BUSINESS RESEARCH PROJECT (DISSERTATION)

5S7V0004

DISSERTATION

TBC

*Dear students,*

*This document contains important information about the assessment in this unit, from task and submission information, to marking criteria, feedback, and including guidance and support. Please read carefully.*

**WHAT IS THE ASSESSMENT?**

*This section contains a brief description of the task for the assessment, assessment weighting, word count and associated penalties.*

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| **ASSESSMENT TASK** | Dissertation (15,000 words including research proposal of 1,000 words with a formative role).  The unit offers students two types of research project:   1. **Business Plan: an empirically based research project on a live business plan for your start-up idea. ·** 2. **Case Study - a research project drawing on and critiquing multiple case study secondary research. ·**   Both types of projects the students are expected to gather primary or secondary data, or both. Whatever pathway, the unit will introduce students to the key research methods associated with their path of study. Students will develop a research project proposal outlining their plans. In developing this proposal, students are required to demonstrate critical awareness of relevant research methods, approaches and techniques. |
| ASSESSMENT WEIGHTING: | Dissertation is 100% of unit mark |
| WORD/PAGE COUNT: | 15,000 words |
| WORD/PAGE COUNT PENALTIES |  |

**WHEN IS THE ASSESSMENT?**

*This section includes key submission instructions. Further detailed instructions are included in the next section.*

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| **SUBMISSION DEADLINE** | **BLOCK ASSESSMENT WEEK (details on Moodle)** |
| RETURN OF MARKS & FEEDBACK | 4 WEEKS AFTER DEADLINE |
| UNIT-SPECIFIC GUIDANCE | **The Supervision Process, Milestones and Feedback**  You can expect up to seven hours of supervision. You must allow your supervisor sufficient time to read drafts of your dissertation/business plan (2 weeks standard turnaround time to ensure fairness and consistency across all students under supervision). Your supervisor will provide advice on its validity, feasibility and on methodological issues and key frameworks that may be included within the business plan. Once your research is under way, you should meet with your supervisor periodically to discuss your progress.  Remember it is up to you to be in regular contact with your supervisor, it is unlikely that they will contact you. You must also remember that your supervisor will have commitments, other than supervision, throughout the academic year, and may not always be immediately available. Your supervisor will be happy to arrange appointments at mutually convenient times and explore options for feedback in other ways should you wish (Teams, telephone, email).  It is your responsibility to agree on a number of milestones that refer to draft deadlines. Formative feedback will be provided on the following drafts:   1. Literature Chapter: this entails critically reviewing a wider range of citations in the field with the purpose of arriving at a conceptual framework to underpin the research project. 2. Methodology Chapter: this entails (1) refining data sources,   (2) choosing an appropriate methodology and methods for data collection and analysis.   1. Analysis and interpretation of findings |

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|  | For the business plan It is your responsibility to agree on a number of milestones that refer to draft deadlines. Formative feedback will be provided on the following drafts:   1. Market and industry research and analysis. This entails whether there is a market and industry gap and demand for your idea and products and services. 2. Justification of primary data collection method and interpretation of primary data results. 3. Financial analysis. This section is critical as it should demonstrate that your idea is financially feasible and profitable.   These drafts should be submitted directly to your supervisor on the scheduled dates. Please note that whilst supervisors will read drafts of your work and provide you feedback for improving levels of achievement, **they are not permitted to "pre-mark" your work before actual submission.** |
| MOODLE SUBMISSION GUIDANCE | Please submit your assignment by the submission deadline date.  You can replace/amend your submission multiple times up until the deadline time to check your similarity score. The score will be displayed immediately. After 3 submissions, similarity scores will take 24 hours to display. |
| SUBMISSION FEEDBACK POLICY | Feedforward will be available in online sessions for both elements of assessment, from the teaching team and your dedicated academic  supervisor. Feedback will be via the rubric below and will be available to students within 4 weeks of submission. |
| ETHICAL APPROVAL (ETHOS) | Ethos approval is required for primary data collection. Further information will be provided by your supervisor. |
| EXCEPTIONAL FACTORS | If you cannot submit your assessment by the deadline, please follow the information [**HERE**](https://www.mmu.ac.uk/student-case-management/guidance-for-students/exceptional-factors/) on how to submit an Exceptional Factors claim. |
| PERSONAL LEARNING PLANS | If you have a Personal Learning Plan in place, please contact your department’s Disability Coordinator to arrange a discussion and agree on a possible deadline extension. |
| REASSESSMENT | Information about the reassessment brief, submission arrangements and reassessment support will be provided on Moodle. |

**HOW TO PREPARE AND STRUCTURE YOUR SUBMISSION**

*This section includes the necessary information on how to approach the assessment.*

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| EXPECTATIONS | Please see marking criteria below for our expectations. |
| ASSESSMENT DETAILS | **Assignment Details and Instructions.**  The structure of your dissertation project will in part reflect the project type you have chosen to undertake. Your Academic Supervisor will give specific guidance. However, an indicative structure that you can adapt as necessary is given below:  A Research Project at Master’s level tests the candidate’s ability to produce a reasonably substantial, original, and independent piece of scholarly work. The research project should also demonstrate the candidate’s awareness and understanding of the relevant theories, frameworks, and schools of thought associated with the chosen topic. It should demonstrate the candidate’s ability to identify relevant sources of information and to analyse their value in relation to the topic under investigation.  Some of the more important characteristics that the Examiners will expect to find exhibited in a Project of Masters standard are listed below:   * It should represent a significant piece of scholarly work that would be recognised as such by other scholars researching in the field. * It should be an original piece of work. This need not necessarily be in terms of the topic itself, but might be in terms of the originality of the approach adopted to researching the topic, or in terms of the sources of information used. A case study in an organisation can be original as can a business plan. * The topic of the research project/business plan should be one that is clearly of relevance to the field of study and the author should produce a sound rationale for her/his choice of topic. * The work should demonstrate the student’s ability to apply and integrate the knowledge and understanding assimilated during the taught phase of the course. * The work should demonstrate the student’s awareness of the breadth of the literature in her/his chosen field of study and should demonstrate critical analysis of the relevant literature. |

