

The (preliminary) stage of a graduation project

ICT & CT Information Technology Bachelor Emmen



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1 GENERAL

1.1 Introduction

The programmes provided by the School of ICT & CT of NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences Emmen are concluded with a graduation project. During this project the students work on a problem taken from professional practice for which no solution has yet been found. By successfully completing the graduation project the students demonstrate their ability on the level of a novice Bachelor of higher vocational education.

In principle, the graduation project is an individual effort, but it can certainly be done as a group, in which case it must be ensured that the performance of each individual group member is readily apparent.

Graduation projects are to be acquired by the students themselves. The graduation project manual describes the requirements the projects and students must meet and this document explains the process prior to graduation.

• This manual frequently refers to Blackboard. The Blackboard information can be found in the ICT Stage en Afstuderen / IT Placement and Graduation course.

1.2 Graduation project manual is leading

The graduation project manual is at all times the most important document during graduation. So it is crucial that you are aware of the contents of the graduation project manual and that you have studied it before you start looking for a graduation project.

Because the graduation project manual is leading, it takes precedence should this document contain any discrepancies or omissions.

1.3 Requirements before you may start on a graduation project

You may start looking for a graduation project well on time, but you must meet two important requirements before actually starting on a project. They are:

 You must obtain the approval of the examination committee to start on the graduation project.

One of the elements the examination committee checks is that you have accumulated sufficient credits, considering you must have gained at least 138 ECs before you may start on the graduation project. In addition, you must be in possession of the foundation year. *The graduation agency checks this on behalf of the examination committee.* If you do not meet these requirements, you can submit a request to the examination committee to be admitted to graduation project.

As you may start looking for a graduation project early on, it can be difficult to estimate whether you will have gained sufficient credits when the time comes. It is not uncommon for students to have to start on their graduation project later than planned. Discuss this important requirement with the graduation company well before the project is to start.

2. You need the graduation agency's approval for the graduation project.

The graduation project you want to work on must be approved by the graduation agency. This document explains how to acquire a suitable project.

The course ICT Stage en Afstuderen / IT Placement and Graduation -> content -> Graduation Bachelor -> Preparation graduation assignment checklist also contains the requirements you are to meet before you may start on a graduation project.

1.4 Criteria

A suitable graduation project meets the criteria as listed in Chapter 2.1 of the graduation project manual.

1.5 Procedures for acquiring a graduation project

- Attend graduation information session 1. (Attendance is mandatory.)
 The first graduation information session addresses topics that apply to acquiring a graduation project.
 - It is held in the first or second week of October and the first or second week of March.
- 2. Find a suitable graduation project yourself.
- 3. Present graduation project(s) you have found to the graduation agency.
- 4. Attend graduation information session 2. (Attendance is mandatory.)

 The second graduation information session pertains to the itinerary of the graduation period.

 It is held in the second last or last week of January and the second last or last week of June.

2 GRADUATION INFORMATION SESSION 1

2.1 Introduction

How do I acquire a suitable graduation project, and what is the procedure in NHL Stenden's Information Technology Emmen programmes for obtaining approval for the graduation project? This chapter provides an answer to these questions.

The following are important matters in this part of the preparatory phase: the requirements you must meet before you may start on a graduation project, criteria for a project, the procedures you are to follow, and finding a graduation project.

A number of important points are:

- The **student bears primary responsibility** for the successful progress of the graduation period. The need for an alert, active attitude in all respects is a consequence of this responsibility.
- Acquiring a graduation project is the first step in the entire graduation process. As regards graduation, the **students themselves** must acquire a suitable graduation project. It is therefore essential that timely action is taken.
 - The deadline for submitting the project has been set at 15 June and 15 January respectively.

• A deal is a deal - always!

This means that once your project has been approved the school will not assign you to another project. Conversely, a student might have accepted a project (that has been approved by the graduation agency) at one company and then gets another more appealing offer from another company. Although in some cases it is regrettable, the fact remains that **a deal is a deal.**

2.2 Requirements for graduation project

Project:

- The project is to be sufficiently complex;
- The project is to have been formulated by the company;
- The project is to contain a research component (what does the customer need, is it technically feasible, etc.);
- The project is to pertain to a new information system or the addition of a new element to the current information system;
- The result of the project has consequences for the company (technically and/or operationally speaking).

