will be assessed in the assessment matrix on Blackboard and in the table at the end of this chapter, in which a part of the matrix about the methodology chapter is shown.

You are free to choose the research method that you think is the most likely to help you answer your research question. This includes (but is not limited to) experiments, surveys, (structured) interviews, (structured) observations, ethnographies, action research,... Based on your choice of research, you will need to explain how you fulfilled the ‘quality requirements’ of this approach. For example, issues to discuss may include the quality of the sample and whether it indeed represents the population (if applicable), the operationalization of the variables (if applicable), the limitations of your research and potential biases (if applicable). In all cases, your description of your methodology has to show “critical thinking”.

It is important that the research you conducted is designed and explained in such a way that other people can replicate it. Other people have to be able to check if repetition of the research will give similar results. This implies that you need to carefully explain how you developed your data collection instrument and include it in the appendices. In all cases, you will need to describe your sample.

There is a difference between the methodology chapter in your research proposal and your final thesis. In your research proposal, you will describe what you plan to do to in your research. For example, you will include information about who you would like to include in your research (sample), what procedures you will follow, and what questions you will ask. You should also explain how you plan to analyze your results.

In your graduation thesis, you will have already executed these steps. So you will describe how you conducted your research. You will therefore rewrite your methodology section in the past tense. If you made significant changes to your initial plan, you will need to substantially rewrite this section.

Many students are tempted to re-write the methods book. This does not add any value to your thesis. Instead, focus on applying your knowledge of the methodology (with the help of the book if necessary) to your particular project. Do not forget to cite correctly.

Your methodology chapter will be assessed on 4 standards. In the table below you will find the grading criteria of the assessment form per standard. From left to right the columns represent good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable.



**Assessment form methodology chapter**

(From left to right in columns good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable).

<p><b>1 Adequate method</b> The presented research method is <u>entirely appropriate</u> for testing the effect of the proposed solution on the company objective, including the sampling technique, questions and the method of data analysis.</p> <p><b>2 Research design choices are argued</b> The choice of research method, sampling technique and data analysis method is argued from a research philosophy, based on literature.</p> <p><b>3 Specific and detailed</b> The research is <u>specified and detailed</u> in such a way that it is <u>completely clear</u> what the research entails and how it is conducted, including the sampling technique, questions, and data analysis method. <u>All the variables to be tested are operationalized</u> (here or previously) and completely clear.</p> <p><b>4 Limitations</b> * The implications of the research method, including sampling technique and method of data analysis, on the reliability and validity of the results, is <u>critically and thoroughly reviewed, adequately showing limitations</u>. * The relevant limitations of the research method chosen are presented adequately.</p>	<p><b>1 Adequate method</b> The presented research method is <u>appropriate</u> for testing the effect of the proposed solution on the company objective, including the sampling technique and data analysis method.</p> <p><b>2 Research design choices are argued</b> The choice of research method, sampling technique and data analysis method, is argued.</p> <p><b>3 Specific and detailed</b> The research method, sampling technique and data analysis method are <u>specified and detailed</u> in such a way that it is <u>clear to a large extent what</u> the research entails and how it is conducted. The variables to be tested are <u>operationalized</u> (here or previously).</p> <p><b>4 Limitations</b> * The implications of the research method, sampling technique and method of data analysis on the reliability and validity of the results are <u>critically reviewed to a large extent, some limitations are discussed</u>. * Some relevant advantages and disadvantages of the research method chosen are presented adequately.</p>	<p><b>1 Adequate method</b> The research method is only partially presented or is <u>not entirely appropriate</u> for testing the effect of the proposed solution on the company objective. Or it is not clear that it is, or the sampling technique and or data analysis method are not appropriate, or it is not clear that they are.</p> <p><b>2 Research design choices are argued</b> The choice of research method, sampling technique and data analysis method is argued only partially.</p> <p><b>3 Specific and detailed</b> The research method, sampling technique and data analysis method are only <u>specified and detailed limitedly</u>. It is <u>not entirely clear</u> what the research entails and how it is conducted. The variables to be tested are <u>not fully operationalized</u> (here or previously).</p> <p><b>4 Limitations</b> * The implications of the research method, sampling technique and method of data analysis, on the reliability and validity of the results, is <u>reviewed only limitedly</u>, not critically, <u>limitations discussed only limitedly</u>. * Few relevant advantages and disadvantages of the research method chosen are presented adequately, or some presented arguments are not relevant.</p>	<p><b>1 Adequate method</b> There <u>hardly is a research method presented</u>, or the presented research method is <u>not appropriate</u> for testing the effect of the proposed solution on the company objective., or <u>that is not clear</u> that it is, and the sampling technique or data analysis method are not appropriate.</p> <p><b>2 Research design choices are argued</b> The choice of research method and sampling technique and data analysis method, is not, or hardly argued.</p> <p><b>3 Specific and detailed</b> The research method, sampling technique and data analysis method are <u>hardly specified</u> and detailed. It is <u>not clear</u> what the research entails and how it is conducted. The variables to be tested are <u>not operationalized</u> (here or previously).</p> <p><b>4 Limitations</b> * The implications of the research method, sampling technique and method of data analysis, on the reliability and validity of the results <u>is not reflected upon, limitations hardly discussed</u>. * No or hardly any relevant advantages and disadvantages of the research method chosen are presented.</p>
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## 2.5. Results

Overall, in the analysis section you present and discuss the results of your research. Your analysis will depend on the methodology. For example, if you choose to do quantitative research, you should report the results of the statistical tests you conducted. Similarly, if you chose to conduct qualitative research, you should report your approach to interpreting the data and your results.

You should present and analyze your research results, and discuss potential limitations of your data collection. However, this section typically only reports on facts. You can relate the results of several questions, but further interpretation should be given in the conclusion. If you do interviews, you must include an overview of your interviews in the appendix (if anonymized then the overview should provide a code and short description of the recipients). You should also attach transcripts of the interviews which you conducted.

It is possible that you find that your proposed course of action is not likely to help the company meet the objective(s) that you set in the project objective. While you may initially be disappointed, this information can also be very valuable to the company.

In the project objective, exploration, conceptual model and proposed solution you came up with arguments why your proposed solution would be the best way to solve the problem. This means that you proposed solution was a plausible idea. However, now you have evidence that it is not. Your research is helping the company to not make a poor decision.

Your results chapter will be assessed on 3 standards. In the table below you will find the grading criteria of the assessment form per standard. From left to right the columns represent good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable.

**Assessment form Results chapter**

(From left to right in columns good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable).