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|  | * The work should demonstrate the student’s ability to synthesize and analyse the information collected via desk research, empirical study or a combination of the two. * The author should locate the research project in relation to previous research in the area and should show how it adds or differs from the existing body of knowledge. This can include a literature gap if pursuing a case study approach or justification of market gap if pursuing a business plan. * The work should demonstrate the selection and application of appropriate research methodologies to the investigation of the topic. * The work should demonstrate the student’s ability to produce clear and well-argued conclusions based on the data collected, and to expose the limitations of data. * The audience for the work is the Board of Examiners. It should not be addressed to a client or organisation. * The work should be addressed to a ‘general informed reader’ rather than to an expert in the subject and its academic frame of reference.   **Option 1: Start Up Business Plan Research Project:**  You should focus on your own enterprise project that aims to prove the feasibility and demand for its offerings. You will outline the proposed enterprise for which you are to produce a plan. In addition, the overall business context will be discussed, along with key areas that a business plan must possess such as clear long- and short-term business objectives, industry and market analysis, operational development, collection of primary data with analysis and interpretation of results, management and organisational structure, and financial analysis and projections. To complete the sections listed, it is expected that you will be collecting data to inform the Business Plan by conducting your own fieldwork (primary data). In addition, you may also use some secondary sources (company data collected and summarized by others) to enhance the Business Plan. You will then choose appropriate methods for analysing the data you have collected (quantitative or qualitative). Your primary data analysis and findings and secondary data will then help you develop the Business Plan and its sections appropriately to defend its feasibility.  The assessment consists of 1 part - Business Plan Research Project – 15,000 words (100%).  You will submit a business plan proposal of 1,000 words to your supervisor via the Moodle page, to check the proposal’s structure and feasibility. The |

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|  | proposal should be submitted to your designated supervisor who will be allocated to you.  **Recommended Business Plan Structure**  The business plan includes the analyses needed to gain enough relevant information to create a viable business plan for a particular start-up business. The plan must be informed by the academic and empirical research undertaken in each section of the business plan. The structure of the business plan should include the primary sections as listed below:  **Executive Summary (approx. 500 words) –** This section should provide a summary of all the main points of the report. It should restate the purpose of the proposal and highlight the key areas and findings of the report. It should describe key results and recommendations that stem from the plan.  **Business Concept and Objectives (10%) (approx. 1000 words) –** This section should clearly define the idea for the business and clearly outline and contextualise the product/s and service/s the business will seek to provide. It should also provide clarity on how the concept will operate and where it will operate. The section should contain both short- and long-term objectives for the business.  **Industry and market Analysis (20%) (approx. 3500 words) –** The section should provide an in-depth analysis of both the macro and micro industry that the firm will seek to operate within. It is expected that the student will make use of empirical and academic data to support and evidence the industry analysis. Further, the student is expected to apply key frameworks to the section such as a Porters Five Forces and a PESTLE analysis. It would be expected that the student is also able to provide a competitor analysis that assesses the strengths and weaknesses of industry rivals that you will be competing against.  The market analysis section should provide an in-depth analysis of both the macro and micro markets that the firm will seek to operate within. It is expected that the student will make use of empirical and academic data to support and evidence the market analysis. Further, the student is expected to outline the target market size, growth and projections, along with a clear justification that supports the target market segment. It is important that the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the market and its behaviour.  **Primary Data Collection, Analysis and interpretation (20%) (approx. 3500 words) -** This chapter presents your research plan. This includes a reference to your ‘measurable concepts or research variables, a choice of |

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|  | method(s) for data collection, a rationale for the implementation of the method, how the gathering of raw data was operationalized, and a choice of method(s) for data analysis. This chapter should describe and justify the choice of methodology and methods adopted for the plan, exposing any potential weaknesses. You should also characterize your data source, your sampling technique, the sample size, and the rate of response (if applicable). You should critically analyse your data, drawing attention to the issues and factors that have emerged as a result of your research. This chapter presents the application of your chosen methods or techniques to your raw data in order to generate data summaries and findings. You should interpret the data to expose and defend the demand for your idea, products, and services.  **Market Entry Strategy and Positioning (15%) (approx. 2000 words)** – This section should provide an in-depth analysis of the pricing, placement, product and promotional strategies that will be used for the enterprise’s products and services. It should provide a clear strategical outline for how the firm will be competitive when considering the 4 P’s. The student would be expected to demonstrate a positioning strategy such as cost leadership, cost focus, differentiation, differentiation focus, or a hybrid approach. This must be justified and evidenced as feasible with the use of empirical data to support.  **Management and Organisational Structure (15%) (approx. 2000 words) –** This section should provide an in-depth analysis that assesses and justifies the business and management structure. It should assess the proposed legal structure of the enterprise and clearly justify and defend the proposed legal structure of the firm. It would be expected that the student justifies the management structure that will be applied to the firm.  **Financial Analysis and Projections (15%) (approx. 2500 words) –** This section should provide an in-depth analysis that focuses on the financial feasibility of the business. It should provide a working cashflow forecast, forecasted profit and loss account and projected statement of financial position. In addition to this, a breakeven analysis should be provided, along with a sensitivity analysis that provides key ratios for the firm to be financially successful.  **\*(5%) awarded for referencing quality, structure and grammar\*** |

