University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland
School of Business

Guidelines on the Project Work (Live Project) 2021/22

1. Introduction

This guideline applies to the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (International Management) (IM) of the School of Business of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW) and governs the various aspects relating to the "Project Work". It applies to the Practical Work module starting in 2021.

The Practical Work is a compulsory module of the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (International Management). It is rewarded with 5 ECTS-Credits, which corresponds to 150 working hours for each student in the team. Full-time students work usually on their Project Work during the fifth semester.

The Project Work is a teamwork, consisting of four to five students per team. The documentation of the Project Work must be written in English.

2. Meaning and purpose of the Project Work

Implementation, integration, deepening ➔ specialist skills
You learn to implement in practice what you have learned so far in theory. It is quite likely that there will also be a deepening of knowledge on the theme of the work, going beyond the material learned. Although the tasks set relate to a sub-topic of business management, knowledge of other areas of business must also be used (integration of theoretical and practical modules). Students should avoid compartmentalized thinking and be able to consider problems from different angles and with the aid of what they have learned in all subjects.

Theory and practice
For the client the result will be a study, a concept or a realistic proposed solution of a set problem. This practical problem solution should not, however, run counter to what has been learned thus far in lessons. On the contrary: specifically, because it is a practical problem, the facts encountered must be incorporated into the theoretical background, in order to reach a practicable solution on a scientific basis.

Don't forget all you have heard so far ➔ method competence
Given that the focus is a practical problem, all the knowledge of project management and problem-solving methods should not be thrown overboard. Follow these steps consistently! While methodical procedure alone does not guarantee an excellent solution, it creates the best conditions for one and ensures a standard of quality.

Caution, people are involved ➔ social skills
Social skills are at least as important as technical expertise, i.e. dealing successfully with people, both in your own group and with the client. All factual problems always have a personal/individual aspect. In enterprises the aspect of system behavior is also relevant. The issue is, while recognizing and accepting problems with their social implications, nevertheless, to be capable of distinguishing one thing from another.

Experience
In summary, it is possible to state that this Project Work generates a wealth of very different experience and almost without exception represents an extremely valuable addition to the tuition. Comments by previous graduates emphatically confirm this.

3. Topic submissions

The client can be a private company, a non-profit or public organisation, an FHNW institute or programme, or a private individual. The client must submit a specific problem that needs to be investigated or solved. The topic shall be restricted to the fields of business. The approach to the task shall include an analytical and a conceptual element.

External partners can submit their topic here: www.fhnw.ch/business/student-project-submission-form.

Students are free to acquire a topic generated by an external client, such as one set by potential employer after their studies or a task of professional interest to the student. Experience has shown that many companies are willing to consider specific proposals. The acquisition of topics must be targeted, i.e., no mass mailing.

If a close personal relationship with the client exists, it must be declared by the student when submitting the topic. The Supervising Lecturer decides in this case whether the client should participate in the assessment and grading of the Project Work or whether the client should be replaced in the assessment stage by a second member of the teaching staff.

Students are welcome to submit their self-acquired topics and the submission form can be found under: https://www.fhnw.ch/plattformen/wirtschaft-studierendenprojekte/en/.

Student teams wishing to submit their self-acquired topics should proceed as follows:

- Sketch out the project concept with the client and describe it in writing on the submission form.
- Discuss the concept with a lecturer of their choice. The lecturer checks the topic for suitability as a subject for a Project Work
- If the topic is deemed suitable, it must be forwarded to studierendenprojekte.wirtschaft@fhnw.ch. On the form, a lecturer of choice can be named. Otherwise, the school takes care of the allocation of the Supervising Lecturer. The students will be informed whether the topic has been accepted.

Students who have not submitted self-acquired topics can choose one from the pool of topics. Students should indicate five different preferred topics in order of preference. The allocation of topics is supported by a software that calculates the optimal allocation. The algorithm aims at allocating the highest possible priority of the students. Subsequently, the Supervising Lecturers will be assigned.

For any questions regarding the submission of potential topics, please consult the contact details at the end of this document.

Confidentiality

Information concerning the client shall be treated in confidence during the whole project. After the completion of the project, to promote the educational value of knowledge transfer to the public, the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland prefers to make the result publicly available if possible. The School of Business distinguishes the following two categories:

Category	Explanation
Confidential	The report is not accessible to the public and is immediately archived by the School of Business.
Public	The report is publicly accessible. Assignments awarded grade 5.0 and higher are made available via the library system swisscovery and under https://studierendenprojekte.wirtschaft.fhnw.ch/.

