BUSA90473
Melbourne Business Practicum

SUBJECT GUIDE

July Semester 2015

Prepared by
Sujay Nair
Faculty of Business and Economics
Subject Outline

Introduction

This exciting subject will provide you with a challenging real-life work experience where you will encounter business practices first hand whilst applying your considerable skills to live projects in real organisations.

The Melbourne Business Practicum (MBP) is an intensive subject worth 12.5 credit points that will be held twice each year, during January and July semesters. The highlight of the subject is a work project undertaken in teams while visiting a local company over a two week period.

You will be organised into small teams and assigned to a practicum organisation. The teams will undertake a project to address a current pressing need of the industry partner, the nature of which has been agreed with the course team. The projects will be cross-disciplinary in nature, and will draw upon a range of disciplines from within the Faculty.

Prior to commencing the project, a series of preparatory seminars will conducted in order to provide you with guidance on various approaches, tools and techniques required to perform the tasks required, as well as various reporting formats for communicating the results. During the practicum, in-depth work will be undertaken in identifying the scope, opportunities, constraints and recommendations of the exercise. You will learn to work with unstructured and incomplete information in real business settings, to develop research and networks to support your enquiry, to work successfully in teams, to present your findings and seek and receive constructive feedback in a range of settings. You will also be encouraged to plan, reflect and modify your approaches to improve the outcomes of your efforts in managing the business project.

The teaching team in this subject look forward to working with you to ensure that your experience in this subject is challenging, and at the same time, interesting, enriching and rewarding!

Subject Aims

The overall aim of this subject is to enhance your understanding of the workplace as well as boost your professional career opportunities. The MBP will provide participants with the opportunity to be exposed to different business practices. The participants will:

- Work on an challenging project that will require the integration and application of knowledge and skills;
- Be exposed to local work practices and networks
- Develop their ability to work effectively in a professional setting.

Learning Outcomes

Subject Objectives

On successful completion of this subject, you should be able to:

- Apply theory and practice of graduate-level studies in commerce to resolving real-world business issues.
- Research, analyse, evaluate and propose practical business solutions in a given organisation setting and within tight timelines.
Identify key strategic questions, assess options related to the exercise, communicate progress and check direction with team members, academic mentors and the practicum organisation.

Demonstrate key attributes sought by employers including cross-cultural communication skills, interpersonal skills, time management, commercial acumen, initiative, independent learning and team skills.

**Generic Skills**

In this subject you will have the opportunity to develop important generic skills. These include:

- Verbal communication skills through interaction with staff at the practicum companies, academics and fellow students in completing the assigned tasks.
- Project management skills, including an enhanced capacity for accurate scoping of projects, the development of approaches and timelines to address complex business issues and the execution of the required approaches and tasks within the timelines set.
- Team work, demonstrated by good communication within the group, understanding of skills brought by individual members, organising for achievement and presenting group report.
- Research, problem solving and critical thinking.
- Documentation preparation and presentation skills through assigned tasks and the practicum exercise.
- Interpersonal skills through the practicum exercise and assigned tasks.

**Awareness Issues**

At a broader level, studying this subject will enable you to:

- Expand your horizons: Gain a deeper understanding of the realities of the business world.
- Experience a dynamic and rich professional learning program.
- Enhance your employment options by gaining professional experience.
- Empower yourself - gain first-hand experience to take the lead professionally and academically.

**Subject Structure**

There are main two components to this subject: induction seminars and a group project.

**Induction Seminars**

There will be a compulsory induction comprising a series of preparatory seminars that will be conducted at the University of Melbourne. These seminars will help you to prepare for your work project by seeking to develop important skills and approaches to assist you to complete the tasks required. These seminars will also explore a range of issues relevant to the host industry organisations, including an introduction to the local economic, political and cultural environment.

During the preparatory seminars, you will get the opportunity to meet other students and staff. Teams will be formed and socialised and plans on how to tackle the assigned projects
will be developed. The induction is a crucial part of the MBP, and is compulsory for all students to attend.