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|  | **Option 2: Case Study Research Project Thesis:** The thesis will consist of six chapters. 15,000 words in total (100%). The goal of this option is to conduct empirical research, using a single case study, or several case studies to explore an existing firm’s/firms’ business plans or a related topic. This includes a theoretical engagement with academic research.  You can work within a single organisation or within multiple organisations when conducting your Masters research project. An interesting approach, for example, involves making a comparison of the practices prevalent in a number of organisations. The aim is to establish how the practices are similar and how they differ with a view to making recommendations about which (or which combinations) is most appropriate in different situations. Some Projects are conducted at the ‘employee’ or ‘individual level’, or ‘organisational level’ where a number of individuals who work across a range of organisations are surveyed/interviewed. This is a mix of primary and secondary data. It will usually be appropriate to focus on organisations which have something in common so that the comparisons you make between them have some purpose (for example, looking at small independent clothing retailers). However, your analysis may also benefit from different organisations, in different sectors (for example, small independent clothing retailers in comparison to small independent food manufacturers).  You will submit a research proposal of 1,000 words to your supervisor via the Moodle page, to check the proposal’s structure and feasibility. The proposal should be submitted to your designated supervisor who will be allocated to you.  The assessment consists of 1 part (1) Case study Research Project – 15,000 words (100%).  **Case Study Research Project Thesis Structure:** The thesis will consist of six chapters. 15,000 words in total (100%).  **(1) Abstract** (approx. 500 words) (0%)  This is a synopsis of your work. This synopsis should describe concisely and clearly the main aspects of your research project. That is context, research question, research design, data analysis, the principal findings and implications for management (A sharp synopsis suggests to the reader that the work is focused and that you have a good grasp of your accomplished work). |

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|  | **Chapter 1 – Introduction** (approx. 1000 words) (10%)  This chapter provides the underlying rationale and purpose of the research study. It should set out the cases, whilst demonstrating to the reader the relevance of academic research in this context. In this chapter you are expected to describe aims and objectives for the investigation, and to identify specific research questions, which may take the form of hypotheses that will be tested within the study.  **Chapter 2 – Literature Review** (approx. 3500 words) (30%)  This chapter provides a critical review of the literature related to the problem area you are studying. This means that you should demonstrate your ability to identify and to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the theories or schools of thought relevant to your topic.  You should also demonstrate your ability to identify how your study may contribute to the existing body of knowledge.  This chapter should close with the articulation of a conceptual framework, that is, a comprehensive synthesis of the analytical models and concepts which you used to answer your research questions. This framework consists of patterns of concepts and their interconnections. In other words, it explains how all the concepts fit together and how they relate one to another. The conceptual framework informs your data collection, in determining what ‘measurable’ concepts may constitute empirical evidence, and in determining the nature of the data to be collected.  **Chapter 3 – Research Design** (approx. 2000 words) (10%)  This chapter presents your research plan. This includes a reference to your ‘measurable concepts’ or research variables, a choice of method(s) for data collection, a rationale for the implementation of the method, how the gathering of raw data was operationalised, and a choice of method(s) for data analysis. This chapter should describe and justify the choice of methodology and methods adopted for the work, exposing any potential weaknesses. You should also characterize your data source, your sampling technique, the sample size, and the rate of response (if applicable).  **Chapter 4 – Findings; Data Analysis** (approx. 3500 words) (20%)  This chapter presents the application of your chosen methods or techniques to your raw data in order to generate data summaries and findings. Examples of such techniques are Chi Square test (Quantitative Research) and Content Analysis (Qualitative Research). The outcome of your analysis provides the evidence that supports the answer to your research questions. This section of the research project is about finding things out by research,  rather than discovering “ready-made” results reported in the literature. The findings of the research undertaken should be presented in a clear and |

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|  | unambiguous manner. Diagrams, charts and tables should be employed, where appropriate, to aid the reader in understanding these findings.  **Chapter 5 – Discussion; Interpreting the Research Material** (approx. 3000 words) (20%)  This chapter should focus on drawing together the findings that have emerged from your analysis and relating them to other previous studies identified earlier in the literature review. In this chapter you are expected to show your capacity for reflective and logical argument. This might include validating specific hypotheses advanced at the outset of the study or summarising the degree to which particular assumptions advanced in the literature appear to be borne out or contradicted by the findings. The interpretation of the research material reflects your understanding of and your insights into the processes and dynamics of the topic you have researched.  **Chapter 6 – Conclusions** (approx. 500 words) (5%) – Structure and Presentation (5%)  Your final conclusions should relate back to the aim and objectives of the study stated at the Introduction. These should be strategic conclusions. They summarise your judgement on the implications of the research outcomes to management and professional practice, what options should be taken or what should be done in response to your strategic questions. The strategic conclusions should be based on the new insight provided by your research findings.  **Appendix 1** is your proposal document (1,000 words) . |
| HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE ASSESSMENT |  |
| GROUP WORK GUIDELINES | *If applicable* |
| FORMATIVE FEEDBACK & FEED-FORWARD | Throughout the weekly activities detailed in the unit handbook you will have the opportunity to receive formative feedback and feed- forward on your work and ideas. This will be personalized and focused on your improvement in this unit, and as a steppingstone to your other units in the programme. |
| REFERENCING | The only acceptable referencing style for this assessment is MMU Harvard. A Harvard referencing handbook can be found on the |

