

## **MSc Strategic Marketing and Consulting / Communications**

### **Consultancy Projects**

#### ***Obtain access to a valuable research and project resource***

##### **The Student Resource**

The students concerned are studying either for an [MSc in Strategic Marketing and Consulting](#) or an [MSc in Marketing Communications](#). All of our students have a good quality first degree which incorporates Marketing, and/or they have relevant Marketing experience. The age range is 22 upwards. The student group includes students from many different countries – offering the potential for companies to research markets way beyond the UK and European context.

The students are being trained in the science of marketing research, and will be able to offer a sound knowledge of marketing, research techniques and the principles of consultancy. They are being taught project management skills, and will be briefed on etiquette for business consultancy assignments. Examples of the type of project that can be undertaken include:

- Investigating the size and structure of markets (either UK or overseas).
- Consumer attitudes towards products, services, brands or organisations.
- Competitor analysis – understanding strategies, markets and performance.
- New market potential – exploring the business potential for new product or service ideas.
- Evaluating a client's on-line or off-line marketing strategy, relative to competitors and/or relative to benchmark organisations in other sectors.
- Identifying and planning marketing communication campaigns – identifying appropriate media, targets, message and timing.
- Researching best practice or case study examples of company strategies in particular market sectors.

##### **Project Timings**

Two types of project opportunity are available:

- **Group Project:** These projects begin in early November and will be completed by March, and are undertaken by a group of 6-8 students.
- **Individual Projects:** These projects begin in May and will be completed by September, and are undertaken by an individual student.

**Whilst companies are encouraged to contact the School year-round with project ideas, the optimum time to begin exploration for summer projects is January – March.**

## What is delivered by the Student or Student Group?

- **A research proposal:** Following receipt of the client's brief, the student or student group will produce a research proposal that will explain their understanding of the project requirements and will set out a plan of action to complete the research. This plan will include objectives, proposed method, timing and costs. The proposal will be subject to discussion and negotiation but we will require the client's approval of the proposal and costs before the students fully commence work.
- **A quality project:** This means a project that addresses the client's brief and provides useful marketing information to help inform marketing decisions. The project will be supervised by a member of Business School faculty (or an approved external mentor) to ensure the research methods and data sources being used are appropriate and are being executed in a professional and objective way.
- **Output:** A copy of the student dissertation, a summary report and/ or a presentation, depending on the client's requirements.
- **Conduct:** The project will be undertaken with due regard for the code of conduct recommended by professional marketing research agencies, and students will be required to complete an ethics checklist as part of the proposal. This latter checklist will ensure that the rights of potential respondents are respected in terms of confidentiality and anonymity.
- **Confidentiality:** All information collected by students in the course of the project, and the final report to the company itself, will be treated in complete confidence and will not be disclosed to third parties or published. We require the students, academics and company to sign a non-disclosure agreement. The accompanying dissertation will need to be read and assessed by selected Business Academics and it will be put through a secure electronic plagiarism check; beyond this, the content will not be disclosed.
- **Project Management:** The project will be supervised by a member of Business School faculty (or nominee) and the Projects Consultant who brokers the project with you will continue to remain onboard to assist where necessary. The latter individual will keep in touch with the client to ensure that expectations are being met and will handle any difficulties in relationships or student progress should they arise.

## What is Required from the Client?

- **A Brief:** We require a very clear brief as to the scope and depth of the research required. This brief should explain the background to the research problem, the key questions that the organisation is seeking answers for, and a statement as to how the client would like the answers reported (report, presentation etc).
- **Time:** The students will need to engage with the client during the research process. This is likely to include meetings at the start of the project (to confirm and explain the brief and requirements), during the project (to provide further information or to obtain feedback from the students on progress) and at the end of the project (to receive the students' formal presentation on results).

- **Project Contact:** We will ask the client organisation to provide a contact person with whom the student(s) can liaise by email between project meetings and who will also help facilitate the collection of any internal company information the students require as part of their project.
- **Resources:** As an absolute minimum we will expect the client to cover all direct expenses incurred by the students in completion of their research, so that they are not 'out-of-pocket'. This will include expenses for travel, subsistence, photocopying, the purchase of any research reports required and so on. As part of the project process, students will develop a formal 'proposal' which will include an estimate of costs. All project costs will be agreed with the client before they are incurred. Clients settle the costs directly with the students (against receipts). In some cases the client opts to pay a discretionary fee to the student upon completion in recognition of the work delivered.
- **Supporting Information:** We will ask the client to provide any necessary background information or briefings on their organisation, products and markets to help ensure the students get off to a productive start.

### **The Student-Client Relationship**

We would ask the client organisation to appreciate that the students are undertaking an educational course and that the principal reason we are offering these project resources is to provide opportunities for students to 'learn by doing'. Working with students is not without its challenges and, whilst on the vast majority of occasions clients are delighted with the projects completed, on rare occasions we can encounter difficulties. A student may drop out of the course for financial reasons, or a disagreement within a project group can slow progress down. We will, of course, be working very closely with the students to minimise the risk of non-completion and to maximise the quality of the work delivered. Should any difficulties arise, however, we will ensure the client is kept informed and we will discuss and agree with the client how best to conclude the project to their satisfaction.

Should a problem arise for the client that could possibly stand in the way of the student's completion of the project, such as the assigned member of staff leaving, we ask that the client keeps us informed so that we can manage the student's expectations and also put in place a process to ensure student learning and assessment is not affected.

For further information please contact:

Mark Foster  
Senior Teaching Fellow  
Tel +44 (0) 121 414 7364  
email [m.foster.1@bham.ac.uk](mailto:m.foster.1@bham.ac.uk)