# Accounting in context handbook essay

Module handbook Accounting in Context UMACMC-40-3 2012-13 Contents Page Welcome 3 Module at a glance 4 What this module is trying to achieve 5 What's new in this module? Two frameworks 8 The Structure of the module11 Learning resources (including textbook) 12 Some comments from previous students14 Module assessment16 Appendices: A Guidance on your critical review of information sources28 BAdvice on presentations36 CIn-Course assessment activities41 DDeveloping a reflective capacity45 ETopic choice form55 Teaching programme for the year57 WELCOME…. Welcome to the Accounting in Context module. This is a double-weighted core module in your final year. The approach taken in this module is rather different from what you have previously experienced; so you should take some time to read this handbook carefully and to think about how you are going to approach your learning on this module. Then keep this handbook to hand and refer to it as you work your way through the module.

If you can identify any ways the handbook or the Blackboard website can be improved, please let me know. Linda and Phaik Module Leaders linda. ac. uk phaik. ac. uk Module at a glance * The module leaders are Linda Cinderey and Phaik Tan.

If you would like any advice or help, please contact them by email (linda. ac. uk or phaik. ac. uk) to arrange a meeting. Contact details for Linda and Phaik are also available on Blackboard.

* Assessment for this module is: 40% Year-end case study examination – Component 1 60%In-course assessment: a report based on a critical review of information sources (weighted 70%) and a reflective report (weighted

30%) – Component 2You need to achieve 40% overall to pass the module, with a minimum of 35% in each of the two components. * The examination will take place in May 2013 and consist of a two-hour written paper. * The course is delivered through a weekly lecture and a fortnightly workshop. Attendance at lectures and workshops is ESSENTIAL. * The aims and learning outcomes for this module are discussed on the following pages. Key Dates| Early November 2012 Presentation groups will be published on Blackboard.

Linda Cinderey will allocate you into your presentation groups. You are required to make your presentations on the day/time of your timetabled workshop. | 7th November 2012 Critical review topic forms are due in. This will allow us to allocate you a supervisor. | 18th January 2013 Draft critical review due in. Students who submit their drafts score higher marks as they will obtain feedback. We will not accept drafts after this date.

You should e mail your draft work to your supervisor before 2pm| 6th March 2013 In-Course Assessment due in – you need to submit two copies of your critical review of information sources and reflective report and one copy of your learning log. We aim to return your work before the Spring (April) student vacation. | What this module is trying to achieve Aims This module seeks to enable you to develop essential skills and knowledge to support your future work either as an accountant or manager in the business world. There are four aims for the module (see the diagram below). These four aims require the development of reflective practice. The latter underpins all learning on this module.

Develop as critical consumers of business information Take a multi-disciplinary approach to business issues/problemsDeveloping Reflective Practice Integrate technical knowledge acquired from study across the programme Develop a critical appreciation of the nature, development and application of knowledge in business Reflective practice is the basis for all professional work. Professionals are expected to continue to develop themselves as effective service providers. This requires more than just technical updates. It requires the development of a reflective stance so that one also learns from experience. In this module you will be expected to keep a learning log. The log will create conditions that support the development of a reflective capacity: time, space and an opportunity to reflect on your learning.

We regard this as a very important module within the degree. Accordingly, this is a compulsory module on the BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance degree and will contribute to your degree classification calculation. Since it involves you drawing on knowledge and skills developed elsewhere in your studies, you are assumed to have passed at least two of the three level 2 compulsory modules. If you have not passed the level 2 compulsory modules you are likely to struggle on this module and we advise you to pass the level 2 modules first before tackling this module Learning outcomes What do these aims mean in practice? The learning outcomes give a more precise idea of what you should be able to do upon successful completion of the module.

As set out above, there are four key aspects to this module. Firstly, it aims to develop your skills as a critical consumer of business information. After successfully completing the module, you should be able to: describe the evolution of different forms of accounting-related business knowledge * identify the fundamental assumptions underpinning theoretical frameworks and approaches to enquiry encountered within the module * criticise and evaluate alternative research methodologies * find, extract and analyse data and information from a variety of different sources * synthesise and evaluate data and information from a variety of different sources * challenge viewpoints, ideas and concepts and make well-reasoned judgementsMost of these skills are assessed in your assignment. Secondly, it aims to develop your ability to take a multi-disciplinary approach to business issues/problems and to integrate technical knowledge acquired from study across your degree. After successfully completing the module, you should be able to: identify the interrelationship between power, accountability and control and the impact of these on organisations and people * identify the relationship between organisational structure, financing decisions and corporate reporting * explain the nature of risk and describe how risks may be managed through organisational and financial strategies * identify alternative ethical frameworks and practices within business Most of these skills are assessed in your case study exam. Thirdly, it also aims to support you in developing problem identification and problem solving skills within unfamiliar situations, such as being able to: identify the issues/factors within a business context that must be taken into account when applying analytical techniques and methods * identify the multi-disciplinary perspectives from

which accounting and finance problems may be analysed * compare alternative theoretical frameworks and choose an appropriate framework as a basis for formulating a course of action * identify ethical issues and the ethical implications of recommended courses of action These skills are assessed in your assignment and exam.

Lastly, all of the above requires you to further develop key (transferable) skills, such as being able to: * present, discuss and defend ideas, concepts and views through written reports to professional standards of organisation, clarity and logical coherence * use IT to aid efficient searching, communication and presentation of information * act independently in planning and undertaking tasks, develop own criteria to evaluate performance, reflect on own learning and seek and make use of feedback These skills are mainly assessed in your assignment. What's new in this module? Two frameworks to support integration of knowledge across your studies This module doesn't introduce much new material. We expect you to integrate technical and theoretical knowledge acquired from study across the BAAF degree. However, we do introduce two frameworks that may support you in carrying out this integration: * a corporate governance framework * an ethical framework In practice, these two frameworks are interrelated. These are outlined below and we shall introduce you to these frameworks in lectures and workshops. A Corporate Governance FrameworkCorporate governance is seen as an all-embracing framework for the subjects that you are studying on this degree. Corporate governance can be defined as follows: It is the responsibilities and practices exercised by the board of directors and senior management of an organisation.

It aims to achieve: * The provision of strategic direction to ensure that objectives are achieved (performance); * The identification and appropriate management of risks; and * The provision of assurance that the organisation's resources are used responsibly (conformance)There are two key aims within corporate governance: conformance and performance. There is generally a tension between these elements. The identification and management of risk is essential if either is to be achieved. See the diagram on the next page for an overview of the key elements within a corporate governance framework. Corporate Governance Accountability and assurance Value creation and resource utilisation Performance Conformance The identification and management of risk Professional and statutory regulations * Statutory audit * Formal corporate governance requirements Corporate codes of conduct (ethics) * Internal control/audit * Financial reporting help safeguard stakeholders' interests and allow external scrutiny and evaluation. Best practice tools and techniques * Scorecards * Continuous improvement * Strategic enterprise systems * Investment committees * Financial reporting help boards to focus on strategic direction and its implications for all areas of the business.

