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**THE *SHEFFIELD GRADUATE* AWARD**

**MY ASSESSMENT PROFILE**

**STUDENT NAME: ALEXANDRU IOAN LIGHEZAN**

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**COURSE: ENTERPRISE COMPUTING: IT MANAGEMENT FOR BUSINESS**

**FACULTY: ENGINEERING AND PURE SCIENCE**

**UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT: YES**

**POSTGRADUATE STUDENT: □**

**MY ASSESSMENT PROFILE**

***Please follow the instructions carefully and complete all four sections. Try to keep your total word count to a maximum of 2,500 (excluding the template).***

**SECTION 1: MY ACTIVITIES**

This section is designed so that you can provide details of your activities. You need to ensure that you have at least **one activity for each of four sections out of the six**. You can list more than one activity under each section heading if you wish, but try to keep your overall description for **all four sections to a maximum of 500 words, but no less than 400.**  Please collapse the sections that you don’t use and remember to present your portfolio as a showcase for your achievements.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Student Jobs and**  **Work Experience** | **Volunteering** | **Enterprise** | **Internationalisation** |
| Title of Activity (ies) | - Web designer: sole trader since 2010  - University of Sheffield Accommodation and Commercial Services (ACS): Casual Worker and Domestic Assistant since 2009 | - Volunteer for the British Heart Foundation | - Flea Market charity event (organized by the Enterprise Zone)  - SIFE: IT&Media | - Web designer |
| Approx no of hours participation | - Web designer: 1,000+  - ACS: 1000+ | - BHF: 80 | - Flea Market: 25  - SIFE: 60 | 1,000+ |
| Describe what you have done: | - Web designer:  Working with clients from all over the world to help them create and manage their online identities. Focus on increasing sales, with a return on investment of just a few weeks.  Work included web design, development and consulting.  In partnership with a marketing company, I had access to clients such as Nestle, Toffifee, Sunsilk, Pedigree and Vileda.  - ACS: Cleaning | - I started by helping organizing events for the BHF. Examples include: the University of Sheffield vs Hallam University competition (2 events), Fundraising pub crawls, Marathons. Additionally, with my background in web design I helped them create the flyers they needed for promotion.  - Currently I am helping them just with flyer design, since I became their go-to person for local events and this takes quite a bit of time. | - Flea Market:  Worked in a team of four. The challenge was to spend 15£ in charity shops buying second hand items and then set up a stand in the Enterprise zone to sell them. Instead of just selling items we decided to organize competitions and prize draws, so we won quite comfortably.  - SIFE: working with a relatively small team to manage SIFE’s online websites, promotional material and offer guidance to the individual teams. | - Worked for and with people from all over the world:  \* Phenomena Group Oy: Based in Finland with offices in major cities of the world. Interacted with the top 2 decision makers, based in Finland and Norway.  \*Worklog Assistant: Consulting and web design for Sohail Somani, based in Canada.  \*iSlateSystems: Head of UI and UX team. iSlateSystems is based in the US. My day to day work for them assumes constant interaction with contractors in the US, UK, India, Romania and Dubai. |
| Any position of responsibility held? | - Web designer:  Sole trader; Currently head of the User interface and User Experience team at a US based startup called iSlateSystems. | No | - Flea market: team leader | - Sole trader and head of UI and UX design team. |
| Supporting Evidence provided (List as appendices) | **- Web designer:**  - Selection of invoices  - Tax return  - iSlateSystems contract  **- ACS:**  - Payslips  **Appendix 1** | - Sheffield Half Marathon certificate  - BHF flyers created by me  **Appendix 2** | - Flea Market Certificate  - SIFE Certificate  **Appendix 3** | - Invoices  - Tax return  - iSlateSystems contract  **Appendix 1** |