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|  | library page of the website, following the link: <http://libguides.mmu.ac.uk/refguide/mmuharvard>  References are the items you have read and specifically referred to (or cited) in your assessment submission. Do not include a list of everything you read in preparation for writing your submission if you have not referred specifically. Attempt to summarize in your own words another person’s work, theories or ideas and then cite your sources. Use quotes to show the difference between the actual words of the writer and your own words, and always acknowledge your sources in references.  Using references in reports and essays is the way to avoid accusations of academic misconduct, specifically plagiarism. |
| ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT | Academic Misconduct is action that could give you an unfair advantage in coursework, exams, or any other assessed work. This may include plagiarism, self-plagiarism, cheating, collusion, falsification of data, contract cheating, breaching [Exam Regulations](https://www.mmu.ac.uk/student-case-management/guidance-for-students/academic-misconduct/exam-regulations/), or non-compliance with ethics procedures.  If your work is submitted and it is discovered that you have broken the regulations, the piece of work will be awarded zero marks or will be significantly penalised. Your awarding body will decide which penalty is appropriate. Please see further guidance on [Academic](https://moodle.mmu.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=98810&section=201) [Integrity](https://moodle.mmu.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=98810&section=201) and [Academic Misconduct Regulations](https://www.mmu.ac.uk/student-case-management/guidance-for-students/academic-misconduct/). |

**MARKING CRITERIA**

*This section includes the marking criteria for this assessment.*

**STEP MARKING:** In line with University guidance, this unit uses step marking. Step marking means using a restricted number of marks within the range of 0-100%. All marks would end in 2, 5 or 8 (e.g. 52%, 68%, 75%). The use of step marking shows the extent to which the piece of work meets a specific criterion within a grade range (e.g.

50-59%).

# Please see the marking criteria grid or rubric below.

**DISSERTATION MARKING MATRIX (OPTION 1) – BUSINESS PLAN RESEARCH PROJECT (100%)**

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|  | Fail | Marginal Fail | Pass | Pass | Pass | Pass |
|  | 0 - 42% | 45-48% | 52-58% | 62-68% | 72-85% | 88-100% |
| Award 2,5,8 | Award 2,5,8 | Award 2,5,8 | Award 2,5,8 | Award 2,5,8 (eg | Award 2,5,8 or 100 |
| (eg 38) | (eg 42) | (eg 55) | (eg 68) | 78) | (eg 88) |
| **Business Concept and** | The Business | The Business | The Business | The Business | The Business Plan | The Business Plan |
| **Introduction (10%)** | Plan does not | Plan only | Plan sufficiently | Plan | unambiguous | unequivocally and |
|  | support an idea | partially | supports an | adequately | supports an idea | insightfully supports |
|  | for a business | supports an | idea for a | supports an | for a business and | an idea for a |
|  | and fails to | idea for a | business and | idea for a | unambiguous | business and |
|  | meet the | business and | sufficiently | business and | meets the | unequivocally and |
|  | objectives of | only partially | meets the | adequately | objectives of the | insightfully meets |
|  | the plan’s | meets the | objectives of | meets the | plan’s identity. | the objectives of the |
|  | identity. | objectives of | the plan’s | objectives of |  | plan’s identity. |
|  |  | the plan’s | identity. | the plan’s |  |  |
|  |  | identity. |  | identity. |  |  |
| **Industry and Market** | No/very limited | Limited | Range of | Presented and | Excellent range of | Outstanding range |
| **Analysis (20%)** | relevant data | reference to | relevant data | written very | relevant and up to | of relevant and up to |
|  | provided on | relevant data. | presented on | well, with a | date data provided | date data provided |
|  | your allocated | Limited | allocated | very good | with excellent level | with excellent level |
|  | business | reference to | business | range of | of analysis. Fully | of analysis. Fully |
|  | market and | allocated | industry and | supporting, | identifies and | identifies and |
|  | industry. | business | market. Range | relevant data | analyses the | analyses the |
|  | No/limited | market and | of factors | sources. Good | characteristics of | characteristics of the |
|  | discussion of | industry. Some | identified and | level of | the industry and | industry and market. |
|  | key trends, | discussion of | analysed in | analysis | market. Very strong | Very strong analysis |
|  | innovations | key trends, | terms of key | provided with | analysis of key | of key trends and |
|  | and how | innovations | trends and | clear reference | trends and | innovations and of |
|  | easy/difficult it | and how | innovations | to allocated | innovations and of | how easy/difficult it |
|  | will be to | easy/difficult it | and an | business. Fully | how easy/difficult it | will be to compete in |
|  | compete in this | will be to | assessment of | addresses key | will be to compete | this industry. The |
|  | industry. No | compete in | how | trends, | in this industry. | section clearly |
|  | models applied | allocated | easy/difficult it | innovations | Written and | justifies a market |
|  | to help | industry but | will be to | and how | presented to an | and industry gap |
|  | evaluate | limited | compete in the | easy/difficult it | outstanding level. | and is written and |
|  | market and | analysis. | industry. | would be to | Models are applied | presented to an |
|  | industry. | Models | Analysis could | compete in this | and performed to | outstanding level. |
|  | Overall, does | applied, but | be stronger. | industry. | an excellent | Models applied and |
|  | not show the | poorly. | Models are | Models are | standard. | performed to an |
|  | expected level |  | applied to help | applied, |  | outstanding |
|  | of research and |  | analyse market | performed |  | standard. |
|  | analysis. |  | and industry to | correctly and |  |  |
|  |  |  | a satisfactory | synthesised to |  |  |
|  |  |  | standard. | offer a valued |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | outcome. |  |  |

