

Reader Academic Skills

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Utrecht University School of Economics



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Introduction

The current developments in society and in the labour market place high demands on university graduates. Naturally you must be well educated with respect to the content of your field, but you must also be able to deal with complex issues in an independent, flexible, and creative manner. In addition to knowledge of economics, society – think: your future employers – expect you to acquire sufficient academic skills during your studies so that at the end of your studies you are not only capable of understanding economic problems and models, but that you can also examine, analyse, and explain. And, in addition, that you are capable of working with colleagues outside of your own field. Therefore our courses already pay a lot of attention to academic skills, in the form of instruction, practice opportunities, feedback and finally assessment. Learning these skills happens in an integrated manner, thus intertwined with learning the economic content. This manual contains the most important background information about these academic skills.

Division of skills

The academic skills on which the Economics degree program places an emphasis are:

- I) Academic reasoning and working;
- II) Problem solving;
- III) Academic research;
- IV) Effective teamwork;
- V) Oral presentation skills;
- VI) Writing skills;
- VII) Purposeful management of own development.

In the first two years of your study you will attain a basic level in all of these skills. This happens by working on them in a number of courses. These skills are complex and dependent on context, thus they cannot be ‘learned’ in one attempt. You learn them by often working on them in different contexts, receiving feedback from your tutors and by trying to give feedback on your own works – which is called reflection – and to use this feedback and reflection to consistently improve yourself. In all of the courses within the Economics and Business Economics programme you will work on one to three skills. To guarantee that you attain a basic level in these skills, you will in principle devote explicit attention to them within the (optional) required courses.

In this manual you will find a description per basic skill of what the skill signifies and instructions on how you can best approach the skill, for example which steps you can best take to write a paper or report. Furthermore, general information and guidelines are provided which are illustrated by examples, from economics in practice where possible. It is also often indicated where you can find more information, for example a literature tip or on Blackboard.

You can find the assessment forms on the online Student Desk.

Reference

This manual is partially based on the binder ‘Professionele en academische vaardigheden’ by Stephan Ramaekers & Truus van den Heuvel (2000). Where other sources have been used it is stated in the text.

1 Skill I. Academic reasoning and working

1.1 Description of the skill

As a scholar you should be capable of thinking in abstract, model-based and conceptual terms, and to reason in terms of your theoretic knowledge. Although you may start from a concrete case, as a scholar you must know how to describe a problem in theoretic terms and how to analyse on a higher level of abstraction than merely that of the problem at hand. Subsequently, you must be able to relate the outcome of a problem analysed in this way to your specific case. This allows a scholar to view the parallels between certain problems and thus between different methods for analysis.

Furthermore, a scholar must be capable of critically assessing solutions to a problem (his own or someone else's): is the argumentation correct and can it be applied to the situation at hand. In addition, a scholar must be able to identify interrelationships (e.g. between problems, theories or models).

There will almost always be many different angles from which you can view a problem. Think of a situation with various actors (e.g. question and demand) or situations where various issues are at play (e.g. the individual versus society at large or economic analysis versus legal analysis). A scholar must be capable of viewing such matters from these different perspectives.

1.2 Evaluation criteria of the skill

Aspects that (may) play a role in this sense are:

1. *Thinking conceptual, thinking in terms of theory*

- being able to translate the problem into abstract, theoretic terms;
- being able to describe and analyse the theoretic/model-based link between these terms;

2. *Asking critical questions, having a critical attitude;*

- being able to verify the extent to which the right degree of abstraction has been used and whether the correct suppositions were made;
- being able to verify if all the relevant aspects of the problem at hand are sufficiently covered by the theory used or the model chosen.

3. *Thinking from different perspectives;*

4. *Identifying links between problems*

These four aspects will be explained below.

1.2.1 Thinking conceptually, thinking in terms of theory

In the academia theoretic models play an important role. Three key words are: abstract, conceptual and model-based thinking and working.

A theory is rarely formulated in terms of detailed facts. It will almost always be specified in terms of more abstract notions (e.g. 'knowledge' not in terms of a high school diploma, but in terms of human capital). In order for a scholar to think and reason in a theoretic context means he/she has to be capable of translating concrete matters in corresponding abstract concepts. This means that you will be capable of translating an 'everyday' problem into the correct theoretic model and of using the model correctly.

Thinking in terms of models also means that you are capable of identifying how the relevant aspects are related (in terms of the model). Normally this means that you will need to view reality in abstract terms. A theory will never describe all aspects of reality: some aspects must be abstracted (i.e. you have to suppose that they are absent).

One of the questions microeconomists are trying to answer is the question of labour supply: how many hours are people willing to work per week? This question cannot be answered without describing the decision in a model. People work to live: their incomes should cover their costs of living. And that obviously costs money. People would prefer to 'have fun', go on holiday, go to the cinema, read a good book. That all costs money, but also time. The question therefore is: how does an economist translate this process of choice into a model.

First of all, the economist will make abstractions. All expenses are grouped under the header 'consumer goods', and the total time per week is split up into two types of times: labour time and leisure. Next, the economist will make a number of assumptions: people would rather have more consumer goods than less, and would rather have more leisure than less, and if at all possible they would like a maximum amount of both. To buy consumer goods a consumer will need money, and this money he will need to earn by working. You will earn an income (also in the marketplace) by selling yourself as labour (at a given hourly wage rate). This leads to a trade-off: the more you work, the more you can buy, and the less leisure you will have left (after all, a day only has 24 hours).