The Corporate Governance Framework Changing accounting and statutory regulations: Changing best practice tools and techniques Changing recognition of the range of stakeholders and their needs? Environmental and social responsibility reporting What are the dynamics at work on this framework? An Ethical Framework Ethics is broadly concerned with how persons, organizations or societies act, or should act, in relations with others. " Being ethical" is an aim of corporate governance, and should be supported

by the framework of controls within an organization. However, we look at three levels of ethics: * Societal: is the social system ethical (e.

g. capitalism, self-regulation, slavery)? * Organisational: are organisational actions ethical (e. g. ribery versus incentives, polluting water sources)? * Individual: are individual actions ethical (" I only did what my boss told me to do")? We shall ask the following kinds of question: * What societal ethical assumptions are implicit within existing regulatory processes? * What kind of organisation is described in a scenario and/or case study? How ethical is it? Or how does one decide what is ethical? * What ethical dilemmas are faced by the organisation or individuals? THE STRUCTURE OF THE MODULE – SUPPORTING YOU IN ACHIEVING THE LEARNING OUTCOMES Learning activitiesThis module provides a variety of learning activities to support you in your learning. They comprise activities: * in a weekly large interactive lecture session (when you will be provided with an overview of topics, expected to perform tasks and provide contributions) * in a fortnightly two-hour workshop (consisting of a variety of activities: three workshops will be based on student group presentations) * during independent study time (either individually or in a group) But an important part of learning takes place when you reflect and " make sense" of these activities. That is why this module expects you to keep a learning log: to support reflection, making sense of your learning and to provide a source for your assessed reflective report (required for the in-course assessment). Student presentations will form the basis of three workshop sessions.

Students' presentations will be based on one journal paper; several papers will be discussed in a workshop. Each group is required to make two presentations based on two different papers. All students are required to attend the three presentation workshops even though they will be only presenting in two of these three workshops. You need to read and critically evaluate all the readings discussed in these workshops, not just the reading that you are presenting. We expect you to make reference to all the readings in your learning log as evidence that you have done this. The skills relating to reading papers and critically evaluating them are vital to your project and success on this module.

The presentations replicate the work that you do for your projects. The module leader will allocate you into your presentation group. You must not change your workshop group from the one timetabled for you. A presentation schedule will be put up onto Blackboard at the beginning of November so that you know when you are presenting and the papers that you are required to present. Please note that your presentation provides an important learning activity that needs to be reflected on in your learning log and we would expect to see the feedback sheets in your learning log with your reflections. Your presentation will be peer reviewed and you will receive their comments, as well as comments from lecturers.

An example of a presentation feedback form is shown at the end of this handbook in Appendix B. Further advice on presentations is provided in Appendix B. Learning resources We have provided a range of learning resources to support you in this module.

We provide specific advice in appendices to this handbook, but in addition, please read on. Text book There is no single textbook that covers this module. Some useful texts are: * Hart. C. (1998) Doing a Literature Review. London: Sage * Saunders, M. , Lewis, P.

, Thornhill, A. (2012) Research Methods for Business Students 6th ed. London: FT Prentice Hall * Jankowicz, A. D. 2005) Business Research Projects 4th ed. London: Thomson * Crane A, Matten D (2010) Business Ethics 3rd ed Oxford: Oxford University Press Additional reading will be given in the lectures. Regular financial update and business awareness You are expected to be aware of current financial events and up-to-date on the business environment. You must regularly read a quality financial newspaper, or make a financial website one of your home pages.

You can access The Financial Times through the Nexis database via the library web page (see e-journals A-Z). You do not need to pay for a subscription. Blackboard Course materials will be placed on Blackboard where practicable, as will additional readings. Library Electronic Resources You will need to use the UWE library facilities for this module, particularly the on-line databases of academic journal articles. Business Source Premier is the main database in accounting and finance which includes many full-text articles.

You can find it via the elibrary here: http://www1. uwe. ac. uk/library/usingthelibrary/searchforthingsa-z/databases/bysubject/ accountingandfinance. spx Downloading Articles Articles will be available as full text downloads from Blackboard content collection or the e –library.

mySkills resources and support for learning Please make full use of these resources. There is some great advice on writing reports, reading, writing, skills for studying, etc. The web address is: http://www.

uwe. ac. uk/library/resources/hub/ THIS MODULE IS DIFFERENT – COMMENTS FROM PREVIOUS STUDENTS ABOUT THE MODULE These have been included to give a flavour of the module – our comments are in italics.

General comments ' The module has taught me a lot and stretched my ideas about ethics' – on this module ethics and corporate governance is used as an umbrella to explore all issues in accounting and finance * ' There is too much work to do' – it is a 40-credit module requiring 400 hours work in all! * ' I like the module as it combines the results of all the other modules and shows how we can apply what we have learnt' – this is one of the main aims of the module * ' The module is very interesting' – we think so too! * ' There isn't a module textbook and I don't know what is important or not' – there is no one textbook that covers all the topics. We provide a substantial amount of materials and you need to use the library resources * ' The workshops were helpful in developing critical analysis and presentation skills' – being able to present yourself effectively is a key requirement for a successful career * ' Workshops seem vague and do not help towards project' – early workshops aim to help you choose a topic, then there are workshops that aim to develop your skills of critical reading and the presentation workshops force you to read the academic literature. All these areas are required for your projects. * ' The purpose of the project seemed irrelevant. It didn't really matter about the content but more about the literature sources' – your

project is not just a literature review, you also have to understand the nature of the literature sources.

Using a variety of information sources – TV programmes, websites, magazines, journals and so on will give you the best scope to understand the differences between literature sources. You should also only choose information sources that are relevant to your scenario – i. e. sources that you might use in practice to inform company policy. You should arrange your critical evaluation by issue, not by author.

Contradictions between authors can be part of your analysis as you discuss the issues. Wider philosophical differences between different research traditions can be covered in a separate section if required. It is difficult to generalise but we would like to see about 40% of your report on a discussion of the literature sources and about 60% on the issues. * ' The module has helped me decide what area of accountancy to follow in the future' – good! FAQ about the Module Why is the module so highly weighted when it does not feel like we are learning anything new? AiC focuses on the integration and evaluation of knowledge gained in your other modules, and the development of skills in critical thinking and evaluation; reflection. The learning log helps students identify what they have learnt (often in the sense of making those connections) This module relies on you to take responsibility for your own learning.

We do not give you ' content' but ideas and processes. As such it might be challenging your notions of education. It is a 40-credit module and requires

400 hours of study. You have 40 hours in class. Preparing for classes takes about 80 hours. Preparing for your exam takes about 80 hours.

Keeping your learning log takes about 60 hours. Completing your project takes about 140 hours. Are the lectures on areas that do not relate to my chosen topic relevant? Yes, for the other modules you are studying and for the case study exam. MODULE ASSESSMENT Assessment for this module comprises: Weighting 40% Year-end case study examination 60%In-course assessment: a critical review of information sources (weighted 70%) and a reflective report (weighted 30%) You need to achieve 40% overall to pass the module, with a minimum of 35% in each of the two components. If you are referred in the in-course assessment you will need to resubmit your learning log reflection and your critical evaluation of information sources. Year-end case study examination Whilst learning activities in the autumn term support both the in-course assessment and the case study examination, we aim to prepare you for your assignment in the Autumn term and to spend the Spring term working on case studies to prepare you for the exam. In May 2013 you will sit an exam.

This exam accounts for 40% of your mark for this module. It is a two-hour exam based on a case study that will be issued in advance. The case study will be uploaded onto Blackboard four weeks before the exam. If you fail to download the case study you are putting yourself at risk of failing! A hard copy of the case study will not be handed out – it is your responsibility to download it.