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| **Market Entry Strategy and Positioning (15%)** | No/very limited relevant data provided that defines and evidences your market entry strategy and positioning.  No/limited discussion of key trends, innovations and how easy/difficult it will be to compete in the chosen market position.  Overall, it does not show the expected level of research and analysis. | Limited reference to relevant data. Limited reference to allocated business market entry strategy and positioning. Some discussion of key trends, innovations and how easy/difficult it will be to compete in allocated position, along with justification of market entry strategy, but overall limited analysis. | Range of relevant data presented on allocated on the market entry strategy and positioning. Range of factors identified and analysed in terms of key trends and innovations and an assessment of how viable the market entry strategy is, along with the positioning.  Analysis could be stronger. | Presented and written very well, with a very good range of supporting, relevant data sources. Good level of analysis provided with clear reference to allocated business. Fully addresses the selected market entry strategy and positioning and provides a good level of supporting evidence to justify the feasibility of such approaches. | Excellent range of relevant and up to date data provided with excellent level of analysis. Fully identifies and analyses the market entry strategy and positioning with a clear defence towards the choice of approach. Very strong analysis of key trends and of how easy/difficult it will be to compete in this market position. Written and presented to an outstanding level. | Outstanding range of relevant and up to date data provided with excellent level of analysis. Fully identifies and analyses the market entry strategy and positioning. Very strong analysis of key trends and of how easy/difficult it will be to compete in this market position. The section clearly justifies a market positioning gap and is written and presented to an outstanding level. |
| **Research Data Collection, Data Analysis and Interpretation (20%)** | Data collection and analysis techniques were very poorly applied. Analysis of findings of data is detached from the identified research objectives. | Data collection and analysis techniques were partially applied. The analysis of findings of data addresses some of the research objectives but there is room for improvement in the integration of data. | Data collection and analysis techniques were sufficiently applied. The analysis of findings of data sufficiently addresses the research objectives. | Data collection and analysis techniques were clearly applied. The analysis of findings of data adequately addresses the research objectives. | Data collection and analysis techniques were unambiguously applied, exploring several dimensions of the body of evidence. A thorough analysis of findings of data addresses fully the research objectives. | There is exceptional degree of application when concerning the data collection techniques. An extensive and relevant approach to data analysis which is evidenced. Data analysis techniques were well applied, exploring several dimensions of the body of evidence and fully integrating various data sources. An unequivocal and insightful analysis of findings of data addresses in depth all the research  objectives. |

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| **Management and Organisational Structure (15%)** | No/very limited relevant data provided that defines and evidences your approach to management and organisational structure.  Overall, it does not show the expected level of research and analysis. | Limited reference to allocated management and organisational structure. The application of structure is not justified and does not support the business and its objectives. overall limited analysis. | Range of relevant data presented on the management and organisational structure of the business. A range of factors identified and analysed that consider the firm and its objectives.  Analysis could be stronger. | Presented and written very well, with a very good range of supporting, relevant data sources that support the suitability and feasibility of the selected management and organisational structure.  A good level of analysis provided with clear reference to allocated business. A good level of supporting evidence to justify the feasibility of such approaches. | Excellent range of relevant and up to date data provided with excellent level of analysis that fully justifies the feasibility and suitability of the selected management and organisational structure.  An excellent level of analysis provided with clear reference to allocated business. An Excellent level of supporting evidence to justify the feasibility of such approaches. | Outstanding range of relevant and up to date data provided with an outstanding level of analysis that fully justifies the feasibility and suitability of the selected management and organisational structure.  An outstanding level of analysis provided with clear reference to allocated business. An Excellent level of supporting evidence to justify the feasibility of such approaches. |
| **Financial Analysis and Projections (15%)** | No/very limited relevant data provided on the financial feasibility of the business. No cashflow forecast, profit and loss account or balance sheet is provided with no/limited discussion of financial forecasting of figures used within the section.  Overall, does not show the expected level of research and analysis. | Limited relevant data provided on the financial feasibility of the business.  Cashflow forecast, profit and loss account and balance sheet are provided but with limited discussion of financial forecasting.  Little justification of figures used within the section.  Overall, limited analysis and application to business plan. | Range of relevant data presented on the financial feasibility of the business.  Cashflow forecast, profit and loss account and balance sheet are provided and satisfies the feasibility of the live business project.  Discussion of financial forecasting is supported with evidence and justification.  Overall, analysis and application are performed to a satisfactory standard. | Presented and written very well with a range of relevant data presented on the financial feasibility of the business.  Cashflow forecast, profit and loss account and balance sheet are provided fully addresses the feasibility of the live business project.  Discussion of financial forecasting is fully supported with evidence and justification.  Overall, analysis and application are performed to a very good standard. | Presented and written to an excellent standard with a range of excellent and relevant data presented on the financial feasibility of the business. Cashflow forecast, profit and loss account and balance sheet are provided and fully addresses the feasibility of the live business project to an excellent standard.  Discussion of financial forecasting is fully supported with evidence and justification.  Overall, analysis and application are performed to an excellent standard. | Presented and written to an outstanding standard with a range of outstanding and relevant data presented on the financial feasibility of the business.  Cashflow forecast, profit and loss account and balance sheet are provided and fully addresses the feasibility of the live business project to an Outstanding standard.  Discussion of financial forecasting is fully supported with evidence and justification. Overall, analysis and application are performed to an outstanding standard. |

