



Agreement on project-oriented study in an external organization

Study Board of Media Technology

Preface

This guide provides information on project-oriented study in an external organization and applies to all parties involved, i.e. students, coordinators, supervisors and companies.

Please direct any questions or comments concerning this guide to
mtstudyboard@create.aau.dk

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Table of contents:

Preface.....	2
Table of contents:	3
General information	4
How students benefit from project-oriented study.....	4
How organizations benefit from project-oriented study	5
How Aalborg University benefits from project-oriented study.....	5
Contact to relevant organizations.....	6
The tasks of the parties involved	7
The student's tasks.....	7
The tasks of the semester coordinator	7
The tasks of the AAU project supervisor.....	7
The tasks of the supervisor from the external organization.....	7
Project documentation	8
Evaluation.....	8
Finance and insurance.....	9

General information

If the study curricula allows it, the student can use a full semester or part of a semester in project-oriented study in an external organization¹. In most cases, the project-oriented study takes place on the third semester of the master programme.

Often students have worked on projects with involvement from companies or organizations during earlier semesters. This cooperation might have been conducted in connection with a project proposal formulated by an organization and may have involved the students being in regular contact with employees in the organization. Typically, when working on these projects, the students will have been members of student project groups at Aalborg University, enabling them to use all available university facilities.

Project-oriented study within organization differs from this in several ways. First of all, work will be carried out within the organization allowing students to experience first-hand the interplay between theory and practice. The student is expected to become an integral part of the workplace and to participate in the day-to-day life of the organization. This is an individual module, and so perhaps for the first time, the student will work without the support of fellow students.

The course of the project-oriented study must be planned in such a manner that the learning objectives of the semester are fulfilled. This means that the academic content, period and supervision must be arranged and approved by the study board.

It is essential that project-oriented study in an organization will not prolong the student's studies beyond the expected duration of the master's programme. This means that the module must be completed within one semester (September 1 to January 31 or February 1 to June 30). This period must include both the actual project-oriented study and the concluding examination.

The extent of the project-oriented study is described in the study curricula. From the curricula, it will appear if there is a possibility to combine the project-oriented study in an organization with one or more course modules. However, the full extent will normally be on 30 ECTS.

How students benefit from project-oriented study

The project-oriented study in an organization provides a student with hands-on experience that may prove crucial to the chances of finding a job after graduation.

In addition, students may benefit from the following:

- gaining experience in communicating and cooperating with an organization
- having the opportunity to test their competences in practice

¹ In this guide, the term organization is used as a wide term including companies, institutions, public administration etc. in Denmark and abroad.

- gaining knowledge of the business world, including work methods and processes
- gaining relevant work experience
- a personal recommendation
- increasing their professional network
- inspiration and cooperation contacts for the final project

How organizations benefit from project-oriented study

A student may contribute to an organization in several ways. The student will be an additional resource to an organization and may often contribute with a new perspective.

Students can often provide the organization with:

- gaining a new perspective on and new ideas for the professional issues relating to the organization as well as its working processes and tasks
- gaining knowledge of theories and methods within the student's academic field
- creating contacts among students and employees at Aalborg University

How Aalborg University benefits from project-oriented study

Aalborg University prioritizes maintaining a close contact to its constituency and emphasizes the need to ensure the relevance of its study programs and research. Project-oriented study in an organization contributes to this by:

- establishing contacts with organizations
- acting as a facilitator of academic and professional sparring
- providing inspiration for study programs and research
- prepare students for a professional career

Contact to relevant organizations

A student may find relevant organizations through different channels e.g.:

- contacting employees at Aalborg University and use their connections
- participate in job fairs such as DSE etc.
- postings in job banks such as jobbank.aau.dk or at the International Office at Aalborg University²
- contacting older students who have been in project-oriented study in an organization before
- contacting study secretaries / study board secretaries to get information about organizations where earlier agreements have been made
- using social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)

² For further details about job postings see the International Office at AAU:
<http://www.internationaloffice.aau.dk/internships-abroad/internships-abroad>

The tasks of the parties involved

Project-oriented study involves apart from the student, a project supervisor, a semester coordinator and a supervisor from the organization.

The student, semester coordinator and company supervisor, must sign a written agreement.

The student's tasks

First, the student must contact the semester coordinator to discuss requirements and expectations to the project-oriented study in an organization. Accordingly, it is the student's responsibility to make a written agreement about the project-oriented study. If the organization wants an agreement in terms of confidentiality or rights, it is recommended to use standard agreements made by the Grants and Contracts Office at Aalborg University³.

The tasks of the semester coordinator

The semester coordinator supervises the student in finding an organization and approves that the project-oriented study is in accordance with the learning objectives of the semester. The semester coordinator can after the agreement is made, delegate the supervision of the student to a project supervisor at AAU.

The tasks of the AAU project supervisor

The AAU project supervisor must maintain regular contact with students during their project-oriented study and may visit students during their project-oriented study period. The project supervisor acts as the student's academic mentor. When the project-oriented study has been completed, the project supervisor is responsible for the evaluation of the student in accordance with the study curricula.

The tasks of the supervisor from the external organization

The company will appoint a supervisor from the external organization to whom the student is to refer during the course of the project-oriented study. It is essential that this person is specialized and experienced within the student's field of study. The supervisor from the organization will ensure that the objectives of the project-oriented study are met by supervising, that the student:

- is assigned tasks in accordance with the agreement made. The aim is that the student gets academically relevant tasks in accordance with the student's study level. It is required that the nature of the work enables the student to prepare project documentation that documents the fulfilment of the objectives of the semester
- gets insight into the organization and business areas of the organization
- becomes an integral part of the organization and, if possible, takes part in social as well as professional events
- receives support and guidance from the external organization as stipulated in the agreement. Please note, however, that the student will also receive support and guidance from the University; thus, the external organization employees are not solely responsible for helping the student

Project documentation

The student prepares, during his/her project-oriented study, project documentation, which documents the fulfillment of the learning objectives. The study curricula and/or the study board may have specific requirements to the project documentation.

The project documentation must include both academic as well as a reflective part, where the academic part must be the most dominant part.

The (dominant) academic part of the project documentation must include at least one of the relevant academic subjects, which is part of the study programme and the student has worked with during the stay in the external company. The project documentation includes – if relevant – problem analysis, theory, methods, models, solutions, implementation, test, conclusion etc. The work with the academic subject/s must be at a level corresponding to the actual semester and describe advanced engineering tasks in a business context.

The (less) reflective part of the project documentation must include a description of the organization – including organization and work areas, an overview of and short description of the tasks the students has been involved in. In addition, it must include an analysis of the output of the stay in the company in terms of academic, social, and working experiences and possible suggestions to changes in the curricula, procedures etc.

Finally, the project documentation must include a reflection of the knowledge exchange between the company and the study programme.

Evaluation

The project-oriented study will be concluded with an internal oral examination based on the student's project documentation. The examination will be held in accordance with the study curricula as regards participation of examiners and the assessment. The examination will apart from the student be attended by, the AAU project supervisor and the supervisor from the external organization, who is though not allowed to participate in the examination of the student

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which the student has met the learning objectives of the project module and this will be conducted based on an overall assessment of the written documentation, the student's presentation and the following discussion. In order for the student to pass the exam, all of the above-mentioned aspects must be fulfilled³.

³ For further information please refer to the examination policies and procedures for examinations at Aalborg University

Finance and insurance

As project-oriented study is a standard part of a study programme, therefore the student may not (according to the University Programme Order) enter an agreement of project-oriented study where the company is paying salary to the student, i.e. a paid company stay. The rule is the same regardless of the individual student's SU (State Funding) status. Students may only receive contributions to costs or fixed monthly costs e.g. transport, rent and phone. If students wish to enter an agreement of a paid company stay, this cannot be done as part of the nominal length of the study programme and it will not be registered at the student's examination certificate, which also means that the student is obliged to take a leave to complete the company stay.

The organization can choose to give the student a financial acknowledgement, which corresponds to no more than 3,000 DKK a month. In order for the student to get this financial acknowledgement in connection with the project-oriented study the financial acknowledgement must not be given as a pre-paid fixed income, which the student can expect to receive like his/her salary. The financial acknowledgement cannot be part of the agreement. The financial acknowledgement is subject to taxation in accordance with current tax legislation.

If the project-oriented study takes place abroad, other conditions can apply. The student can contact the university or his/her member organization for more information.

The student is not covered automatically by the company's liability and accident insurance. The conditions of insurance must therefore be agreed between the student and the company. Therefore, it must be clear in the agreement form between the student and the company, if the student is covered by the company insurance. If the company does not take out an insurance for the student, it is recommended that the student takes out a liability and spare time/accident insurance to ensure that the student is fully covered. The liability insurance is necessary, if the student should cause damage. It is a requirement that the work in the company does not involve a risk to the health and security of the student.

It is expected that the organization makes normal work facilities available for the student during the period.