**SECTION 2: MY TRANSFERABLE SKILLS**

In this section, you are required to answer **four questions out of the six.** You are asked to provide an example or evidence of how and where you gained the skills and attributes listed for each of your four choices. The skills and attributes can have been acquired from any of your activities listed in section 1 and use a range of different activities. **Try to keep each example to a maximum of 200 words, but no less than 150**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Skills and Attributes** | **Title of your Activities (Refer to Section 1)** | **Example/Evidence:**  **What did you do and how did you demonstrate this skill?** |
| Tell us about when you worked as part of a team, highlighting your ability to be a constructive team member working collaboratively towards a shared goal. | - Web Designer | - At iSlateSystems, I am part of a team of 8 contractors working towards a shared goal: empowering restaurants with a platform(called Menuscale) that allows them to take orders via mobile devices and desktops, manage their menu, coupons, online content and more. It is a massive system that took months of active development to create.  The Menuscale platform combines sections from completely different areas of development (Mobile development, web development, Desktop programming, Server management and scaling) and thus required a team of experts in different fields and from different backgrounds (and countries).  Despite all the challenges we faced, including time management (different time zones), different customs, holidays, working methodologies, we bonded together as a team and successfully developed our product.  We have now started accepting clients and have been featured in US magazines, radio shows and have had a presence in the largest industry trade shows. |
| Demonstrate your ability to communicate effectively, orally, in writing, or by other means as appropriate. Examples could include public speaking, presentations, writing meeting minutes, journal articles or similar. | - Web Designer  - Volunteer for the British Heart Foundation | Because I carry most of my work remotely, good communication skills are essential for the success of the project.  Working with people from different countries, with different levels of English abilities, I know how important clear and effective communication is.  In my freelance web design work, I routinely have to communicate via email and Skype to manage contractors, clients and partners. I still remember how difficult my first weeks doing this were: people have different expectations, and depending on the country even the same words can mean completely different things. I am now aware of most of these pitfalls and can prevent most misunderstandings from taking place.  In large projects, I have also realized that simply taking minutes is not enough. I know use online tools to create issues, assign them accordingly and track progress. Sometimes, clear communication does not involve just “talking”, but rather making sure that everyone is kept updated (which can be incredibly difficult when you have to manage 3+ different time zones).  For the BHF, I have proved my communication skills by successfully being part of the team for years now. |
| Tell us about a time when you encountered problems or difficulties. What happened and what did you learn from the experience? | - Web designer | - One particularly serious issue was for iSlateSystems. We had a place booked at one of the USA’s largest pizza trade shows, and with just a few weeks to go we were all busy polishing put products. Having no time to create our showcase website ourselves, we hired some external contractors to do it for us.  I set up a few deadlines, for different stages of the website (wireframe, design, development).  However, assuming that these contractors were as reliable as us I failed to build in enough safety time. This had disastrous effects, with the website failing to be completed on time for the show. We lost quite a few business leads because of this, during the first day.  The quick solution was to make a quick and simple version of our planned website: something that at least allowed our visitors to contact us. This stop gap solution proved to be good enough.  Since then, whenever I am working with people I haven’t worked with before, I simply double to time I estimate the project to take. |
| Demonstrate your ability to make effective use of media applications and highlight how you have applied these in your activities, e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Publisher, Web site Design or similar. | - Web designer | - I am proficient in Adobe Photoshop, and this is the main software I use to carry out my activities. I used it to design websites for a wide range of clients and devices. I also use it to design promotional materials and logos.  - I am highly skilled in Adobe Dreamweaver, and have created professional websites visited by hundreds of thousands of people.  - I have an ECDL accreditation, which means that I am fluent in the Microsoft Office Suite. I use Microsoft Powerpoint to create presentations for my clients and myself; I use Excel to keep track of my cash flow and estimate future income; And I use Word on a daily basis for documents.  - I can use Adobe Flash, to create interactive animations, Adobe Illustrator to create vector illustrations and Adobe Fireworks as an alternative to Photoshop.  - I am a daily user of Facebook, twitter and other social media and have used it to promote iSlateSystems. |
| Demonstrate your ability to use and apply creativity, enterprise skills or innovation in your working practices | - Web designer | - Creativity is one of my main selling points.  Because my projects vary so much (from IT startups, restaurants and recruitment platforms) I need to employ a lot of creativity to solve all kinds of problems: identity design, accessibility, usability, conversion techniques, etc.  - I need to employ enterprise skills in order to keep my business running. In addition to working on client projects, I have to handle the marketing, promotion, client support and accounting.  - Web technology changes very fast, meaning that my work has to be on the cutting edge. I am constantly required to come up with novel solutions for all sorts of issues.  For example for one of my latest projects (Sodexo careers website), I had to employ a new markup schema, that will help search engines such as Google better recognize different parts of the job advertisement. In the future this will allow them to display the job ads directly in the search pages. This schema has just been proposed by one of the companies that I contract for and has just been approved and standardized. This means that the Sodexo careers website is the one of the first in the world to use this schema. |
| Were you responsible, at any time, for setting your own goals or targets and how did you achieve these? | - Web designer  - SIFE: IT & Media | - For my business, I set up targets for every six months.  I noticed that my business performance increases if I have targets to work towards. That’s why I routinely compare my current status against the targets. If it happens to reach the target early, I simply increase it.  I reach my targets by constantly knowing where I am on my path to reaching that particular target. This allows me to estimate the next steps that I need to take in order to get where I want (planning).  When I am under pressure to reach a target, I make better, more informed decisions related to project costing, time management and deadlines and this is what I think allows me to actually reach that target.  - For SIFE, I had the occasion to set a few deadlines for team projects (leaflets and a small website promoting one of the teams). We successfully met these deadlines by planning properly and constantly keeping track of our progress. |