Company:

- The organisation where the graduation assignment is carried out must sign the NHL-Stenden graduation agreement. If the organisation does not want to sign this agreement, it is not allowed to graduate in this organisation. So ask in advance whether the organisation wants to sign the agreement which can be found on Blackboard.
- Company (or department) whose main mission has been IT development for a good while;
- A number of experienced higher education graduates (higher vocational/university IT education) work in the company (or department);
- Bachelor students can only graduate in their own company under the supervision and conditions
 of the Center for Entrepreneurship (cfe@nhlstenden.com);
- Student is given a workplace in the company;
- The student works 5 days a week for the organisation at the work location and working from home is not allowed.
- Per organisation, only 1 work placement student and/or graduate of the NHL Stenden computer science training Emmen per 10 permanent employees may do an internship or graduate. Exam-

ples: If a company has 9 permanent employees, 1 student from our NHL Stenden computer science courses in Emmen may do an work placement and/or graduate there. If a company has 12 permanent employees, 2 students from our NHL Stenden computer science courses in Emmen may do an work placement and/or graduate there.

Supervisor:

- Graduated bachelor or master in the field of IT;
- At least 3 years of relevant experience.

2.3 Finding a graduation project

To find a suitable graduation project you should first list all that you have learned during your studies, which subjects you liked and found interesting, and what you want to do after you graduate. We also recommend that you consider which competences you still want to work on to improve your chances of getting the career you want once you graduate.

In principle, you do the graduation project on your own. Occasionally, the graduation project has to be carried out by several students. In that case it must be clear who is responsible for what and each individual project member is to produce a product.

Graduation projects can be found via the following (possible) channels:

Via the graduation agency

Many companies and other organisations have come to appreciate the knowledge and dedication of students of NHL Stenden's Information Technology study programmes Emmen and so organisations regularly seek new graduating students. Some want to "engage" a specific expertise for a one-off project. Some organisations offer a graduation project on a structural basis. The advantage of those graduation projects is that the organisation, the head supervisor and the student all know in advance what they can expect. The activities and supervision of these kinds of graduation projects are geared to the knowledge and skills of students of our programmes. On the other hand, responding to such a graduation project only makes sense if the graduation project fits the student's learning objectives and expectations for the future.

Some graduation projects are offered spontaneously and can be found on Blackboard. Please note that projects posted on Blackboard are not necessarily suitable projects. Some projects the -graduation agency can offer via Blackboard are not yet clearly defined. They won't be defined until the interview for the graduation project and in consultation with the student. Naturally, the project will be assessed by the graduation agency after the interview.

· Own contacts, through network

Many students have contacts in organisations that offer interesting graduation projects. Of course there is no harm in seeking a graduation project via a personal network. **Students are not permitted to graduate in a company run by relatives.** Get the message out that you aim to graduate in a few months' time and are looking for a graduation project. But do make sure that you can immediately communicate the kind of graduation project you are looking for and why you are the right graduating student for the project. You will also need to promote yourself as a graduating student when looking for a graduation project indirectly.

A possible disadvantage of looking for your own graduation project is that you can land in familiar territory. That's no problem when you know for certain that that is where your future lies. Otherwise, you are well-advised to explore a new sector and expand your network.

Unsolicited applications

A third way to acquire a graduation project is by way of an unsolicited application. An unsolicited application is your best option if you want a "customised" graduation period. It takes a lot of work but it is certainly worth the effort. You can also search various websites for a suitable company and/or graduation project.

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You can acquire a graduation project via an unsolicited application. Do realise, though, that this way requires a lot of preparation.

It is important that you look into the organisation you are interested in. Be aware that there are all sorts of organisations (large/small, formal/informal, profit/non-profit, etc.), all with their own culture. If you want to enjoy your graduation period, it is important that you fit the organisation and the people who work there.

Consider beforehand what you want to get out of your graduation period (work experience, experience in your field) and what your personal learning objectives are (perhaps there are specific skills you want to practice).

Information on the organisation can be collected by telephone or via the Internet, by requesting annual reports, etc.