<p><b>1 Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The research results of the research conducted by the student are <u>completely clear and presented in a well structured way</u> which is easy to read, and <u>set out key results</u>.</li> <li>* The structure/order in which the results are described is very clear and makes this section very easy to read.</li> <li>* If quantitative data are presented, a visualisation of the most important results is presented in a relevant and completely clear manner.</li> </ul> <p><b>2 Analysis method executed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The analysis techniques chosen (e.g. statistical testing for quantitative data or coding for qualitative data) are executed completely correctly.</li> <li>* If this section includes quantitative data, it is described whether the results of these are <u>significant</u> and <u>includes the relevant statistical analysis</u> (e.g. correlation, Chi square, t-test), clearly explaining which statistical tests have been used and why, and the <u>results are reported accordingly</u>.</li> <li>* If this section includes qualitative data, a <u>solid thematic analysis</u> was done (e.g. transcribed interviews, assigned codes to particular quotes, and grouped codes to form themes).</li> </ul> <p><b>3 Primary data collection</b></p> <p>This section <u>clearly shows</u> the student has collected primary data (with transcripts in case of interviews for example).</p>	<p><b>1 Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The research results of the research conducted by the student are <u>clear to a large extent, presented in a structured way, which sets out most of the key results</u>.</li> <li>* The structure/order in which the results are described is clear to a large extent, making this section easy to read.</li> </ul> <p><b>2 Analysis method executed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The analysis techniques chosen (e.g. statistical testing for quantitative data or coding for qualitative data) are executed correctly to a large extent.</li> <li>* If this section includes quantitative data, for <u>most data, it is</u> described whether the results of these are <u>significant</u> and <u>includes the statistical analysis</u> (e.g. correlation, Chi square, t-test), <u>describes which tests were used</u> and the results are reported accordingly.</li> <li>* If this section includes qualitative data, a thematic <u>analysis was done to a large extent</u> (e.g. transcribed interviews, assigned codes to particular quotes, and grouped codes to form themes).</li> </ul> <p><b>3 Primary data collection</b></p> <p>This section <u>shows</u> the student has collected primary data (with transcripts in case of interviews for example).</p>	<p><b>1 Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <u>Not all results</u> of the research conducted by the student are presented or clear, and <u>structured in a way which is hard to read, setting out only some of the key results</u>.</li> <li>* The results section sets out only some of the key results of the research conducted by the student.</li> <li>* The structure/order in which the results are described is not entirely clear, this section is not easy to read.</li> </ul> <p><b>2 Analysis method executed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The analysis techniques chosen (e.g. statistical testing for quantitative data or coding for qualitative data) are not executed entirely correctly.</li> <li>* If this section includes quantitative data, it is only <u>partially described</u> whether the results of these are <u>significant</u> and only includes <u>limited relevant</u> statistical analysis (e.g. correlation, Chi square, t-test), and it is <u>not clear which tests</u> have been done.</li> <li>* If this section includes qualitative data, a thematic <u>analysis was done to a limited extent</u>.</li> </ul> <p><b>3 Primary data collection</b></p> <p>It is <u>not entirely clear</u> from this section if the student has collected primary data (with transcripts of interviews for example).</p>	<p><b>1 Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <u>Hardly any research results</u> are presented, or they are unclear and <u>structured in an unclear way, not setting out the key results</u>.</li> <li>* The results section does not set out the key results of the research conducted by the student.</li> <li>* The structure/order in which the results are described is not clear, making this section difficult to read.</li> </ul> <p><b>2 Analysis method executed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The analysis techniques chosen (e.g. statistical testing for quantitative data or coding for qualitative data) is not executed or not executed correctly.</li> <li>* If this section includes quantitative data, it is <u>not described</u> whether the results of these are <u>significant</u>, and <u>hardly any relevant</u> statistical analysis, is included (e.g. correlation, Chi square, t-test).</li> <li>* If this section includes qualitative data, there is <u>no thematic analysis</u>.</li> </ul> <p><b>3 Primary data collection</b></p> <p>This section <u>does not show</u> collected primary data, or it is unclear whether he did.</p>
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## 2.6. Conclusions

The conclusions section should present the conclusions you drew from your analysis and from your graduation project. You should try to answer your research question and conclude whether (and to what extent) your proposed course of action is likely to accomplish the company objective(s) that you defined earlier. However, this section should not present any new facts. You can also link your conclusions from your primary research to your section “theoretical framework” in the exploration.

Your conclusions chapter will be assessed on 7 standards. In the table below you’ll find the grading criteria of the assessment form per standard. From left to right the columns represent good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable.

**Assessment form Conclusions chapter**

(From left to right in columns good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable).

<p><b>1 Conclusions formulated</b> A conclusion is formulated, which is <u>completely clear, answers the research question completely, and indicates clearly how</u> the company should attain the objective.</p> <p><b>2 Answers RQ/link to company objective/business issue</b> * The conclusions are thoroughly argued. * This section clearly provides a conclusion to attain the company objective(s). regarding the business issue. * The research question(s) is / are all completely answered, in an innovative way.</p> <p><b>3 Combination of data</b> The conclusions clearly combine data from different perspectives in the research, as and data from the exploration and the research results in the analysis.</p> <p><b>4 Supported by research</b> The conclusions are <u>argued thoroughly, and clearly supported</u> by research results, which are critically and thoroughly analyzed and gathered and <u>combined from different chapters and perspectives</u>.</p> <p><b>5 Relevance for company</b> The conclusions are <u>very relevant</u> to the company and clearly show the added value of the research to the company.</p> <p><b>6 Limitations</b> The conclusions <u>clearly take into account all important limitations</u> of the project (e.g. other possible solutions, scope, assumptions, methodology, analysis, sampling method etc).</p> <p><b>7 Broader perspective</b> The findings of the study are clearly placed in a broader and relevant perspective (e.g. the industry context, international differences or theoretical context).</p>	<p><b>1 Conclusions formulated</b> A conclusion is formulated , which is <u>clear to a large extent</u>.</p> <p><b>2 Answers RQ/link to company objective/business issue</b> * The conclusions are argued. * This section provides a conclusion to attain the company objective(s). regarding the business issue. * The research question(s) is / are all answered, in a way which includes some innovative elements.</p> <p><b>3 Combination of data</b> The conclusions combine data from different perspectives in the research, as and data from the exploration and the research results in the analysis.</p> <p><b>4 Supported by research</b> The conclusions are <u>argued and supported</u> by research results, which are critically analyzed and <u>gathered and combined from</u> different chapters.</p> <p><b>5 Relevance for company</b> The conclusions are <u>relevant to the company to a large extent</u>. The added value of the research is clear from this section to a large extent.</p> <p><b>6 Limitations</b> The conclusions <u>take in to account the limitations</u> of the project (e.g. scope, assumptions, methodology, analysis, sampling method etc).</p> <p><b>7 Broader perspective</b> The findings of the study are placed in a broader perspective (e.g. the industry context, international differences or theoretical context), but not the most relevant one.</p>	<p><b>1 Conclusions formulated</b> A conclusion is formulated, but it is only <u>partially clear</u>.</p> <p><b>2 Answers RQ/link to company objective/business issue</b> * The conclusions are argued only partially. * This section only partially provides a conclusion to attain the company objective(s). regarding the business issue. * The research question(s) is / are only answered partially and the conclusion entails few innovative elements.</p> <p><b>3 Combination of data</b> The conclusions only partially combine data from different perspectives in the research, as and data from the exploration and the research results in the analysis.</p> <p><b>4 Supported by research</b> The conclusions are <u>only partially argued, and only partially supported</u> by the research results gathered, which <u>are not analyzed very critically</u> and do <u>not combine all data</u> from different chapters.</p> <p><b>5 Relevance for company</b> The conclusions are <u>only partially relevant</u> to the company. The added value of the research is only partially clear from this section.</p> <p><b>6 Limitations</b> The conclusions <u>only partially take in to account the limitations</u> of the project (e.g. scope, assumptions, methodology, analysis, sampling method etc), or it is not entirely clear if the limitations are taken into account.</p> <p><b>7 Broader perspective</b> The findings of the study are barely placed in a broader perspective only limitedly (e.g. the industry context, international differences or theoretical context) and/or it is not the most relevant one.</p>	<p><b>1 Conclusions formulated</b> No conclusions are presented, or they are <u>unclear</u>.</p> <p><b>2 Answers RQ/link to company objective/business issue</b> * The conclusions are not, or hardly argued. * This section does not provides a conclusion to attain the company objective(s). regarding the business issue. * The research question(s) is not answered, or answered only to a limited extent and there are no innovative elements.</p> <p><b>3 Combination of data</b> The conclusions do not combine data from different perspectives in the research, as and data from the exploration and the research results in the analysis.</p> <p><b>4 Supported by research</b> The conclusions are <u>hardly argued</u> and <u>hardly supported</u> by the research results gathered by the student, <u>which are not critically analyzed and not combining data</u> from different chapters.</p> <p><b>5 Relevance for company</b> The conclusions are <u>hardly relevant</u> to the company. The added value of the research is not clear from this section.</p> <p><b>6 Limitations</b> The conclusions <u>do not take in to account the limitations</u> of the project (e.g. scope, assumptions, methodology, analysis, sampling method etc), or it is not clear if the limitations are taken in to account.</p> <p><b>7 Broader perspective</b> The findings of the study are not placed in a broader perspective (e.g. the industry context, international differences or theoretical context).</p>
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## 2.7. Recommendations