**Team Project**

Working in teams, you will be assigned to a company and given a project to complete over a period of two weeks. The companies will provide real business projects and/or problems which they are currently facing. For example, the companies may ask the teams to:

- examine the costs and benefits associated with a new business opportunity for their company;
- develop a business case which analyses a current issue facing the company;
- undertake financial analysis or model of current operations, products or services;
- undertake a business planning exercise to inform some aspect of the company’s future direction; or
- identify opportunities for generating operational efficiencies and develop strategies for the implementation of those strategies.

You will work together as a team to develop your ideas, and then present your project findings and recommendations to senior company representatives on the final day of the two week company placement.

Since each project will be cross-disciplinary in nature, there is opportunity to draw from a range of disciplines from within the Faculty of Economics and Commerce. An academic staff member from the Faculty will provide ongoing support and assistance throughout the work project.
Entry Requirements

Students must check that there is capacity within their study plan for an elective subject worth 12.5 points and have approval from their Program Manager.

In addition, the following criteria apply:

- **Students completing their degree** in the current semester are NOT eligible to apply.
- **Students in their first semester** must have a foundation in business, either through their previous degree or via demonstrable, relevant experience. Students without this background should first complete the foundation subjects of their degree and apply in their second semester.
- **You may only apply for one Business Practicum subject (GBP, MBP) per intake.** Students who apply for both MBP and GBP will not be considered for either subject.
- **Entry is competitive as places are limited.** The minimum average grade requirement for MBP is 65%. The Selection Committee considers the following when allocating places: academic performance, demonstrable foundation in business, quality of the written application and CV, interview performance, and the overall match of skills, experience and interests to the available projects.

Academic Staff Contact Details

Teaching Team

There may be various academic staff from the Faculty of Business and Economics involved in the delivery of the subject. These staff will deliver the preparatory seminars, provide on-the-ground assistance with project work, and assess the work undertaken.

The details of the subject coordinator are provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles and responsibilities</th>
<th>Name &amp; contact details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Coordinator</td>
<td>Sujay Nair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Accounting</td>
<td>198 Berkeley Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:sujay.nair@unimelb.edu.au">sujay.nair@unimelb.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone: 9035 3799</td>
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Administrative Matters

Administrative matters relating to subject application, enrolment, and co-ordination of practicum are managed through the Business & Economics Careers Centre.

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne Business Practicum Managers</td>
<td>Marg Herczeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:herczegm@unimelb.edu.au">herczegm@unimelb.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone: 8344 2172</td>
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Email Protocol

Please note that we are only able to respond to student emails coming from a University email address. Please do not use personal email addresses such as Yahoo, Hotmail or even business email addresses. Emails from non-University email addresses may be filtered by the University’s spam filter, which means that we may not receive your email. All correspondence relating to this subject will only be sent to your University email address. Note that you must first activate your University email address before you can send or receive emails at that address. You can activate your email account at this link: http://accounts.unimelb.edu.au/.

While academic staff endeavor to address queries received via email, it is more appropriate to resolve substantive questions during seminars and during normal consultation hours.

The teaching team will communicate with you using the LMS. Please ensure you are able to access the LMS and are receiving LMS-generated email messages.

Seminars

Indicative timetable of all the major activities in this subject are provided in the following tables. Students are required to allocate 4 weeks to the practicum. Precise logistical details will be provided separately as and when they become available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Date/s</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Induction</td>
<td>29 June–3 July</td>
<td>9:30am -4pm</td>
<td>The Spot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Practicum Intensive</td>
<td>6 – 17 July</td>
<td>10 full working days with host</td>
<td>Industry Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Company presentation and report preparation</td>
<td>17 – 23 July</td>
<td></td>
<td>Industry Organisations and The Spot</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Please note that it is compulsory to attend the induction seminars.

Seminar Slides

The induction slides will be placed on the LMS page for this subject prior to each seminar. The seminar slides are located under the heading “Induction”.

