

KEY DATES:

- Assignment 1:
2000- word **project proposal**, worth 20%, due Wednesday the 26th of May, 2021.
- Assignment 2:
1000- word **Executive Summary**, worth 20%, due for submission on September the 3rd, 2021.
- Assignment 3:
10,000-word **Final Report**, worth 60%, due for submission on September the 3rd, 2021.

Any questions?

Contact the module convenor, **Dr Beth Kewell** on MS Teams or via e.j.kewell@exeter.ac.uk

You can also make an appointment during Beth's Office Hours which are

Mondays: 15.00-16.00 hrs., GMT.

Fridays: 11.00-12.00 hrs., GMT.

Assignment 2: Executive Summary

Recommendations for Composing an Executive Summary

Reports are often accompanied by executive summaries that provide information about a project that can be read by different stakeholders in the research process, as well as members of the public, where relevant. We will look again at some examples of executive summary writing during Week 3 of Term 3, when attention will turn to the proposal.

For the most part, you will be writing your summary for two groups of people – your *academic supervisor* and your *company contact*, where this is applicable. However, it is always worth thinking about how your executive summary might appeal to different audiences (e.g. a policy expert, a shareholder, a journalist, a potential client, or a member of the public, to name but a few).

Executive summaries appear logically to be the last task you perform when completing a project – making this the final 'cherry on the cake.' This said, the executive summary is an all-important 'audience capturing' statement that it is definitely worth starting at an earlier juncture, as they can actually be quite tricky to compose...and are therefore not something to leave until just before you submit your project in September!

This is why we are suggesting that you include **a note** on what you would like the executive summary to look like **with your proposal**. For the final submission, you must aim to produce a 1000-word executive summary or equivalent, taking into account any feedback that you may have received at the proposal stage and/or from your supervisor/company contact.

✓ Your final 1000-word executive summary should therefore be composed as either a written statement, slide deck, visualisation or infographic, or combination thereof, submitted alongside the Final Report, on the 3rd of September 2021.

✓ You should aim to focus on writing for the purpose of engaging with stakeholders.

✓ This may well involve putting forward a 'business case' for your research – that is to say, you should aim to explain why it is worth doing from a business perspective. Such a remit might also include consideration of why the research you are proposing is important for economy and society (e.g. my project will help make the company/industry more profitable whilst also helping businesses deal with climate change).

✓ Over and above this, you should use the executive summary to address the 'so what' question, which is the



We will cover the 'so what' question, in class but if you'd like to read ahead then the following title is to be recommend:

Stephan, F and Smith, I (2019) *A Practical Guide to Dissertation Writing*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Chap.4 is all about the 'so what' question and it's available via Proquest Ebooks in the library.

To really understand the research process, I would also recommend

Reva Burman Brown's book on student dissertations and projects, the citation for which is as follows:

Burman-Brown, R. (2006) *Doing Your Dissertation in Business and Management*, Sage Study Skills.

You will also find Reva's book among the virtual shelves of the library... why not have a browse and see what other project and dissertation books the library has to offer?

Just finally, I would recommend **Business Source Complete** as a really good place to start looking for literature and useful facts about an industry...it has helped me complete numerous research projects and I'm sure that you will find it really helpful too...just visit the library homepage to get started:

<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/library/>

ultimate test of all research. This means telling the assessor why you think the project you are planning is important. Asking the 'so what' question will also help you sharpen your approach and avoid writing an overly descriptive proposal that tells us what you are planning to do but not why it matters.

Assignment 3: The Final Report

OVERVIEW

For the final assessment of BEMM466, we would like you to design and implement a research project based on your proposal and the plan of action you have agreed with your supervisor and company contact, for conducting your study over the summer (May to September 2021).

While your final project will build on your proposal, it is inevitable that your ideas and plans for the research will undergo change as you begin to implement your study. In fact, it is a sign of good progress for this to happen!