The purpose of your graduation assignment was to help the company deal with a particular business issue. Based on your exploration and conceptual model, you proposed a course of action that should enable the company to achieve the objective that you defined in your project objective. In the recommendations section, you will use all the insights you gathered so far to present actionable recommendations to the company. Your recommendations should be actionable to the company and have added value to the company. They must therefore be specific and precise and take in to account the current resources of the company.

Your recommendations chapter will be assessed on 5 standards. In the table below you'll find the grading criteria of the assessment form per standard. From left to right the columns represent good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable.

**Assessment form Recommendations chapter**

(From left to right in columns good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable).

<p><b>1 Recommendations presented</b> There are <u>completely clear</u> recommendations presented for the company.</p> <p><b>2 Specific and detailed</b> The recommendations are so specific and detailed, that it is <u>completely clear what the course of action</u> is the company should take to implement them.</p> <p><b>3 Added value and feasibility for company</b> * The recommendations are <u>clearly of added value</u> to the company and <u>practically feasible for the company, thoroughly considering</u> the current resources and showing <u>detailed financial and organisational implications</u> of implementing the proposed recommendation. * The current resources of the company are considered. * The financial and organisational implications of the recommendations are completely clear.</p> <p><b>4 Link with conclusions and business issue</b> The recommendations are clearly and <u>directly based on the conclusions</u> and are clearly and <u>directly linked to the business issue</u> and company objective(s).</p> <p><b>5 Innovation</b> The recommendations constitute an innovation for the company as well as for the business at large. Appropriate examples and counterexamples fully support the newness, value, and usefulness of the recommendations.</p>	<p><b>1 Recommendations presented</b> There are <u>recommendations</u> presented for the company, which are clear to a large extent.</p> <p><b>2 Specific and detailed</b> The recommendations are specific and detailed, it is <u>clear to a large extent what the course of action</u> is the company should take to implement them.</p> <p><b>3 Added value and feasibility for company</b> * The recommendations have <u>added value</u> and are <u>practically feasible</u> for the company <u>to a large extent</u>, based on a <u>consideration</u> of the current resources and <u>showing the general financial and organisational implications</u> of implementing the recommendations. * The current resources of the company are considered to a large extent. * The financial and organisational implications of the recommendations are clear to a large extent.</p> <p><b>4 Link with conclusions and business issue</b> The recommendations are <u>based on the conclusions</u> and are <u>linked to the business issue</u> and company objective(s) <u>to a large extent</u>.</p> <p><b>5 Innovation</b> The recommendations comprise of a completely new course of action for the company, if not for the business at large. Provides appropriate examples and counterexamples to support the newness, value, usefulness of the recommendations.</p>	<p><b>1 Recommendations presented</b> The recommendations presented for the company are <u>only partially clear</u>.</p> <p><b>2 Specific and detailed</b> The recommendations are only partly specific and detailed, it is <u>not entirely clear what the course of action</u> is the company should take to implement them.</p> <p><b>3 Added value and feasibility for company</b> * The recommendations are <u>only partially valuable</u> and/or only <u>partially practically feasible</u> for the company. They are based on <u>limited consideration</u> of the current resources and considering the financial and/or organisational implications of implementing the recommendations in a superficial way. * The current resources of the company have considered only partially. * The financial and/or organisational implications of the recommendations are only partially clear.</p> <p><b>4 Link with conclusions and business issue</b> The recommendations are <u>only partially based on the conclusions</u> and are <u>only partially linked to the business issue</u> and company objective(s).</p> <p><b>5 Innovation</b> The recommendations entail a limited level of newness for the company. The added value of the recommendations compared to the current situation revolving around the problem or opportunity identified is somewhat unclear (not fully justified).</p>	<p><b>1 Recommendations presented</b> There are <u>no recommendations</u> are presented, or they are unclear.</p> <p><b>2 Specific and detailed</b> The recommendations are not or hardly specific and detailed, it is <u>not clear what the course of action</u> is the company should take to implement them.</p> <p><b>3 Added value and feasibility for company</b> * The recommendations have <u>hardly any value</u> to the company and are <u>hardly practically feasible</u> for the company. They are <u>not based on consideration</u> of the current resources and <u>hardly show relevant financial or organisational implications</u> of implementing the recommendations. * The current resources of the company have not, or hardly been considered. * The financial or organisational implications of the recommendations are missing or unclear.</p> <p><b>4 Link with conclusions and business issue</b> The recommendations are <u>not based on the conclusions</u> and/or are <u>hardly linked to the business issue</u> and company objective(s).</p> <p><b>5 Innovation</b> The recommendations do not justifiably encompass an innovation (new to the company), do not add new value compared to other offerings that revolve around the problem or opportunity identified.</p>
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## 2.8. Formal requirements of the thesis

There are a number of requirements which you must meet in your graduation thesis.

### 2.8.1. International character of the graduation project

In your International business education you of course should do a graduation project with a clear international character. The international character of your graduation project can lie in either one of two things: you do the graduation internship in a foreign country *or* the graduation thesis is written on an international business issue. This international character is assessed with a pass or fail in your graduation thesis.

This alternative rule on the international character does not mean that all students can do a graduation project in the Netherlands. The country requirements for graduation depend are related to the overall country requirements for your studies and therefore depend on the periods you already spend abroad in the previous part of your education.

If you can and choose to do a graduation project in the Netherlands, the international character of your graduation project must lie in the content of your project. Your thesis must then be written about an international business issue. At minimum, this requires that the business issue has an international aspect which is clearly shown in the project objective section and which is clearly explored in the exploration and concluded upon in the conclusion. You can find the entire assessment form on Blackboard. But the assessment form of the international character of the graduation project is included below.

Additionally the student must ensure the international character of his graduation project is sufficient to reflect upon all the assignments and program learning outcomes in the reflection report. The student must find or create situations on which he needs to reflect, such as a situation in which he collaborates with people from different cultures. This is not assessed in the graduation thesis however. See the reflection report chapter, for further information about the reflection report.

Your international character will be assessed as a pass/fail. In the table below you'll find the grading criteria of the assessment form. From left to right the columns represent good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable. This is to provide additional insight into the pass/fail assessment.