Then try to formulate a graduation project that dovetails with your knowledge and skills and that contributes to the activities of the department you have chosen. Send this project description, of no more than one and a half sides, as an appendix along with your application letter. Explain in your letter that you would like to graduate in the department concerned, that you have a good idea for a graduation project but that you are also prepared to consider other projects, and describe why you would be a good graduating student. Let the company know that you will telephone them in a weeks' time to make an appointment should both parties show an interest. Appendix A contains an example of an application letter and a curriculum vitae.

• Current and previous graduation host companies

You can ask your graduation agency where interns and graduating students are working today and where they have worked in the past few years.

• Graduation reports

The public graduation reports are available in the media centre.

Company information days

Companies regularly organise information days or fairs, which you can visit without NHL Stenden's intervention.

Internet (incl. job sites, jobrapido.nl, afstudeerbank.nl, studentenbureau.nl)

• Graduation abroad

NHI Stenden University of applied sciences Emmen encourages students to graduate abroad. The European Union, for instance, has made it easier to graduate abroad. It can have a positive effect if you can list work experience abroad in your curriculum vitae.

2.4 The application, the follow-up

Take the following matters into account when you apply:

- You must have a personal application interview with the client. Appendix B contains more information on important considerations, etc.,
- Do not place all your hope in one company but make sure you always have some more strings to your bow.
 - It's better to be offered one graduation project too many than none at all.
- Try to get hold of the right person. The personnel department might say nothing is available whereas a graduation project can be arranged via contacts with people in the organisation.
- Some companies take their time responding to your application. If you hear nothing within 1 to 1.5 weeks, contact the company and if necessary keep contacting them.
- State the specific character of the Information Technology programme in your "application" for a graduation project. Consider that due to the multitude of programmes not every company knows what Information Technology Science is all about and provide relevant information on the various subjects if you think that will benefit your application.

- Sometimes a project requires the purchase of equipment, software, etc.
 Try to ascertain that this will not obstruct the work.
 How certain can you be that a planned device is available on time?
- Try to make a proper assessment of the level of the project: what is already available, what still
 needs to be done. Working out details of a previous project, continuing on a programme that is
 nearing completion, etc., are examples of a poor graduation project. When in doubt, contact your
 graduation agency.
- Make sure you have a properly formulated project and if necessary and if possible take the opportunity to help formulate it.
 - Occasionally, the school and the host company contact each other once a project is formulated. Still, the written project assignment should be clear enough in itself.
 - So do not accept a rough outline with the added note "if necessary, have the school contact us". The <u>written</u> project assignment must be approved by the school!
- It is necessary that you keep proper records of the actions you take (by phone or letter), including the unsuccessful ones. This information might possibly be of use at some later date.
- NHL Stenden University of applied sciences Emmen makes the final decision as to where a student will graduate.
- Make sure that matters are settled correctly with the companies. This applies to the company where you will graduate as well as to the companies whose offer you do not pursue. Always do this directly with the person with whom you were in contact.

Result of the application: A description of the graduation project. You should use the standard digital form *O1_PlacementAssignmentDescription* that can be found in the course ICT Stage en Afstuderen / IT Placement and Graduation -> content -> Graduation Bachelor -> Preparation graduation assignment checklist on Blackboard. Additional appendices may be added to this standard form. This standard form is to be sent to the graduation agency.

2.5 Approval/Rejection of the project

After the graduation agency has received the project he/she will start up an assessment process which will result in one of the following outcomes:

- Project or company is unsuitable; the student will need to find a new project;
- Project or information on the project is not clear; a revised project description is to be submitted;
- Project does not meet the requirements but might still be suitable after an adjustment. The graduation agency will discuss this with the student after which a revised project description can be submitted;
- The project is approved.

Final outcome of approval/rejection of the project: an approved graduation project.

Attention: After approval of the graduation project, the student must start work within 6 months. After 6 months, the approval to start the approved graduation project lapses and the student must search for a new graduation project.

3 GRADUATION INFORMATION SESSION 2

3.1 Introduction

Your graduation project has now been approved and soon you will start on your graduation activities. As you know, you must meet several requirements (see Section 1.3) before you can actually start on your project, besides which there are some matters you have to consider while working on your graduation project. You also have to know how your graduation period is to be concluded.