Now you have identified all the elements of the model. The economist describes the consumer's preferences in a so called 'utility function', a mathematical function that – in this case – describes how the consumer values consumption and leisure, and more in particular, how much of his leisure he is willing to sacrifice in order to be able to consume more. The options open to the consumer are described by means of so-called 'budget restrictions': mathematical descriptions of the limiting conditions the consumer has to deal with. He/she cannot spend any more on consumption than he earns on the labour market (income budget), and the total number of hours he/she can work is not more than 24 hours a day maximum (time budget).

Next, the economist will use a number of mathematical techniques to solve this problem: the maximum utility (welfare) that can be reached given the restrictions. The solution of this mathematical problem will tell you how many hours you work, what your income will be and how much consumption you will be able to afford.

The exam on growth theory contained the following question: 'What will happen to the per capita production if there is an epidemic that decimates the (working) population?' Some students answered that the per capita production would increase. Apparently, they argued as follows: the per capita production is a fraction, i.e. production divided by the (working) population. If the denominator goes down, the value of the fraction will go up. The production is distributed over fewer people.

In the context of the theory on growth, however, this answer is not correct. According to the macroeconomic production function, the level of production also depends on the size of the (working) population. If the (working) population decreases in number, production will drop accordingly. So: it is not just the denominator that changes, the numerator changes as well meaning that the end result (at least in the short term), cannot be defined. Whether the production per capita drops or rises will depend on how strong production will drop.

1.2.2 Asking critical questions, having a critical attitude

Asking critical questions is an important skill for a scholar to have. A model is a simplified representation of reality. This implies that you must be aware at all times that your model has its limits, as does the theory on which it was founded. Within the context of the study of economics this skill implies that you look at a problem and its possible solution and that you ask yourself the questions that will eventually answer the question of whether the problem has been solved correctly.

Questions you could ask in this context are:

- Is this the right model for tackling this issue? Why/why not?
- Why should these approach be preferred over others?
- Have all the conditions of the model been fulfilled?
- What are the limitations of this model? Notably: a model is an incomplete reflection of reality; many elements have been omitted in order to be able to see the wood for the trees.
- Does the model contain any redundancies all the same?
- And even more importantly: are the elements that have been omitted really not essential?
- How does this compare to what I already know? Is it in line with it, or do I see conflicting matters?
- Does the argument make sense (are claims and conclusions well founded and will the arguments hold)?

In most books presenting an introduction to microeconomics you will find the following argument against a minimum wage. Starting points equilibrium in the labour markets, with wage rate establishing equality between labour demand and labour supply. Now introduce a minimum wage that is higher than the equilibrium wage rate. Then labour supply will exceed labour demand, because more people will want to work for higher wages, while fewer companies will be willing to pay that much. The conclusion thus will be: introducing a minimum wage will result in a drop in employment, which will lead to unemployment.

This argumentation, however, starts from the assumption that there is perfect competition on the labour market while it is all too possible that it is the employers who have market power in the labour market. In this case it can be demonstrated that profit maximising firms employ a smaller number of people than they would have in a situation of perfect competition on the labour market. In a situation where employers have market power on the labour market the introduction of a minimum wage, depending on it's level, will lead to either a reduction or an increase of employment, resulting in either an increase or a drop of unemployment.

This example demonstrates that you always need to verify if the model fits the situation you are examining.

1.2.3 Thinking from different perspectives

One important characteristic of a scholar is that he/she is capable of viewing a problem from various different perspectives. In many situations there will be a variety of different actors (individuals, organisations or groups that all play a role in the economic case under analysis): for example the government, employers, employees, exporting and importing countries and so on. A given problem is not necessarily viewed as a problem by all the relevant actors. Also, a solution may not be acceptable to all parties. By adopting a scholarly view you will approach an issue from various different angles which means that you will be better able to see why some solutions do work and others don't.

Viewing issues from different perspectives is not just necessary because you will be dealing with different actors. It is also possible to view a problem from different theoretic angles, or in an even broader context: from various academic domains. Within the context of the Economics degree programmes in Utrecht, you may choose or have already chosen an approved optional minor (law, geography, history, public administration and organisation, business or the social sciences) but other disciplines can be equally relevant.

Economic theory on auctions, for instance, deals with the question of how the seller should arrange an auction to get the largest possible revenue. What's important here, is for the seller to realize how the buyer will behave (in other words, what will the buyer's objective be and how will the buyer try to realize this objective).

Microeconomics also pays attention to the so-called 'game theory'. This part of economics is explicitly concerned with the question of how people will behave when they know that their actions will affect the actions of others, and that the outcome of the 'game' is determined by the actions of both players. A well-known example of this is the 'prisoners' dilemma': two prisoners have a choice of either selling out the other suspect or of providing them with an alibi, yet they cannot consult each on their strategy. If they provide each other with an alibi the case won't hold, and they will both end up behind bars for a short time. If they decide to sell out the other, they will both go to prison for 10 years. If one of them provides the other with an alibi, yet he himself is sold out by the other, the 'betrayor' will walk, while his fellow suspect will spend 20 years in prison. No matter how counterintuitive this may sound: you can actually prove that both will do anything they can to betray the other one...

A macroeconomic example would be the relationship between trade unions and employers. Trade unions promote the interests of their members and in that respect will benefit from high wages and a high level of employment. Employers promote the interests of their members, and they benefit from low wages, as that will lead to higher profits. The two pressure groups negotiate the level of the wages.

1.2.4 Identifying links between problems

The three aspects of scholarly thinking and acting will almost automatically lead to the identification of interrelationships and parallels.