**Assessment form international character of the report**

(From left to right standards and columns good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable)

<p><b>Standards:</b> The student does the graduation internship in a foreign country (other than the own nationality) or the graduation thesis is written on an international business issue.</p> <p>A international business issue at minimum has an international aspect (so about more than one country) which is clearly shown in the project objective section and which is clearly explored in the exploration and concluded upon in the conclusion.</p>	<p>It is clear from the company mentor's appraisal that the student adapts quickly and appropriately to any unfamiliar or unexpected (changing) events in the business environment, with full respect for the interests of all stakeholders involved, without coaching or prompting.</p> <p>Whenever the student dealt with people other cultural backgrounds than his own and different cultural contexts (in business or social situations), he behaved in accordance with appropriate knowledge of the cultures involved, including his own.</p> <p>Capitalizes on cultural differences between himself and his co-workers to create unique results in collaborating with them. Is comfortable working in a multicultural setting, appropriately interacting with people from various backgrounds.</p>	<p>According to the company mentor's appraisal, the student adapts appropriately to most unfamiliar or unexpected (changing) events in the business environment in a timely fashion, taking into consideration the interest of the most important stakeholders involved. May need some minor coaching or prompting to do so.</p> <p>The student participated successfully in the international and multicultural business environment. However, he adapted his behaviour to the standards of the prevailing culture out of tolerance rather than appreciation for differences.</p> <p>Successfully works together with people from other cultures, looking beyond own stereotypes and prejudices to ensure effective collaboration.</p>	<p>According to the company mentor's appraisal, the student is capable of repsonding appropriately to expected and familiar (changing) events in the business environment, but has diffilculty dealing with unexpected or unfamiliar (changing) events. Coaching and prompting leads to reflection on the student's part, but no real change in behaviour.</p> <p>The student showed self-awareness of his own (cultural) norms, values and behaviour and was clearly aware of how these differed from those of people with different cultural backgrounds whenever he encountered them. He is able to explain the implications of differing cultural values in the work place (including conflicts), but made no real effort to adapt.</p> <p>Shows an interest in the cultural background of people from other cultures; asks questions to gain insights into their culture, but tends to avoid working with people from (very) differing backgrounds or ignores these differences when professionally interacting with them.</p>	<p>It is clear form the company mentor's appraisal that the student is mostly oblivious of unfamiliar or unexpected (changing) events in the business environment; he stubbornly sticks to the plan, even when the plan needs adjusting due to changes.</p> <p>The student seems aware of the fact that cultural differences exist and can have implications for how people work and communicate, but more in a theoretical sense than a practical one. He doesn't recognise situations from his internship where (differing) cultural values played a role.</p> <p>Does not explicitly show an interest in the cultural background of people from other cultures or in learning from them. Seems content with his theoretical knowledge of cultural differences. Tends to prefer working with people with a similar background to his own; seems somewhat prejudiced towards other cultures.</p>
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### 2.8.2. Professionalism of the report

It is required that you use a professional presentation of your final thesis. The maximum amount of words for your thesis (body text) is 15,000 words. The professionalism of your thesis is assessed with a pass or fail. See appendix 2 for further information about this. If you receive a pass, you will receive the verdict which your assessor(s) gave for the content of your thesis. If you receive a fail for the professionalism of the report you will be automatically UNFIT for defence. The assessor(s) will still assess and feedback the content of your work, but you will not receive the verdict FIT for defence.

The professionalism of the report includes several conditions which can be seen in the table below

#### Assessment form professionalism of the report

Professionalism of report	<p><b>Standards:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The outline of the thesis is professional; it includes an ASIS cover page, an executive summary, table of contents, introduction and reference list.</li> <li>2. Structure of the text is logical and easy to read (attractive, to the point)</li> <li>3. The level of English used is sufficient</li> <li>4. APA standards are correctly applied</li> <li>5. Presentation (e.g. consistency in lay-out, the line Verdana font size 10 with 1.15 spacing, headings, tables and graphs)</li> <li>6. Appendices (functional and appropriate for an (uninformed) audience).</li> <li>7. The thesis does not exceed 15,000 words (introduction - recommendations). The surplus of words will not be assessed and feedbacked.</li> </ol>
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An overview of the required elements professional outline of thesis & research proposal can be found above, at the very beginning of chapter 2 'Graduation thesis'.

## 2.9. Hand-in & assessment of the graduation thesis

### 2.9.1. Hand in of the graduation thesis

To submit your thesis, follow the instructions below and on Blackboard.

You should hand in your thesis as a digital copy to Blackboard (in the Urkund folder) for plagiarism check and this will also count as official hand in for the graduation office. You do not have to hand in your thesis via mail for your mentor or at the graduation mailbox.

You must submit your thesis following these requirements before the deadline (view Graduation deadlines on Blackboard). If you fail to do so, you will receive an automatic fail for your thesis. This means you fail your thesis, but you receive no official assessment of your thesis (and get no mark).

### 2.9.2. Assessment graduation thesis

Your graduation thesis will be evaluated by your school mentor and a second reader based on the standards listed in the assessment matrix, which you can find on Blackboard in the folder 'Assessment matrices'. The standards for the different chapters and the formal criteria are also shown separately above in the specific paragraphs.

You will be informed whether your thesis was assessed as 'fit for defence' or 'unfit for defence' by the date specified in the Graduation deadlines overview (view Blackboard). You will be declared fit for defence if both your school mentor and the second reader assessed your thesis with a preliminary 5,5 or a higher grade. You will be declared unfit for defence if your thesis is assessed with a preliminary 5,4 or a lower grade. Please note that your thesis has to be assessed with a 5.5 or higher mark by both assessors on every criteria stated in the assessment matrix.

If your thesis is assessed fit for defence, you will be invited to defend it. Fit for defence means that your thesis has met the assessment criteria for the graduation thesis at least sufficiently. Your final grade for the graduation thesis will be determined based on your oral defence.

#### Plagiarism

Your thesis will be checked for plagiarism. The graduation coordinator will conduct a Ephorus check on your final thesis. Possible plagiarism will be submitted to the Examination board by the graduation coordinator. The Examination board will decide on the possible plagiarism case and apply penalties if needed.

#### **Re-sit of the thesis**

If your thesis was declared unfit for defence, you can take one re-sit. You will receive feedback from your graduation mentor about why your report was unfit for defence. You can improve your thesis and resubmit it for the re-sit, at the date indicated in the Graduation deadlines overview (view Blackboard). Your improved thesis will then be assessed again by your school mentor and the second reader.

If your thesis is declared fit for defence in the re-sit, you will be invited to a re-sit defence. If your thesis is declared unfit for defence in this re-sit, your graduation project ended unsuccessfully. You cannot graduate on the same project anymore and need to start a new graduation project, possibly at a new company, in a new round of the graduation project. In principle you will need to find a new internship at a different company and find a new project, and hand in a new contract.

Please be aware that there is no additional mentoring for students re-sitting their thesis beyond the feedback that you receive on your thesis in the first opportunity. In other words, you are responsible for applying the feedback that you have received from your graduation mentor. Do not underestimate the amount of work that will go into revising your graduation thesis.

**If you receive an unfit for defence in the re-sit of your thesis, you fail the graduation project. Your graduation project will end. You need to do a new graduation project entirely.**

## 2.10. Confidentiality

If you and/or your company want to keep your thesis confidential, ASIS can help you realize this, by means of the following measures.

- 1) The Avans internship contract includes an optional confidentiality clause which you can use. Should your company require a statement of confidentiality, please fill in this confidentiality clause, have your company sign it and sign it yourself. The graduation coordinator can then sign it, on behalf of ASIS. This clause is not obligatory.
- 2) If your company so requires, the graduation coordinator can provide an additional confidentiality agreement, specifying which measures ASIS takes to safeguard the confidentiality of your thesis. If you want to use this, contact the graduation coordinator. This agreement is not obligatory.
- 3) If you have used the Avans confidentiality clause and/or the additional ASIS confidentiality agreement, you need to use the special confidential cover page while submitting final thesis. There is a special confidential cover page available on Blackboard.