The purpose of this information session is to answer these kinds of questions and to explain various topics in broad outlines. The latter because you will also get an explanation from the graduation tutor who will visit you about 6 weeks after you start on your graduation project.

Please note again that reference is made to forms on Blackboard. The Blackboard information can be found in the ICT Stage en Afstuderen / IT Placement and Graduation course.

3.2 Requirements to be met before starting on your graduation project

The requirements you are to meet before you may start on your graduation project are listed in Section 1.3. Do not start on your graduation project until you meet these requirements, otherwise you will have to discontinue this graduation project.

3.3 During your graduation project

- **Requirement:** The **02_GraduationNotificationForm must** be returned by e-mail to the graduation agency in the first week of your graduation project. (This signals the graduation agency that you have started.)
- As a student, it is your responsibility that the graduation project proceeds correctly.
- Contact the graduation agency if you do not hear from him/her within one month after starting on your graduation project.
- The number of working days: 90. (No less, but may be exceeded by 10% at the most.)
- Check the graduation project manual for dates, regulations, e-mail addresses, and forms.
- Within 4 weeks after receipt of the **02_GraduationNotificationForm** the graduation agency informs you of who your first graduation tutor (hereinafter referred to as graduation tutor) is. From that moment on, you can arrange things with your graduation tutor.
- You organise all current affairs with your graduation tutor who in turn supervises you during the entire process. A second graduation tutor is assigned in addition to this graduation tutor. You are notified of this second graduation tutor shortly before your graduation presentation. The second tutor will be involved in assessing your various graduation components.
- The graduation tutor visits you about six weeks after you have started on your graduation project. Prepare well for the graduation tutor's visit.
- In your approach to the project, reporting, etc., adhere to the requirements that apply at school.
- You are only intended to work on your graduation project and not on any other tasks.
- Take an active approach towards the company, the graduation tutor and school.
- Do not forget to send your provisional planning to the graduation tutor.
- You are to send the graduation lecturer a monthly report (about one page long) at the end of each month
- Discuss your performance with the company supervisor during the course of your project.
- If you make a late start you might have to plan over the summer holidays.

3.4 After and during your graduation project

- Warn others in a timely fashion of **confidentiality** with respect to the presentation/reports.
- Send up your provisional graduation report in time (two weeks before your final graduation report) to the first graduation tutor.
- The final graduation report is to comprise 12,000-16,000 words, excluding the appendices.
- Consult with the graduation tutors and the host company supervisor regarding a date for the
 graduation session. Then pass the date on to the graduation office (graduation.ict-ct-emmen@nhlstenden.com). The graduation office will arrange with you whatever you need to conclude your graduation project.
- You yourself are

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- to write the announcement of your graduation session, which will be posted on Blackboard. Make sure your announcement does not contain any errors.
- Present during your graduation session: host company supervisors, graduation tutors, interested parties, students.
- Check beamer, equipment, etc., in advance.
- Presentation duration approx 30 minutes; structure is important. Time is reserved for questions after your presentation. See Appendix C for more information on the graduation session.

APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE OF APPLICATION LETTER AND CURRICULUM VITAE

Lamp Engineering
For the attention of: Mr. J.A. Field
Architect Street 4
7459 SE Locotown

RE: Vacancy number PX34/99

Machinetown, 7 January 2011

Dear Mr Field,

As a student at NHL Stenden University of applied scienes in Emmen, I am seeking a 90-day graduation project and would very much like it to be within your company.

Please let me introduce myself and explain why Lamp Engineering has drawn my attention.

My name is John Sunderland. I am a Year 4 Information Technology student with a particular interest in Embedded Systems. The possibilities your company offers with respect to micro controllers and sensors are highly appealing and give me the impression that your company is an inspiring environment in which to continue to develop in my field.

I hope the information I have provided above has aroused your interest enough to invite me for an interview. I would in any case appreciate hearing from you by 21 January.