If you approach a problem from various different angles, you will discover certain interrelationships. Different markets are related to each other, for example: the commodity market and the labour market. If more commodities are sold, production will increase, so that in principle the demand for labour will go up. This in turn will have an impact on the commodity market. Yet there are also relationships between concepts in various disciplines: including changing social values and norms in an economical analysis will allow you to see how such changes lead to changes in economic behaviour, which could give rise to changes in the institutional arrangements within society.

Identifying parallels means that you should be (sufficiently) capable of abstracting and of thinking in concepts. This allows a scholar to transpose solutions from one concrete situation to another. The route you take here is basically that of translating the concrete situation into a model, to then apply the same model to a different situation. Being able to abstract from reality (thinking conceptually) will thus lead to the acknowledgement of parallels: solving different practical problems often proves to require the same mechanism.

Microeconomics focuses on both consumer and producer behaviour. As became clear from the example given above, consumer behaviour concerns the question how many commodities an individual consumes and how many hours of paid work she puts in. This question is studied within the context of a behavioural model that argues from an objective (as much 'utility' as possible) and restrictions (given the hourly wage and the price levels, what would be the amount of commodities you could buy). Utility is then gain through commodities and leisure time, income is gained by working against a market wage.

Microeconomists often look at producers as well. One of the questions they are concerned with is: how can I maximise my profits? The producer makes products and sells them on the market. Here too the economist will make an abstraction: all of such products are viewed as 'output'. Output is created by utilising labour and capital in a certain proportion in the production process. Furthermore one needs certain hypotheses, e.g. the product will yield a given price on the market and the production factors labour and capital can be bought against fixed prices.

The analogy here is the underlying mechanism: the producer wants to maximise her profits, while the consumer wants to maximise her utility. The producer makes a profit by buying labour and capital and by using these in the production process, while the consumer 'creates' utility by purchasing consumption and leisure time. The producer's restrictions include the fact that labour and capital may never cost more than the maximum earnable income. In short: by choosing a sufficiently high level of abstraction in either case, both problems can be solved by using the same set of tools

The interrelation: the producer buys labour and sells consumer goods. The total budget for the production must be earned by selling products on the commodity market. The consumer buys the products and sells labour. The total budget available for consumption must be earned on the labour market. Thus, the consumer's decision cannot be viewed as separate from that of the producer. For in either market prices and quantities come about through the confrontation of demand and supply.

This interrelationship between decisions of producers and consumers can also be translated into a macroeconomic context. On the commodity market consumers and producers meet each other, where the sales potential of the producer depends on the purchasing power of the consumer. This purchasing power in turn depends on employment, which is determined on the labour market, where producers in the role of employers and consumers in the role of employees will find each other again. As for the actual performance of their roles there is also a link to financial markets, where producers in their role of investors (demanding financial funds) are in contact with consumers in their role of saver (supplying financial funds). It is important to learn to identify such links between actors and markets and to understand the art of analysing problems in this way.

To help you see interrelationships and parallels you can ask yourself a number of questions:

- How is this issue/problem related to the previous issue/problem?
- How are the different theories and models linked?

- Which economic aspects do you recognise in the problem? What is the link between these aspects?
- What is the link between the different perspectives on the issue at hand (geographic, legal, historic, social-scientific)?

1.3 Embedding in the courses

In addition to learning different theories the courses will pay a lot of attention to the skill 'Academic reasoning and working'. This will mainly be done in the form of assignments where the skills are to be applied (often in tutorials). Except for knowledge-related aspects, these assignments will especially focus on applying the knowledge gained by correctly using the different aspects of this skill.

These assignments will start from a concrete situation. The answer must be construed from the aspects mentioned above: 1. a motivated choice for a suitable - relevant – theory or theories and a translation into these theories via abstractions and conceptualisation; 2 the critical analysis within the context of that theory; 3. translating the (theoretic) answer thus gained back to your concrete problem; 4. evaluating the answer, especially in view of which aspects will feature in the analyses and which will not, and the extent to which the answer would be different if you would opt for a different theory, different hypotheses, different perspectives and so on; which each step you will need multiple subaspects of the skill 'Academic reasoning and working'.

Analogous to the way in which the courses incorporate the skill 'Academic reasoning and working' the examination will include a number of assignment that explicitly deal with the aspects distinguished within this skill.

The (required) courses that will pay particular attention to the skill 'Academic reasoning and working' are Microeconomics and Institutions, Intermediate Macroeconomics and Intermediate Microeconomics.

1.4 Final notes

The skill 'Academic reasoning and working' is not as easy to present in the form of a plan or a checklist as the other skills. It is much more a matter of attitude, the way you view the world: try to keep track of the larger whole when viewing the details of the concrete situation. Know how this larger whole is related to the theory and draw your conclusions with this knowledge in mind. In doing so you must always remain critical of yourself as well as others, so that you are able to learn from your and their insights and mistakes.

Also be aware that because you start by abstracting your answer will only have limited validity: it will only be valid within the context on your hypotheses as related to the theory chosen. Academic reasoning and acting is exactly what allows you to realise that other hypotheses and other theories or models could lead to different outcomes. To master this skills means that you are not just able to work within certain theories and models, but that you are equally capable of making a comparison between different models and theories.

In this sense this skill is different from the next skill we will describe, i.e. 'Problem solving', which is mainly aimed on working within certain theories and models and on your ability to work in a systematic manner. The skill 'Academic reasoning and working' focuses much more on working with and comparing different theories and on your academic curiosity.

