Best practices: introduction

Below you will find the course description for the course during which the exemplary reports (best practices) available on the website accompanying *Doing In-Company Research Projects* were written.

Project: business research

Course description

This is a 3 credits (ECTS) research skills course, offered in the third semester of International-al Business and Management Studies. The course aims to prepare students for doing their in-company research project during the work placement, which will take place in their fifth semester. It does so by having the student work on a small, individual research assignment for a real company. The student acts as management advisor. The student chooses a company him-self. This could be his parents' company, but also a restaurant or fitness center that he works for on the side.

Together with the owner or manager of the company (the 'client'), the student will define a business problem. The student then designs and executes the research project and reports on each step in written form. At regular intervals, the teacher uses the report to assess the stu-dent's ability to do a business research project.

Specifics

The course consists of approximately 20 hours in class (input, short exercises) and 65 project hours (the student designing and executing his research project). Most of the in-class exercises involve the student's own project. The student receives the following instructions. The original page limitations for reporting are shown on the right.

Project activity		Pages
1	Define 1 business problem. Include problem question.	

2	Specify project aim:
	  I Specify primary deliverable.
	  II Specify common elements.
		1

3	Specify research approach: I Review project aim to identify 2 or 3 information gaps.	

4	Formulate each information gap as a research question.
	  I Split 1 of the research questions into 2 sub-questions.
	  II Per research question: state relation to project aim.
		1

5	Review your research approach. Consider which research (sub)question may benefit from a *model*. Consider the question. Then search for a model that helps answering that question.	

6	Review your research questions. For each (sub)question:
	  I Select an appropriate data collection method.
	  II Check need for an *instrument* for data collection. Check need for *sampling* method.
	  III Check for need of data analysis method. Check need for *statistical* data analysis method.
		1

7	Select one research question. Start up each research activity (process, data, source). Collect data. Present data in overview.	2
8	Finalise each research activity: analyse data, interpret, conclude. Do the same for all research (sub)questions.	
9	*List* the interim conclusions from your main research. *Relate* them to get the bigger picture.	1
10	Recommend: I Review problem, project aim, overall conclusion. II Develop your advice.	1
11	Critically appraise: I *Review* project. State 2 limitations. For each limitation, state *effect*. Then state how effect was minimized. II State remaining value of the project.	1

Some examples are given here of projects that we consider 'good practices' in the light of this third year research project. All reports involve real companies. All of them involve real business problems. The reports have been adjusted in places to increase readability. Names and locations are fictional.