

Helpful hints for work placement

If your work placement requires that you do an in-company research project, then the following hints may be useful.

- 1 Inform the company about the precise nature of your assignment *before* signing the contract. Inform them in advance that you will need to do a *research project*. Get them to confirm which empirical data is specifically available to you. Ask them to confirm which data the company intends to reveal.
- 2 Start early. Preferably before arrival at the company. Familiarize yourself with the available online databases. See if there is literature that may support your project. Contact former work placement students for helpful hints about the company and about getting started.
- 3 Consider *why* you are there. Actively search for what needs to be solved. Since you are a business student, you will be expected to approach the problem from a *business* perspective. Since you are an outsider to the organization, you will be expected to take a *critical* view.
- 4 Expect the project to change in the first few weeks. It often does. Such situations test your ability to effectively (re)design your research project. Inform your university supervisor in advance of any changes in the focus or scope of your project. Ask your university supervisor whether the adjusted project still lives up to the requirements of your university.
- 5 Your company supervisor is often very busy. Arrange regular meetings. (Say once a week.) In case you have no questions, use these meetings to inform your company supervisor about your progress. Also use these meetings to check whether your plans and decisions are in line with the project.
- 6 Reporting follows research. First design your research. Then structure your reporting accordingly. Refrain from setting up a table of contents at the start. This will come later.
- 7 Stick to your research design. Your research questions provide a structure for your research activities. Simply follow that structure.
- 8 Consider when to contact your university supervisor. If his or her role is not clear to you at the start, *ask*. University supervisors typically have a budget of hours for supporting you during your project. Consider how to use their support wisely.
- 9 Always prepare an agenda before contacting your university supervisor. Formulate specific questions you have in advance. In case you run into prob-

lems, think of possible solutions first. Then present these to your university supervisor to learn his or her reaction.

- 10 Expect limitations to your research process. Each research project has some. Discuss any limitations at an early stage with your client and your university supervisor. Actively propose solutions.
- 11 Put aside any 'nice to know' facts and findings that are outside the scope of your project. Such facts and findings are distracting and will confuse the assessor.
- 12 As you are not operating in a world with perfect information, you have to make assumptions regarding your work. Any assumption made by you should be critically reflected on so you can defend your approach. The limitations of these assumptions should come back in your critical appraisal.