2 Skill II. Problem Solving

2.1 Skill description

In their jobs economists are confronted with questions about the relationships between economic variables (e.g. the relationship between profits and output). To solve such problems they may use verbal, graphical, mathematical and statistical techniques. Take for example establishing the price elasticity of the demand for petrol: data are collected on the price and the amount of petrol bought (statistics). The elasticity is then calculated using the correct formula (mathematics). Once this is done, e.g. the effect of an excise tax (the price) has on mobility (the number of kilometres that can be driven with petrol bought) can be discussed in policy-making (verbal and graphical).

A frequently recurring problem in solving questions and problems is a failure to approach them in a systematic way. Many real-life problems do not simply exist of one question only, but rather are a fabric of several related questions. To properly solve a complex issue it is important to pay attention to the right things at the right time. Flaws in the analysis, for example, or a failure to acknowledge important aspects will usually lead to wrong steps in later stages of the research, which will eventually lead to flawed solutions to the problem. Many mistakes made by students result from the fact that they don't work systematically enough. To reduce the risk of errors as much as possible, economists use a more or less fixed system in which all the steps in the process towards solving a problem have been included. The 'Problem-solving' skill will mainly focus on teaching you this systematic working method.

2.2 Criteria for good problem solving

It is difficult if not impossible to present a 'solution diagram' that can be applied to any problem. Problem solving is not a trick that can be taught. Still, there is a general structure that is very useful. The structure consists of four steps:

1. identifying the problem (what is being asked);
2. devising a path towards the solution (know how to find the answer);
3. follow the path devised (do it);
4. verifying the outcome (check/evaluate your results).

These steps will now be explained in more detail.

2.2.1 Identifying the problem

The first stage of solving a problem is analysing the problem at hand. First you must try and gain a clear picture of the actual problem: what exactly is the question? It may be necessary to clarify terms and notions. Try to establish what information is characteristic of the problem at hand and translate this information into economic terms. Give a definition of relevant terms.

A consumer wants to go on holiday and buy new furniture for her house. Her monthly income is 1000 Euros. How much will she spend on her holiday and how much on new furniture if she is striving for a maximum utility?

We suppose that the utility in this case depends on two things only: the commodity 'holiday' (x_1) and the commodity 'new furniture' (x_2), given her income, Y , and the prices of the commodities, p_1 and p_2 respectively. We also assume that this consumer is striving for a maximum utility..

Here you see how the problem is translated into economic terms, symbols and values. What we are asking for is: $p_1 x_1$ and $p_2 x_2$.

2.2.2 Devising a path

The second step is devising a path towards a solution. Note that this should precede the actual solving of the problem. Starting from the information you have and using the theories, models and techniques available to you ('means') you will describe how you arrived at your answer/solution ('end'). In other words, you develop and phrase a strategy for a solution.

Sometimes this step can be quite trivial: the problem and the path coincide (e.g. the problem 'how much is two plus two?'; the path: 'add two and two'). In case of a complicated problem the problem and the path will not coincide as much. When devising a path you may also find that there are a few subordinate problem: to solve your actual problem you will find that there are other issues or problems that need to be addressed first (in case of the question about price elasticity mentioned in the introduction determining the demand is such a subordinate problem). Only if all the steps are clear and if it is clear how everything is related you may proceed with the next step.

Example (continuation of the problem in 'identifying the problem'):

The path towards the solution is: amounts spent on commodity x_1 and commodity x_2 (that which was asked) \leftarrow quantities of commodity x_1 and commodity x_2 \leftarrow maximising the utility function given the budgetary restriction (maximisation of utility) \leftarrow write the Lagrange function (maximisation under restrictions):

Max $U(x_1, x_2)$ subject to $Y = p_1x_1 + p_2x_2$

Here, the method of Lagrange multipliers would be suitable:

max $L = U(x_1, x_2) - \lambda (p_1x_1 + p_2x_2 - Y)$

x_1, x_2

If we apply this method we will find the values of x_1 and x_2 , written in terms of exogenous variables (here: Y, p_1, p_2 and the parameters of the utility function). Multiplication by the respective prices will give the amounts p_1x_1 and p_2x_2 .

2.2.3 Follow the path

In the previous step, the solution to the problem was subdivided into subordinate problems of which you know the method for solving them. The step 'follow the path' therefore actually means that you will now perform the actions you know you must perform. You are on familiar territory now; however, this is exactly where you run the risk of slipping (e.g. computation errors). Work conscientiously and always check what you're doing.

Example (continuation of the example mentioned in 'devising a path'):

Now you must actually apply the methods you established before. Always remain aware of what you are doing. In the example mentioned, for instance, you will try to find the maximum of an equation with three unknowns. For this you must derive the three first derivatives and equate them with zero; you will then have a system of three equations to three unknown that you will need to solve. Know what you are doing!

2.2.4 Verifying the outcome

The last step consists of taking a critical look at the outcome. In other words, is the outcome you established the answer to the original question? As a first check, ask yourself whether your answer matches the prognosis or estimate you made in the first step. If the problem definition was ‘the relationship between price and the quantity demanded’, then check if your answer actually reflects this relationship. Have you solved the problem in its entirety or are there any loose ends?

Also check if your answer corresponds to the criteria it should reasonable meet: are the prices and quantities you found positive, for example. You know they can never be negative.

If your conclusion in this step has to be that your solution is not satisfactory, then you will have made an error somewhere down the path. Obviously it will not suffice to establish that you have made a mistake: Go over all your steps, check for flaws in your argumentation or computations and make the necessary corrections. It may also be that the answer is flawed but that this cannot be helped (e.g. if you don’t have all the relevant data). This too must be stated in your conclusion.