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| **Structure, Presentation and referencing (5%)** | The structure / presentation is inadequate/ins ufficient. | The structure / presentation is partially adequate. | The structure / presentation is sufficiently grasped. | The structure / presentation is attained to an appreciative level / some area. | The structure / presentation is attained to a high quality in all aspects. | The structure / presentation (which includes MMU Harvard referencing) is exceptional in all areas, exceptionally  well presented. |
| **Specific and overall comments**  **Plus research proposal (1,000 words)** |  | | | | | |

**CASE STUDY RESEARCH PROJECT MARKING MATRIX (OPTION 2) (100%)**

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|  | Fail | Marginal Fail | Pass | Pass | Pass | Pass |
|  | 0 - 42% | 45-48% | 52-58% | 62-68% | 72-85% | 88-100% |
| Award 2,5,8 | Award 2,5,8 | Award 2,5,8 | Award 2,5,8 | Award 2,5,8 | Award 2,5,8 or 100 (eg |
| (eg 38) | (eg 42) | (eg 55) | (eg 68) | (eg 78) | 88) |
| 0. Abstract: Approx 500 | The abstract | The abstract is | The abstract is | The abstract is | The abstract is | The abstract is explicitly |
| words (0%) | fails to outline | questionable. | appropriate. | clearly scoped. | unambiguously | scoped and the topic |
|  | the topic. No | Little argument | Sufficient | Clear argument | scoped and the | unequivocally identified |
|  | argument is | is given to the | argument is | is given to the | topic well | and argued. The |
|  | given to the | purpose of this | given to the | purpose of this | identified and | abstract is theoretically |
|  | purpose of this | Research | purpose of this | Research | argued. | grounded. Articulate |
|  | Research | Project/ or only | Research | Project. | Purposeful | argument is given to the |
|  | Project. | partially | Project but |  | argument is | outline of the Research |
|  |  |  | lacks clarity |  | given to the | Project. |
|  |  |  |  |  | outline of this |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | Research |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | Project. |  |
| 1. **INTRODUCTION:** | The context for | The context for | The context for | The context for | The context for | The context for a case |
| Identify the rationale and | a case study is | a case study is | a case study is | a case study is | a case study is | study is ambitious and |
| purpose of the research | not identified | only partially | sufficiently | clearly | unambiguously | unequivocally argued, |
| study. Outline context | leading to no | identified and | identified and | identified and | identified, | persuasive application |
| and the objectives of the | clear research | expressed, but | expressed, | scoped, | scoped and | identified and |
| research that are | objectives. | also lacks | leading to an | leading to the | prioritized, | theoretically grounded. |
| relevant to case study. |  | clarity in some | adequate | identification of | leading to well | The purpose is |
| Approx 1000 words |  | areas, leading | identification of | appropriate | framed | meticulous to iterate the |
| (10%) |  | to an adequate | research | research | research | business scenario that |
|  |  | but somewhat | objectives. | objectives. | objectives. | leads to precisely |
|  |  | loose |  |  |  | framed research |
|  |  | identification of |  |  |  | objectives. |
|  |  | research |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | objectives. |  |  |  |  |
| **2. LITERATURE** | There is an | There is a | There is a | There is an | An extensive | Exceptional degree of |
| **REVIEW:** This chapter | insufficient | sufficient range | sufficient range | adequate | range of | application and critique |
| provides a critical | range of | of literature | of literature | range of | literature is | of concepts with |
| review of the literature | literature | considered, but | considered, | literature | considered. | evidence of breadth and |
| related to the problem | considered. | the analysis | and some | considered. | Excellent | depth of literature |
| area you are | This impairs | and integration | attempt at | Analysis and | analysis and | reviewed and integrated, |
| studying. This means | the analysis | of concepts, | analysis and | integration of | integration of | leading to an |
| that you should | and integration | models and | integration, but | concepts, | concepts, | unequivocally well- |
| demonstrate your ability | of concepts, | theories are | lacking in | models and | models and | grounded underpinning |
| to identify and to | models and | fragmented | critical focus to | theories have | theories with | for this Research |
| analyse the strengths | theories that | and do not | clearly | an adequate | substantial | Project. |
| and weaknesses of the | underpins the | clearly | underpin the | critical focus | critical content. |  |
| theories or schools of | Research | underpin the | Research | which | The review |  |
| thought relevant to your | Project. | Research | Project. | underpins the | clearly |  |
| topic. You should also |  | Project |  | Research | underpins the |  |
| demonstrate your ability |  |  |  | Project. | Research |  |
| to identify how your |  |  |  |  | Project. |  |
| study may contribute to |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| the existing body of |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| knowledge. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Approx 3500 words |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| (30%) |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **3. RESEARCH DESIGN:** This chapter should describe and justify the choice of methodology and methods adopted for the plan, exposing any potential weaknesses. You should also characterize your data source, your sampling technique, the sample size, and the rate of response (if applicable). Approx 2000 words  (10%). | There is no justification for the chosen methodologies and methods for the study. | There is only partial justification for the chosen methodologies and methods for the study. | There is sufficient justification for the chosen methodologies and methods for the study. | There is clear justification for the chosen methodologies and methods for the study. | There is unambiguous justification for the chosen methodologies and methods for the study. Articulately explained and executed. | There is exceptional degree of application, for the chosen methodologies and methods for the study. Articulately explained and executed. |
| **4. FINDINGS / DATA ANALYSIS:** Critically analyze your data, drawing attention to the issues and factors that have emerged as a result of your research. The outcome of your analysis provides the evidence that supports the business idea. Approx 3500 words (20%) | Data analysis techniques were very poorly applied. Findings of data is detached from the identified research objectives. | Data analysis techniques were partially applied. The findings of data addresses some of the research objectives but there is room for improvement in the integration of data. | Data analysis techniques were sufficiently applied. The findings of data sufficiently addresses the research objectives. | Data analysis techniques were clearly applied. The findings of data adequately addresses the research objectives. | Data analysis techniques were unambiguously applied, exploring several dimensions of the body of evidence. A thorough findings of data addresses fully the research objectives. | There is exceptional degree of application, extensive and relevant data analysed which is evidenced. Data analysis techniques were well applied, exploring several dimensions of the body of evidence and fully integrating various data sources. An unequivocal and insightful findings of data addresses in depth all the research  objectives. |
| **5.DISCUSSION/ INTERPRETING THE RESEARCH MATERIAL AND CRITICAL REFLECTION.** This  chapter should focus on drawing together the findings that have emerged from your analysis and relating them to other previous studies identified earlier in the literature review. In this chapter you are expected to show your capacity for reflective and logical argument. Approx 3000 words  (20%) | No discussion of findings or critical reflection on the research project or comparison with the literature.  Interpretation of data is detached from the identified research objectives. | Only partial discussion of findings or critical reflection on the research project or comparison with the literature.  Interpretation of data is partially detached from the identified research objectives. | Sufficient discussion of findings sufficient critical reflection on the research project or comparison with the literature.  Interpretation sufficiently attached to the identified research objectives. | Adequate discussion of findings and adequate critical reflection on the research project or comparison with the literature.  Interpretation adequately attached to the identified research objectives. | There is extensive and relevant discussion on the findings and Unambiguous critical reflection on the business plan process or comparison with the literature. An unambiguous interpretation of data addresses fully the issues and research  objectives. | There is exceptional degree of application, extensive and relevant discussion on the findings and Exceptional degree of application, extensive and relevant critical reflection on the business plan process or comparison with the literature. Exceptional degree of application, extensive and relevant interpretation of data addresses fully the issues and research objectives. |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **6.Conclusions**  (Approx 500 words) 5% | There are no clear implications of the research identified.  There are insufficient research findings. There is no attempt to identify the impact of findings on organization strategy and management practice. | There are only partial implications of the research identified.  There are partial research findings. There is partial attempt to identify the impact of findings on organization strategy and management practice. | There are sufficient implications of the research identified.  There are sufficient research findings. There is sufficient attempt to identify the impact of findings on organization strategy and management practice. | There are adequate implications of the research identified.  There are adequate research findings. There is adequate attempt to identify the impact of findings on organization strategy and management practice. | There are unambiguous implications of the research identified.  There are unambiguous research findings. There is unambiguous attempt to identify the impact of findings on organization strategy and management  practice. | There is an exceptional discussion of the impact of findings on organization strategy and management practice. The discussion, in line with the scope of findings, demonstrates unequivocal and insightful original and creative thinking with a well-argued and convincing vision. |
| 5. Structure & Present (5%) | The structure / presentation is inadequate/ins ufficient | The structure / presentation is partially adequate | The structure / presentation is sufficiently grasped | The structure / presentation is attained to an appreciative level / some areas | The structure / presentation is attained to a high quality in all aspects | The structure / presentation (which includes MMU Harvard referencing) is exceptional in all areas,  exceptionally well presented. |
| **Specific and overall comments**  **Plus research proposal (1,000 words)** |  | | | | | |