**SECTION 3: MY PERSONAL LEARNING AND EVALUATION**

In this section, there are twelve questions and you are asked to answer **one question** **from each of the** **three parts** **listed.** You are invited to evaluate and reflect upon your overall experiences during your time at university. **Please answer each question in no more than 350 words, (but no less than 300)** All answers should be provided from your activities listed in section 1. You can use one activity for each question, or you can combine all four activities within each answer. Please remember to write out the question you have answered.

**Part 1: Career Planning and Professional Development**

1. What career ideas do you have, if any, and how has taking part in the Award helped you towards achieving your career goals?
2. Discuss how your activities may have influenced your choice of career or postgraduate study?
3. Discuss how you were able to use your transferable skills in working across professional or organisational boundaries
4. How useful do you think your extra curricula activities will be for your future employment or further study?

**Part 2: Personal Development**

1. Are there any examples of where you might have done things differently if you had had the opportunity in one or more of your activities?
2. Which of your activities did you enjoy the most and why? What did you gain most from?
3. How do you feel you have developed personally as a result of undertaking your activities?
4. If appropriate, identify and discuss where you feel you have experienced undertaking activities which have enhanced your knowledge of different cultures or social issues?

**Part 3: Skills and Attributes**

1. As a result of taking part in the Award, what skills do you now consider to be your strengths and why?
2. Explain a situation where you had to use your knowledge and skills in a leadership/negotiation/management role. (Please choose one)
3. Discuss how you were able to relate your practical abilities to the wider needs of the individuals with whom you were working within your activities
4. Provide an example of where you had to prioritise your workload. How did you go about doing this?

**(Please answer each question here and write out the question you have answered)**

**Discuss how your activities may have influenced your choice of career or postgraduate study?**

In my first few weeks as a student here, I was surprised to find out that people were taking extracurricular activities and working student jobs while studying. In my home country, this was rather unusual. I started getting involved in societies and making friends; then I started taking various jobs and making connections and getting some work experience. The whole experience was extraordinary. But it lead to a lot more than I was expecting – it changed my career expectations.

Having made a few connections at the University, I started getting small web design jobs. I then partnered up with a friend and started doing web design and development at a professional level. This completely changed my professional plans. I had always assumed I would finish University and then get a job. I still consider this a viable option, but I find it a lot more likely to continue as a sole trader and enjoy the benefits and challenges it offers. I simply love it. And I would have never considered it if it weren’t for all the activities I got involved in.

Being a part of SIFE and a sole trader I realized that I don’t love just computer science. I realized that I loved the business side of things as well. I am already planning a potential startup, and I am also involved in two startups, one based in the US and one based in Sheffield.

Getting involved in the BHF I learned that I like working with charities– I like making a difference. I am currently assessing whether I can move some of my business in this sector as well.

Overall, most of what I am currently doing is a result of my extracurricular activities. I did not consider most of this before coming to University, but it happened and I like it!

**Which of your activities did you enjoy the most and why? What did you gain most from?**

My activity as a sole trader is definitely the one that I enjoyed the most and the one that I gained the most from.

Through it I was able to learn how to work with people from different cultures. I was a bit confused at the beginning, since I was not expecting there to be such a big difference in the way people work, communicate and act. But there is, and it is important to know how to handle it.

Working for real clients also meant that I had to keep updated with the latest technologies and research. This means that I am very skilled in what I do and I can prove it with my past work.

My business also allowed me to improve my track record. So far, at all the interviews I have been invited to I received good feedback on my work experience. I believe that this will help me stand out from the crowds when applying to jobs or projects.

On a more personal level, my business helped me sustain myself at university. I has allowed me to be completely independent. Without it, I would have probably had to quit and return back to my country when the economic crisis hit. So in a way, it was a life saver.

I really appreciate all the things that I have learned throughout my degree. But without my business, most of this wouldn’t have been possible. I also believe that it has nicely complemented by degree, which also has a small influence from the Management School.

In conclusion, I am happy that I decided to start this business. I wish that every student out there gave it a shot, as it really is fascinating to learn the inner workings of a business and interact with so many different people.