If your conclusion is that your answer meets the requirements defined beforehand you must show that your answer is satisfactory (cf. the mathematician who will end his conclusions with a QED: which was to be demonstrated). This way it will be clear to you and to others that you feel the answer you have given is the correct answer. (So for instance: if an equation of the income-consumption curve is asked for, and the answer you found is $X = 7Y$, then you will end your answer with the line: ‘The equation of the income-consumption curve is: $X = 7Y$.’)

Example (continuation of the exmample in ‘taking the path devised’):

You have done your computations in the previous step and you have found the utility maximising values of x_1 and x_2 . Good. So now you can move on to the next question in your test or tutorial assignment. Or can you? You’d better first check whether it is really the quantities of both commodities that were asked for! And check if your answer seems likely (e.g.: are the amounts found positive?).

2.3 Embedding in the course

All of the above will be trained during the courses (and tested during the exams); you must therefore explicitly apply the working method described above in all (tutorial) assignments. This is how, from the onset, you will train yourself to work in a methodical, structured manner, and you will find that by following this approach also more complex problems will be easier to tackle.

In the exams we will pay deliberate attention to this skill: the front page of the exam paper of most courses will read the following line (or words to the same effect): “Always give your EXPLANATION of answer in full. Give the FULL DERIVATION of your final answer in calculus questions and lines that you drawn in any figures.” In other words: show the method you have adopted and explain how you arrived at your answer. In evaluating your answer we will consider whether you have explained these things. For each of the aspect distinguished with ‘Problem solving’ described above you will be awarded points (or not; depending on whether the aspects are or are not there and whether they have been performed correctly or not) meaning that your grade will largely depend on the extent to which you master this skill.

The courses that pay special attention to this skill are name Mathematics, Statistics, Microeconomics & Institutions, Intermediate Macroeconomics and Intermediate Microeconomics.

2.4 Final notes

You may have gained the impression that the skill *problem solving* mainly comes into play in case of simple problems of an arithmetic nature. This is not the case. It is true, though, that it is easier to illustrate the skill by means of such problems, because they are relatively easy to take in. The methodical approach we described here is equally important in the event of problems that are not as mathematical.

Moreover, a path you followed to solve a particular problem may help you solved other problems as well. This is why when you are done answering the question and when you have checked your answer you must always ask yourself whether the method you used is worth keeping in mind. It may also be useful to evaluate which step took the most time and whether you want to look into that aspect more closely. You can learn from the mistakes you make along the way, so that you can prevent them in the future.

One final remark: in the first chapter the skill ‘Academic reasoning and working’ has been described. Comparing these two skills you will find that there are parallels: in both cases you are to work in a methodical, structured manner, formulate hypotheses and steps in your analysis and evaluating results. Still, there is a difference: “Academic reasoning and working” is much more aimed at working with and comparing different theories and on your scholarly curiosity; “does it make sense what I’m claiming?” while the skill of ‘Problem solving’ is much more focused on working within certain theories and models and on your ability to work in a systematic manner.

Another example to illustrate the above.

The following demand function is given:

$$Q_D = f(P, P_A, Y) = \frac{P_A Y}{P}$$

where:

Q_D = the quantity demanded of commodity Q

P = the price of commodity Q

P_A = the price of another commodity A

Y = income.

Calculate:

- the (own) price elasticity of the demand for commodity Q;
- the cross-price elasticity of the demand for commodity Q;
- the income elasticity of the demand for commodity Q.

Answer:

The (own) price elasticity of the demand for commodity Q, E_p , is the quotient of the percentage change of the demand for Q and the percentage change in the price of commodity Q.

The cross-price elasticity of the demand for commodity Q, E_{P_A} , is the quotient of the percentage change of the demand for Q and the percentage change in the price of another commodity (here: commodity A).

The income elasticity of the demand for commodity Q, E_Y , is the quotient of the percentage change of the demand for Q and the percentage change in income.

$$\text{So: } E_p = \left(\frac{\frac{\Delta Q_D}{Q_D} 100\%}{\frac{\Delta P}{P} 100\%} \right) = \left(\frac{\Delta Q_D}{\Delta P} \frac{P}{Q_D} \right)$$

where $\Delta Q_D / \Delta P$ in the case of infinitesimal changes to P equals $\partial Q_D / \partial P$.

$$\text{Likewise: } E_{P_A} = \left(\frac{\frac{\Delta Q_D}{Q_D} 100\%}{\frac{\Delta P_A}{P_A} 100\%} \right) = \left(\frac{\Delta Q_D}{\Delta P_A} \frac{P_A}{Q_D} \right)$$

where $\Delta Q_D / \Delta P_A$ in the case of infinitesimal changes to P_A equals $\partial Q_D / \partial P_A$.

$$\text{And: } E_Y = \left(\frac{\frac{\Delta Q_D}{Q_D} 100\%}{\frac{\Delta Y}{Y} 100\%} \right) = \left(\frac{\Delta Q_D}{\Delta Y} \frac{Y}{Q_D} \right)$$

where $\Delta Q_D / \Delta Y$ in the case of infinitesimal changes to Y equals $\partial Q_D / \partial Y$.