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Assessment

Assessment Overview

The subject will be assessed in several ways. Each group will make presentations to the group (including academic staff) during induction, as well as to the host company, and also produce a written report. There will also be additional individually-based assessment that may involve a reflective individual essay. The precise due dates for these assessment will be advised during the induction week.

Assessment Specifications

**Assessment task #1 Research proposal presentation to the subject group**

During the induction, each group will be asked to develop the approach they intend to use in undertaking their project. This should include developing a clear understanding of the issues to be addressed and the associated complexities, as well as a potential timeline for the project.

**Length.** Groups should present for 15 minutes, allowing a further 10 minutes for questions.

**Date:** End of the induction week

**Assessment value.** This assessment comprises a total of **20 marks**. The key criteria for assessing this piece are how well the team have developed an understanding of the project, the reasonableness of the approach they intend to take, balanced task division amongst members and clarity of communication. The presentations will also receive peer feedback.

**Assignment submission.** This slides used in the presentation should be submitted via email to the academic supervisor and course coordinator of your project.

**Individual/Team effort.** This is a group assignment.

**Assessment task # 2 Group presentation to host company**

Each group will develop its ideas and then present the project findings and recommendations to senior company representatives on the final day of the project.

**Length.** Each group should allow up to 1 hour for their presentation, consisting of presentation and questions and answers.

**Due date of the presentation materials:** Towards the end of Week 4. Exact date TBA

**Assessment value.** This assessment comprises a total of **30 marks**. The key criteria for assessing this piece is the quality of the team’s written and verbal communication. The feedback provided by the host company will be taken into account. Assessment of this work will be done by academic staff.

**Assignment submission.** This slides used in the presentation should be submitted via email to the academic supervisor and course coordinator of your project.
Individual/Team effort. This is a group assignment.

Assessment task #3: Group report on project

This assessment task requires the group to provide a complete and thoroughly investigated solution to the problem that was specified by the host company. For this assessment, the group is to provide a carefully researched response that fully meets the requirements of the project. It is expected that together with the report, a comprehensive resource file will be submitted. This report (and attachments) will be sent to the host company by the supervising academic.

Length. The total length of the assignment is a maximum of 4,000 words.

Due date. Towards the end of Week 4. Exact date TBA.

Assessment value. This assessment comprises a total of 40 marks. The assessment criteria are how thoroughly the requirements of the project are addressed, the general quality of recommendations and readability of the report.

Assignment submission. This assignment must be submitted via direct email to the academic supervisor for your project and the course coordinator. In addition to the softcopy submission, it may be required that a hardcopy version of the work is also submitted.

Individual/Team effort. This is a team assignment.

Assignment format. The exact format of the report will depend on the individual host’s requirements. Typically, the report would consist of several logical sections and sub-sections. These sections will likely include an executive summary, background to the company with the main section covering technical issues relating to the project. A separate section is required to report the key findings. Guidance as to how to prepare a report will be provided during the induction period.

Assessment tasks #4: Individually-based assessment

Part of the assessment for the subject is individually-based. Assessment tasks four comprise 10% of the assessment for the subject. This assessment may involve students being asked provide a written essay to reflect on their experiences in taking part in the team project work. A focus of this work may be to describe the learnings that were generated through this exercise taking into account relevant cultural, social and political factors.

Length. The total length of the individually-based assessment will be 500 words.

Due date. Towards the end of Week 4. Exact date TBA.

Assignment submission. This assignment must be submitted via email to the academic supervisor for your project and the course coordinator.

Please note that you are required to keep a copy of your assignment after it has been submitted, as you must be able to produce a copy of your assignment at the request of your seminar leader at anytime after the submission due date.
**Peer review**

Each group member is required to rate the performance of the other members in his/her group. The ratings range from ‘Excellent’ to ‘No Show’. These ratings should reflect each individual's level of participation, effort and sense of responsibility, not his/her ability per se. This will be done via the PRAZE tool which is linked to the LMS (under the assessment tab). Brief justifications for the ratings are also required.