**Provide an example of where you had to prioritise your workload. How did you go about doing this?**

I am currently in my last semester of my 4th year, and I have around 70 credits worth of modules and I am pursuing a first class degree. I am also working a 10 hour part time job for the University’s ACS department, run my own business with two large contracts and do volunteering work for the British Heart Foundation. On top of that I try to keep a healthy social life and make some time for my hobby – cooking!

I came from a background where academic life used to take 90% of my life. When I got here, I realized I had to change my mentality. Now university is just a part of my life, and I try to balance it with everything else. I believe this was the biggest psychological barrier that I had to break so far.

To handle everything that I want to do I keep a very tight schedule and I prioritize important tasks. I am always aware of my deadlines, and basically everything else is flexible and set around them.

For example, if I have a university deadline in the next few days, everything else will take a back seat. If I have a work deadline, university will take a back seat. There were times when I could afford to get a low mark in university and I did, just to save a deadline for work. There were reversed situations as well.

Currently, my student job is occupying my weekend mornings. I do my university work weekday mornings, and then work until about 18:00 or 19:00. It’s then time for hobbies, volunteering or other activities. It’s very strict, but I have found that limiting myself to these set hours will allow me to actually complete most of what I need to.

It’s tough to handle this sort of schedule, and it takes a lot of energy. When I feel tired I just stop. I believe that most students continue to push on, even when their productivity falls and I consider that a big mistake. Overall, my system seems to work.

**SECTION 4: REFER BACK TO YOUR PLAN. PLEASE INCLUDE A COPY OF YOUR PLAN IN THIS SECTION (IF YOUR ACTIVITIES HAVE CHANGED FROM YOUR ORIGINAL PLAN, THERE IS NO NEED TO SUBMIT AN UPDATED VERSION).**

**HAVE YOUR ACTIVITIES CHANGED FROM YOUR ORIGINAL PLAN? CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHY? (No more than 150 words, but no less than 100)**

For example, what might you have done differently? How do you feel about your achievements? You can include any comment on the actual process of undertaking your activities, anything that contributed to a change of plan or feedback on taking part in the Award.

**Please keep your word count to within 2,500 of your overall Assessment Profile.**

**Name and email: Alexandru Lighezan, aca08ail**

**THE *SHEFFIELD GRADUATE* AWARD**

**MY PLAN**

This plan is to be **completed and submitted to the Award team within 7 days of paying your £25 enrolment fee.**  We accept that your plan may change between now and completing your portfolio, but this won’t affect your portfolio provided you have met the Award criteria. **Please remember to keep a copy of your plan as you will be required to submit it with your portfolio.** Please provide as much information as possible about your activities to enable us to make a decision as regards its eligibility for the Award. Once you have received feedback and approval, you can start working towards producing your portfolio.

**The aim of this plan is to:**

* Help you to understand what you need to do to gain the Award within the appropriate time scales
* Allow you to receive feedback on your proposals and determine their suitability
* Help you to plan which of your activities you will use for the Award and avoid ‘double counting’
* Enable you to start collecting relevant evidence, e.g. verification for the activities you have undertaken

1. What activities have you undertaken since starting University and where do these completed or ongoing activities fit under the six sections? (Please include details)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Activities/including brief description** | **Date undertaken** |
| Enterprise | SIFE, Flea market | Nov 2010  2008-2009 |
| Student Jobs/Work Experience | Self employed as freelance web designer  Part time summer vacation work, paid | 2010-present |
| Volunteering | BHF | 2010-present |
| Cultural and Social | Treasurer CraftSoc |  |
| Internationalisation | RoSoc |  |
| The University and its Community |  |  |

2. What plans do you have for any further activities during your time at University and where do they fit under the six sections?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Details of Planned Activities** | **Date completed by:** |
| Volunteering | Continue helping BHF |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

3. When do you graduate? July 2012

Undergraduate □✓ Postgraduate □

**Date submitted: February 2012**

**HAVE YOUR ACTIVITIES CHANGED FROM YOUR ORIGINAL PLAN? CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHY? (No more than 150 words, but no less than 100)**

Looking back at my plan I realize nothing changed, mainly because I have been undertaking my current activities for quite a while.

I really enjoy what I currently do, so I find it very difficult to take on new activities since my schedule is really full.

I have enjoyed every single activity that I got involved in, and I feel that this helped shape my future. I am therefore very aware of the need of experiencing new challenges regularly and keeping your horizons wide open.

I am considering getting involved in new charities, but that will probably happen after I finish university, when my schedule will free up.

**APPENDIX 1**

**APPENDIX 2**

**APPENDIX 3**