We can now calculate the relevant price elasticities.

$$E_p = \frac{\partial Q_D}{\partial P} \frac{P}{Q_D} = \frac{-P_A Y}{P^2} \frac{P}{Q_D} = -1$$

$$E_{P_A} = \frac{\partial Q_D}{\partial P_A} \frac{P_A}{Q_D} = \frac{Y}{P} \frac{P_A}{Q_D} = 1$$

$$E_Y = \frac{\partial Q_D}{\partial Y} \frac{Y}{Q_D} = \frac{P_A}{P} \frac{Y}{Q_D} = 1$$

The (own) price elasticity of the demand has a value -1. Both the cross-price elasticity and the income elasticity of the demand have a value 1.

Explanation:

In this example you had to respectively:

- give the definitions of the different elasticities (step 1: identifying the problem);
- write out the elasticities as the product of the differential quotient of two values, which allowed you to calculate the elasticities asked for based on the given demand function (step 2: devising a path towards a solution);

- write out the actual elasticities, including a simplification of the result (step 3: follow the path);
- check whether the outcomes were plausible; a positive (own) price elasticity could have been reason for you to consider whether you made a computation error somewhere along the way (step 4: verifying the outcome).

Important: If you had not simplified step 3, the result would have been much more difficult to interpret, so that you would have made things unnecessarily difficult for yourself in step 4. Be aware that if you don't simplify you will lose points.

3 Skill III. Academic research

3.1 Academic standards of research

One crucial skill that you will develop during your studies is that of doing research. To better understand the research skill it is important to know how research is defined in an academic context; in other words: how does academic research differ from non-academic research (e.g. astrology)?

There are three aspects that characterise proper academic research:

- A theory; a theory is used to try and explain an (economic) phenomenon. It is essential to academic research that you are aware that this theory does not need to be a foolproof explanation. There may very well be alternative theories that in fact offer a better explanation. Academic researchers generally prefer theories with the broadest possible validity (e.g. the demand for a product will decrease as the price of that product increases). Because of this general validity, theoretic claims can be somewhat abstract. The above assertion, for instance, is more abstract than the following: the demand for washing machines will fall if their price goes up.
- An academic theory is *falsifiable* (i.e. refutable). Theories can be rejected in favour of other alternative theories. This means that such theories can never be 'proven' (with the exception of mathematical proof). Astrology, for instance, is not a science as its underlying theories cannot be falsified.
- An academic theory must be *replicable*. This enables researchers to test a theory. The aim of a research report is not only to convince its readers of a theory's correctness (in relation to other theories), but to give them the opportunity to carry out the research again and reach the same conclusions.

Each discipline has its own toolbox for academic research. An economist's toolbox contains the basic concepts of microeconomics, macroeconomics and business economics. It also contains analytical tools from Mathematics & Statistics and insights into economic methodology the history of economic thought.

3.2 Steps in the research process

There are three steps in the research process: research preparation, execution and reporting. As a researcher, you will take a number of basic steps to make your research successful. This guide describes the steps that apply to analytic research¹ and the evaluation criteria used.

3.2.1 Preparation

Preparing academic research consists of formulating what you want to research, why you want to research it and how you will research it. The reason why you want to research something is described in the *objective*. The object of your research is described in the *problem definition*; how you will carry out the research is described in the approach. The objective, problem definition, approach, provisional bibliography and schedule are all part of the research plan.

Formulating an economic objective and problem definition

The formulation of your *objective* is an important step in the preparation of your research. This is where you state why your research is of theoretical or social relevance. If you want to

¹Analytic research, the research of cause-effect relationships and the testing of correlations, such as 'how does X affect Y?' is the type of research most frequently performed in economic sciences. There is also descriptive research ('how did X develop?'), evaluative research ('how suitable is measure X to achieve Y?'), and normative research ('which measure must be taken to reach situation Y?').

develop new theoretic models that will provide a better explanation of the (economic) reality, if you want to test new hypotheses resulting from relevant models or theories, previously evaluated hypotheses using new information, or if you are testing hypotheses with new and better methods. Your research is of social relevance if its results can be used, for example, to address a social problem better, or improve corporate policies. The formulation of your objective must be more substantial than just 'gaining insight into the relationship between X and Y', and the research report must trigger the reader's interest. If the research has no other objective than gaining insight into a certain issue, why would anyone want to read the report? You have to formulate why someone would want to read the report, why it is important that it be read, and what it has to offer that cannot be found elsewhere.

Once you have finished defining your objective, you devise an analytical problem definition. The problem definition must be formulated as a question. Avoid the use of 'why' and 'why is it that' questions. Such questions are too open-ended and unfocussed, and are more descriptive than analytical.

The problem definition may not be a normative/ethical or ideological question. An example of an ethical question is: Is euthanasia morally justifiable? An example of an ideological question is: Should the government curb the salaries of medical specialists? The answer to both types of questions depends on the researcher's religious beliefs or political convictions. A confirmed Christian will always answer that euthanasia is not morally justifiable. A believer in communism will answer that the government must curb the salaries of medical specialists. This has nothing to do with science; it has everything to do with religious and political beliefs.

The fact that an ethical or political problem definition may be unacceptable does not mean that the selection of a problem may not be ethically or politically motivated. A Christian researcher may want to research euthanasia. He or she could ask what effect of banning euthanasia would have on the perception of welfare of those involved. A communist researcher may want to research the salaries of medical specialists. The problem would then have to be defined as examining the effect that introducing a performance-based system would have on the salaries of medical specialists.

Determining the research approach

You can now start working on your approach by formulating a number of sub-questions derived from your problem definition. The answers to these sub-questions must provide the material to answer the problem as defined. In order to ask relevant sub-questions, you must figure out which factors could influence the concepts in your problem definition. Use the insights gained from relevant models and theories. You should then describe the research method you will use to answer the sub-questions. Depending on the time you can spend on your research and the nature of the sub-questions, you can choose, for example, to study literature and papers, carry out interviews and surveys, use data sets already available or create new ones. Your research plan should end with a provisional bibliography and a schedule.

