

Postgraduate Dissertation Consultancy / Research Projects

Commonly Asked Questions

The postgraduate dissertation consultancy / research projects are an initiative of Birmingham Business School to give our MSc and MBA students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in companies based in the UK and Overseas during their degree. It is expected that these students will use their business experience, their language and cultural skills and their knowledge of their home market to provide a valuable input to the client company. To help in deciding whether one or more projects might be advantageous to your company, the sections below provide answers to the most commonly asked questions:

1. When do the projects run and for how long?

Most projects are of six to twelve weeks' duration to be undertaken from June to September each year. Ideally, companies need to contact Birmingham Business School between January and March to propose projects.

2. What can you tell us about the students?

Our MSc students hail from the UK and across the globe. They are gifted and driven individuals who have already identified their career path and are looking to make their mark. They offer recruiters added commitment, knowledge and focus in their chosen specialism, such as strategic marketing, HRM or communications. Many speak additional languages and offer knowledge and experience of overseas economies.

Our MBA students are professionals in their own right, joining the programme with a minimum of five years' professional experience. They range from qualified Chartered Accountants, Marketing professionals, HRM professionals, to qualified Engineers and even Medical practitioners. The MBA adds a new layer to their professional background, instilling a thorough knowledge of essential management skills and enhancing their strategic and analytical ability, making them a highly sought after resource to recruiters.

3. Does it matter which programme we pitch our project to?

Probably not. If you prepare a project proposal, we can usually identify which student group is best placed to tackle it. We will always be looking to provide you with the best student available to do the project, therefore we will often promote projects across different programmes to find the most suitable student.

4. Are the projects suitable for companies of all sectors and sizes?

Yes. Due to the diverse nature of our programmes and the range of students, we can usually match individual student expertise and interests to any function and sector. Multinationals and SMEs, businesses, private equity firms and not-for profit organisations are all encouraged to apply.

5. Would the company be allowed to select the student it wanted?

Yes. Based upon the nature of the project, and how many students express an interest, Birmingham Business School will offer up a short list of potential candidates. The client company would be welcome to interview one or more of those candidates and to select the one they like best.

6. What type of projects are most suitable?

The projects are as varied as the students undertaking them and the companies commissioning them. They can be in Marketing, Strategy, Operations, IT, HRM or any other business discipline. Examples of past projects can be accessed [here](#) although they are merely illustrative and should not be considered as constraints on future projects.

7. Will the student work on site 5 days a week for the duration of the project?

That depends on two things: The preference of the company and the nature of the project assignment. If the project demands a lot of secondary data research e.g., accessing business/economic databases and other research tools, then that would probably be best done at the University, where we have excellent access facilities. Equally, the project may be more focussed on collecting data from within the company or associated clients, in which case it may well be beneficial for the student to be spending a significant proportion of their time in the company.

It is really up to the client company to determine with the student how much time should be spent on the company's premises.

8. Is there a cost to the Company?

This is dependant on the nature of the project and is negotiated accordingly.

In all cases out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the student must be covered by the company. This includes travel, phone calls, photocopying, research / report purchases etc. Often, there is no further charge. In these instances, it is not unusual for the company to pay a discretionary bonus to the student at the end of the project based on outcome.

On occasions where the student is required to carry out work tasks at the company, take on regular hours over the summer, or is bringing significant expertise, as a result of their own professional background, then it is likely that appropriate remuneration will need to be negotiated accordingly.

9. Will the project findings be confidential?

Absolutely, all information collected by students in the course of the project, and the final report itself, will be treated in complete confidence and will not be disclosed to third parties or published. Indeed, we will ask the students to sign a non-disclosure agreement. The report will need to be read and assessed by Business School academic staff but, beyond this, the content will not be disclosed.

11. What is required of the client company in terms of support?

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, or the work criteria, the key questions that the organisation is seeking answers for, and clearly defined deliverables, e.g., how the client would like the answers reported (report length, 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).

Feedback: We will ask the client organisation to provide feedback on the student's performance. In some cases this will be part of the student's formal assessment.

Project Contact: We will ask the client organisation to provide a contact person with whom the student can liaise by email between project meetings and who will also help facilitate the collection of any internal company information the student requires 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. 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 should settle the costs directly with the students (against receipts).

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.

12. What's next?

If you should like to propose a project or require further information, please contact:

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