Your sincerely,

John Sunderland

High Street 7 9950 KJ Machinetown Phone: +31 (0)546-3125670

E-mail: jsunderland@hotmail.com



Curriculum vitae of John Sunderland

Name: Sunderland First names: Jonathan

Name by which

generally known: John

Address: High Street 7

9950 KJ Machinetown

Telephone:+31 (0)546-3125670

Date of birth: 15 August 1989

Place of birth: Emmen Civil status: Single

Particulars: none / dyslexic /

Study programme:

2002-2007: Upper general secondary education (Hondsrug College, Emmen)

profile: Science & Technology

Subjects: Dutch, English, Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry

2007 - Stenden University of Applied Sciences, MEMTECH, Information Technology

Work experience:

2009-present Shelf replenisher at Albert Heijn supermarket (Saturdays only)

2008-2009 Postman on Saturdays

Other activities:

2003-2009 Chairman of "No Boundaries" scouting group

Hobbies:

Football

NOTE:

Example of a curriculum vitae. Education and work experience are sometimes listed in reverse order (starting with the most recent)

APPENDIX C: THE GRADUATION SESSION

The graduation session is the conclusion of the graduation project. It comprises an oral presentation and a defence. The presentation is to be at least about 25-30 minutes long, including a demonstration, if applicable.

If the graduation group consists of two people, the presentation is to be 40 to 45 minutes long (20-25 minutes per candidate). The presentation is followed by a defence of up to 30 minutes.

Everyone knows that a professional presentation is clearly **structured (1)** and requires **proper preparation (2)**. It all comes down to a good **performance (3)** on the day. This document describes these three components.

C.1 Structure

Presentations are always built up according to a fixed structure:

- Introduction;
- Essence;
- · Closing.

✓ Introduction

- Arresting opening + welcome;
- Introduction to subject;
- Reason, purpose, significance;
- Explanation of the structure.

✓ Essence

- 3-5 brief blocks, divided into points;
- A clear title for each block and point;
- Structure is logical and familiar to the audience;
- Presentation leads to a climax.

✓ Closing

- Summary of the essence;
- Repeat of the key message phrased differently, including a practical example or a tip;
- Repeat of the main conclusions;
 - What the audience should remember above all;
 - What the audience is to do (what should they leave with?);
- Arresting closing words.

APPENDIX B: PERSONAL APPLICATION INTERVIEW

B.1 Preparation

Prepare yourself well for the interview (knowledge about graduation project and company). You can usually find this information on the Internet. The graduation agency can provide additional information on some companies. If the company is an existing host company for NHL Stenden graduation projects, the graduate agency can usually tell you more about the company, the culture, etc.

Make sure you are on time (five minutes before the interview is due to start) and that you are immaculately groomed. Many organisations have notified several programmes that they are looking for a graduating student, so you often have to compete with others. Furthermore, the company always has the right to contact the graduation agency.

Some organisations prefer an introduction interview, others want you to first write an application letter.

Find out where the interview will be held. Some companies have several locations. Make sure you are on time at the right location.

B.2 What to bring with you

- A CV plus a copy. Should someone who does not have your documents join in the interview, you can hand that person a copy;
- Your list of questions;
- Pen and notepad. Make sure you make a professional and interested impression. You can write your questions down on paper beforehand;
- Diary, for a follow-up appointment;
- Possibly a portfolio;
- For emergencies: your mobile phone and the telephone number of the person with whom you have an appointment;
- Information on the company.

B.3 The interview

The application meeting is an interview (for tips go to www.leren.nl). The aim is to make the best and most sincere impression possible, which does not mean they have to know everything there is to know about you. You, in turn, can form an impression of the company. Show that you are interested, for instance by taking notes during the interview and asking questions (that you prepared in advance).

The first interview usually takes about an hour and consists for the most part of questions and answers. Let your answers show that you are already informed to a certain extent about the project and the organisation, and do not be tempted to make any value judgements. Try to learn more about the project during the interview. Clearly state what you want to work on. You do not need to have a ready answer to every question; if necessary, just say you want to think for a moment.

The project and the company should offer sufficient opportunities for you to apply and expand your learning experiences. Furthermore, the company should give you a project that matches your level of training. You should be given the opportunity to be fully involved in the organisation, your own workplace being a prerequisite.

Should the graduation project not meet the afore-mentioned requirements, do not reject it out of hand, but try to make better arrangements in consultation with the company.

Do not leave the interview without knowing what the follow-up procedure is. Explicitly ask when you can expect further notice. Inform the interviewer at the end of the interview if you have sent out any other applications for a graduation project. This is another reason for wanting to know what will happen after the interview.