Example of a faulty approach:

"The problem I am researching is defined as follows: "How does the introduction of the euro affect the different prices for a pack of cigarettes in Germany and The Netherlands?" Sub-question 1: What did a pack of cigarettes cost in The Netherlands and in Germany in 1998? Sub-question 2: What does a pack of cigarettes cost in The Netherlands and in Germany today?"

In this research approach, the change in prices is fully ascribed to the introduction of the euro. All of the other contributing factors are ignored entirely.

3.2.2 Execution

Looking for and selecting literature

You will look for relevant scientific literature during the preparation and execution of your research. As a researcher, you have an obligation to clearly explain to the readers of your research report why your research is so unique and why they should spend their time reading it. Hence, you will have to clearly explain the similarities and differences in approach and conclusions between your own research and previous studies performed in this field earlier.

Studying research publications on your subject (articles in scientific journals, chapters in academic books, working papers, discussion papers, and research memoranda) is a crucial part of your research. But how do you find the research publications and how do you determine their relevance to your subject? The best way is to use a search strategy. The Annex contains tips on using search strategies.

Examples of wrong strategies:

- Search until you find a relevant publication and then stop searching. You may overlook other relevant publications. With this strategy, you risk doing research that has already been done, or has been done better. You are wasting your own and the readers' time.
- Only select publications that are 100% related to your research topic. If, for example, you are researching the relationship between the liberalisation of the Dutch railway company and the service offered at the train stations it does not make sense to limit yourself to publications that write about this relationship. Also publications on the consequences of the privatization of other public organisations or publication on the factors determining the quality of service industries could yield interesting information for your own study.

Collecting, processing and analysing data

Your research must be verifiable and reproducible, for instance by fellow researchers. If you use existing data sets, you must reference their source. If you generated your own data by conducting surveys or interviews, you must state the circumstances under which you conducted them (time, location, duration), who the poll-takers and interviewers were, who was polled/interviewed and so forth. If you do not provide this information, other researchers will not be able to evaluate the data you collected. Verifiability and reproducibility also apply to the processing and analysis of data. Specify how you processed your data (logarithmic transformation, weighted average, first differences etc). When analysing the data, specify the method you used (regression analysis, correlation coefficients, etc.), the tests you carried out (Chow test, F test, Durbin-Watson, T test) and report the results. Never withhold any controversial results.

3.2.3 Reporting

For the general report-writing guidelines, see the text about writing reports, policy documents or memorandums. If the result of your data analysis is different to that established by other researchers, or concludes that a plausible hypothesis should be rejected, you need to do more than simply report the results of your research: you will need to find an explanation for your results.

3.3 Evaluation criteria

In the evaluation of the skill 'Academic research' various sub aspects are distinguished. They will be explained below.

3.3.1 Formulating economic problem definitions and objectives

Thesis: has the thesis been formulated in sufficiently objective terms, in other words: doesn't it lead to an analysis that is too descriptive?

You must bear the following aspects in mind when defining your problem:

Anchoring, relevance, accuracy and functionality (Oost & Markenhof, 2002).

Anchoring

This aspect consists of determining if you are sufficiently able to specify the field and sub-fields in which the problem definition falls and the theories or models that will be used. See Oost & Markenhof (2002, pp. 21-29).

Example of an incorrectly anchored problem definition:

'My research focuses on the relationship between competition in the healthcare insurance sector and the salaries of medical specialists. This research is microeconomic in nature.'

This definition does not explain how the relationships are established between the different microeconomic sub-fields. In other words: which models will be used in these sub-fields to analyse the relationships? From which toolbox will the models be taken: institutional economics, public-sector economics or organisation theory? Which model will be used? This information must be shared. Researchers who do not properly anchor their problem definition run the risk of wasting time searching for data and literature during their research.

Relevance (formulating the objective)

This aspect consists of determining why the research should be carried out. Important questions are:

- Objective: discuss the relevance of the research, or more precisely: do you feel that the relevance (theoretic, in terms of policy and/or the social relevance) is pointed out to the reader sufficiently, or do you have to read between the lines, or hasn't it been made apparent at all?
- Does the question already have a definitive answer? If it has, any further research would be a waste of your own and the readers' time.
- Does answering the question bear any theoretical and/or social relevance? For research that is of theoretical relevance, you must point out that you are testing
 - a new hypothesis using relevant models and/or theories
 - a previously tested hypothesis using a new and/or better method (e.g. by applying more appropriate statistical methods or using a new data set).

For research that is of social relevance, you must point out that the research results will be used, for example, to better address a social problem, or to improve corporate policies. See Oost & Markenhof (2002, pp. 30-39).

Example of a poorly formulated objective:

'My research focuses on the relationship between competition in the healthcare insurance sector and the salaries of medical specialists because this subject is interesting and often in the news.' Here it is unclear why the subject is interesting and in the news.

Accuracy

This aspect consists of accurately defining in the research plan what it is that you will be researching. The more accurate the definition, the better the position you are in to judge the importance and the success of your research. Make sure your research plan clearly conveys the main statement your research will be making (*intended domain*), the basis on which the statement is made (*reached domain*) and what the main statement could become. See Oost & Markenhof (2002, pp. 40-48).