### 3. The reflection report

#### 3.1. Introduction

In order to convince the ASIS assessor that you have developed all program learning outcomes, we want you to write a reflection report. The purpose is to help you learn from a particular practical experience and help you make connections between what you were taught in theory and what you needed to do in practice. Through self-reflection, you should be able to make sense of what you did and why you did it and reflect on what you can learn from it to do it better next time.

Since you will be in a lot of different situations during your graduation internship, we advise you to write a diary or personal log. Writing your thoughts and the particular situations down will make it easier for you thinking about them and using them as input for the reflection report, that you might write at a later stage.

By reflection in depth on situations in which you developed the program learning outcomes, you are able to convince the assessor you have reached the desired level for the Bachelor International Business. The assessor should, by reading the STARR report, understand how you have acquired the required knowledge/skills related to this PLO and be convinced that you did.

The reflection report is a tool for you to describe how you developed the following Program learning outcomes at level 3:

- Collaboration (WW6) : collaborate effectively with different kinds of stakeholders in different cultural, organizational and political landscapes to contribute to achieving agreed goals.
- Personal & professional development (LW8) : express reflections on one's personal development with the aim of personal growth.
- Personal & professional development (LW9) : respond appropriately to an unfamiliar, or unexpected changing business environment.
- Ethical & Social responsibility (LW10) : formulate one's own position concerning ethical and social responsibility in a professional environment.
- Intercultural proficiency: mitigate the pitfalls of cultural differences in business and social contexts (LW11), display willingness to work with people from other countries with different cultural backgrounds (LW12), use appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication in an intercultural setting (LW13).

#### 3.2. Content of the reflection report

In the reflection report, you will have to write 3 assignments on the basis of which all PLO's can be assessed.

You will need to use the STARR method in each assignment to discuss a specific situation, your tasks therein, your actions, the results and your reflection upon this. An instruction on how to write a STARR can be found in appendix 5, and online you will find plenty of additional instructions and information on the STARR method. You should be able to write one STARR report on maximum 2 pages.

For each STARR report, please select the situation that was most appropriate to describe a PLO. The situation must have taken place during your graduation internship.

**STARR report 1 Reflection on intercultural competencies**

In this STARR, you reflect on a situation in which you dealt with different stakeholders of different cultures, encountered during your graduation internship. In this reflection programme learning outcomes WW6, LW11, LW12 and LW13 will be assessed. You will be assessed based on the assessment matrix, which you can find on Blackboard. Below the assessment matrix criteria for the first STARR assignment is shown.

**STARR report 2 Reflection on the internship**

In this STARR, you reflect on your graduation internship itself. In this reflection assignment programme learning outcomes LW9 and LW10 will be assessed.

**STARR report 3 Reflection on personal professional development**

In this STARR, you reflect on your personal and professional developments during your graduation research proposal phase (writing the research proposal, and processing the feedback related to the research proposal). In this reflection programme learning outcome WW6 and LW8 will be assessed. You can find the criteria on which all STARR reports will be assessed in the assessment form on Blackboard and below.

### 3.3. Finding the situations to reflect upon

According to the STARR method, you must choose a situation to reflect upon for each of the reflection assignments. The three reflection assignments thus require that your graduation project provides the situations to be reflected upon. You need to find or create these situations.

In some cases that will be easy, especially if you are doing your internship abroad. Any graduation internship automatically implies that you will encounter a situation in which you experience personal and professional development (for LW8), an unfamiliar, or unexpected changing business environment to you (for LW9), and a situation in which you will have different ethical and social responsibility from what you are used to at school as student (for LW10). Some situations needed for the reflection assignments however, require special attention because they are not automatically present in all graduation internships.

You must make sure that the following situations arise to reflect upon, within your graduation project:

- A situation in which you collaborate with different kinds of stakeholders from different parts of the organization (for WW6).
- A situation in which you encounter cultural differences in business contexts (for WW6, LW11 and LW12 and LW13).

You can find or create such a situation in your company, or research. We strongly advise you to discuss the situations chosen by you with your school mentor within the first 8 weeks of your internship.

### 3.4. Hand-in & assessment reflection report

You must hand in the reflection report by the deadline (view Graduation deadlines on Blackboard).

#### **Assessment of the reflection report**

Your reflection report will be assessed by one ASIS examiner, in principle your school mentor. He or she will assess your reflection report with a mark (1-10), based on the assessment matrix for the reflection report. You can find this on Blackboard. The matrix for the reflection report is also included below. You pass the reflection report if it is assessed with at least 5,5 for every STARR. You fail the reflection report if it is assessed with a 5,4 or lower. If your report is assessed with a 5,4 or lower, you need to submit a re-sit reflection report.

You can find the criteria on which all STARR reports will be assessed in the assessment form on Blackboard and below.

#### **Re-sit reflection report**

If you need to re-sit the reflection report, you must submit it together with re-sit thesis. If you also need to re-sit your graduation thesis, you can submit your re-sit reflection report together with the re-sit thesis.

If you passed the thesis opportunity 1, you cannot submit a re-sit thesis, only a re-sit reflection report. Your reflection report again will be assessed by one ASIS examiner. He or she will assess your reflection report with a mark (1-10), based on the assessment matrix which you can find on Blackboard. You pass the reflection report if it is assessed with at least 5,5 for every STARR. You fail the reflection report if it is assessed with a 5,4 or lower mark.

The reflection report determines a part of the final mark for the overall graduation project (weighing 20% in the final mark). Obtaining a sufficient grade for the reflection report is a condition to pass the graduation project. You need to obtain at least a 5,5 (a pass) for your reflection report, to be fit for defence and thus to pass your graduation project.

**If you fail the reflection report in the re-sit, you will need to do a new graduation project.**

**Assessment matrix for the reflection report on STARR 1 assignment**

(From left to right in columns good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable).

<p>1. The report <u>convincingly shows</u> the student collaborated effectively with stakeholders from various cultures and political layers of the organisation.</p> <p>2. The report demonstrates a <u>conscious and thorough understanding</u> of cultural differences encountered and the student's position and actions therein, to overcome differences.</p> <p>3. The student <u>reflects thoroughly</u> on whether the verbal and non-verbal communication was appropriate in an intercultural setting.</p>	<p>1. The report <u>shows</u> the student collaborated effectively with stakeholders from various cultures and political layers of the organisation.</p> <p>2. The report demonstrates <u>understanding</u> of cultural differences encountered and the student's position and actions therein, to overcome differences.</p> <p>3. The student <u>reflects</u> on whether the verbal and non-verbal communication was appropriate in an intercultural setting.</p>	<p>1. It is not <u>entirely clear if</u> the student collaborated effectively with stakeholders from various cultures and political layers of the organisation.</p> <p>2. The report demonstrates only <u>limited understanding</u> of cultural differences encountered and the student's position and actions therein, to overcome differences.</p> <p>3. The student <u>reflects only limitedly</u> on whether the verbal and non-verbal communication was appropriate in an intercultural setting.</p>	<p>1. It is <u>not clear</u> if the student collaborated effectively with stakeholders from various cultures and political layers of the organisation.</p> <p>2. The report does <u>not demonstrate understanding</u> of cultural differences encountered and the student's position and actions therein, to overcome differences.</p> <p>3. The student does <u>not reflect</u> on whether the verbal and non-verbal communication was appropriate in an intercultural setting.</p>
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**Assessment matrix for the reflection report on STARR 2 assignment**

(From left to right in columns good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable).