B.4 Supervision

You need to be supervised and/or coached when you work on the project. Regular consultation with the host company supervisor on your progress is useful. Make clear arrangements for these consultations with the host company supervisor.

B.5 Facilities

Besides supervision, it is important to agree on what provisions should be in place for you, such as workplace, hardware, software and the Internet/e-mail.

B.6 Finances

Make clear agreements regarding finances. Matters such as travel costs (if you do not have an annual public transport pass), remuneration, (copy) rights and obligations, insurance, responsibilities and authorisations, are to be discussed and possibly recorded.

C.2 Preparation

✓ Analyse target and audience

- Who will attend the presentation? What prior knowledge do they have? What is their level? Etc. Gear your presentation to their experience and level of knowledge;
- Consider that there are those who know nothing about the subject, so do not get straight to the point, but introduce the subject properly;
- Do not try to impress with difficult terms;
- What does the audience expect of you?
- What do you aim to achieve? Afterwards everyone knows, believes, wants, can, does ...

✓ Determine the contents

- You can never present everything you have done in the past six months nor everything contained in the report. Make choices! Discuss these choices well in advance with your supervisor:
- Give your point of view;
- Limit yourself to what is strictly necessary;
- First formulate the key question;
- Work out the answer;
- Use keywords to outline your presentation;
- Underpin your point of view with convincing arguments or reliable sources;

✓ Structure

Create a presentation schedule:

Presentation (broad strokes) in keywords

Introduction and closing may be more expansive; for instance, include consequential propositions;

Possibly in colour: instructions for yourself (time, voice and diction, posture, use of aids) *Tips:* Spacious layout (plenty of "white space"); Do not staple pages together;

- Find fitting images (tables and graphs);
- Do not be afraid to leave things out.

✓ Prepare the aids

Create presentation slides:

Not too many, but certainly not too few;

Text: Telegram style, plenty of white space (max. 7 lines containing max. 7 words);

Perfectly designed (font size, contrast, spacious layout)

Tip: Can replace presentation schedule.

✓ Give one or more try-outs

- To a critical audience;
- Ask for feedback;
- Check the time (cut your presentation down, if necessary)

✓ Check the facilities beforehand

- Are there enough seats, are they arranged properly?
- Is a beamer provided and how does it work?
- Are the slides clear even at the back of the room?
- Is the whiteboard clean and are markers and an eraser available?
- Does my demonstration work?

C.3 Implementation

✓ Opening

• Stand up, face the audience, ask for their attention, wait patiently for everyone to quiet down:

✓ Address

- Addressing a group of people calls for proper speaking skills and a bit of nerve;
- It's easier if you connect with your audience (make eye contact!);
- Audibility, intelligibility, volume, articulation and tempo are important (so practice!)
- A bit of an accent is fine;
- Do not repeat verbatim what is on the slides, or read out your notes;
- Present point by point;
- Do not shy away from silence, but pause briefly after each point;
- Believe what you present and radiate that belief: You have something to say!

✓ Posture and conduct

- Stand up straight, firmly on both feet; this provides strength, both literally and figuratively speaking;
- It's OK to be nervous;
- Keep eye contact with your audience; force yourself to do so when using visual aids;
- Do not get flustered if something goes wrong (do not laugh, overly apologise or explain);
- Above all, be yourself!

√ Visual aids (whiteboard, PowerPoint)

- Use visual aids (slides, whiteboard, flip chart) to support your presentation, because visual aids ...
- ... Focus the attention of the audience;
- Provide variety;
- Are a steppingstone for your line of reasoning;
- A picture says more than a thousand words ...;
- ... and improve one's memory by 50%.
- Include the table of contents in PowerPoint;
- Whet one's curiosity;

✓ Constantly structure

- Announce each new point → refer to the table of contents;
- Specify what you are going to present in what order and why;
- Indicate how each part relates to the others;
- Repeat often;
- End each point with a conclusion.

✓ Closing

- Announce end of the presentation in good time;
- Summarise the essence;
- End with closing words that will make a lasting impression;
- Remain where you are and look round your audience;
- Ask your audience if they have any questions (first response will only come after 10-15 seconds).