**RATIONALE FOR THE ASSESSMENT**

*This section explains how and why this assessment is important to assess your learning in this unit, and how it links to the outcomes of your programme.*

Our expectations in this assessment are linked to the learning outcomes listed below. We teach, practice, and assess these outcomes in the unit. The learning outcomes are linked to your overall programme.

# PROGRAMME LEARNING OUTCOMES

**PROGRAMME: MSc Management**

PLO 23.1 How to systematically and rigorously evaluate the competitive environment that organisations operate within

PLO 23.3 How to be an effective manager and leader within a competitive environment

PLO 23.7 The identification and assessment of key measures of performance, and the factors that impact upon performance

PLO 23.8 Apply critical thinking to practical and theoretical problems. PLO 23. 9 Be effective communicators using a range of media.

PLO 23.10 Demonstrate an awareness of ethical, corporate social responsibility and sustainability issues appropriate to the level of study and the discipline context.

PLO 23.11 Demonstrate professional and commercial/corporate awareness.

# UNIT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. LO 1: Identify the macro and micro organisational contexts for the dissertation and the objectives of the research. This should be in the light of a client’s briefing if applicable.
2. LO2: Critically review and synthesize the relevant literature on the subject area in order to construct a conceptual framework to underpin their research.
3. LO3: Identify the nature of relevant evidence and associated data sources to support their research objectives.
4. LO4: Apply an appropriate methodology for collecting and for analysing primary data with due regard to ethical considerations. Critically discuss the methodology used for secondary data where applicable.
5. LO5: Interpret and present data clearly, integrating data from different sources where applicable and critically discussing their findings.
6. LO6: Appraise the implications of their research outcomes to managerial and professional practice in response to strategic issues.

