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Handbook of Project Writing under the Study Board for Cross-Cultural Studies

Culture, Communication and Globalization & Tourism

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Handbook of Project Writing
Under the Study Board for Cross-Cultural Studies:

Culture, Communication and Globalization
&
Tourism

Aalborg University, March 2012

Robert C. Thomsen and Julia Zhukova Klausen

Good project writing is a skill that must be learned gradually. Therefore, we recommend that you revisit this guide occasionally to enable actual 'real life' experience to allow you to better appreciate some of the introductions and advice provided here. Hands-on experience, supervision and this guide in combination should improve your skills and increase your awareness of what the good project is, and thus your own ability to produce one.

We wish you enjoyable and fruitful reading!

Robert C. Thomsen and Julia Zhukova Klausen,
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Table of Contents

1. The 'Aalborg Model' in brief

The 'Aalborg Model' basically refers to a way of learning that emphasises the central place of a problem in an extensive project developed by students under faculty supervision. To place project writing in its proper frame, it is useful first to address the central question: why does the 'Aalborg Model' place so much emphasis on problem based learning (PBL) and project writing?

One very good reason is that this particular approach to academic education improves the learning outcome by removing learning from one-way, class-room based communication. Anyone who has sat in on seemingly endless lectures delivered by teachers from behind a lectern will appreciate how this form is rarely conducive to learning. Whereas some institutions of higher learning still believe in the idea that students can simply drive into the 'academic gas station' and be filled up with knowledge in this fashion, most have come to realise that practical, hands-on learning multiplies the knowledge acquired many times − and makes it stick!

It is clear from this that there is an important and active role for students to play in the process of learning. Through PBL and project writing they not only *acquire* knowledge, but through active participation and hands-on practice they cooperate in *creating* it.

Furthermore, this particular approach to learning very efficiently integrates theory and practice. Students will be challenged to connect and apply the largely theoretical knowledge that has been procured during lectures/seminars to the specific problems investigated in project work. This ensures that you, already as a student, will build up valuable experience in applying theory in practice, thus increasing the sophistication of your analysis.

Closely related to this point is the fact that PBL and project writing simulate 'real-life' problem-solving. This means that through project work you will development important competences to do with independent project management as well as problem solving skills. As you can imagine, this kind of knowledge and experience is much appreciated by future employers whose assignments to you will not come with ready-to-go methodologies or answers/conclusions to choose from.

Three basic terms to focus the rest of this guide should be introduced before we proceed. They have been defined in the 'Principles of Problem and Project Based Learning' (Barge 2010), which is the official AAU document in this regard. If you feel you do not immediately recognise or understand the definitions, do not despair. They will all be elaborated further on in this guide:

Problem: "[…] Grows out of students' wondering. […][I]s the starting point directing the students' learning process and situates the learning in a context".

Project: "A complex effort [on the basis of a formulated problem] that necessitates an analysis, […] must be planned and managed [and] completed at a point in time determined in advance".

Supervisor: A faculty member "serving as a resource for […] students engaged in project work. [An] advisor or facilitator". (Barge 2010)

2. Projects written under the Study Board for Cross-Cultural Studies

The Study Board for Cross-Cultural Studies organises two different MA programmes: *Culture, Communication and Globalization (CCG)* and *Tourism*.

Each has its own Regulations and Curriculum (*Studieordning*), which is the central legal and defining document of the programme. Guidelines, such as the one you are currently reading, have been developed to fit a particular set of regulations and procedures at a given time. Therefore, regardless of what you may hear from fellow students or faculty or what you may read in guidelines, *always consult the relevant sections of your Regulations and Curriculum* with regard to any module or exam you seek information about.

According to the Regulations and Curriculum, students in both programmes will be writing two projects as part of their studies towards the MA: one to conclude the 7th semester, and one to conclude the 8th. Both programmes place much value in project writing which is reflected in the fact that the project module is worth 20 ECTS in the CCG programme and 15 ECTS in the Tourism programme on both the 7th and the 8th semester.

Each programme will offer a number of courses that are designed to inspire and provide thematic and theoretical bases for project writing. Both programmes aim to place all courses within the initial eight weeks of the semester to allow students to devote all their energy and time to project work during the remainder of the term.

3. Elements that constitute a project

Figure 3.1 outlines what we may term a 'classic' project. This means these elements are *usually* to be found in projects in either of the two programmes organised under the Study Board. You are free, however, to weigh elements as best fits your project, change the sequence of elements, or merge them. Still, for most projects, the proper and useful structure includes all these elements. Below the figure, all the elements will be further explored.

Fig. 3.1: CONTENTS OF THE PROJECT

Introduction	Purpose, problem formulation: - What is the problem that this project seeks to explore? - Why is this a relevant/topical/interesting problem?
Method	Method(s) of analysis/approach: - How will you approach and explore this problem? - Why did you choose this particular research design (incl. particular kinds of sources/data)?
Theory	Presentation and critical discussion of theories relevant to the identified problem.
Analysis	Critical use/discussion of data and sources. Make sure to apply theory actively in your analysis. You may choose to include discussion in your analysis or separate these into different chapters.
Conclusion	Summary of findings, answering questions posed in the introduction.
List of references	Works cited.

3.1. Introduction and problem formulation

Every project should begin by introducing the topic and formulating the problem that the project seeks to explore. A project introduction is meant to engage with such questions as: "What will this project be about?", and "Why is this a relevant and interesting problem to concern oneself with in a project?" It usually makes much sense to set the scene before introducing and formulating the problem. In this way, you provide the context that will enable you to argue the relevance of the problem, and provide the reader (your examiners) with the necessary background to properly appreciate the arguments you make about relevance.

Choosing a general topic to write about is usually pretty easy. Having chosen that topic however, you must now narrow down the focus of your topic to 'distil' your problem formulation. In the following we will provide you with some of the basic tenets of problem formulation.

3.1.1. The good problem formulation

As you will have gathered from reading the first parts of the guide, defining and formulating a problem is essential to PBL-style project writing. A problem was defined as something which "grows out of students' wondering", and which is "the starting point directing the students' learning process and situates the learning in a context" (Barge 2010). This means a problem is both a starting point that directs the study, and that which focuses and frames the entire project.

It is important that you do not think in simple terms about a problem only as something which is not working, or needs fixing (as something 'problematic'). That approach is possible also, but more common (and often more rewarding) is considering a 'problem' in a wider sense as something that derives from your puzzlement. It can be something which has not yet been fully discovered or debunked, something about which we seem to have wrong or insufficient knowledge or something which is unclear or underexplored. In other words, the problem is not necessarily one of malfunction, but very often one of potentially rewarding investigation.

> **Example:** "This project sets out to explore the role of differing cultural self-perceptions in the representation of two famous UNESCO heritage sites: Kronborg Castle in Denmark and Taj Mahal in India. What are the cultural interests at play, and how do local site managers cope with a diversity of culturally based expectations?"

Basing your problem formulation on puzzlement or curiosity is an excellent approach to avoiding the pitfalls of formulating an unfocussed, irrelevant problem, or a problem that lends itself only to simple descriptive analysis (as opposed to critical, independent analysis).

For you to be able to ensure coherence throughout the project from introduction (where the problem formulation is placed) to conclusion, you must start out with a doable and manageable research problem before you get into any detailed considerations about methodology, or analysis. It is a good idea to formulate your problem before developing an outline. It does not necessarily have to be formulated as one or more questions, but might read something like "This project sets out to explore the causes of … Furthermore, it aims to…". It is often helpful, however, also to narrow down the focus of the thesis in the form of research questions, such as "What are the cultural interests at play, and how do local site managers cope with a diversity of culturally based expectations?" in the example above.

Whereas the methodology will be asking questions of the 'how' kind: 'how do I plan to go about answering my problem formulation?', the problem formulation itself will be asking questions of the 'what' and 'why' kind: what will this thesis investigate or achieve, why is that relevant or important, and why are the elements of the problem formulation knit together in the particular fashion that you suggest is useful/relevant? A problem formulation, therefore, should also contextualise in order to argue why this particular problem is relevant and worthwhile.

To inspire your own creative process, here is a list of criteria that can help you ensure the quality of your problem formulation. The good problem formulation:

- Is 'curious', seeks to explore a 'problem' (not aimed simply at describing or giving an account of a phenomenon)
- Is original (rather than copying what has been done before).
- Is academic (as opposed to commonsensical, non-theoretical)
- Is relevant
- Is properly contextualised
- Has a clear focus
- Is written in precise language, formulated in a few lines
- Is an open question (not calling for a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer)
- Is possible to answer
- Is properly reflecting what is actually in the project report and, eventually, the conclusion.

A final note on the problem formulation process: a basic principle of the PBL model is that problem formulations must be allowed to evolve. If, during the course of analysing, discussing, etc., you realise that what you *really* wish to investigate is not exactly what you formulated during the initial stages of your project, then go back and improve your problem formulation by revising it.

3.2. Methodology

During the course of your studies at CCG or Tourism you will be equipped with a host of theoretical and practical tools that will enable you to produce optimal research designs and apply relevant methods in your project work. Attaining methodological skills is a long and sometimes demanding process, and we do not pretend that a short section in a handbook, like this, will make anyone an expert 'methodologist'. Therefore, in what follows we will briefly sketch out the purpose of methodology and provide you with some useful general pieces of advice, and then simply emphasise the importance of attending methods and methodology courses offered in your programme, since this is where such knowledge must really be acquired before your skills will be further developed in practical application in your projects.

Let us first set out the purposes of 'methodology': to explain what you do, how you do it, why you do it – and with what consequences.. First of all, thorough methodological considerations should be part of any Master's level project because it ensures the necessary academic quality of what you do. It is not enough simply to rely on chance or luck, and simply hope that the ways you randomly choose to go about collecting data and sources, analysing them and answering your problem formulation are optimal. Anyone can do that (it takes no training), and in such a case a poor quality process and outcome can almost be guaranteed. A well-trained and skilled academic will think critically and thoroughly about the best possible strategy and design, and will not have to rely on luck to produce high quality work.

Second, methodological skills are also transferable skills: if you can get it right in your projects, your programme can proudly certify you as educated with the competences to carry out any, or at least most, assignments that you will encounter in your professional lives. So think of methodology in projects not as something which you must include because the programme regulations require it, but as something that will increase your ability to produce high quality work later, when you are no longer a student.

Third, through a well-described, justified and transparent methodological approach to your project problem you will be able to document the quality of your work and the validity of your findings to those who will later be assessing it. In other words, you earn your points. If you can't illustrate convincingly why your analyses turned out so well as they did, the examiners can't give you proper credit for your work – they must assume that any high quality analysis is rather purely accidental.

You may encounter differences in terminology as you discuss these issues with your supervisors, but usually 'methodology' and 'methods' refer to different things. In project work, try to think of methods as the tools which will enable you to move forward in your working process. They might be, e.g. methods for data collection, such as questionnaires and other kinds of surveys, participant observation,

interviews, or methods for data analysis, such as content analysis, critical historical source analysis, discourse analysis.

'Methodology' is a more general term that is concerned with approach and design. Your methodology section should present your methods, but also, importantly, explain the choice and use of these methods. Thus, it is essential that you do not only describe *which* methods you will apply but also *why* you picked these particular tools from the toolbox.

In sum, the questions that should occupy your mind when thinking methodologically are: With this particular problem formulation, which design and method(s) can help me make high-quality data collection and analysis? What is it that makes this particular design/these methods *optimal*?

Other considerations to include here are limitations of the research design you have chosen (what will you not be able to conclude on that might otherwise seem obviously relevant?), what kind of sources and theory will you be making use of (and why), as well as your epistemological and/or ontological point of departure, when relevant.

It is quite common to include a separate chapter in projects entitled 'Methodology' or 'Research design' or something else that properly describes such considerations However, at times you may find that dividing methodological considerations from other considerations about e.g. theory seems almost impossible and artificial. Ideally your methodological considerations should be with you throughout all parts of the project and not just something which is stated in a separate chapter on methodology. Still, for clarity, make sure you give your readers an overview of the main methodological approaches and decisions in a designated section.

As with so much else in problem-based project work, it is quite probable that you grow wiser as your work progresses and you realise that the design and the method(s) you first thought would be useful for exploring your problem turn out less than optimal. In that case, don't think you must proceed as initially set out, but go back and revise this chapter on the basis of the new knowledge you can now use as foundation for an improved methodology.

3.3. Theory

In project work, examining a particular problem can be compared to looking at it through a kaleidoscope. Every time the tube is turned, the colours and the shapes inside shift, thus changing the formation, the shade and the light in which a part of the world, a phenomenon or a process investigated in a project comes into the student's sight. This kaleidoscope lens, through which you will view, analyse and make sense of the issues and processes that you choose to deal with in your project, is formed by what is referred to as *theories*. In this section of the handbook we shall address some of the

issues related to the theoretical aspects of the project, and try to answer such questions as: 'What is theory?'; 'What role does theory play in the project work?'; and 'How do we choose an appropriate theoretical framework?'.

3.3.1. The purpose and practical use of theory

As a student you have certainly come across the term 'theory' numerous times. You have probably encountered the term 'theory' being used in relation to quite concrete concepts and notions, such as 'identity theory' or 'network theory'. At the same time, 'theory' is very likely to have been used at some point during your studies to describe particular academic fields central to the study programs in which you are enrolled, e.g.: 'media theory' or 'marketing theory'. Finally, you might also have seen or heard it appear in the context of complex philosophical models or scientific paradigms, such as a 'theory of phenomenology'.

This multiplicity of ways in which 'theory' can be used in academic work and of the meanings of this term can be confusing. It can also make the task of actually using theories in your project seem somewhat intimidating. We believe that having clear ideas about *why you need theories* to write a project and *what theories consist of* can help you overcome any initial uncertainty that you might feel in relation to this part of the project work.

Theories provide you with a perspective for looking at the issues that you have decided to tackle through your project. What this means is that the theories, which are relevant to a problem in your focus, will show you what you can look for and in relation to this problem. They will provide you with the language for talking about it and they might also give you some ideas about what is yet unknown in relation to the problem at hand, and inspire you to examine this unknown. Even if you have an interesting problem formulation, without theory you may not know what to focus on in order to deal fully and adequately with this problem and you may not know how to describe and explain the things that you find while working on it.

Theories refer to sets of clearly defined ideas used to explain particular phenomena or processes. Theory which is "appropriate" or "fit" to your project would be the theory that deals with the aspects of the world and processes which are central to your problem. For instance, if in your project you are examining how race and ethnicity are constructed in 'United Colors of Benetton' advertisements and you want to discuss this in relation to the notion of 'stereotypes', then relevant phenomena would be stereotyping, mass-media, identity construction, etc. The theories that, as a consequence, might be useful for your project will thus include, for instance, 'identity theories', 'cultural theories', 'theories of intercultural communication', 'media theories' and 'marketing theories' -- depending, obviously, on the more specific questions that you have formulated in relation to your problem.

Theories operate with the specific terms for talking about the things you are interested in, such as 'identity', 'race', 'ethnicity'. They will provide clearly specified ideas about what all of these terms mean, how they are related to each other and how they can be used for studying diverse aspects of the world and diverse problems. This means that having chosen, read and thought about theory or theories relevant to your problem formulation, you will know what to search for or to look at in your data, you will know how to talk about it, and you will know how whatever you discover in the course of your project might contribute to existing knowledge.

It is important to emphasise again that the project writing process is rarely linear. Developing a theoretical framework is a task which you may easily continue to work on throughout the whole project. What this means is that as you go along with your empirical work, with your analysis and with the critical discussion of its results you might be discovering on your way that there are more sides to your problem that you initially anticipated. You might realise that the sets of issues that you are working on are connected to social, cultural and political matters which only became visible through your empirical and analytical work and which your initial theoretical framework does not address or does not address sufficiently. You might also learn that the theories which you have found appropriate in the beginning of your project work do not provide you with the notions and with the ways of explaining all of the interesting and new things that you uncovered in the course of your analysis. In this case you would have to go back to your theory and revise it (re-formulate, develop) so that it fits these new needs. This on-going movement between different elements of the project work (theory, methodology, analysis, etc.) is one of the fundamental and vital aspects of writing a project and something that you will most likely be doing also in relation to other parts of your project.

Theory structures have another 'brick' that you might come across while working on the theoretical aspect of your project. Just as all concepts are derived from and anchored in particular theories, so do all theories connect to particular scientific paradigms – large clusters of ideas about the nature of reality, and how we can study it (e.g. 'constructivism' and 'positivism'). While knowing where the theories and concepts you apply come from is certainly important and while pointing out these philosophical scientific roots and connections might be useful in some cases, engrossing into long-winded and abstract accounts of these paradigms is rarely necessary.

3.3.2. Literature review.

Finally, it is important to distinguish between 'theory' and 'literature review'. Searching for, reading and thinking about the central, state-of-the-art scholarly texts relevant to your problem is an important part of choosing an appropriate theoretical framework for your project, and a comprehensive account of these texts is often an essential part of telling your reader about the theoretical position that you have chosen. Hence on the basis of your literature review, you choose the specific theories that are to serve as central tools for analysing your data. However, such a literature review will be useless unless:

- you outline and discuss against each other the ways in which the diverse scholarly works address the issues central to this field;
- you demonstrate clearly how the works that you describe is relevant to what *you* are doing in your project, i.e.:
    - how the concepts and categories provided by your theory help you explore your research problem;
    - how these notions and categories are defined within the framework of the prior scholarly works and how they will be understood within the framework of *your* project;
    - how your research will be potentially developing (fortifying or arguing against, contributing to or challenging, etc.) highlighted theoretical perspectives;
- you actually *use* the concepts and ideas emphasized in the theoretical account in your analysis and in your discussion return to the theoretical issues raised.

You should avoid putting together a simple list that merely describes the work of others in the form: "Smith found...", "Jones concluded...", "Anderson stated…" Such lists are largely irrelevant to your project. Instead, try to build your literature review as an argument allowing the scholars whose works you found relevant to engage in a 'dialogue' with one another, e.g.: "As opposed to Smith, Anderson claims...", "Similarly to Jones, Smith's argument contests...".

3.4. Analysis

Analysis is at the 'heart' of any project. In project assessment, great attention is always paid to how students set up, describe and discuss in their analysis. In the CCG and Tourism programmes, emphasis is placed on your ability to develop and carry out *critical* analysis. That makes it relevant to attend to the question of what makes an analysis critical. What distinguishes the analysis that takes an explicit critical stance from other analytical work?

There is no ready-made answer to this question. The strategies through which students position themselves critically in relation to their data and its analysis always depends on the character of the material with which they are working, on the methodological and theoretical grounds from which they carry out this work and, most importantly, on the specific problem with which they are engaging. In this handbook we shall, however, outline some basic principles of critical analysis that can guide you in developing a critical approach in your project analyses.

3.4.1. Basic principles of critical analysis

Very generally, in academic work, taking a critical stance means recognising that those ideas, meanings and knowledge that might appear as 'natural', given 'facts' and universal 'truths' are in fact socially, culturally and historically specific and they are constantly being renewed and renegotiated (Rapley, 2007, p. 4). It also means recognising that one's cultural background, life experience, values and beliefs

will always affect how analysis is conducted – how data is collected, selected and analysed and how inferences are drawn on the basis of this analysis.

The questions that you might be asking yourself at this point are, "How am I to do this in my project?", "How do I ensure that my analysis is critical, i.e. that I recognise the contextual nature of the phenomena that I am looking at?", "How do I deal with my own role in studying these phenomena?", etc. There are a few basic principles to which you can adhere in developing critical analysis that would be specific to *your* problem formulation and those theories and methods that you apply in dealing with it. These principles include:

- Your analysis and discussion of its results should be systematic. You can ensure this by:

  - Presenting evidence for every claim that you are making, and showing clearly how you produced this evidence through the analysis of your data based on theoretical tools;
  - Considering viewpoints that support your arguments, as well as viewpoints that contest them;
  - Always returning to your problem formulation! That is, you need to demonstrate clearly and continuously throughout your analysis and discussion how whatever questions you are asking and answering, whatever empirical work that you do, whatever analytical steps that you are taking are relevant to the problem which you are investigating. I.e., make it clear how your analysis confirms your assumptions about the field, answers the questions that you posed in the beginning of your project, or contributes to understanding the processes that you were wondering about, etc.

- Your analysis and discussion should be transparent. You can ensure this by:

  - Explaining clearly why you chose to conduct the analysis in the way you did. That is, you need to tell the reader, how you arrived at the pre-understandings on which you rely in your analysis; how you chose the concepts which you use in discussing your analytical results; how the methods that you apply in your analysis affect the outcome of your investigation, etc. Hence methodological awareness accompanies you in your analysis as well.

  - Setting up clear criteria for what makes your analysis credible. That is, you need to discuss how your data is collected, why certain sources and points of view are presented, and why your findings are reliable, possibly generalisable, valid, etc. (Silverman, 2000; Seal, 2004, p. 409-410, as cited in Silverman, 2000, p. 281). Basically, you need to constantly make clear why the analysis you are carrying out is relevant and why we should believe the conclusions that you draw on the basis of it.

It should be noted that while in this handbook we address the issues of critical analysis and critical discussion together, and while these elements of the project will always be tightly intertwined, the method of your analysis might require you to make a more explicit destinction between these aspects of your project and it might sometimes be useful to make a separate 'Discussion' chapter in your written project report.

Finally, it must be emphasized that critical analysis is also ethical analysis. This means that you have certain responsibilities in relation to the people who are involved in your project (e.g. your interviewees, participants of the interaction that you observe, etc.). These responsibilities consist in protecting privacy of the people who have shared their viewpoints and experiences, and entrusted their personal information to you in the course of the project. Obviously, you must respect their wishes with regard to participation in your project. This can be done, for instance, by using a 'confidentiality agreement' (available on-line), 'informed consent' and 'data release agreement' forms, etc.

3.5. Conclusion

In your conclusion you summarise your findings in order to answer your problem formulation. Make sure to include all relevant aspects, and don't leave any out in the assumption that your reader/examiner will remember them from the analyses above. Even if he/she will, you will have failed to properly conclude unless you fully answer your research questions and fully relate to all the aspects of the problem you set out to explore.

It may well happen that in the course of your project writing your analyses have dictated a change of focus or methodology, so that your conclusions now seem not to 'match' your problem formulation. This you may decide to deal with in different ways. One is to go back and revise your problem formulation so that there is once again a one-to-one relationship between it and your conclusion. In such a process, however, you must carefully ensure that all the various sections remain aligned throughout the project – that all elements still make sense in connection with each other. Alternatively, you may choose to openly address the fact that you are unable to conclude in the manner and to the extent that you originally thought you would be. There are obvious perils associated with acknowledging flaws in one's work, but this is much to be preferred to attempts at 'twisting' conclusions to fit problem formulations, when clearly this cannot be successfully achieved. In fact, you are likely to get credit by examiners for realising and acknowledging flaws that you will not be able to correct. If at all possible make sure problem formulation, content of the project and conclusion are aligned, and discuss changes in focus during the project in your methodology also.

Summarising findings and answering the problem formulation is usually all that is required of a conclusion. You should not add any new information or muse about what might also have been done, had you only had more time and pages at your disposal. In some cases it makes sense to present practical and theoretical consequences of your project.

4. Project Writing in Practice

4.1. Group formation and applying for supervision

At both CCG and Tourism we strongly encourage project group work – and most students do work in groups. There are plenty of benefits to project group work, such as coverage of larger theoretical and empirical ground, synergies making it possible to reach a higher academic level, a larger bulk of supervision hours available, the possibility of constant sparring about difficult theoretical and methodological issues, for example, with someone 'in the know', and, of course, the fact that in this process you rehearse the kind of cooperation and joint work that you are also very likely to experience in your professional career. Also, some students feel they need the moral support and/or the moral responsibility to fellow students to be able to produce and deliver drafts on time.

The option of writing alone exists, however, and students and their projects will not be assessed differently for choosing it. This option allows you to 'call the shots' yourself, and may be preferable to some. As a soloist you are likely to be more dependent on your supervisor for sparring, but you must also be aware that no additional hours of supervision will be allotted for those who choose to write alone.

CCG and Tourism are international programmes in several senses: focus- and content-wise they have an international outlook and explore the international and intercultural dimensions within their respective core disciplines. Also, both programmes are international in the sense that they enrol a large number of non-Danish students. Combined, these provide a wonderful opportunity for all students (Danish and non-Danish) to cooperate with fellow students with different cultural backgrounds and thus enhance their own cultural knowledge and intercultural communication skills. Therefore, we also encourage you to keep an open mind and take advantage of the fact that this opportunity exists, and try to form culturally and ethnically diverse groups as much as possible.

A group formation meeting will be scheduled every semester in the beginning of March and October to give students the opportunity to present topics and early problem formulations that they consider writing within, to explore possible constellations of interests and expertise and – eventually -- to form project groups. You should not wait this long before beginning to think about possible topics, however. The better prepared you are when attending these meetings the more likely you are to become part of a well-functioning and focussed group.

Shortly after the group meeting is the deadline for submission of requests for supervision, which also functions as an application for approval of your project topic.

NB (CCG students): all CCG projects must include an international and/or intercultural dimension. If you fail to include this dimension, your proposal will be rejected.

In Moodle you will find the electronic application form under the relevant semester (7th or 8th). Please note the deadline and make sure to apply in time. Otherwise, having a supervisor assigned to your project might be unnecessarily delayed.

4.2. Organisation of the research and writing processes

4.2.1. Supervision

Once you have been assigned a project supervisor your project work begins. You will usually have around 10 weeks for writing your project. This is time enough to complete a project but it is important to manage this time wisely and to get started as early as possible. It is your responsibility to contact the supervisor in order to arrange the first supervision meeting.

As a rule, project supervisors are allotted 10 hours for supervision per student. This allotment includes not just face-to-face supervision or electronic correspondence between you and her/him, but also your supervisor's preparation for meetings, her/his critical reading and commenting on drafts, assessment of the final project report, evaluating with the co-examiner, and the oral exam. Consequently, as a solo writer you cannot expect many meetings or major electronic correspondences with your supervisor. Even though you should keep this limited number of hours and meetings in mind when arranging meetings with your supervisor, this should not cause you to spend as little time as possible with him/her. It just means that you must make the best possible use of the time available. For this reason also, do not ask your supervisor to keep commenting on the same piece of text. As a rule, once should be sufficient, and should allow the supervisor to read everything you write once − if you make sure to present it to him/her in good time before your meetings.

The more prepared you are for your first meeting with the supervisor, the more productive and efficient it will be. Describe your early ideas in terms of topic, problem, theories and data in your first e-mail message - it will give him/her a chance to get acquainted with the problem you want to tackle, to take a look at the material you consider using in your project, to provide you with references that might be useful to you, etc. During this first meeting you should talk about when you expect to meet, and how: face-to-face or via e-mail, Skype, telephone. It is a good idea to develop a fairly regular meeting schedule, with deadlines at which your group agrees to submit drafts for discussion at subsequent meetings.

It might be necessary, or just easier, to carry out one or two supervision meetings via Skype, telephone, e-mail or other electronic media. However, unless it is absolutely unavoidable you should refrain from using your supervision time on large e-mail exchanges. Supervision via e-mail takes much more time (and, hence, supervision hours available to you) than e.g. face-to-face or Skyping supervision sessions. Moreover, as e-mail communication is a delayed form of interaction, it is not the most suitable medium for project supervision, which ideally takes the form of dialogue. It remains, however, that e-mail is highly useful for planning supervision, asking a supervisor short urgent questions between supervision meetings and for sending drafts, etc.

Experience says that it is useful for project writers to spend much time with the supervisor in the early phases of writing and to consult with her/him about the complicated but crucial early items: problem formulation and methodological considerations. With at least a preliminary, rough version of these in place, and you and your supervisor agreeing to the relevance and benefit of a particular formulation and research design, venturing into the following sections of your project becomes much less daunting.

Obviously, you are expected to honour agreements and respect your supervisor's and your own time by preparing properly for meetings: send your supervisor drafts for discussion well in advance so that (s)he can prepare properly for your meetings and give you relevant feedback. You should also, when possible, attach reading instructions to your drafts, so as to ensure that your supervisor focuses on those parts that you are particularly interested in discussing or receiving assistance with regard to. The nature of drafts is to be unfinished, but try to make them as finished as possible before sending them to your supervisor. Mind-maps and scattered notes are likely to make sense only to you.

As regards the practice of supervision meetings, there are a few essentials:

1) Always bring an exact copy of the draft material that you asked your supervisor to comment on – either in print or on your laptop. Why? a) your supervisor is very likely to refer to specific paragraphs and sentences, and you will be able to note her/his comments at the exact place in your own copy. b) There is no point in wasting your supervision hours with having your supervisor comment on versions of text that have since been revised so that the comments are no longer relevant.

2) Always take notes. Why? You may think that you will be able to remember all the comments made and recall good pieces of advice later, but why risk missing something important?

4.2.2. Group work

If you are working in a group, organising group work will inevitably figure as one of the central aspects of your project. Like the supervision process, it is important to discuss and plan your group work as early in the process as possible. Some of the issues that you need to address in your group include deciding when and how often you are going to meet, and how you are going to communicate with each other between the meetings. It is often useful to agree from the beginning about the division of responsibilities, such as contacting your supervisor, taking notes during meetings, etc. Later in the project work you will also need to discuss how you divide the responsibilities for different sections of your written report.

It is germane that all of the group members try to participate in all supervision meetings. Project work is fulltime work (which translates into 37 hrs/week), so it would also be very unwise to plan any long-term trips during your work on the project. Remember, while *writing* a project in a group does not necessarily entail sitting together in the same place, *working* on a project in a group is always a collaborative effort. This effort will be successful only if each group member is actively engaged, if everybody contributes at all stages of the project, and if all group members feel that the work load is distributed equally.

As useful and important as these recommendations may be, unfortunately they do not constitute a ready-made recipe for smooth and effective group work. Each group functions differently and group dynamics might at times be complex -- meaning that more or less serious disagreements and conflicts might occur. It is important to be prepared for these (probably only minor and temporary) difficulties, not to get discouraged by them and get all misunderstandings and disputes into the open before they begin to affect your project work. It is often helpful to discuss such cooperation issues with your supervisor.

5. Formalia

The written project report has a number of formal requirements. These requirements concern formatting, use of references, referencing style and authorship. Whilst during the supervision process your supervisor might comment, based on your drafts, on how you realise these requirements, the responsibility for making sure that all the formalities are in order before you submit your project is yours entirely.

5.1. Referencing

Referencing is one the important aspects of writing a project. Although in this guide referencing is treated as a part of project formalia, it is crucial to remember that the use of references is also a significant element of the project content. References point at those theories and methods on which your base your project. They make visible scholarly arguments that you follow or argue against. By referring to your sources you define the place of your project among other academic contributions. Referencing demonstrates how well you orient yourself among current and state-of-the-art literature related to a particular research area as well as your ability to select among this literature those writings that are relevant to your problem in focus.

There are two major general requirements to referencing in a written project report: referencing should be done properly and referencing should be done consistently. What it means very concretely is that in writing a project you have to choose one of the recognised academic citation styles (e.g. APA, Chicago, MLA, etc.) and apply this *one* style fully, exactly as it prescribed and consistently throughout the project. It is highly recommended *not* to postpone 'sorting out the references' till the end of the project work as you risk overlooking aspects of the paper that require referencing and making errors in references. Instead, train yourself in referring to your sources fully and properly from the very beginning of your project work. It will save you time and will allow you to avoid unnecessary stress before the submission deadline. Following elements of an academic paper require explicit and proper references (you can choose in-text references or footnotes):

- Direct citations. Direct use of any text (by another author or your own) must be indicated clearly by placing it inside inverted commas and referencing to the source in-text or in a footnote. Quotations longer than two-tree lines (or app. 40 words) should be indented. Parts of the original text that are omitted should be indicated by "..." or "[...]" (this might vary from one citation style to another). Choose one style and be consistent. Direct quotations require indicating the page number where the original text can be found. Please note that placing a part of the text in inverted commas or quotation marks signifies that you reproduce the original text *exactly* as it is. Changing this text (for any reason) is unacceptable and considered as cheating.

*Example***:** "Research requires you to give proper credit to the people whose ideas and information you have used" (Perrin, 2009, p. 4).

- Indirect citations. Reproducing a part of any text(s) (by another author(s) or your own e.g. from earlier assignments) by paraphrasing it, summarising it, invoking it to support your argument in a way that changes the exact wording of the original source does not require using inverted commas. However, it does require making a reference as clearly, as fully and as properly as in the case of direct quotations. Failing to reference an indirect citation in the way described above is known as 'hidden citation'. Hidden citations are a form of plagiarism. It is both illegal and immoral and will prompt server sanctions (see section 5.2 of this guide for more information about plagiarism).

*Example***:** In line with many scholars I believe that responsible and effective research results in writing where the ideas, thoughts and information are incorporated clearly and accurately (Perrin, 2009, p. 4).

- Indirect sources. In citing a source that is cited in another source you need to refer to both original and indirect source using such formats as "as cited in" or "qtd. in" (this might vary from one citation style to another).

*Example***:** Walker and Taylor (1998) argue that all styles of referencing are grounded in five principles: of intellectual property, of access, of economy, of standardization and of transparency (pp. 11-15, as cited in Neville, 2007, p. 7).

- Graphic and visual elements (tables, diagrams, figures, images and drawings, etc.). It is crucial to remember that texts are produced not only through written language. Texts often include diverse graphic and visual elements. 'Borrowing' these elements from another source (by another author or your own) and using it exactly as it appears in the original source or in an altered form (e.g. rephrasing the text within a table, adding graphic elements to a snapshot from a webpage, changing colour of a photograph, etc.) are forms of direct and indirect quotation, respectively, that are guided by the same requirements as the requirements for written citations described above.

Internet material and electronic sources. Computer-mediated interaction (forums, chat rooms, websites, etc.) and electronic sources represent immensely rich resources of easily obtainable and interesting data and of academic literature. Every semester students working on projects make use of Internet resources, unfortunately, sometimes forgetting that electronic sources of data and scholarly writing require the same respect for the authorship as other formats of written, visual, audio and video production. Internet material and electronic sources are guided

by the same referencing requirements as described above in relation to the printed formats. Please note that including simply a URL (web address) is not considered proper referencing. Every recognised academic citation style has guidelines for proper quotation of computer-mediated material. You must use these guidelines when referring your Internet sources.

> ***Example*:** "APA (American Psychological Association) is most commonly used to cite sources within social sciences" ((OWL), 1995).

- Data. Secondary data (i.e. material used in the other scholarly works) needs to be referenced clearly and fully using the selected citation style. The sources of your primary data (such as documents, websites, public speeches, documentaries, etc.) that you use in your analysis also need to be indicated clearly.

Apart from these references in text or in footnotes, you also need to compile a 'List of references' and include it at the end of your written report. In this list you should state all the sources that you used in your project (both literature and data) including those that you did not quote directly. The list should include references in the full format presented in accordance with the citation style you have chosen and followed in the rest of the project.

> ***Example*:** (OWL), P. U. (1995). *Purdue Online Writing Lab*. Retrieved January 22, 2012, from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/14/

> ***Example*:** Carter, D. (2000, April 28). *Beyond the Loan Word: Plagiarism in Academic Writing*. Retrieved March 1, 2012, from Department of Language, Literature and Culture: Faculty of Humanities: Aarhus University: Study Guides: Plagiarism: http://engelsk.au.dk/en/studies/guides/plagiarism/

> ***Example*:** Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage Publications.

> ***Example*:** O'Brien, M. (1993). Social Research and Sociology. In N. Gilbert (Ed.), *Researching Social Life* (pp. 1-17). London: Sage.

5.2. Plagiarism

Unfortunately, despite the determined efforts to inform on the matter of plagiarism, on its moral implications and formal consequences, each year one or two cases of plagiarism are revealed. Therefore, we use this handbook as an opportunity to draw your attention to the issue of plagiarism and to emphasize the seriousness of this offense and its consequences.

As Dale Carter (2000, p. 1) notes, the term 'plagiarism' stems from the Latin noun 'plagium' meaning 'kidnapping'. In academic context, such kidnapping involves "using someone else's words or ideas without giving proper credit (or without giving any credit at all) to the author of the original" (2000, p. 1). As students you are required to be able to discuss, draw on and sometimes reproduce and faithfully apply theoretical arguments, methodological strategies, terminology, etc. which have been developed, defined, introduced and coined by the other scholars. Doing this is an integral and important part of academic training. Our warnings with regard to plagiarism are not meant to come in the way of this training. However, they are meant to make you aware of and to encourage you take seriously your responsibility for giving credit to the authors of the ideas, texts, images, websites or any other forms of material produced by somebody else (or yourself, in the context of another assignment/paper/exam) that you use, refer to or adopt (directly or by paraphrasing/with alterations). Such crediting should be accomplished through consistent, accurate and unambiguous referencing to the authors/sources of the used material in-text or in footnotes as well as by including these references (in full format) in a bibliography. Failing to do that (either intentionally or because of sloppiness) is considered as plagiarism. See section 5.1 of this handbook for more information about referencing.

In reproducing someone's work (or your own, previously submitted and graded work) and commenting on it, it is important to remember that this reproduction has to be fair and true to the original. As well as it is important to distinguish clearly between your comments and direct or paraphrased citations from the sources.

Contemporary Internet resources provide us with an easy access to a vast variety of literature, scholarly works and other academic resources and materials. Unfortunately, some students become tempted to "borrow" these materials and to submit them as their own paper or a part of it. Doing that or committing any other of the above-mentioned forms of plagiarism, self-plagiarism and falsification of the cited materials is probably the worst choice you can ever make in your student career. This is not only because plagiarism, as any form of stealing, is both morally and legally wrong, but also because it is much more easily detectable that it might seem. Whilst neither examiners nor censors are *looking for* plagiarism, their expertise and experience makes it easy for them to spot the "suspicious" segments of writing, which then can be checked for plagiarism with the help of software, Internet resources, etc.

When the examiner discovers plagiarism, s(he) is obligated to report it to the Director of Studies (who may choose to present the case to the Rector) and to give automatically the grade -3. In addition, according to Aalborg University rules, students caught seriously cheating are expelled from the university for at least one semester. As you can imagine, this is not only extremely inconvenient to the student sanctioned, but also pretty humiliating. Make sure your projects are original and correctly referenced.

Having said that, we know that plagiarism revealed over the past years are merely single cases that are not representative of Aalborg University students, the absolute majority of whom are engaged and hard-working, which is exactly how we see any student enrolling in the CCG and Tourism programmes.

5.3. Formatting

All project reports must include the following:

- Standard filled-in front page (available on-line)
- Title page
- Table of contents
- List of responsibilities (projects written in groups). You *must* indicate in your written report which members of the group are responsible for particular parts of the project. You may choose to do this in the list of contents. 'Introduction' and 'conclusion' can be marked as 'jointly written'. Please note that you do not have to divide writing responsibility by chapters. Each chapter can include several sub-chapters or sections which can be written by different group members. Such division of writing responsibility is acceptable as long as these sections/sub-chapters appear in the table of contents, and as long as it is indicated clearly by whom they are written
- Page numbers
- List of references stating all used sources, including those which are not quoted directly and including data or any other material to which you refer in the project.
- Appendices (if relevant). Please note that all the data (and other materials relevant to your empirical work) which you use in your project needs to be attached (if possible) to your written project report. Such attachments might include, for instance, transcripts of interviews, conversational transcripts, images, video and audio data (can be attached in the form of a CD-ROM, USB flash drive), questionnaires, copies/examples of confidentiality agreement, printed copies of the websites, etc. Please make sure to check copyright requirements before copying/reproducing any published material.

One of the most important requirements to the format of the written project report is with regard to the maximum number of standard pages you are allowed to write. According to the study regulations and curriculum (2011), this maximum number is 25 pages per student in a group and 30 pages for an individually written report. Standard page includes 2400 keystrokes including spaces, footnotes and endnotes, but excluding front page, title page, table of contents, appendices and bibliography. Please remember to indicate the number of keystrokes on the standard front page of the report. Please note that you are not allowed to hand in the project, which exceeds the maximum number of pages. Handing in such a paper means using

an exam attempt. Indicating the incorrect number of the keystrokes is considered cheating. Handing in such a paper means using an exam attempt and will be reported to the Director of Studies.

The CCG and Tourism programs do not pose specific requirements with regard to the font, layout and other typographical elements of the project format. However, in choosing these aspects of the format for your written project it is important to remember that you need to be consistent in your use of formatting and that it needs to be easy to read and not distracting.

6. Examination of the Project

6.1. Assessment

Your project will be assessed on the basis of the objectives and requirements set out for each module in your programme Regulations and Curriculum. Your examiners will consult these before assessing the quality of your project report, and your performance at the oral exam.

In addition, the Study Board for Cross-Cultural Studies has developed a list of criteria that examiners consider as part of their assessment of projects. This is not a template for the 'perfect project' (it does not exist) so you should not necessarily seek to fully develop *all* the criteria listed here. You should, however, acquaint yourself with it before and during the writing process. The criteria will be relevant, but they will not be equally relevant; that depends on your topic, your problem formulation, methodology, etc.

You find the 'Criteria for the evaluation of projects' in Appendix 1 and on Moodle.

6.2. Practicalities

Shortly after submitting your thesis you will be taking an oral exam based on your written project report. Project exams normally take place by the end of January / June. Immediately after you have handed in your project, your supervisor switches her/his role from being your advisor to being your examiner, which also means that (s)he will not guide you in preparation for your oral exam (you can only contact your supervisor/examiner if you have questions with regard to the exam's procedure). The examiner and a co-examiner will each have assessed the qualities of your written report, and they will have questions and inquiries on the basis of their reading. If you have produced your project as a group, group members will be examined individually.

The oral examination will be conducted as a dialogue between the student, the examiner and (to a lesser degree) the co-examiner. The duration of the project exam is 30 minutes. This, however, includes examiners' evaluation and communication of your grade with their motivation, so in practice this means that you will spend only about 23 minutes discussing your project. 23 minutes may still seem like a long time, but most students find that time flies at the exam. In fact, having worked on your project intensively for several weeks you will likely feel that you could have spent more time talking about it, elaborating on the aspects of it that you found particularly interesting or challenging, explaining to the examiners your methodological and theoretical choices, discussing with them potential future research directions that might derive from the results of your analysis, etc.

We recommend that you begin your oral exam by making a short presentation (no longer than 5 minutes). Consult with your supervisor regarding the relevance of a PowerPoint presentation. Some

supervisors will advise against it because setting up often takes away valuable examination time. Should you decide in favour of PowerPoint, you must bring your own laptop and have it ready when the exam begins.

Try to ensure that your oral presentation offers new perspectives and ideas, not repetition of what is included in the thesis. Practice several times in advance until you are confident that you can stay on time and that you are not overly dependent on your manuscript. If after the project submission you have discovered in your written report a mistake that *seriously* affects the content of your project, that might undermine the validity of your research, etc., you may choose to address this flaw in your presentation. However, *do not* spend time at the exam going through corrections of commas, spelling mistakes and other minor errors. Rather, make sure your written project report is thoroughly proofread before you hand it in.

Following your presentation you and your examiners engage in discussion about elements in the project singled out by them as particularly relevant. This discussion will be anchored in your written report as a whole as well as (for projects written in groups) in those sections for writing of which you have been responsible. However, you will also be expected to be able to comment on conceptual, methodological, socio-political and cultural issues that are connected to your project and set of problems in its focus but that might exceed its immediate empirical and theoretical scope.

Don't feel intimidated or insulted if your examiner insists on challenging you with difficult questions. (S)he would not be doing a proper job if not trying to push you to perform at your very best. If you were only thrown 'easy balls', this would not give you the opportunity to excel, to illustrate how well you know your data, how methodologically aware you are, etc. Pushing you to the limit (but not over it), your examiner tries to ensure that you will not leave the room thinking: "I feel I could have done much better!". Remember that your examiners will try to ensure that you demonstrate as fully as possible the knowledge that you have acquired through your project work and through the courses offered in the program.

After the examination you will be asked to leave the examination room for a few minutes while the two examiners discuss the qualities of your written and oral performance. You will then be called back into the room to receive a mark on the 7-point scale and an explanation as to why your work has received that particular mark. Do listen carefully as this will be useful input for future project work. Get an overview of the 7 point scale on this link: http://en.iu.dk/education-in-denmark/detailed-information/grading-systems.

7. List of References

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Appendix 1: Criteria for the assessment of projects and theses

Criteria	Strengths	Weaknesses
Problem formulation: Purpose, problem analysis (incl. Contextualisation – theoretically & empirically), research questions/ hypotheses, precision, topicality, originality.		
Methodology: Methods (data collection/analysis), justification, limitations, source criticism, choice and use of theory, philosophy of science (reflections on application)		
Theory: Relevance, critical discussion, independence towards (e.g. new combinations of theories)		
Analysis: Empirical data, application of theory, quality/ logic and documentation of arguments, critical use of sources, independence.		
Conclusion: Summaries, one-to-one connection between PF and conclusions. Practical and theoretical consequences of project		
Independence and creativity: Theoretical creativity, new practical angles, combining existing theory/empirical data in new ways, interdisciplinarity, creative use of existing and new methods		
Communicative skills and formalia: Readability, language proficiency, citations/ references, layout.		
Coherence: Alignment between PF, methodology, analysis and conclusion, structure		
Overall assessment	**Grade**	

Appendix 2: Project titles, examples

CCG:

- "Integration in Denmark and Sweden: An analysis of integrational consequences of structural differences regarding integration models in Denmark and Sweden"
- "How fair is your coffee? Coffee consumption habits and fair trade coffee"
- "The use of black models in US advertising"
- "Food culture in Denmark and France seen through ads"
- "Online crisis communication: South-West Airline case analysis"
- "Cultural influence – Americanization and the young Japanese consumer"
- "Examining the practice to understand the meaning: An analysis of competing CSR-discourses and their reflection in UN-Initiatives"
- "The dark side of globalization: Piracy, terrorism and bad governance in Horn of Africa"
- *"Serious Play in multicultural groups - A perfect method?"*
- "To be or not to be … ROMAnian? Identity problems in country branding"
- "Discursive reproduction of racial attitudes, whitening and whiteness dominance in media texts in Peru"

Tourism:

- "The world is flat: A qualitative study of Danish DMOs use of social media marketing"
- "The Quest – A case study of an interactive treasure hunt under development by Visitnordjylland"
- "Backpackers & mass tourists. Coexistence and conflict on a medium sized destination"
- "Sustainable Tourism Development and Climate Change in the light of Queensland State"
- "The pink dollar at the end of the rainbow. Danish homosexual men in a tourism context"
- "Improving consumer experience in food festivals: A case study on Aalborg future food camp"
- "Is there potential to brand Samsø on gastronomy?"
- "German families and their holiday experiences. A qualitative study of German families with younger children and their holiday experience demands in relation to a Danish holiday home context"

Please check out the digital project library for more inspiration: http://projekter.aau.dk/projekter/en/