<p>1. The report <u>extensively shows</u> the student responded appropriately to a new or changing situation of the internship.</p> <p>2. The student's through reflection shows that he is capable of handling ethical and social dilemmas appropriately, demonstrating his high level of responsibility and accountability. Contributed actively and appropriately in increasing the business' social and ethical responsibility.</p>	<p>1. The report <u>shows</u> the student responded appropriately to a new or changing situation of the internship.</p> <p>2. The student deliberately aligned his own values with those of the job, group/department and corporate policy, reflecting on (mis)matches and how he dealt with these appropriately. Also reflects on the corporate policy's alignment with societal norms and values, but does not act on correcting possible misalignments.</p>	<p>1. It is not <u>entirely clear if</u> student responded not entirely appropriately, to a new or changing situation of the internship.</p> <p>2. The student is clearly aware of the ethical and social issues at hand in the international business environment and reflects on how his own values and behaviour relate to them. Acts as a responsible person with the context of the business.</p>	<p>1. The report <u>does not show</u> the student responded appropriately to a new or changing situation of the internship.</p> <p>2. The student <u>does not reflect on</u> ethical and social responsibility issues in the professional environment; he may describe the issues (either in general or for the business at hand), but does not relate them or responsible behaviour to himself.</p>
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**Assessment matrix for the reflection report on STARR 3 assignment**

(From left to right in columns good, sufficient, insufficient, unacceptable).

<p>1. The learning experience being reflected upon is <u>clearly relevant and meaningful</u> to the student's personal development, and aimed at personal growth.</p> <p>2. The reflection demonstrates <u>strong ability</u> of the student to question his own conduct and assumptions and to define new modes of thinking/conduct as a result.</p>	<p>1. The learning experience being reflected upon is <u>relevant and meaningful</u> to the student's personal development to a large extent, and aimed at personal growth.</p> <p>2. The reflection demonstrates <u>ability</u> of the student to question his own conduct and assumptions and to define new modes of thinking/conduct as a result.</p>	<p>1. The learning experience being reflected upon is <u>only partially relevant and meaningful</u> to the student's personal development, OR only partially aimed at personal growth.</p> <p>2. The reflection demonstrates <u>limited ability</u> of the student to question his own conduct and assumptions and to define new modes of thinking/conduct as a result.</p>	<p>1. The learning experience being reflected upon is hardly relevant and meaningful to the student's personal development, OR not/hardly aimed at personal growth.</p> <p>2. The reflection demonstrates <u>poor ability</u> of the student to question his own conduct and assumptions and to define new modes of thinking/conduct as a result.</p>
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## 4. The oral defence

The final part of your graduation project consists of the oral defense in which you uncontestably show that you are ready to receive your IB diploma and enter the business world as a junior professional. You can find the outline of an oral defence in appendix 1. The defence is where the mark for your thesis is determined by your school mentor and the second reader, based on the guidelines set out in the assessment matrix, which you can find on blackboard. The assessment form for the defence is also included below.

Your school mentor and the second reader are advised by an external adviser, representing the professional field. The external adviser has read your thesis. The defence assessment will lead to the mark for your written thesis. The weighted average mark of the thesis and the reflection report is the final overall mark for the graduation project.

The oral defence is a condition to passing the graduation project; only if you defended your thesis, you will receive the final mark for your graduation project and be able to pass your graduation project. You are only allowed to an oral defence if the following conditions are met:

- The final graduation thesis is fit for defence.
- The mark for the reflection report is 5.5 or higher.

Your final mark for the graduation phase consists of the weighted average grade for your graduation thesis (which weighs 80%) and your reflection report (which weighs 20%).

In a graduation project you will have two opportunities for an oral defence. If you are invited to the oral defence, this means you have passed your reflection report with at minimum a 5.5 and your final thesis is fit for defence. If you defend your thesis, you will therefore pass the graduation project in principle, unless you committed fraud. If you cannot attend the preliminary round of defences you can participate in the resit defences. If you are already fit for defence in the first opportunity, you cannot improve your graduation thesis or reflection report however, before doing the re-sit defence.

The defence schedule with dates/times and room numbers will be published in the week before the defences (view Graduation deadlines overview on Blackboard).

The oral defense comprises two parts. The first is a Q&A about your graduation assignment and thesis. The examiners have read your thesis and reflection report in preparation of the oral defense and will ask you in-depth questions about choices you made, methods you used, results you found and recommendations you made. This part will take about 20 minutes.

The second part of the oral defense (also about 20 minutes) is related to your employability as a candidate junior professional and your readiness to enter the 'world after your bachelor education'.

Your employability strongly depends on your ability to put yourself out there in a way that distinguishes you from all the other similar graduates out there; you will need to 'sell' yourself in an authentic and credible way. Since the digital landscape plays an important part in 'selling' yourself to your desired 'customers', for this part of the oral defense we ask you to devise a digital marketing strategy for yourself and build at least a prototype for it. What digital footprint will you create for yourself to land that dream job or build your professional network, why, how and for whom?

In creating this digital strategy we expect you to use all the insights you've gained in (digital) marketing & sales and in yourself throughout the IB program. You will have a maximum of ten minutes to present and justify your strategy and show us your prototype. The remaining ten minutes will be used for a Q&A with and feedback from your examiners and audience.

## Recommended learning materials/sources Digital Marketing

- Google Digital Garage: <https://learndigital.withgoogle.com/digitalgarage/course/digital-marketing>  
A free online self-paced course on digital marketing. After completion (26 short modules, ±40 hours workload in total) you will receive an official Google Digital Garage certificate.
- Digital Marketing for Dummies By Ryan Deiss and Russ Hennesberry, 2017
- Pre-suasion: A Revolutionary Way to Influence and Persuade by Robert Cialdini
- Top of Mind: Use Content to Unleash Your Influence and Engage Those Who Matter to You by John Hall
- The New Rules of Marketing and PR: How to Use Social Media, Online Video, Mobile Applications, Blogs, News Releases, and Viral Marketing to Reach Buyers Directly by David Meerman Scott
- Crush It! Why Now Is The Right Time To Cash In On Your Passion by Gary Vaynerchuk
- Branding.com: On-Line Branding for Marketing Success by Deborak Kania

**Assessment matrix for oral defence (same as for the thesis + digital marketing strategy)**

<b>Standards</b>
<b>Problem objective:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Description of the business issue (the problem)</li> <li>2. Company objective(s) regarding the business issue</li> <li>3. Relevance and urgency for the company</li> <li>4. Critical analysis</li> <li>5. Research question</li> </ol>
<b>Exploration:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Exploration of company and industry information</li> <li>2. Exploration of relevant theory</li> <li>3. Exploration of relevant factors</li> <li>4. Critical analysis of information</li> <li>5. Combination of information from different sources</li> <li>6. Coherent story</li> <li>7. Visualisation</li> </ol>
<b>Proposed solution:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Solution clear</li> <li>2. Viable solution</li> <li>3. Choice solution</li> <li>4. Solution implementable</li> <li>5. Innovation</li> </ol>
<b>Methodology:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adequate method</li> <li>2. Research design choices argued</li> <li>3. Specified and detailed</li> <li>4. Limitations</li> </ol>

**Results:**

1. Results are presented
2. Analysis method executed
3. Primary data collection

**Conclusions:**

1. Conclusions formulated
2. Arguments for and answers to research question/link company objective(s)/ business issue
3. Combination of data
4. Supported by research results
5. Relevance for company
6. Limitations
7. Broader perspective

**Recommendations:**

1. Recommendations presented
2. Specific and detailed
3. Practical feasibility and added value for company.
4. Link with conclusions, business issue and company objective
5. Innovation

**Digital Marketing Strategy:**

Student designs an appropriate digital marketing strategy to promote and distinguish himself as a junior IB professional to the outside world, taking himself, his ambitions and his desired audience into consideration. Provides solid argumentation for his choices for methods and content, based on relevant research into digital marketing. Executes (part) of his digital marketing strategy in a prototype. The presentation is professional, logically structured.

Student uses correct English.

## 5. Information and guidance

### 5.1. Blackboard & Workplace

Important announcements will be posted on Blackboard. It is your responsibility to check Blackboard regularly. Also, a range of resources is available to you through Blackboard. Resources include report writing guidelines, FAQs... It is your responsibility to review this information.

### 5.2. Books

The following books can help you:

- Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2009). *Research methods for business: a skill-building approach*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2012). *Research methods for business students*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Booth, W.C., Colomb, G.G., & Williams, J.M. (2003). *The craft of research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Malhotra, N.K. (2009). *Basic marketing research: a decision-making approach*. London: Pearson Education, Inc.

### 5.3. The supervision of the graduation internship

During the graduation internship period students are supervised by:

- A School Mentor
- The Company Mentor

#### **Role and tasks of the School Mentor**

The role of the School Mentor is to help and guide the student. The School Mentor will never make choices for the student. The student is in control and is responsible for the work. The graduation is the culmination of 3½ years of study. It is the student's opportunity to demonstrate that they master the knowledge and are able to apply it to a real world problem. The School Mentor is not there to teach the student anything new, merely to keep him or her focused. The assistance given by the School Mentor must not be interpreted by the student as any kind of approval of the student's work. The School Mentor has no authority to approve the student's work.

The tasks of the School Mentor include:

- Helping the student to demonstrate that they are able to think and act at Bachelor level
- Helping the student to demonstrate that they are able to make choices for themselves and the organisation for which they are solving a problem
- Providing guidance in developing the methodological approach of the graduation assignment
- Providing feedback and being a 'sounding board' in order to guide the student in elaborating the different angles of solving the business problem
- Being a member of the Assessment Committee and (co-)deciding on the grade for the thesis, the grade for the reflection report and the possible mark-up for the defence.

- Contacting the company. Preferably visiting the company in person, if time allows.
- Being the ASIS contact in case of difficulties with the student's company

A graduation mentor will be assigned to you at the start of your graduation internship.

As soon as you know who your graduation mentor will be, you should contact him or her, share your approved Graduation Proposal, discuss mutual expectations and make agreements. Issues to consider include deadlines (also for drafts), expected response time (also for feedback on drafts), preferred ways to be in touch, possibility to be present for the company presentation of the research proposal.

While each cooperation between graduation mentor and student is different, there are some general guidelines that you should follow to ensure a smooth cooperation:

- Be professional in your communication.
- Be mindful of regular working hours. Graduation mentors are typically not available during school holidays and outside of office hours. If you are in a faraway place for your graduation (e.g. China, Australia, US) you will also need to take time differences into account when making agreements with your graduation mentor.
- Use your graduation mentor's time judiciously. In general, you should expect to receive feedback on 4-5 occasions over the course of the semester. Once you receive feedback, review it, reflect on it, and make the necessary changes. We usually do not expect to review a draft that we have already seen, since we expect that you will have made the necessary changes.
- Be realistic in your expectations. You can expect answers to short questions within a day or two but should be prepared to wait several days for feedback on a longer draft. It is generally a bad idea to send a long draft without making prior agreements with your graduation mentor as they may not have time at that particular moment. It is an even worse idea to send a 30-page draft of your thesis a week before the deadline since it is very unlikely that you will receive feedback on time, and if you do, it will be too late to make any significant changes.
- Be specific about what you expect from your graduation mentor. When asking for feedback, be specific about what you want feedback about. Sending a 30-page draft with "what do you think?" will probably not result in the feedback that you were hoping for.

Each cooperation graduation mentor – student is unique and dependent on the individuals concerned. However, like any good working relationship it is based on mutual respect, clear agreements and transparent expectations. Try to make agreements at the beginning of the semester. **Please be aware that graduation mentors are not available during school holidays, so plan accordingly.**

### **Role and tasks of the Company Mentor**

The Company Mentor will focus on the following activities:

- Taking care of the introduction and supervision of the student in the company. They will explain the rules and structure of the company to the student and, if necessary, make contacts on the student's behalf.
- Undertaking the supervision of the student during the plan development stage as well as the execution stage.
- Discussing and providing feedback on the student's progress and social functioning, if necessary.
- Assessing the work of the student in the following areas, in order to be able to advise the ASIS Assessment Committee:
  - The contents of the thesis, especially the recommendations to the company on the basis of which the stakeholders could reconsider their interests. It should be noted that the Company

Mentor does not give a grade for the thesis. The Company Mentor provides their opinion about the thesis to the ASIS Assessment Committee.

- The Company Mentor advises the Assessment Committee about the student's interpersonal and organisational competencies.
- The student's performance overall. If a relevant job in the professional field was available, would the Company Mentor hire or recommend the student?

## 6. References

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2012). *Research methods for business students*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2009). *Research methods for business: a skill-building approach*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons LtdAppendix 1



## Appendix 1 Overview of oral defence

### General preparation student prior to defence:

- Professional presentation skills (language and nonverbal language) and formal attire is required.
- Planning and preparation will be key to a solid, successful and well-structured defence.

### Phase 1: Preparation (10 min)

- Student is called in to introduce him/herself and set up his/her powerpoint or prezi presentation and/or set up any props.
- Student is asked to leave the room again.
- Examiners convene.

### Phase 2: Q&A thesis (20 min)

- Q&A sessions starts with a short pitch focused on presenting highlights of the study, illustrating newly acquired skills, showing how and/or if the report has been of benefit to the company.
- Examiners pose questions related to thesis content.
- Answers should be well-grounded and well-formulated.
- If the student does not know the answer it is recommended to say so rather than fabricate an answer.
- It is normal for the student to take a minute after hearing the question to gather his/her thoughts before answering.

### Phase 3: Digital marketing strategy presentation and Q&A (15 min)

- Student is requested to present his/her digital marketing strategy after graduating. The student shows his/her prototype for this digital marketing strategy and justifies the chosen strategy.
- Examiners pose questions related to digital marketing strategy.

### Phase 4: Evaluation & Feedback (15 min)

- Student leaves.
- Examiners reconvene and discuss.
- Student is called in, provided with some feedback and given a provisional grade only.

## Appendix 2 Report Writing Basics and APA

A professional report should include the following sections:

### **Cover**

The cover contains the following information: a title that succinctly indicates what the research was all about; the name of the writer the date the report was issued; some administrative data covering the need of University. For your (research proposal and) graduation thesis please use the template which is available through Blackboard.

### **Executive Summary**

This section briefly summarises the purpose of the study, major findings, conclusions and recommendations. It is designed for those who do not have the time to read the entire report and as a means of refreshing a reader's mind at some later time. The summary must therefore be capable of standing alone as a complete, accurate and comprehensible item, independent of the main body of the report. An executive summary should typically not exceed two pages.

### **Table of Contents**

The reader should be able to easily access all the information in your graduation thesis. Your chapters, report sections, pages, tables, graphs, appendices, should therefore all be numbered and included in a table of contents.

### **Acknowledgements**

If applicable: The acknowledgements provide an opportunity to thank the people and organisations who have helped in the preparation of the report by providing information or resources. The acknowledgements may be presented at the beginning (e.g. before or after the executive summary) or at the end of the report.

### **Introduction**

The introduction helps the reader understand the structure and content of the report. It should contain a brief description of the company, a short description of the role of the student, and a preview of the structure of the report.

### **The body of the report**

This part must reflect the research conducted by the student. Since at ASIS we adhere to a particular research approach, the chapters of the body of the report most likely will follow the structure outlined earlier in this guide. However, this is not required, you may choose to deviate if you think this is appropriate. Also, you should choose titles that are informative to the reader (e.g. if the objective of your study is to develop a social media strategy, you may call your *project objective* section: "motivation for new social media strategy").

### **References**

A reference list (or citation list) is a list of the books, journals, Internet sites, magazines, newspapers, etc that are directly referenced (either by quoting, paraphrasing or summarising) in the report. A reference list is not the same as a bibliography. A bibliography is a list of all the materials consulted when preparing the report, including those which are not directly referenced. APA Style requires a reference list at the end of the assignment, not a bibliography.

You MUST provide a reference list and apply the APA referencing style or equivalent. The APA referencing style is an author-date system that requires you to list the author of the work you are referencing and the year of publication in text, and provide a full reference to the work in a reference list. We do not allow you to use the alternative, which is a numbering system.

We expect you to use the APA system or equivalent. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) include an extensive guide to author-date systems in Appendix 1. Alternatively, you can choose to use the Word function "citation & bibliography" or the software RefWorks which is supported by Xplora. In all cases, we expect you to be consistent, AND to provide COMPLETE references.

**IMPORTANT**

The reference list should include information such as title of the publication (e.g. for journals) and/or the publication (e.g. for books) so that we can assess the quality of the source. The Word function can sometimes make your reference list look like a list of links. This will result in a fail for professionalism of the report and a fail for the Exploration since we won't know that you used sound theoretical sources.

***Appendices***

Background information should not be part of the basic content of the report and should be included in the appendices. The appendices should be numbered and the links to the appendices should be clearly indicated in the text. The information in the appendices can be used as illustration and/or as supporting information for the statement(s) made in the report itself.

## Appendix 3 Programme Learning Outcomes

PLOs		
Critical thinking	WT1	Use the process of thoughtful evaluation to deliberately formulate a reasonable conclusion.
Innovation & creativity	WT2	Create innovative ideas in a changing business environment in a systematic fashion.
International business awareness	WT3	Analyse patterns in global macro-economic factors and policies that drive international trade and business development.
International business communication	WW4	Communicate (business) messages effectively and persuasively using advanced English to an (un)informed audience.
	WW5	<i>Optional: Use one or two additional languages to facilitate international business.</i>
Collaboration	WW6	Collaborate effectively with different kinds of stakeholders in different cultural, organisational and political landscapes to contribute to achieving agreed goals.
Management of information as a digital citizen	WW7	Produce management information from various data sources in an international business environment.
Personal & professional development	LW8	Express reflections on one's personal development with the aim of personal growth.
	LW9	Respond appropriately to an unfamiliar, or unexpectedly changing, business environment.
Ethical and social responsibility	LW10	Formulate one's own position concerning ethical and social responsibility in a professional environment.
Intercultural proficiency	LW11	Mitigate the pitfalls of cultural differences in business and social contexts.
	LW12	Display willingness to work with people from other countries with different cultural backgrounds.
	LW13	Use appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication in an intercultural setting.
	LW14	Assess the effect of cultural differences on organizational behavior and strategic choices.
Marketing and sales	TWM15	Develop a well-founded marketing plan to support the creation of value for international customers.
	TWM16	Use appropriate sales techniques in support of durable customer relationships.
	TWM17	Incorporate developments of digital landscape in marketing strategy.
International finance	TWM18	Evaluate financial performance of the organization from different stakeholders' perspectives.
	TWM19	Recommend financing possibilities in a dynamic international environment.
Operations & supply chain management	TWM20	Evaluate operations processes within and between organisations.
	TWM21	Manage operations processes within and between organisations.

Organisation & people	TWM22	Draft the strategic cycle of part(s) of the organization (process and content).
	TWM23	Assess the impact of change on the organization.
Business research	TWM24	Analyse a complex business problem in an international business setting with use of adequate research design, resulting in an evidence based, feasible solution.

## Appendix 4 Level programme learning outcomes

Competence Level		Complexity		Autonomy
		COMPLEXITY OF THE TASK	COMPLEXITY OF THE CONTEXT	
1	The student is able to perform a simple task with guidance in a limited context.	Simple and structured. Issue is familiar. Standard procedures. Basic knowledge and skills are required.	Defined. Familiar, predictable. Monodisciplinary. Few parties involved. Low level of interaction and communication.	With guidance: instructions, coaching and/or supervision. Acting in accordance with the instructions, not based on own initiative.
2	The student is able to perform a well-defined task independently in a relatively clearly arranged situation, or is able to perform in a complex and unpredictable situation under supervision.	Complex but structured. Issue is partly familiar, partly unknown. Standard procedures must be adjusted. Specialist knowledge and skills are required.	Unknown but transparent. Monodisciplinary. Several parties involved. Average level of interaction and communication.	With intermediate coaching, or coaching on demand. Acting on own initiative (as well). Making (some) choices and decisions. Responding to unexpected circumstances (within limits).
3	The student is able to perform a complex task independently in a complex and unpredictable situation with complete control of the required skills.	Complex and unstructured. Issue is unknown, must be analysed. No standard approach exists, new procedures may need to be developed. Advanced specialist (and sometimes interdisciplinary) knowledge and skills are required.	Unknown, dynamic and non-transparent. Multidisciplinary. Several parties and political sensitivities must be taken into account. High level of interaction and communication.	Little direction and coaching. Acting upon own initiative. Making well-argued choices and decisions. Responding to unexpected circumstances. Reflecting on own tasks and role.

## Appendix 5: Instructions for writing a STARR report

Here, the different parts of the STARR report are described. Please find many more instructions and examples online.

### > **S - Situation**

Here, briefly describe the situation you were involved in and where the experience was gained. Select a situation that is a good example for showing your development on this particular PLO. Describe the background, stakeholders, location, period etc..

### > **T - Tasks**

What was the key objective you wanted to achieve? What were your tasks on forehand and what was your role? Here also describe e.g. your position in the organizational structure, responsibilities, tasks performed and the person who assigned the tasks.

### > **A - Actions**

Describe here step-by-step actions you took, emphasizing the talents and skills that you used. It is your reflection, so focus on what you did.

### > **R - Results**

Here you describe the outcome of your actions (in business terms if possible) and what you have accomplished. Also describe why the results were surprising and who, how, and on the basis of which assessed the results; what was done with the results, what did others think of it?

### > **R - Reflection**

Here you can describe what you have learnt from the whole situation described above. This should of course be a logical conclusion of the previous parts. The reflection is a crucial part of the STARR report in which you describe what went well and what could have been done differently. Where you satisfied and why or why not? What did you learn from this, how did you develop? How would you act in a similar situation in the future?