Under normal circumstances, these ratings do NOT form part of the assessment and are mainly for development purposes. However, in the case of extremely poor peer reviews for a particular member, the academic supervisor may seek clarification from all the group members to determine if a downward adjustment to the mark of the particular member is warranted.

**Plagiarism and Collusion**

Presenting material from other sources without full acknowledgement (referred to as plagiarism) is heavily penalised. Penalties for plagiarism can include a mark of zero for the piece of assessment or a fail grade for the subject.

Plagiarism is the presentation by a student of an assignment identified as his or her own work even though it has been copied in whole or in part from another student’s work, or from any other source (eg. published books, web-based materials or periodicals), without due acknowledgement in the text.

Collusion is the presentation by a student of an assignment as his or her own work when it is, in fact, the result (in whole or in part) of unauthorised collaboration with another person or persons. Both the student presenting the assignment and the student(s) willingly supplying unauthorised material are considered participants in the act of academic misconduct.


**Penalties for Late Submission and Exceeding Word Limits**

In order to ensure equality for all students, assignments must be completed within specified time limits. Unless approved by the academic supervisor, late submissions will attract a marking penalty where approval for late submission has not been given. They will be penalised at the rate of 10% of the total mark per day, for up to 10 days, after which time a mark of zero will be given.

Assignments that exceed word limits may also attract a marking penalty.
Special Consideration

Students who have been significantly affected by illness or other serious circumstances during the semester may be eligible to apply for Special Consideration.

The following website contains detailed information relating to who can apply for Special Consideration and the process for making an application:

http://mbs.unimelb.edu.au/students/services/special_consideration

Referencing

All sources used for a written piece of assessment must be referenced. This is to acknowledge that your material is not based entirely on your own ideas, but is based, in part, on the ideas, information, and evidence of others. This is desirable as you are attending University in order to learn from others.

You will be required to use the APA system or Harvard System of referencing. The FBE Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) has prepared a booklet for each system specifically to assist students to reference correctly. Each booklet contains many examples that will help you when preparing your assignments. The booklets can be found here:

http://fbe.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/647583/Basic_referencing_APA_system.pdf and

It is important that all material you present for assessment is referenced correctly. Material that has not been referenced correctly may be considered to be plagiarised, and as such may be penalised. We will also look for evidence that material included in the bibliography has been used in the assignment. Including references that have not been used may also result in your assignment being penalised.

Team Work

Working in teams can sometimes be more difficult than working individually. However, team-work and organisational skills associated with team work are highly valued by employers. With careful management and ongoing communication, you can have a successful and rewarding experience working in a team.

You should exchange names, phone numbers, and email addresses with your team members straight away.

If you have difficulty with a member of your team, you should contact the Manager of the Melbourne Business Practicum as soon as possible. Do not leave issues unresolved until just before or after your team assignment is due.
All students within your team will be given the same result for the three group-based assessment tasks - unless you have raised an issue during the assignment period. Students who do not contribute to a team assignment may be allocated a lower mark or assigned a mark of zero.

Other Subject Resources

Textbooks and Other Readings

Please note that there is no prescribed textbook for this subject. Relevant reading materials will be provided during the seminars and other times as and when necessary. Given the highly practical and contingent nature of the projects that will be involved, students are expected to draw upon their existing knowledge and cite references to literature in a manner that best suits the requirements of their project.

FBE Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching

The FBE Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) provides services and resources to enhance your learning in Business and Economics.

Maximise your academic success by taking part in CELT services that develop:

• Skills in research, referencing and academic writing
• Mastery of different assignment types
• Effective study techniques
• Abilities to learn effectively with your peers
• Transition to the faculty and understanding of academic expectations

The Centre also provides an extensive range of helpsheets that can enhance your academic performance in Business and Economics. These are available or online or at the Centre.

Visit the CELT site [www.fbe.unimelb.edu.au/celt](http://www.fbe.unimelb.edu.au/celt) to learn more and get involved.