The questions relating to the case are not issued in advance; the first time you will see them will be in the exam. There will be four questions on the exam paper, and you will be required to answer three – therefore you have 40 minutes per question (3*40mins= 120 mins or two hours). No new case information will be added in the exam, only the questions. You do not need to bring the case study to the exam room as a new one will be given out as part of the exam paper. You are allowed to bring into the exam one page (two sides) of typed notes on A4 paper in Arial 12-point.

You can include diagrams on your notes as long as they are also in 12-point. You are free to change the margins on your notes, i. e.

to make the most of the A4 paper. Your notes must be handed in with your answer, but will not be marked. The questions will be drawn from the following disciplines – financial reporting, financial management, management accounting and corporate governance. You are assumed to be studying or have studied the following modules – Corporate Reporting Theory and Practice, Advanced Management Accounting and Financial Management. The corporate governance aspects will have been covered in the Accounting in Context module or in your level 1 core modules. We shall work on case studies towards the end of the module and past exams will be distributed before the year end exam so that you can gauge the standard. More detailed advice on the exam will be provided in the Spring term. In-course assessment This assesses your skills as a critical consumer of business information, and your ability to: * act independently in planning and undertaking tasks; * use IT to support your work; * present, discuss and

defend ideas; * develop your own criteria to evaluate performance; * reflect on your own learning; and * seek and make use of feedback.

There are two parts to the in-course assessment and both will now be discussed in turn. Requirements for the critical evaluation of information sourcesRequirement You are required to submit a 4, 500 word critical evaluation of information and its various sources on your chosen topic. You should frame your project and report within the following scenario: You are a research assistant reporting to a finance director/partner in a large organisation. Your responsibility is to carry out special projects required by the finance director. The finance director wants to know more about the issues related to an article she has read. You have been asked to provide a report to brief the finance director on these issues. She has particularly asked you to focus on: * Other information sources on these issues that might inform the strategic direction of the organisation * The nature of these information sources ; their relevance and reliability You are not expected to make any recommendations on the strategic direction of the organization; just to provide information to enable the finance director to make a decision. Marking criteria Your critical evaluation of information sources will be marked according to the following criteria: 0 clarity of project question/issue; a comprehensive identification and clear demonstration of familiarity with relevant information sources; 2 critical evaluation of the information sources; 3 quality and depth of analysis; 4 logical flow within the report ; 5 persuasiveness of conclusions as to the nature of the information sources; their availability, relevance and reliability ; 6 presentation: structure and balance and use of English.

Presentation is important as it indicates the skill and care that you have invested into your work and a logical presentation implies an ordered and logical approach to the subject. You should follow the requirements below in terms of the structure of your report; 7 correct use of Harvard referencing; and 8 word count showing that the 4, 500 words have not been exceeded. You are not allowed to exceed the word limit under any circumstances. If you exceed the word limit we will deduct 10 marks. Marks are not individually allocated to each of these criteria. However, all of these criteria are taken into account when coming to an overall grade.

Here is the feedback form that we use when we mark your project: Accounting in Context – Individual Marking Scheme for Critical Review of Information Sources Student number................................. | | Grade awarded from A to E| 1| Clarity of project theme/issue to remit – a clear scenario| | 2| A comprehensive identification and clear demonstration of familiarity with relevant information sources – breadth of information accessed| | 3| Quality and depth of analysis and synthesis of information sources – analysis of information sources| | 4| Critical evaluation of information sources – relevance and reliability of information sources| | 5| Logical flow within the report| | | Persuasiveness of conclusions | | 7| Presentation of work in accordance with module requirements; structure, use of sensible headings, sentence construction and use of English | | 8| Correct Harvard style referencing| | 9| Word count exceeding 4, 500 words| Deduct 10 marks| The structure of your report Two copies of your report should be submitted. We mark one and return it to you. We keep the other copy for our records. Your report should be structured as follows: Title page| Title of project, number

and name of student, module name, course title, word count, name of supervisor and date. Executive summary| A 150 word precis of the whole of your project clearly identifying the topic, your main arguments, how the report might inform the development of policy within the company and what issues require further review and consideration.

| Contents pages| Showing headings and their pages| Declaration| You need to state that ' this project is the work of (insert your name) and has not been submitted for any other qualification or as part of any other module assignment'. | Glossary and list of abbreviations| If necessary| Main text| Subdivided into relevant headings. Your word count starts here (you can write a maximum of 4, 500 words). | Appendices| (not part of word count) – these should not be necessary and you should include any tables or figures within the main text.

| References| (not part of word count) – in the correct style: use Harvard and refer to skills4study section in http://www. uwe. ac.

uk/library/resources/hub/One list in alphabetical order is required, not separate lists for websites etc. You are not required to prove a separate bibliography of sources you have read but not cited. | Style of writing| Your project should be written in a professional business style. You can choose whether to write in the ' third' person or not, but a formal style should be maintained. Your report should be capable of being understood by the finance director (an informed reader) at first reading. Aim for an easy style with precision. Try to avoid waffle! All pages must be numbered.

Use Arial font in 12-point single line spacing. | Requirements for the reflective report An important part of your learning on this module arises from reflection on your lecture, workshop and independent study activities. To support this you are required to keep a learning log during the course.

We suggest that you write in your log at least three times a fortnight, reflecting on: * the lecture activities * the workshop activities * independent group or individual study activity The purpose of the learning log is to support you in reflecting on your learning during the course. Advice on how to keep a learning log is provided in Appendix B. Requirement You are expected to submit: * a 1, 500 word reflective report, drawing on your entries in your learning log and overview of log entries, on how your learning has developed during the first section of the course, up to the date of submission of the in-course assessment. Two copies are required.

* your learning log and overview of log entries. Only one copy is required. There is no maximum word limit for the learning log and overview of log entries. The assessment criteria for this reflective report are as follows. The reflective report must cover both descriptive and subjective aspects: Objective * comprehensive and clear observations of events arising from the learning activities taking place in lectures, workshops and independent study * clear overview of log entries to support the reflective report * clear audit trail between reflective report and the log/overview of log entries * word count showing that the report does not exceed 1, 500 wordsSubjective A good range of subjective description: indicating a depth and thoroughness of reflection and indicating a developing self-awareness of self and others e. g.

for self and interactions with others * what was learnt * what was felt * the identification areas of difficulties and enjoyment * the identification of strengths and weaknesses * how strengths were/can be built on * how weaknesses were/can be addressed * how actions/behaviour changed * how beliefs/views changed You must submit the learning log itself. We cannot specify the form and quantity that is required – it may be a loose leaf folder or a diary or a little notebook, whatever is helpful to you.

We need to see your overview of log entries and an audit trail between your 1, 500 word reflective report and the overview/learning log. The overview of the log should highlight the key learning events and key learning activities for you. These key learning events are likely to be the events that you discuss in more detail in the reflective report. The overview should be placed at the end of your log. (NOTE: The overview of the log should not comprise a contents page or index relating to your learning log.

If you are unsure about any aspects of this, please consult your supervisor. ) If your learning log is incomplete, because you have missed sessions or failed to keep it up, then this will affect your ability to meet the assessment criteria. In particular, you should attend all the presentation sessions and include the feedback in your log.

We would expect to see in your learning log any notes and visual aids you used in your presentations. Here is the form that we use when we mark your learning log and reflective report: Accounting in Context – Marking Scheme for Reflective Report based on the Learning Log Student Number.......................... | Mark| Total marks | A comprehensive learning log

with clear objective descriptionsComplete original learning log (If your learning log is incomplete, because you have missed sessions or failed to keep it up then this will affect your ability to meet the assessment criteria). Containing objective descriptions: a comprehensive and clear observations of events arising from the learning activities taking place in: * lectures * workshops * independent studyClear overview of log entries to support the reflective report (overview to be included at the end of the log and should highlight key events)Clear audit trail between reflective report and log| | 301010| A good range of subjective description: indicating a depth and thoroughness of reflection and indicating a developing self-awareness of self and otherse. g. or self and interactions with others * what was learnt * what was felt * the identification areas of difficulties and enjoyment * the identification of strengths and weaknesses * how strengths were/can be built on * how weaknesses were/can be addressed * how actions/behaviour changed * how beliefs/views changed * Word count exceeding 1, 500 words | | 50deduct 10 marks| Total mark| | 100| FAQ on Learning Logs How much do we need to write for each entry in the learning log? It is up to you but obviously the more you write the more likely it will be that you will start to reflect. The log needs to contain sufficient detail to enable you to recall the learning experience when you start to write the reflective report. Merely describing what happened in lectures / tutorials in detail is not sufficient; you should ask yourself questions such as why you found a lecture/workshop activity useful / not useful; how you have attempted to improve your learning and understand where difficulties are encountered (e. g.

when working on the critical evaluation report) In other words, go back to advice in the module handbook directed learning activities. Do the entries in the learning log have to be 5 A4 pages long each or is half of one page sufficient? Try to write up your log three times a fortnight, after each lecture and each workshop. In addition, include entries relating to your independent study activities on your project such as your progress in finding useful information sources, your plans for the project, your experiences during the writing of the report, etc.

Do we have to keep the learning log for both the lectures and workshop? Or is it only the workshop? All your learning activities should be reflected upon. Is it enough to note in the learning log my impression about the lecture, workshops etc. or do I need to evaluate them? Yes evaluation is necessary – see the guidance in the directed learning activities. What happens if one is not able to be reflective " enough"? Please see ' additional guidance on reflection' under the ' teaching materials' section on Blackboard. When reading an entry in a learning log, what would you consider to be poor/un-insightful? What sort of detail are you looking for? Description of events is not very insightful. It's a good start, but you then need to question assumptions you have made, feelings that you have, and consider how you might see things differently or learn from learning activities and others. Is the reflection part of the 4, 500 words? No – please see the module booklet. Do I need to include all the notes I took during lectures and tutorials in my learning log? No, but you need to include in your log your reflections on lectures and tutorials.

Can I write the reflective report as a report? Yes. By report, we mean use headings and use appropriate language. You are not required to number sub paragraphs. I haven't started my learning log yet. Is this a problem? Yes, you need to start it now! Handing in Your Work * Please submit one folder containing all your work.

* Please make sure your name, number and supervisor's name is clearly written on the outside of the folder. * Please submit two copies of your reflective report and critical evaluation project. You need only submit one copy of your log and overview Using your supervisor effectively You will be allocated a supervisor in November, once you have chosen a topic area. Once you know who your supervisor is you must make immediate contact.

Please note that your supervisor is under no obligation to contact you. Supervision is discussion-based and will probably consist of four 15-minute meetings where you bring along the work you have completed and the questions you wish to discuss. Here are the key points in your work where you must contact your supervisor: * November – Meet to introduce yourself after being allocated a supervisor, and to discuss your plans based on the information you have compiled. * December – Discuss the outline and key sections of your report, and the nature and range of articles / journal papers you are reading. January – You would be expected to send your supervisor a rough draft of your report in mid January during the January assessment period so that a meeting can be held later in January.

The meeting will enable you to discuss aspects based on the rough draft and also enable your supervisor to see the general flow of discussion and advise

on areas which require attention. * February – submission of assignment is in early March so supervision ends at the end of February. Please plan these meetings at the start of your project so that they can be used to best effect. Keep a record of meetings with your supervisor and please keep all emails and other correspondence – you may wish to incorporate them into your learning log. A supervisor meeting form is included in this booklet. Supervision will end one week before the deadline for submission of your work. Supervisors will not be responding to queries during that week.

This final week is for printing, editing, refining and not for writing on new aspects – so no supervision is necessary. It is essential that you plan and manage your time very carefully when working on your project in order to avoid last-minute panics. Your supervisor is there to guide you through your project.

Advice can be given on research methodologies, information sources and writing up. However, your supervisor cannot undertake any research for you. It is a good idea to show your supervisor your work as you progress to get some feedback on your progress. However, your supervisor will not mark your rough drafts and you should not ask your supervisor for a mark. Supervisors are responsible for many students and are allocated a limited number of hours to spend on each student they supervise. Supervisors have to mark your report and double mark other work (we swap them around to ensure we mark to the same standard), attend exam boards and, finally, help you. So you need to manage your supervision time carefully. Please

note that supervisors are not required to chase you for work or actively monitor you.

We would expect ad-hoc queries to be dealt with during lectures, workshops and clinics sessions. Normally, we would not expect students to email their supervisors for any purpose other than to arrange a meeting. Frequently-asked questions will be placed on Blackboard. If you do not make regular contact with your supervisor, you run the risk of failing. If you find that the relationship with your supervisor has broken down then you need to seek immediate help from the module leader or from one of the other tutors in the team. Assessment Offences Every year we have examples of students failing to reference correctly. In some cases, where there is direct quotation from sources without attribution, this leads to a mark of zero. You need to learn to use the Harvard system of referencing.

Refer to skills4study section in http://www. uwe. ac. uk/library/resources/hub/Assignments: assessment offences Please refer to the following link for guidance in order to ensure you avoid any assessment offences. http://www1.

uwe. ac. uk/bl/bbs/currentstudents/assessments. aspx To maintain academic honesty in your work, you need to ensure that you have the necessary knowledge and skills.

In particular, you need to avoid plagiarism by knowing how to : * Clearly indicate where you have used your own words and ideas and where you have used someone else's words and ideas (citation) * Clearly list all the

sources you have used in constructing your assignment (list of references). The myskills zone on the library website specific detailed guidance on how to use citation in your writing and how to reference your sources using the BBS accepted style, which is Harvard General. You must familiarise yourself with these practices prior to writing your critical review.

APPENDIX A – GUIDANCE ON YOUR CRITICAL REVIEW OF INFORMATION SOURCES AIdentifying a question You must choose a question that relates to accounting and finance. You may like to think about your future career – if you want to become a management accountant it may be sensible to choose a management accounting topic. You can then use your knowledge gained in any future job interview.

You may also like to browse recent academic and professional journals for articles that interest you. Thank about the scenario and imagine that you are a finance director flicking though professional magazines or a newspaper. You need to identify one article that might have been read by the finance director and that will form a starting point for the identification of a question. This article might be a consultancy report (maybe from one of the Big 4 accountancy firms), a professional article, a newspaper article, or an item from the internet. It should be a recent publication i. e. published in the past two years.

Please note that this article is only a guide for us and for you. You can discard it later if it does not fit your report as you progress with your project. Your task is then to research the main issues raised by the article using other sources. You need to come up with an ' issue' or ' question' for your project –

something that would be of key interest to the finance director and which might inform the development of policy relating to the strategic direction of her company. Your issue or question needs to be sufficiently complex to enable you to write a 4, 500 word report but not so complex that it will take an 80, 000 word PhD to answer.

It should also not be so superficial that it is a ' non-question'. Most issues are quite complex once you look into them so take care to narrow your field of enquiry so that it is manageable. Please refer to the corporate governance framework presented earlier in the handbook (p. 9) as it provides a useful basis for generating ideas for a suitable topic for investigation. You are free to choose a topic in accounting and finance but please be aware that you are not allowed to submit a piece of work that has been submitted on another module e. g. you cannot submit your Advanced Management Accounting assignment as your critical review.

We do check! Frequently Asked Questions from previous students * ' Some of the content of my project may overlap with my Financial Management/CRTP/AMA assignment' – Using the same references is fine but you must not ' cut and paste' from one assignment to another. We have tried to steer you away from choosing topics that are too close to assignments. Make sure you read the declaration you have to make and are happy to sign it. If you have any doubts please consult your supervisor. * I'm happy about my topic but have yet to find a good title – The title is likely to emerge as you continue to write-up your project. * ' I don't know how to apply my topic

to the required ' finance director' scenario' – Consider how knowledge of the issues relating to the topic will inform company policy.

If in doubt, consult your supervisor for advice. * I'm panicking – it is November and I haven't started yet. Is there still enough time left to do a good job on my report? It depends on what stage you have reached, but many students will still be at an early stage now. It is possible to produce a good report – you need to work out what needs to be done and design a timetable which reflects milestones you need to achieve. Your supervisor can advise you on this. Above all, don't panic – that will make things worse. It is helpful to realise that, even if you only have an hour spare in a day, then that can be put to good use on your assignment. Avoid procrastination – as this will just make things worse.

Set yourself small, achievable targets, carry them out and you'll feel better about it as you see progress being gradually made. B. Searching for information sources You will need to use the UWE library facilities for this module, particularly the on-line databases of academic journal articles. Business Source Premier is the main database in accounting and finance which includes many full-text articles.

The web address is: http://www1. uwe. ac. uk/library/usingthelibrary/searchforthingsa-z/databases/bysubject/ accountingandfinance. aspx Note: If you require an article which is not available from the library, a opy can be requested through the inter-library loan facility. You do not have to pay for any articles.

Details of the inter-library loan facility can be found here: http://www1. uwe. ac. uk/library/usingthelibrary/borrowthings/obtainfromoutsideuwe/guidetotheser vice. aspx C Advice on critiquing information sources Frequently asked questions * ' How do you know if what the authors are saying is wrong? ' – It is unlikely to be wrong but you need to be aware of the authors' biases and assumptions. Through reading more articles, differences in opinions become clearer.

Refer to the lecture on ' seeking answers' for guidance. ' If two articles come to opposite conclusions, what should I do? ' – This shows that your topic is interesting! You should review more articles on the issue and evaluate the evidence they provide to support their conclusions in order to identify which conclusions are more reliable. * ' How far back into the literature should I go' – It depends on your topic. Early papers will often identify the core issues and how they arose. * ' Reading articles takes up too much time' – Please refer to the ' mySkills resources and support for learning' site: http://www. uwe. ac. k/library/resources/hub/ Read the abstracts to get a feel for the article's / paper's objectives.

There is also advice available on the module Blackboard site. * ' Do we critique articles based on other articles or our own opinions' – Both! Hopefully your confidence will grow as you find out more about the topic. * ' All I seem to be reading are other people's opinions – there are no facts. I am concerned that my report will be too biased' – Other people's opinions are the ' facts' that you have to use as sources of information. Your report will

not be biased if you have identified the key arguments relevant to your topic. Also, if there are no " facts" you should compare evidence on the basis of the assumptions that underpin it.

* ' Can we have an example of critiquing an article? ' – We develop these skills in the autumn term workshops, especially in the presentations workshops. Therefore, please ensure you engage in the activities in these workshops. D Advice on " writing up" Frequently asked questions * ' I don't know the format to use' – A report is required. Please refer to the module Blackboard site which has links to advice on writing reports.

Also see the requirements for the report structure given in this handbook. ' Is it the same format as an ISP or DBK? ' – No. It is a report on a practical issue. See the scenario in the booklet and the marking criteria. * ' What is Harvard referencing' – Please refer to the myskills section in http://www. uwe. ac.

uk/library/resources/hub/ * ' Can I quote from authors? ' – Yes you can. Put the quote in quotation marks and provide name of the author, year of publication and the page reference. You should avoid using too many direct quotes – use your own words, as this demonstrates your understanding of what you have read. * ' Should each section of my report have a conclusion' – No. The conclusion should feature at the end. You need to make sure your report has a good logical flow and you may wish to summarise arguments at key points.

A diagram or mind map might help get an overview. * ' Is there an ideal word breakdown? ' – You have to write 4, 500 words or about 20 pages. You need to break your topic down into a number of issues.

You also need an introduction and conclusion. It's difficult to generalise as each report will be different. However, do not start writing up your project by allocating a fixed number of words per section. You should write freely; guidance from your supervisor together with the editing process will enable you to decide on which sections need to be shorter or deleted, and which ones require expanding. * ' Should I talk about the relevance and reliability of each information source as I go or put all the information about relevance and reliability into one separate chapter? ' You can evaluate the relevance and reliability of several information sources / articles relating to a particular issue, or conduct the evaluation and place it in a separate section. Both approaches are acceptable; your supervisor will be able to advise. ' We should be given marking criteria showing how the report is marked' – The marking criteria are provided this handbook. * ' Must I start with my base article that I submitted' – No, we ask you to supply an article to show that there is some literature relating to your topic .

You needn't refer to it at all later on if subsequently alter the focus of your project. * ' My English is not so excellent. I am afraid I can't produce a high level dissertation' – You are not marked on your command of English but if it is so poor that it affects the synthesis, logic or line of argument, you will lose marks. Ask a friend to proof read your report for you. You should also use the English language and academic writing support services provided.

Please refer to the following site: http://www. uwe. ac. uk/aces/ EAdvice on supervision Arranging to meet Please arrange meetings by email.

Indicate what you wish to discuss at the meeting. It may be that your supervisor will be able to answer some queries by email. If you are unable to attend your pre-arranged meeting, please let your supervisor know as soon as possible. The meeting You must bring the following with you: A list of the information sources you have accessed. It is advisable to keep a daily record of the search terms that you have used and what you have accessed; * Hard copies of several relevant key articles to be discussed. * A list of references gathered so far. You should bring this to every meeting; * A summary or diary of work carried out to date; * A pro forma record of the meeting, ready to be completed (see below). If you don't bring these with you, your supervisor may cancel the meeting.

Make a record of what has been discussed/agreed at the meetingIt makes good sense to briefly record what has been discussed/agreed at the meeting. This ensures that there are no misunderstandings. A pro-forma record sheet is attached. Frequently asked questions (FAQ) * ' When can we begin to come and see our supervisor? – If you need to see your supervisor, then you should make an appointment.

* ' How many hours do we have allocated to see our supervisors' – Please see the module booklet about using your supervisor effectively * ' Do you have to see your supervisor a set number of times? ' No, we have provided some guidance in this handbook but these are not fixed rules. ' My supervisor didn't spend much time with me. Other students seem to have

had better support and may get a higher mark as a result. This isn't fair' – It is inevitable that some students will perceive differences in supervision. The module leader seeks to ensure that all supervisors follow a consistent approach. Any concerns should be raised with the module leader.

* I haven't written much for my draft report, can I still hand it in? We will accept ' skeleton' projects as long as we can get an idea of your key sections/headings and general flow of arguments. We would expect to receive a minimum of three pages of writing under one heading so that we can comment on your academic writing style and ability to reference correctly. Obviously the more you give us the more we can comment on your work. Students who submit drafts achieve higher marks because they can obtain feedback on their work. Please note that no mark is given for the drafts; we only suggest areas for improvement. * ' What kind of feedback will we get on our final reports' – You will get a mark, annotated report and an individual feedback sheet returned with your assignment before your exams. You have to submit two copies of your report and reflective report and we will keep one copy.

* Do we get extra marks for conducting primary research? No. You are required to conduct secondary research only. * When we submit the draft, should it be fully 100% completed or are you expecting us to have a few gaps? Not essential, so no I suppose.

Gaps will be fine. The deadline for the draft gives you a target. We will not be able to review drafts after this date as there is not sufficient time for effective feedback. * How crucial does the strategic perspective of the

critical review have to be? Your topic should be of importance to your organisation – something of significance that will affect the organisation's strategy i. e.

have a lasting impact. The ' critical' aspect relates to your analysis and evaluation of the literature. The strategy and the critical evaluation are two separate aspects. * Do we include all academic articles used in the appendix or just the main article read by the finance director? Use as many information sources as are necessary. You should not just analyse the one article you submitted with your topic choice form. In fact, you may subsequently decide not to cite the article you submitted with your topic choice for because the focus of your project has changed. * Can I change topic? How many times can we change a topic? Yes you can change topics, subject to availability of appropriate supervisors.

Obviously, it is not a good idea to keep changing topics as you will be reducing the time available for obtaining advice from your supervisor and have less time to complete the work. * Can we use articles from the Emerald database file? Yes * How recent do articles have to be? 1yr 5yrs 10yrs etc. It depends on the topic area. A wide range of articles should be reviewed. * What is the proportion of academic and non-academic articles? There isn't a definitive answer to this. Both types of articles should be useful to you. However, a major factor to consider is the relevance and reliability of the articles in relation to the issues you are investigating.

* Do we cite information sources from Business Source Premier as a webpage or as an article? As an article. * How many information sources

should we aim to reference? Are there any sources we should avoid? You should cite as many references as are required to evaluate the issues relating to your topic in sufficient depth. A wide range of information sources is useful. You should try to find some academic peer reviewed articles and some reports from professional bodies or firms. We do not provide precise rules on the number of references required as each project is different. Your supervisor should be able to provide advice. * Why do we not have access to Harvard Business Review online in the library? The faculty librarian said " We do have access to the complete archive of Harvard Business Review via Business Source Premier. This is linked from the Library catalogue".

* Do we need to put our personal opinion into the report? Yes, if it is a reasoned opinion based on the evidence you have presented. Opinions presented without any logical argument behind them are not very useful. * If some of the arguments in my project are wrong, would that be a fail? Not sure what you mean by ' wrong'. If your report is illogical, poorly argued, badly referenced and with no substance then it will fail. * If I do not find my supervisor helpful, who do I complain to? And can I request to be allocated to another supervisor? We would hope that you develop a good working relationship with your supervisor so that you are able to raise any concerns. If this doesn't work or if you feel unable to raise your concerns with your supervisor please send an email to the module leader, Linda Cinderey. If Linda Cinderey is your supervisor and you have concerns about her please contact Phaik Tan. You can also consult your student representative.

AIC MODULE Supervision meeting record Student's name: Supervisor's name: Date, time and duration of meeting: Purpose of Meeting: Key discussion issues within the meeting: Agreed further action: Signature of Student and date Signature of Supervisor and date APPENDIX BAdvice on presentations What is required? Each workshop is two-hours long and in each workshop there will be four or five groups making a presentation. You should therefore be prepared to make a 10-minute presentation and expect 10 minutes of questions. Questions will come from students and the lecturer. We expect you to have read all the articles and to be prepared to discuss them.

This is an important element in developing a spirit of enquiry, which is essential for success in your assignment and examination. You can access advice about making a presentation from the mySkills resources and support for learning site: http://www. uwe. ac.

uk/library/resources/hub/ Listening to presentations All students listening to the presentation will be asked to fill out a feedback form, an example is below. We expect students to ask questions after presentations. Listening to presentations is an important learning activity and we would expect you to reflect on what you have heard in your learning log. Attendance at all workshops is compulsory, even if you are not making a presentation. You are not supporting your fellow students if you fail to attend. To help you in listening to presentations and as evidence for your learning log, a brief form is available and an example is below. Why are Presentations Important? We

think that presentations are important because in your career you will be required to present.

You need to feel comfortable standing up in front of people. People in business have very little time – they will make decisions based on how you present your arguments as well as the nature of the arguments. Please see this email from a BAAF student who recently attended a careers development session with a firm of accountants (the names have been changed to ensure anonymity) I am just emailing to give you some feedback on the (a firm of accountants) session today. The session started off by discussing what commercial awareness is and how important it is in the interview process i.

e. it is important for applicants to be aware of business in the news as interviewers will often ask. Following this we did a quick quiz of 20 questions in our groups, which consisted of general questions such as where is the head office of (name of accountancy firm) based, how is inflation measured etc.

This was kind of an icebreaker I think to get us talking within our groups and to show the kind of information we would be expected to know as applicants. We were then handed a task in our groups. We were given about 25 pages of articles and were told that we had 20 minutes to read them and prepare a 5 minute presentation about the key issues, and the advantages and disadvantages that they may have for stakeholders. We were expected take facts from the articles and develop our own opinions. After the 20 minutes, she gave us another 15 minutes, and then we presented. She asked

quite challenging questions after the presentation. Apparently this is something we might have to do on an assessment day. Following the presentations she gave us a presentation on further interview skills that we could use for future applications.

She stressed throughout the session that although she was from (a firm of accountants) that this was a session to give us general application techniques, however when people asked questions towards the end regarding getting a job in (a firm of accountants) she was hugely helpful and I think she was prepared to offer herself as a contact which was great. All in all it was really useful, and not having had any experience of interviews or assessment centres, I feel that from what I learnt today I would be far better prepared now, it was truly a very valuable session. " Comments from Students on Presentations * ' The presentations should be assessed' – They are assessed indirectly via your learning log as presentations form a major part of your learning. * ' Group members don't show up – this isn't fair' – Agreed but they will probably fail their reflective report! FAQ on Presentations What is the point of the presentations? Employers now frequently require short-listed job applicants to make a presentation on a particular topic – so it is regarded as an important skill. The presentations seek to develop students' skills in critical thinking and evaluation, and the ability to summarise this succinctly in their presentations.

In order to present, one has to understand an article, more than would be the case if one had only to read it. Presentations are also a learning exercise as they allow students to reflect on how others approach presentations and

they can learn from this. Can we use Powerpoint for the presentations? Yes. Acetates or flip charts are also acceptable.

Do we need to dress formally for the presentations? No – but you are expected to present in a professional manner These forms are used in the presentation sessions Presentation feedback form for Accounting in Context Please complete this form after the presentation and hand to the presenters. Please give a mark out of 5 (where 1 = criteria not met, 3 = average and 5 = criteria fully met). Date…………. Topic…………………………. Group……………………………. Criteria| Mark| Comments| Were the objectives of the presentation clearly stated? | | | Were key points identified? | | | Were points well explained? | | | Was there a clear conclusion? | | | Were questions handled well? | | | Did presenters speak confidently? | | | Was the timing right, i. e. not rushed or too slow? | | | Did presenters make eye contact with the audience? | | | Were the visual aids useful? | | | Any other comments: Main strengths and weaknesses (write comments overleaf)| These forms are filled out by all those listening to the presentations.

They will have to be copied by group members and included in your learning logs. Memorandum for audience listening to student presentations Presentation date……………………………………. What did I learn from the presentation about accounting and finance? | | What did I learn from the presentation about making presentations? | | Good things I would adopt| | Weak things I would avoid| | Other points| | This form is kept for your log and is not given to the groups presenting APPENDIX C In-Course Assessment (ICA) Independent Study Activities Introduction We have designed a series of

independent study activities to support your ICA work. If you follow this programme of activities you should be ready to submit your topic choice form on time and be well prepared to make the most of your meetings with your supervisor. Activity 1 – what does the In-course Assessment involve? 1. Read through the coursework assignment. Check out the learning outcomes and ensure you know the requirements of the assignment.

2. Read through the activities for this term and you will see that you cannot afford to fall behind with the tasks. 3. Put the key dates in your diary now. 4. Read, and re-read key sections of the module handbook. There is a lot of information here. Try and make sense of the structure of the module, the learning resources provided and the work that you will need to do.

The assignment asks you to work professionally. You need to think what this involves. You have to: * demonstrate your awareness of topical business issues by selecting a topic * demonstrate your ability to search information sources for relevant information * evaluate that information critically, looking at its relevance and reliability Then you have the difficult task of writing a clear and readable report – a report that the finance director will be able to read quickly and yet still have a good understanding of the key issues. But there is even more to it than this. Working professionally means organizing your time so that the task is accomplished properly within the given time span.

You'll also find that working professionally involves working with others. This might be with students within your presentation groups. Or it might mean working with your supervisor, drawing on their expertise to support you in

your work. This is the nearest we can get to the real-life equivalent of having to approach your senior manager to touch base – that is check that you're working on the right lines and seeking clarification where you need it. A last point on this – working professionally also involves taking into account issues of professional responsibility, and ethics, sustainability and social responsibility. So for the in-course assignment, not only do you have to choose a topic, but you also have to demonstrate that you are aware of other issues arising in that area – to what extent do issues of ethics, sustainability and so on arise within that topic area? So you can see there's quite a lot involved in this in-course assignment! That's why we're asking you to keep learning at all times and to write a reflective report. Working professionally means that you're involved in the process of lifelong learning. This means learning from your mistakes, learning from others and learning through a process of reflection.

Reflection is not straightforward and that's why we've provided you with the series of directed learning activities around the learning log. Being aware of the professional framework that surrounds this module may help you in your applications for jobs. It will be important to you to stress to potential employers that you have the ability to act professionally – and that you know what it means to act " professionally". Activity 2 – start to consider a range of possible issues/questions Think about the work of a finance director. What are the ranges of information sources that they draw upon to make sure they are up-to-date? Have a look at the quality financial press, Accountancy magazine, Accountancy Age, Financial Management, ACCA and CIPFA publications. What websites might a finance director access? Browse through

these publications/sites and identify articles relating to the topic issues/questions that you are most interested in.

Remember the In-Course Assignment is not an essay. It's a piece of work that must be of value to the Financial Director and relevant to the strategic direction of the organisation. Activity 3 – which of your possible issues/questions are most feasible? This is an important week as you need to identify the feasibility of the issue/question you have chosen for your project. Are there a range of information sources you can draw in relation to this issue/question? i. e.

journals, magazines, websites, professional publications? Will a knowledge of this topic inform your organisation's strategy over the next few years? Remember, this is not an essay, this is a practical project that must be of value to the organisation. If you are stuck you will need to find some advice – have a look at the Library website on information searching tutorials. You may find that the topic you first selected isn't working out, in which case you need to go on to an alternative topic. It might be useful for you to think about, at this stage, the concept of " information literacy". You may not have come across this term before. So what does it mean? An information literate person is able to: * recognize the need for information and determine the extent of information needed * access the needed information effectively and efficiently * critically evaluate information and the information seeking process * manage information collected or generated apply prior and new information to construct new concepts or create new understandings * understand economic, legal, social, ethical and cultural issues in the use of

information * recognize information literacy as a prerequisite for lifelong learning As you go about your information searching, be aware that there might be more to it than you've realized.

Searching for information is an iterative process. It's also a learning process. Initially you may learn a lot from your mistakes. You'll find that it will be helpful to compare notes with fellow students – swapping tips and hints will save you a lot of time. It is particularly important to maintain a good list of references (in Harvard format, of course) from the very beginning. Information or evidence? One thing we would like you to think about is the difference between information and evidence. You'll be accessing a lot of information. But is this evidence? For information to become evidence it needs certain attributes. What might these attributes be? Activity 4 – narrowing down your issue/question Hopefully by now you have an issue/question that is feasible but you will probably need to narrow it down so that you can explore a particular aspect in depth. Have you got something that is narrow and specific that will contribute to your organisation's strategy? Activity 5 – complete the topic choice form You need to fill out the topic choice form. Yes, this is ahead of the submission date! This is because a professional approach allows for unforeseen interruptions to projects and for difficulties in identifying topic issue/question. Activity 6 – don't stop working whilst you wait for a supervisor to be allocated to you! 80% of you will be told that your topic is too broad. 75% of you will be told that it not clear how your work will inform your organisation's strategy. So carry on working, ensuring that you have a more feasible project when you meet with your supervisor. Carry on working on your review of information sources for

your issue/question. You will meet with your supervisor soon so please read through the module booklet about the supervision arrangements. Activity 7 – making the most of your meeting with your supervisor This week it is essential that you prepare for your first supervisory meeting. Read the section in the Module Handbook on " Using your supervisor effectively". Make sure you take the Supervision Meeting Record form (see Module Handbook) with you and complete this form at the end of the supervision meeting. It is up to you to manage this meeting to ensure that it is a useful meeting for you. Activity 8 – reflecting on the supervision meeting Reflect on how the meeting went in your learning journal. Do you need to take any follow-up action or approach it differently next time? If you have not yet met your supervisor – why not? A significant minority of students won't arrange to meet their supervisor until after Christmas. This is a big mistake – so don't fall into this trap. Why do students avoid it? Why are you avoiding it? Often it is because you feel that you haven't done enough work yet or you'll arrange it when you've done a bit more work. Arrange your meeting now. Activities 9/14 – keep going You are now on your own individual path. You need regular contact with your supervisor to make sure that you are on track. Keep working on the assignment every week, it will all be over sooner than you think. Make a timetable to make sure your draft project will be submitted on time. Appendix D – Developing a reflective capacity – Independent Study Activities Introduction A central aim of this module is to provide you with an opportunity to develop your reflective capacity. What do we mean by that the term " reflective capacity"? It means that you have the ability, and most importantly, the willingness, to reflect. Reflection is a form of thinking –