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WRITING THE FINAL REPORT

Projects normally follow a tried and test structure. For all types of research project, you should aim to include the following sections, all of which should be appropriately referenced:

- **An Introduction** telling the reader what your project covers and how you have approached your chosen topic, which type of project you have selected (i.e. a dissertation-style project, an extended report or a consulting report).
- **A section or chapter on context and background.** Why this topic and why now? Why is it important and to whom does it matter? Use this chapter to quite literally 'sketch the background' to your research, telling us about the situation you wish to analyse

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- ✓ You should consider including an acknowledgement section, title page, contents page, glossary of terms as well as lists of figures, illustrations, and tables at the beginning of your report
- ✓ You may also be required to include a **Statement of Confidentiality if the work you are doing includes sensitive data or sensitive information**
- ✓ Within the report, you should use data and analytics to describe some of the key challenges and opportunities related to the question or questions you have chosen to investigate.
- ✓ Your report can include diagrams and visualisations – words incorporated within these visualisations will not count towards the word-count limit.
- ✓ You must use APA referencing within your report. References will not count towards the word-count limit. The UEBS guidance document for working with APA that can be found here: <https://vle.exeter.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=6748§ion=2>
- ✓ **References are not included in the word limit**, which is 10,000 words +/- 10%
- ✓ Remember to include the reference / source for any tables, figures or illustrations that you are including in your work.
- ✓ It is a mandatory requirement that you include a reference list to accompany your final project. Many people use software to help organise their referencing. Word includes its own referencing facility. You can also download Medley or use Google Paperpile or similar product to help organise your reference list.
- ✓ You can also check the originality of your work and monitor your grammar using software products, for instance, Turnitin or Grammarly.
- ✓ You can include an Appendices/Annexes as necessary but they should be supportive but not excessive. Font size for these appendices must not be smaller than Calibri 11 point; line spacing must be at least single line spacing; all margins must be at least 1cm.

and whether it includes a 'problem' or 'challenge' that raises questions your research hopes to address or answer.

- **Research questions:** Tell us about the research questions you have selected and how you will investigate them.
- **A literature review** that includes an appropriate blend of scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles and books, and business sources, for example, consulting reports or industry digests.
- **An overview of the methods** that you intend to implement, test or trial as part of your project. This section of the report should **explain and justify your choice of methods** using relevant citations and previous studies, where appropriate, whilst also telling the reader about how you intend to apply these tools and techniques to the project at hand.
- You also need to say something in this section about the **ethical implications, risks and limitations of your study**. A note of **personal reflection** can sometimes be appropriate in concluding this section of the report. This should convey what you have learnt about using a specific method or technique and how this has affected your approach to the research and/or shaped your relationship with the data.
- **Your findings.** Provide a detailed account of your findings using written explanations that are logically argued and evidence-based; supplemented, where appropriate, with tables, figures, and data visualisations.
 - **Your conclusions.** You should start your conclusion by reviewing your aims, objectives and wider goals for the research. You can then discuss the various phases of your project's research cycle, where it took you and what you learnt about:
 - The problem or challenge that you set yourself/ was set for you by a company and/or refined with the help of your supervisor
 - How you framed or conceptualised this problem – did this framing work perfectly

- The methods you used and how they work in practice – what went to plan, and what did you need to revise?
- Your analysis – did you find answers to your research questions or more questions or both?
- The implications of your findings and their wider ethical and risk-related consequences.

- [illegible]

Criteria for Evaluating Assignment 2: The Executive Summary

Marks	0 – 39	40 - 49	50 -59	60 - 69	70 - 85	86 - 100
Assessment Category	Fail	Borderline Fail	Pass	Merit	Distinction	Distinction
Knowledge & Understanding 90%	An Executive Summary is not included or provides very limited coverage of the report	The Executive Summary is incomplete and does refer to key considerations such as findings and ethics.	The Executive Summary provides a description of all aspects of the research that are proposed/which have been undertaken, is pitched to a relevant audience	The Executive Summary provides a description of all aspects of the research that are proposed/which have been undertaken, identifies conclusions of relevance to businesses, policymakers or an academic audience	The Executive Summary provides a synthesis of all aspects of the research that have been undertaken, is pitched to a relevant audience, identifies conclusions of relevance to businesses, policy-makers or an academic audience, is able to pinpoint findings of conceptual and theoretical relevance	Meets and often exceeds the 70 – 85% criteria across all sub-categories Work is of demonstrably outstanding quality and would be considered publishable as best-practice in industry literature
Presentation 10%	Unclear presentation, lack of clear structure, significant errors or lack of proof-reading	Some errors or elements of weak communication	Demonstrates good communication in most places	Demonstrates effective communication throughout the assignment	Demonstrates a very high level of communication – including the ability to write at publishable standard	