The confidentiality level is decided by the client at the end of the Project Work and needs to be declared in the final assessment form and on the public management summary.

4. Timetable and sequence of events

What	When
Kick-Off-Event	June 10, 2021, 16:00-17:30 hrs.
Group formation recorded on Moodle	By Fri. July 2, 2021
Topic submission (self-acquired topics)	From June until August 16, 2021
Self-acquired topics: Formal admission and allocation of Supervising Lecturer	Until Fri., 9 July and from Monday, August 10, 2021
Release of topic pool to students	Fri., August 13, 2021
Selection of topics from the pool (students with no topic of their own)	Wed., August 18, 2021
Allocation of topics and Supervising Lecturers (applies to students who have chosen a topic from the topic pool)	Fri., August 27, 2021
Initial meeting with client (Participants: student group, client and Supervising Lecturer)	ASAP
Two project management input sessions with review session	22 September / 6 October 2021
Proposal signed by client and Supervising Lecturer	By October 4, 2021
Mid-term status update with client	October / November 2021
Submission of the report	**Friday, January 14, 2022 12 pm (mid-day)**
Final presentation to client and Supervising Lecturer	by Fri., January 21, 2022 or on agreement with the involved persons
Public management summary approved by client and Supervising Lecturer	by Fri., January 21, 2022 or on agreement with the involved persons
Grade information directly from supervising lecturer	by Mon., 21 February
Project Forum	Wed., 23 February
Feedback on the Module Project Work and supervision (online survey)	Thu., 24 February 2022

Main steps

The client, students and supervisor take part in the Kick-off-Meeting, Status-Meeting and the final presentation. The students are responsible for the organization of the meetings and the compliance with the following steps:

Milestone	Objektives	When
Preparatory work	- Arranging and organizing the Kick-off-Meeting - First literature review, familiarization with the topic	At the beginning
Kick-off-Meeting	- The participants become acquainted with each other - Agreement on the starting point and task, the client explains the situation in full and issues any necessary documentation - Identification of the core objectives and results - Agreement on the form of collaboration with the client (intensity, on-site presence, flow of information, in case of surveys: rights of the interviewees, handing of confidential information, etc.) - Establishment of the data required for the status meeting/mid-term presentation and final presentation - Regulation of expenses - Declaration of any lengthy absences and definition of process/next steps	At the beginning Recording the kick-off meeting with minutes, which are submitted to the supervisor and client for their approval within one week.
Proposal (Charter)	The proposal should incorporate the following elements: - Starting point, current situation, task - Objective - Initial results stemming from the literature research; relevant facts/best practice/theories and/or models - Procedure/chosen method during the analysis phase - Procedure/chosen method during the planning phase - The outcomes expected - Key milestones	Two weeks after the kick-off-meeting First submission to supervisor for approval, then to client for approval, signing of the proposal by all involved parties (client, students and supervisor)
Project Management	Two project management input sessions with review session. The following subjects will be covered: - Information on project work - Proposal - Stakeholder management - Communication plan - Project plan - Risk Management	Separate invitation by project management lecturers
Status meeting/ interim presentation	Presentation of the current status of the assignment; what has been achieved to date, any issues presenting a challenge, forecast; next steps, feedback from the client and supervisor on progress made	During the course of work
Final presentation	Final presentation and handing over of the Project Work electronically or as a hard copy.	Until one week after submission or by arrangement with supervisor/client

Milestone	Objektives	When
Public Management Summary	The public management summary is intended for the publication on our FHNW website and has to be rendered anonymous if demanded from the client's side. Includes a graph or video. Approval by the supervisor and client	Until one week after submission or by arrangement with supervisor/client
Assessment	Joint assessment and appreciation of the work by the client and supervisor	Until grade information date
Project Forum	The students present their Project Works and project work. The works are judged by a jury in different categories and the best works in each category are awarded a prize.	After completion of the work

Surveys

In the case of surveys, the rights of the interviewees have to be respected, i.e. they have to be informed about the objectives and purpose of the survey. Therefore, the survey should be sent with a meaningful explanatory text. The cover letter should contain the following elements:

- Personal form of address of the recipient
- Information about the project and the students
- Information on the client (see also under: "Surveys outside FHNW")
- Information about why the person was selected or where the contact details for the person came from
- Timeframe of the survey and expected time for answering the questions
- Information on the anonymity or non-anonymity of the survey
- Signatur:
    - full name of the students
    - Information on semester, study degree programme, school and location
    - Contact data incl. contact email
    - Contact details of the supervising lecturer

The survey software Questback is offered and can be used https://survey.fhnw.ch

Surveys outside FHNW

The client can only claim the results of the survey for itself if the client and the purpose of the survey are mentioned. Text example: "The survey takes place within the framework of a student project on behalf of the .... AG. The ... AG wants to understand the customer needs better. "

The client loses the right to use the results solely if he, she does not wish to be named. The survey participants are also entitled to the results. Text example: "The survey takes place within a student project. If desired, the results of the survey will be made available to you. Please contact hans.muster@students.fhnw.ch "

The disclosure of the client is the normal case.

Surveys within the FHNW

Surveys to FHNW students must be sent ready to dispatch to Corinne Köpfli (corinne.koepfli@fhnw.ch) with an indication to which student groups the survey should be sent to. The surveys are then sent via the central address umfragen.wirtschaft@fhnw.ch

In addition, it must be confirmed that the supervising lecturer has reviewed and released the survey for publication. The supervising lecturer is to be integrated into the mail CC.

5. Documents, submission process and grading

Documents

Project Work
The Project Work should be intelligible to a well-informed reader and capable of being understood in all substantive aspects without need for further commentary.

There is no direct relationship between the quality of the work and the scope of the Project Work. The challenge lies in directing sufficient attention to the core of the assignment, while mentioning in the appendix what is less important and avoiding duplications. The Project Work should be between 50 and 80 pages in length, excluding the appendix.

The formal and linguistic aspects of the Project Work should adhere to the "Guide to the formal presentation of scientific papers".

When submitting the Project Work, the students shall declare in a Statement of Authenticity that the work is their own, that use was made only of the sources, aids and offers of help that are referenced, and that quotations are also referenced in full.

Public management summary about the project work for publication on the FHNW website or in other media. The public management summary is included in the assessment of the work and is released by the supervising lecturer and the client. In the case of confidential work, it must be agreed with the client whether the name of the client and the concrete results may be mentioned in the public management summary. Otherwise, the description should be sufficiently generalised. The work itself remains confidential in the case of confidential work.

Further an illustration, picture, drawing, diagram, table or scheme with reference to the work (jpg, gif) in legible quality is required. Instead of a picture, a video clip of the project work can be posted. Duration: approx. 1:30 min. The video clip or picture should arouse curiosity about the work and encourage people to read the summary. In many cases, pictures are protected by copyright. The student must have the necessary copyright and publication rights for the graphic.

The publication on the Internet serves as a reference for the students. It also serves subsequent students, as companies may decide to enter a student project assignment based on a public management summary.

A frequently asked question section (FAQ's) and successful examples of videos and illustrations of summaries can be found under: https://www.fhnw.ch/plattformen/wirtschaft-studierendenprojekte/en/

Submission process

The submission of the final documents takes place in two steps. First, the thesis has to be submitted electronically to Moodle and handed over to the involved parties. Then the submission process for the public management summary has to be started.

By the official submission date
A moodle course has been opened (see under platforms). The upload of the Project Work as a PDF and its appendix, plus any specially developed tools (XLS…) must be completed by the

student by the official submission date (see Timetable section). I must only be uploaded once per team. Moodle logs the upload time and date automatically.

The handing over of the Project Work to the client and the supervising lecturer shall be completed within one week of the official submission date. It can be agreed with the involved parties if the project work should be handed over electronically or as a hard copy. The students confirm on Moodle that the uploaded work is identical to the one handed over to the client and supervisor.

No hard copies have to be handed in to archives or libraries. If the criteria for publication of a Project Work in swisscovery are met, the School of Business produces the necessary hard copy.

Within one week of the submission date or by arrangement with supervisor and client

The submission of the public management summary has to be completed within one week of the official submission date. In the course of the submission process via groups.inside.fhnw.ch the summary is checked and approved by the lecturer as well as the client. The link to groups.inside is published on Moodle (see platforms). After consultation with the supervising lecturer and the client, the summary can also be uploaded later, if the assessment is guaranteed until the grade submission date. This must be confirmed in writing on Moodle. The public management summary must also be submitted for confidential work.

Assessment

The students can find the performance assessment grid under: https://www.fhnw.ch/plattformen/wirtschaft-studierendenprojekte/en/. The lecturers use this grid for their marks and grades. The lecturers will notify students of the grade in writing by the autumn semester grade submission deadline. In addition, the work should also be discussed orally whenever possible. A corresponding discussion date should be arranged between the student group and the supervising lecturer at the latest during the final presentation.

Consequences of late submissions

Punctual upload of the work on Moodle reflects the quality of the work and form part of the Project Work requirements. Late uploads onto Moodle carry the following consequences:

- Up to 24 hours after the official submission time: Grade 4.0 (or less if the contents are deemed unsatisfactory)
- More than 24 hours after the official submission time: Grade 1.0 (grade F)

The involved lecturers and the Dean of Studies will be informed immediately of a late submission.

6. General hints

Gaining time
Although the whole project period may appear a long time at the outset, you are urged to work efficiently and intensively on the project from the beginning. Experience has shown that the project can certainly be completed before the final deadline, if you work on it intensively and determinedly, though if this is not the case it is regularly necessary to work a sequence of late nights at the end to make the deadline. So draw up a carefully thought-out and cautious timetable and keep to it.

Maintain contact
The more intensive the co-operation, the better the solution will comply with expectations. Seek and maintain contact! In particular ask to be allowed to inform the client regularly, preferably every second week, about the status of the work, any difficulties, outstanding questions and progress. In this way you will also include them in responsibility for the solution. The co-operation must be so close that the final presentation and the written report is not a surprise and does not contain substantial news either for the client or for the supervising lecturer.

You need to know everything
One of the demanding problems in the Project Work is the procurement of sufficient comprehensive information. It will rarely be served to you on a plate, but must generally be sought and sometimes secured with reasonable determination. The success of the work largely depends on the quality of the information which you are able to obtain in the first third of the project. The work expended must be based on the dolphin profile (starting with the broad head and ending in the narrow tail: broad research and explanations at the beginning allow a narrow end) and not on the dinosaur profile (starting with a narrow head and neck, with a transition to a vast rump and ending in an endlessly long tail: scarce information basis at the start, rapid advance into the solution phase, which becomes broader and broader as new information emerges, and then an endlessly long finish).

Role of the lecturer
The task of supervising lecturer is to monitor the progress of the work, intervene correctively and to supplement gaps in specialist knowledge. But responsibility for a good result remains with the group. The lecturer is guided by periodical meetings and advises the group occasionally as he/she thinks fit or as the group requires. The lecturer is thus adviser to the project group and indirectly also adviser to the client. Make contact! Here too information has to be collected. **You** decide on the extent of the support that you receive from the lecturer.

Title
The title is not an incidental, but the shortest summary of the work. The title should evoke the expectations which are then met by the work, in normal understanding of language. The main title should contain not more than 5 words. Because accurate descriptions sometimes require more than five words, the solution may be a main title with a maximum of five words and a more precise sub-title. (Bad example: "Causes of the fluctuation and possibilities for its reduction in a temporary employment agency"/ Good example: (main title :) "Fluctuation in temporary employment agencies", (sub-title :) "Causes and solutions"). Highly specific jargon terms and abbreviations should not be used in the title.

7. Expenses
Expenses (e.g. printing costs, travel costs, postage/shipping, survey telephone charges) incurred in connection with the Project Work shall be borne by the client. These are typically in the region of CHF 200.- to CHF 500.- per project. The students must agree at the outset of the Project Work on the expenses with the client and furnish the client with evidence of such expenses. The client shall reimburse the student directly.

8. Contact information and platforms

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Platforms

Information for clients: www.fhnw.ch/business/student-projects

Information for students and Supervising Lecturers:
https://www.fhnw.ch/plattformen/wirtschaft-studierendenprojekte/en/

Submission of the report and Public Management Summary:
https://moodle.fhnw.ch/course/view.php?id=46201, Access code: STUDPROJ21EN

Willingly or unwillingly: you are always ambassadors of the FHNW!

And now

Good luck!