# Assurance of Learning (AoL)

Assurance of learning (AoL) refers to the systematic processes and assessment plans that demonstrate that learners achieve learning competencies for the programs in which they participate. AoL also includes the processes of identifying competency gaps and designing and implementing changes to the curriculum and learning experience so the learning competencies are met.

**PRSB REQUIREMENTS**

*Not applicable.*

**ASSESSMENT SUPPORT**

*This section provides an overview of opportunities for both unit-level and university level assessment support.*

UNIT LEVEL SUPPORT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **SUPPORT** | Please see supervision arrangements included above. Over the course of the unit, you will receive support from your in-class tutors and your academic supervisors as you work to complete each stage of this dissertation unit. Your tutors and academic supervisors will provide feedforward on your work on an ongoing basis. |

UNIVERSITY-LEVEL SUPPORT

*Includes details of study skills, library workshops and assessment support at university and department level. There is a lot of support and guidance available at the University to help you with your assessments. You can find further information on these services in the unit and programme handbooks.*

*[Undergraduate Assessment Regulations](http://www.mmu.ac.uk/academic/casqe/regulations/assessment-regulations.php)

*Peer Assisted [Learning](https://www.mmu.ac.uk/student-life/teaching-and-learning/study-skills/peer-learning/) The scheme supports students academically whilst also providing social opportunities & the creation of learning communities.

*[Study Skills workshops and Academic and Study Skill tutors](https://www.mmu.ac.uk/student-life/teaching-and-learning/study-skills/)

*[Study Skills Online](https://moodle.mmu.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=525): This area contains supporting information on a variety of topics from learning at university, coursework specific information (e.g. presentations, group work, exams) and general study skills (e.g. time management, reading, writing, problem solving and avoiding plagiarism).

*[MMU Library](http://www.library.mmu.ac.uk/): Search the library database for books, articles, and journals. Assess reference guides.

*[Disability Service](https://www.mmu.ac.uk/student-life/wellbeing/disability/): The Disability Service provides advice, guidance and support to disabled students and those with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

**[MMU Harvard Referencing Guide](http://libguides.mmu.ac.uk/refguide/mmuharvard) [MMU Harvard Referencing on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9sZ_AmkyAXiUmy3Z5Huefezq8nGUUJRm)

**[Counselling, Mental Health and Wellbeing Service](https://www.mmu.ac.uk/student-life/wellbeing/) [Students’ Union Advice Centre](https://www.theunionmmu.org/advice-centre)

**[Student Hub](https://www.mmu.ac.uk/student-life/contact-us/) [Help with Moodle](https://moodle.mmu.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=36)

**ESSENTIAL AND RECOMMENDED READING**

*This includes a list of essential and recommended readings to support you in your assessment preparation.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **ESSENTIAL READING** | * Bell, E., Bryman, A., Harley, B. & Bryman, A. (2019). Business research methods, Fifth edn, Oxford University Press, Oxford. (book) * Bell, J., (2018). Doing Your Research Project: A guide for first-time researchers. McGraw-Hill Education, UK. (book, also 2014 edition ebook) * Burns P. (2014). New venture creation: a framework for new entrepreneurial start-ups, Palgrave-Macmillan: Basingstoke, UK. (book) * Collis, J. and Hussey, R., (2013). Business research: A practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students. Palgrave Macmillan, UK. (ebook) * Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Jackson, P.R., (2012). Management research. Sage, UK. (book) * Jones O., Macpherson A. and Jayawarna D. (2014). Resourcing the start-up business, Routledge: London, UK (ebook) * Kier, A., McMullen, S. & Jeffery S (2018) Entrepreneurial Imaginativeness in New Venture Ideation Academy of Management Journal, Vol 61, No. 6 (ejournal) * Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A.   (2019). Research methods for business students, Eighth edn, Pearson, Boston. (ebook)   * Williams, S. (2019) .The Financial Times Guide to Business Start Up 2019/20: The Most Comprehensive Guide for Entrepreneurs (The FT Guides), FT Publishing International: London (book) * Alice Y. Kolb and David A. Kolb (2005) Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education Academy of Management Learning & Education, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Jun., 2005), pp. 193-212 Published by: Academy of Management Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40214287> * David Coghlan & Mike Pedler (2006) Action learning dissertations: structure, supervision and examination, Action |

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| --- | --- |
|  | Learning: Research and Practice, 3:2, 127-139, DOI: 10.1080/14767330600885797. |
| RECOMMENDED READING | * Brown, R. & Lee, N. (2019). "Strapped for cash? Funding for UK high growth SMEs, Journal of Business Research. Vol.99 (ejournal) * Jesson, J., Matheson, L. & Lacey, F.M. (2011). Doing your literature review: traditional and systematic techniques, SAGE, London. (book) * Joyce, A. & Paquin, R.L. (2016). "The triple layered business model canvas: A tool to design more sustainable business models", Journal of Cleaner Production, vol. 135, pp. 1474-1486. (ejournal) * Leedy, P.D. & Ormrod, J.E. (2015). Practical research: planning and design, Global;Eleventh; edn, Pearson, Boston. (ebook) * Matthews, B. & Ross, L. (2010). Research methods: a practical guide for the social sciences, 1st edn, Pearson Longman, New York, NY. (ebook) * Parnell, J.A. (2018). "Nonmarket and market strategies, strategic uncertainty and strategic   capabilities", Management Research Review, vol. 41, no. 2, pp. 252-274. (ejournal)   * Phelps, R., Fisher, K. & Ellis, A. (2007). Organizing and managing your research: a practical guide for postgraduates, SAGE, London. (ebook) |

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

*Useful information not covered above.*