Criteria for Evaluating Assignment 3: The Final Project

Marks	0 – 39 Fail	40 - 49 Borderline Fail	50 -59 Pass	60 - 69 Merit	70 - 85 Distinction	86 - 100 Distinction
Assessment Category						
Knowledge & Understanding 20%	Demonstrates little knowledge or understanding of the chosen research topic, no problem statement is evident	Demonstrates knowledge of the research topic, but with some notable weaknesses, problem statement is only partially written or includes gaps	Demonstrates a good understanding of the research topic and the context in which it is problematised, has set out a workable problem statement	Demonstrates systematic knowledge and understanding of the research topic alongside critical awareness of context, has provided a comprehensive “problem statement” as part of the proposal	Demonstrates excellent knowledge and understanding of the research topic, incorporates a comprehensive and conceptually orientated problem statement that acknowledges new insights at the forefront of this field	Meets and often exceeds the 70 – 85% criteria across all sub-categories Work is of demonstrably outstanding quality and would be considered publishable as best-practice in industry literature
Literature Element 30%	Makes minimal use of either relevant business sources or academic literatures Very little or no demonstrable reflection or critical ability Poor or inconsistent analysis fails to use APA referencing	Is based on a limited number of citations from relevant business sources or the attendant academic literature, demonstrates little reflection or critical ability Some appropriate analysis but does not include sufficient coverage of key topics and/or debates to support proposal writing effectively References to appropriate literature are flawed, a partially absent or inconsistent	Demonstrates an ability to identify, analyse and reflect upon the themes and issues highlighted in relevant business sources and the attendant academic literature Makes good use of literature provided by the module leader/supervisor	Demonstrates an ability to identify, critically analyse and reflect upon the themes and issues highlighted in relevant business sources and the attendant academic literature, including those of a conceptual nature Demonstrates the ability to identify and critically review literature beyond that provided by the course leader / supervisor	Demonstrates an ability to identify, critically analyse, reflect upon, and conceptually synthesise relevant themes and issues highlighted in business sources and the attendant academic literature Identifies and makes excellent use of appropriate literature, using relevant referencing conventions consistently throughout	
Research Skills 30%	Either fails to include or provides only a very brief description of intended research methods, does	Provides incomplete information about intended research methods, the rationale for their selection	Describes research methods and why they were chosen, comments on how they help address the problem statement, considers how	Compares potential methodological choices, justifies selection, comments on how this choice of methods	Critically evaluates potential methodological choices, justifies this selection conceptually, comments on	

	not provide an adequate rationale for their selection or comment on the advantages and limitations of these approaches	makes only brief comments on the advantages and limitations of these approaches	they link to the literature and what limitations might prevail when using them, mentions potential biases, identifies potential tools of analysis	addresses the problem statement, explores analytic choices, their limitations, potential data and researcher biases, situates this understanding within a wider knowledge context	how this choice of methods addresses the problem statement, explores approaches to and the limitations of analytic approaches, as well as potential biases, situates this understanding within wider knowledge of the field, demonstrates an understanding of personal perspective and how it influences the research process	
Ethics 10%	Fails to consider the ethical dimensions of the project	Includes only a very brief commentary on the ethical dimensions of the project	Has thought about the ethical issues raised by the project, identifying a plan for dealing with any ethical risks that might be encountered	Links the ethical issues raised by the project to the relevant literature, identifies a plan for dealing with any ethical risks that might be encountered, explores the wider ethical implications and risks raised for society	Links the ethical issues raised by the project to the relevant literature, identifies a plan for dealing with any ethical risks that might be encountered, explores the wider ethical implications and risks raised for society, identifies any resultant methodological challenges arising from these risks	
Presentation 10%	Unclear presentation, lack of clear structure, significant errors or lack of proof-reading	Some errors or elements of weak communication	Demonstrates good communication in most places	Demonstrates effective communication throughout the assignment	Demonstrates a very high level of communication skills – including the ability to write at publishable standard	

Use this space to beginning mind mapping your project: