

# **BDMX 8023 BUSINESS CONSULTATION GUIDELINES**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Business Consultation (BDMX 8023) is a compulsory component of the DBA program. Students are required to undertake a consultancy assignment in any SMEs or large firms for a period of one semester as a case study project. The businesses or firms will be chosen by the students themselves. It is the student's responsibility to negotiate the details of the consultancy with the firms, negotiate resources and schedule any meetings. The assessment for this course will be based on the case study report prepared by the student. All the cases written by the students must be accompanied by a permission letter from the respective organizations that permit the case study to be used in teaching or to be published by UUM.

Students will treat consultancy works as an ideal opportunity and vehicle for integrating what they have learned during the DBA program, and apply these concepts and skills to a real problem solution. Students will also gain hands-on experience of undertaking consulting in SMEs or large firms and this will enhance their academic understanding and practical skills of the consultancy process.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

The main objectives of the DBA consultancy are:

- a. To provide students with an opportunity to draw together and integrate the knowledge gained and the skills developed from the DBA program.
- b. To provide students with an opportunity of independent study and to develop an ability to organize work with a view to achieve specific goals.
- c. To develop students with skills in business strategy, operations or in similar integrative activities appropriate and relevant to their organizations and personal development needs and goals.

## **3. PROCESS**

At the beginning of the new semester, students are required to register for BDMX 8023 Business Consultation on-line and fill-up the consultation registration form available from the OYAGSB's website.

- a. The consultation registration form should be submitted to the Coordinator of the DBA Program within the first week of the new semester. In the consultation

registration form, each student should identify the company and the area of consultation work that they intent to work on.

- b. In week two, the mentor who will guide the student throughout the consultation project will be notified.
- c. Students is expected to complete the consultancy report and submit the report (in a loose copy form) to the respective mentor in week 12<sup>th</sup> (please refer to the academic calendar-*date of submit project paper/practicum report/internship*).
- d. Based on the comments and suggestions made by the mentor, students are required to make the appropriate amendments/corrections and submit **TWO (2) hard bound copies** AND **one softcopy in CD format** (please use Microsoft Word file and not PDF file) of the report to the mentor in OYAGSB's office in week 14<sup>th</sup>.
- e. Mentor will be given two weeks two review the report and submit the grade to the DBA course coordinator.

To successfully undertake the consultancy works, students must first assess their skills and interests. Based on this interest, students should select the industry and firms that can provide them with the best opportunity to show their application of the theories learned from the DBA program.

Importantly, students need to support their conclusions with logical analysis. The "why" portion of their analysis is as important as the "what." Both substance and style are important in effective written communication.

The case study report is complex and the conclusions will be derived from many hours of research, thinking, and writing. Students should envision themselves as writing for a group of potential investors interested in learning about the focal firm. The report should be complete, accurate, and objective. All conclusions should be clear and well supported. A well-organized presentation helps enormously in simplifying a complex subject and shows clear thinking on the students.

Tables, charts, and figures may be included in an exhibits section. Do not use an exhibit unless you refer to it in the text of the paper. The source of the information in the exhibit must be shown on the exhibit.

#### **4. CONTENT OF THE CASE STUDY REPORT**

Below is the suggested outline for the written consultancy case study report. This outline is intended to provide student with an idea of the potential scope of the project. Student may adjust it to suit the specific circumstances of the chosen company.

### **1. Title page**

The firm's name and student's name should be highlighted as well as course's name and code.

### **2. Title and Abstract**

The title is very important and should be concise, easy to read, and free from academic jargon, as well as quickly capture the reader's attention. Ideally, the title should contain the basic name of the organization (e.g. Hartalega Sdn Bhd could be written as Hartalega only) and should not have more than 10 words. The abstract is summary of case (organization, protagonist, decision point) in not more than 250 words. The readers should get the basic idea about the case from the abstract. It may be advisable to provide 5 key words after the case in a separate line with a header

### **3. Case Objectives**

Before beginning the writing process, the DBA students should have 2 to 5 case objectives they would like to share with their supervisor and other readers. The case objective is summary of learning objectives. One of the best ways to develop objectives is to answer the following question:

"After discussing this case, readers will be able to..."

The objectives should specify exactly what readers should know and be able to apply after they finish reading and discussing the case.

Words that leave room for ambiguity about what is expected of the reader should be avoided. "Understand," for example, should be replaced with action verbs such as "explain," "interpret," "outline," "discuss," "distinguish," "predict," "restate," "translate," "compare," or "describe." The commonly used "demonstrate" should be rephrased with words such as "solve," "show," "use," "illustrate," "construct," "complete," "examine," or "classify."

### **4. Introduction**

The introduction to the case should identify the protagonist and central characters of the case and the situation and challenges facing the protagonist with a vignette (short story). Here the protagonist should be asking himself or herself the questions that readers will have to answer during their reading, group preparation, and class discussion of the case. The central challenges should be seen through the protagonist's biases and assumptions. The protagonist should have to make a decision, provide recommendations, or develop an action plan

relevant to the central questions of the case within a specified period. Some guidelines:

1. Within the first paragraph, identify the protagonist.
2. Within the first few paragraphs, present—from the protagonist’s point of view—the decision point. Identify other major players, if relevant. The quotes from the case personalities should be there to increase the authenticity of the case and to evoke reader’s interest in the case.
3. Provide the context for the situation. Include the situation’s time frame, location, the purpose of the company or organization, relevant business factors, and the goal of the protagonist.

**5. Background on the Company, Industry, and Competitors**

In this section, DBA students should give background information to the case. However, it is very important to avoid revealing what actually happened in the case. Here the DBA students should provide information on the history of the featured company, which is often best organized chronologically and includes how the company came into existence, how long the company has been around, and what the company does (i.e., its business model). It is also important to identify the company’s major products, services, and customers. The DBA student should also consider depicting the culture and leadership of the company or organization, if relevant to the case.

The information on Industry & Competitors is also important. The DBA student can provide information on how the featured company stacks up against competitors which means what is the standing of the company or its market share within the industry. If detailed information is not available then, at least, information on major competitors should be provided.

**6. Business Issues/Challenges**

Next the DBA student should provide the business issues and challenges facing the protagonist, including a breakdown of the problem and the information available to the protagonist and central characters of the case to solve the problem. This is equivalent to the problem statement while writing a research report. Also, it should include enough background information for the reader to analyze the decision point, which might include revenues, profits and losses, and other financial valuations. If relevant to the case, the writer can also include historical information, trends, direct quotations from participants and analysts, and essential tables and figures. Sometimes portions of the protagonist’s career relevant to the current situation may also be included in the case.

The information presented in these sections should be directly tied to the protagonist/central character narrative, including the protagonist's biases and feelings as he/she goes about working through the central questions of the case.

## **7. Solutions/ Recommendations**

The case analysis is to be provided in the form of solutions according to the issues. Here, DBA student should restate the issue in the beginning and then provide solution in detail. The DBA student should repeat this process issue by issue, till all the issues are over.

The solutions should specifically answer the issues raised in the previous section. The student could use various analytic tools to analyze the issues e.g. force field analysis, fish bone analysis, Porter's 5 force analysis, SWOT analysis, financial analysis, and any other analysis depending on the problem area e.g. if the issue face by the organization is financial in nature then financial ratios and analysis may be relevant. But if the issue is related to marketing then strategic analysis may be tried. It means that the student should do the analysis in specific reference to the theories they have learned in various business and management courses. They should include some discussion on the relevance of the theory to the case situation. . In short, the DBA student should justify the solution based on some theoretical consideration and should also cite the relevant references for that.

## **8. Conclusion**

In the conclusion, the DBA student should draw the reader's attention back to the protagonist of the case and briefly revisit the case study's central problem. The relevant case questions can be highlighted in this section. The DBA student should restate what has been the learning out of this case.

## **9. Footnotes**

All jargons should be defined for DBA students in footnotes.

## **10. References**

Whatever sources have been used should be mentioned in this section. The DBA student should provide complete reference so that examiner can cross-examine. The DBA student should follow the APA style version 6. The samples are given below:

**Journal**

Williams, J. H. (2008). Employee engagement: Improving participation in safety. *Professional Safety*, 53(12), 40-45.

**Book**

Wheelan, T.L. & Hunger, J. D., Hoffman, A.N. & Bamford, C.E. (2015). *Strategic Management and Business Policy* (14th Ed). Boston, US: Pearson.

**Magazine Article**

Mathews, J., Berrett, D., & Brillman, D. (2005, May 16). Other winning equations. *Newsweek*, 145(20), 58-59.

**Newspaper Article**

Generic Prozac debuts. (2001, August 3). *The Washington Post*, pp. E1, E4

**Article Retrieved from an Online Database**

Senior, B., & Swailes, S. (2007). Inside management teams: Developing a teamwork survey instrument. *British Journal of Management*, 18, 138-153. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8551.2006.00507.x

**Online Report**

Kenney, G. M., Cook, A., & Pelletier, J. (2009). Prospects for reducing uninsured rates among children: How much can premium assistance programs help? Retrieved from Urban Institute website: <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=411823>

**Others**

Give the details in the above format but also give complete URL or DOI.

**11. Exhibits**

The exhibits contain additional information relevant to solving the case. Exhibits can be very complex, such as complete financial statements. The exhibits should appear after the text portion of the case (including references) in a section with the subhead "Exhibits." They should all also have titles, for example:

EXHIBIT 1: BASIC ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Furthermore, exhibits can include financial statements, timelines, diagrams, charts, tables, pictures, and graphs. In some cases it is possible to include or link to multimedia supplements, such as an interview video with the case's protagonist. An exhibit can have its own references or sources of information.

## Important Instructions for the DBA students

### 1. Narration Style

A business case study confronts readers with a real-life situation and engages their abilities to solve its challenges. In presenting a specific business or policy situation—one that does not have an obvious solution—the case provides information for discussion. A good case study stimulates an educated conversation and the building of business knowledge.

Good cases create an interactive, discovery-learning process where DBA students learn to face business situations. Someone reading the case should be provided with the information needed to form assumptions and make good decisions. A good case is fun; it creates a participatory learning process in which DBA students learn from one another. A well-written case compels readers to distill complex subject matter that crosses functions and helps them begin to get comfortable with making decisions.

Writing a good business case study as a final report in the Business Consultation course BDMX 8023 is not difficult if the DBA student internalizes a basic template and writes the case around solid learning objectives and a compelling narrative.

### 2. Writing Style

- a. **Size of the Case:** The size of the case should be at least 10,000 words without Exhibits.
- b. **Typeface and Font Size:** The students must use MS Word. The version should not be older than 2007. The entire text of the case, including headings and page numbers, must be produced using Times New Roman font. The font size should be 12 point. Table titles should be before table and in bold font. Figure titles should be after the figure and in bold font. The students must choose headings and subheadings from the dropdown menu rather than creating in their own style.
- c. **Margin:** For binding purposes, the left margin should be at least 4cm (1.5 inch) and the right, top and bottom margins should be at least 2.5cm (1 inch). Margin specifications are meant to facilitate binding and trimming. All information (tables, footnotes and figures), including page number, must be within the text area.

- d. **Spacing:** The case should be typed in 1.15 line spacing and there should be at least one line space between paragraphs and sections. Body text should be justified.
- e. **Pagination:** Each page, including those in the appendices must be numbered consecutively. All pages should be numbered at the bottom of the page.

### **3. Protagonist**

The case situation appears real if the case is narrated from the point of view of someone involved in the situation. Therefore, cases should have a central character, called Protagonist, facing a business situation under time pressure and other constraints. Readers should be able to put themselves in the shoes of the protagonist and use the case details to make decisions based on the protagonist's perspective. It is important to identify the protagonist's roles and responsibilities. This information gives the reader an idea of the role to assume and the tactics that could be recommended. It is possible to use a team as the protagonist, but it can be more difficult for the DBA student to create empathy for a team than for an individual. Sometimes it is better to condense the work of a team into a single protagonist.

### **4. Decision Point**

Not only a case should have a protagonist but should also have issues/challenges and an end point where the protagonist will have to make a decision. The ultimate purpose of a case is to stimulate decision making in real or similar to real situations applying the management theories or concepts. The readers should have various ways of coming to a conclusion using course concepts.

A situation demanding decision is typically one involving more than one alternative. Therefore, a good narration of case requires that decision point should involve a few alternatives.

### **5. Neutral Stand**

The DBA student should not be opinioned while writing the case study report. It is best to take a neutral stand. The common mistake that is often committed by the DBA students is to write the case in support of a particular decision or a particular conclusion. The onus of decision should be left to the reader. The case writer should be as objective as possible.

## **6. Obtaining a Company's Permission to Use a Case Study**

**Important:** All the cases written by DBA students must be accompanied by permission from the organization about which the cases have been written.

The DBA student should ensure that permission must be obtained from the company. It is best to let the organization know up front that DBA student are writing a case study that will be used in teaching and published for use in institutions of higher learning by UUM or for publishing on behalf of UUM (the sample permission format, a sample request from the OYAGSB, UUM and some sample permissions are enclosed).

## **GUIDE TO REPORT SUBMISSION**

### **1. TITLE PAGE**

Must contain the following:

- a. Title of project
- b. "A consultancy report submitted to the Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctorate of Business Administration University Utara Malaysia"
- c. Full name of Author
- d. Month and Year report was submitted.
- e. DO NOT number this page

### **2. CERTIFICATION OF CONSULTATION REPORT (available from the OYAGSB's website)**

### **3. CONSENT TO USE (available from the OYAGSB's website)**

### **4. PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE ORGANIZATION (sample available on OYAGSB website)**

### **5. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/ABSTRACT**

Executive summary/abstract is a summary of the report and should contain a brief write-up of the problems and summary of the findings in context of the whole area of study. Number this page as i.

## **6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- a. This is a statement of appreciation to the chosen company, mentor, colleagues and other assistance obtained during consultancy period and etc.
- b. Number this page ii.

## **7. TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- a. Comprises the titles of parts, sections or chapters and their subdivision.
- b. Must be worded exactly as in the text. Must have Headings (1, 2, 3 and so on), sub – headings (1.1, 1.2, 1.3) and sub headings (1.2.1, 1.2.2 and so on)
- c. Further divisions to be indicated by small letters in parenthesis eg. 1.2.1(a), 1.2.1(b) and so on.
- d. Number this page iii.

## **8. LIST OF TABLES and FIGURES**

- a. Must be worded exactly as in text.
- b. Page number begins with vii and so on.

## **9. CONTENT OF THE CASE STUDY REPORT (REFER SECTION 4 ABOVE)**

## **10. REFERENCES**

- a. To refer to other works either by direct quotation or by reference.
- b. Start on a fresh page.
- c. Words REFERENCES to be centralized in capital letters.
- d. Five (5)cm from the top.

## **11. APPENDICES**

- a. Referred in the text.
- a. Comprises of supplementary illustrative materials, original data, quotations too long for inclusion in the text or lengthy experimental methods.
- b. Words APPENDICES to be centralized in capital letters.
- c. Do not number this sheet.
- d. Must be listed in the Table of Contents.

## **12. LENGTH OF REPORT**

Generally, consultancy report should be around 10 000 words.

### **13. COVER OF REPORT**

- a. The cover (1 hard-bound copies, black in colour) must contain the following:
  - Full report title
  - Your full name
  - Universiti Utara Malaysia
  - Year of submission

### **14. PAPER**

Use 80gm, A4 size (210 x 297 mm), white paper.

### **15. PRINTING**

- a. Print on one side
- b. Page setup to paper size A4.
- c. Computer paper or carbon copies are NOT allowed.

### **16. TYPING QUALITY**

- a. Typed on one side.
- b. Times New Roman font.
- c. Font size 12.

### **17. SPACING**

- a. 1.15 line spacing for text.
- b. Single spacing for long tables, table titles, long quotations, notes, footnotes, multiline caption and bibliographic entries.

### **18. SYMBOLS**

- a. Symbols or special characters not found on the computer key board are to be drawn using a mechanical guide with black Indian ink.
- b. For formulas, use equation editor including subscripts and superscripts.