about some event or experience with a view to changing how we might act, react or generally learn from that experience. You might realise that you could have interpreted a situation differently or could have done something more effectively. This awareness may lead to a change in what you do, or how you see things, in future. Clearly, this is a capacity that we would expect all professionals to develop. The learning log We expect you to keep a learning log during the course. The purpose of the learning log is to give you the time and space to reflect on your learning during the module. This guidance handout provides you with a series of activities to help you ' get started'. We would expect that as you develop your reflective capacity you will become more self-aware, self-critical, and open to change. You may find that your motivation changes as a result of reflection – you may be surprised at how much you are learning, and this may encourage you to experiment and learn yet more. Activity 1 – Setting up your learning log In order to work out the best way to do this, you need to know what we expect you to do. As a bare minimum we suggest that you write in your log at least three times a fortnight: reflecting on * the lecture * the workshop; and * on any group or individual study activities. You will probably want to jot down immediate thoughts and reflections, during classes or independent study, while it is fresh in your mind. But you will also want to sit down at home and write in a more leisurely way too. So you'll probably find it easiest to use a loose-leaf A4 file/folder. This means that you can insert pieces of paper as and when you wish. Head up each reflection with the date and time, and your location. Leave a blank space, or column, on each page, so that you can go back a few days or weeks later, and add in any extra reflections. Start writing – now!

1. The learning outcomes for this module These are contained in the module handbook. Read them through now. And now make your first entries into your learning log. Do the learning outcomes make sense to you? Can you understand what they mean? Can you see how they relate to the activities in lectures and workshops and independent study? Write down any questions that you might have about these learning outcomes. You can raise these questions with the lecturer or workshop tutor when you next see them. You can also return to these later in the module and track your progress. 2. Where do I start? What might you write about? Here is a list of list of possibilities: Often it may be useful to reflect on a specific event: * describing the event or experience * asking yourself how it made you feel asking yourself how you responded to the event or experience * asking yourself how you might respond to a similar event in the future – what would you do differently? Issues, difficulties and confusions: * identify difficulties or confusions that you are experiencing * work out how to deal with these difficulties * identify how you might have avoided a difficulty/confusion Getting more out of activities: * identify how you might have made more of a particular event or situation * identify what you enjoy about the module/activity * work out how you can get more out of the module/activityIn addition, you might like to reflect on: * how your ideas are changing as the course progresses * how you are changing as the course progresses Another way of reflecting might be to ask, in a particular situation: * What do I know (take stock of existing knowledge)? * What do I need to know (identifying gaps in your knowledge)? * What do I need to do (and/or do I need to change how I feel)? * How well did that work? You might

also like to consider the learning outcomes set out in the appendix to this handout: * To what extent do you think that you are achieving these? * Do you have difficulty in understanding them? Can you see how they relate to the learning activities taking place in the lecture, workshops and independent study? Come back to this list again and again, and add to it. Should I only write about AIC? Obviously the main focus is AIC, but remember that AIC draws on all of your studies to date. It may often be the case that something that happens in another module sets you thinking, so write about it. You might find a particularly interesting activity/event elsewhere (maybe at work or at home) is an important learning experience, and you might want to write about that too. Activity 2 – Checking up – have you set up your learning log yet? You'll probably find that you'll need to experiment in the first few weeks, trying to find a convenient way of keeping it and also setting up a routine that works for you. Do you have an entry for every lecture, workshop, and period of independent study so far? How do you learn? You might find it useful at this stage to start reflecting on the way in which you learn. You may find that some aspects of the course, or ways that you are taught, suit you better than others. One way of reflecting on this is to try a quiz! This can be accessed from the following web site: http://www4. ncsu. du/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/ILSpage. html Compare your results with those of a friend. Or ask your tutor what their results look like! Don't place too much importance on the precise results that you get. Some researchers doubt the value of this particular questionnaire, but it makes a good talking and discussion point. There is no right or wrong way to learn – mostly it's a question of being aware of how you prefer to

learn and to consider whether that is the most appropriate way for the particular circumstances. It's useful to think about you own learning approach and how you can adapt and change it if necessary. How do you feel about writing? Sometimes it's difficult to get started. So you might find it useful to use some of the following starting points – try these out: * the most important thing I learnt was… * the most annoying thing about… was * the most enjoyable thing about… was * the most boring thing was… * the most intriguing thing was… * my biggest problem today… * next time I'll do it like this…. * one thing I learned today was about how I learn… * one thing I learned today was about how I react… * one thing I learned today is about how other people act… * one thing I learned today was about the subject… one thing I learned today was about what I prioritize… * one thing I learned today was about how I avoid… * I discussed it with a friend and… Reflect on these activities in your learning log. Activity 3 – How is the writing going? Are you writing up at least three times a fortnight: lecture, independent study and workshop? If you find that you cannot keep this up – try working with a friend. Writing doesn't come naturally to everybody. So you could try an experiment. How about drawing a picture, a diagram or a mind map instead? Try writing a letter to a friend – imagine that you're talking to them. Sometimes recording your thoughts on tape can be useful – write it up later. Why a learning log? It's quite likely, at this stage, that you may not be convinced about the value of keeping a learning log. We think it's important because it is a way of improving your own learning and performance, thinking about working with others and how to problem-solve. It's a vital support to learning to think critically – a central aim of this module. Try doing

a search on Google " learning logs" – you'll find that there is plenty of advice available out there. Don't spend too long on this. But just see if you can pick up some useful tips from the first few " hits". Reflect on this activity in your learning log. Activity 4 – I hate this! Who likes keeping a learning log – is there anyone out there? The task for this week is to find one fellow student who likes keeping a learning log, or even if they don't enjoy it, finds that it is valuable for them. We hope that this won't take you too long…Find out why they think it is a useful activity – and find out how they make it work for them – when do they write, how do they write, how can you make it less of a chore? Reflect on this activity in your learning log. By way of encouragement we find that, by the end of the module, many students (reluctantly) concede that, once they had got into it, they found that the learning log was a really useful support. Activity 5 – Choosing your project topic It's now getting close to the time when you will have chosen your project topic. You might like to reflect on how you chose your topic, the process involved and what you have learnt from this. It's a good time to look back on the whole process – you might ask yourself, what have you learned from the process? How might you have done it differently? If you haven't chosen your project topic, think about how best to support yourself. Have you really given this your best shot? Support is available from: * The module handbook * The ICA Independent Study activities * Fellow students * Your tutors – go on, ask for help, you can't afford to get behind and we want to help Meeting with your supervisor You will be allocated a supervisor shortly. It's a good idea to think in advance, about how best to use your supervisor. Every year, some students do not meet sufficiently often with their supervisor, or at all! We are never

sure quite why this is. Be assured, it is much better to talk with your supervisor, even if you feel you have got behind with your work. Reflect on how you feel about making regular contact with your supervisor. Initial feedback from your supervisor may be that your topic is too broad or it won't contribute to the strategic direction of the organisation. This is quite usual – don't despair. But it does mean that you will have to go back to the drawing board – and this is a good point for reflection. Activity 6 – Back to learning outcomes