Example of intended and reached domains:

'My research focuses on the relationship between competition in the healthcare insurance sector and the salaries of medical specialists. I am going to interview urologists and dermatologists that work at Utrecht University Hospital. I will use the interviews to state the effect this will have on the salaries of all of the specialists in The Netherlands.' You will make a statement about the salaries of all medical specialists in The Netherlands (intended domain). The statement is based on the salaries of urologists and dermatologists working at the University Hospital Utrecht (reached domain).

Functionality

For this aspect it is especially important that you have thoroughly considered the way in which your problem could be answered. The sub-questions and the research method must relate to the problem definition. Determine if the basic information used to answer the sub-questions can be used to answer the problem definition and if the research method is optimal. See Oost & Markenhof (2002, pp. 49-58).

Example of poor functionality:

'My research focuses on the effects interest rates had on industry investments in The Netherlands between 1990 and 2004. My research method consists of interviewing 5,568 industry managers. One of the questions I will be asking is: How much did you invest per year between 1990 and 2004?' The research method - interviewing 5,568 industry managers in The Netherlands - is not optimal. Not only is it time-consuming, conducting so many interviews to obtain information that is readily available from Central Bureau of Statistics in Voorburg does not add any value.

3.3.2 Preparing and setting up research

Research design: has the reader been presented with clear and logical subordinate questions – whether explicit or not – which through intermediate steps will lead to an answer to the main question? In other words, do the subordinate questions contribute to a logical structure of the paper? Is it made sufficiently clear how the researchers set up their project: did they perform desk research, did they do a case study, interviews, did they interpret statistic data? and so on. See further the aspects discussed in Formulating an economic objective and problem definition.

3.3.3 Choosing a method to collect and process data

Make sure the data collection and data processing methods you choose will enable you to answer your problem definition.

3.3.4 Collecting and selecting relevant data

Because academic research must be replicable, you should ask yourself the following questions, among others: If you 'created' data, for example, by conducting interviews and surveys: Did you clearly state who was interviewed/pollled and the circumstances under which the interviews/surveys were conducted? Did you add the questionnaire used in the survey and the list of topics used in the interview? Are the results of the interviews available? If you are using existing data sets: Did you specify the source?

3.3.5 Collecting and selecting relevant literature

The main criteria include:

- Critical evaluation of literature consulted: have the researchers used sufficiently reliable, relevant and high-grade sources? In addition, if relevant: is the bibliography presented in a clear and consistent manner (although this is more a matter of layout).
- And reference to literature in the body text: have these been included sufficiently and in the correct fashion?
- Does the bibliography contain sufficient academic literature and policy papers?
- Can the references be used to formulate the objective?
- Can the references be used to analyse the situation or analyse and interpret the data?

3.3.6 Embedding in a theoretical framework

Has it been made sufficiently clear from which social angle the thesis has been fleshed out (the ‘anchoring’)? In short, do the researchers sufficiently link their research to the academic domain within which they performed their research (in an explicit way)? Subsequently: have any relevant theories from this domain been incorporated in the correct manner?

See further: Anchoring.

3.3.7 Using common mathematical and statistical methods

Are the data analysed according to the method courses Mathematics & Statistics and Econometrics guidelines?

3.3.8 Processing and analysing research data

Is the main discourse easy to follow, are the arguments substantiated enough (or do claims seem to be appearing out of nowhere). In short, is what was announced in the introduction fleshed out sufficiently and has a sufficiently likely case been presented in the body text, or does it fail to deliver on the promise made in the introduction.

This aspect focuses on the replicability and falsifiability of your research. Is your research replicable and falsifiable? Can someone else replicate your research using the information contained in your report on the way you processed and analysed the data? Is the argument falsifiable? Are all of the steps you carried out during your research clearly described so that your reader will understand this, and does the main text sufficiently refer to the sources?²

3.3.9 Drawing conclusions

As a researcher you must make sure that:

- you base your conclusions on the research results
- you answer the problem definition
- the answer is used to make a statement that relates to the objective
- you discuss the conclusions. Is the conclusion the definitive answer to the problem definition, rendering further research in this area superfluous? Or did you argue that the conclusion strongly depends on the research method or the data used?

Further important aspects include:

- Are the conclusions well-founded?

² For information on references, see the APA guidelines in the appendix of Writing a report, policy document or memorandum.

- Are the conclusions misleading because they are based on the wrong assumptions?
- Can some of the effects be traced to causes other than those you stated?
- Did you clearly define the key concepts you used?
- Did you use the concepts consistently and with the same meaning?
- Are facts and opinions clearly separated?
- Do any of your statements contradict statements made in previous or subsequent chapters?
- Does the language in any way indicate partiality, superficiality or unreliability?
Examples: 'it is common knowledge that ...', 'it has been clearly proven that ...', 'many agree with me on ...', 'research shows ...', 'there is no doubt that ...', 'it is generally assumed that ...'.

3.4 Bibliography

Oost, H., Markenhof, A. (2002). *Een onderzoek voorbereiden*. Baarn: HBuitgevers

4 Skill IV. Effective teamwork

Many of the issues you will be dealing with as an economist require collaboration with fellow economists and with people from other disciplines. In research projects, policy development, consulting and management you will often work in teams. Working with a group of people can be inspiring, enriching and stimulating. Likewise it can be frustrating, annoying, draining, confronting and tiresome.

To learn mastering the main aspects of sound teamwork we have included many group assignments during your degree programme. These assignments serve as a learning ground for your future professional life. 'Effective teamwork' therefore is one of the academic skills that we will pay a lot of attention to in our courses.

4.1 The pros and cons of working with others

If you stick to a set of rules concerning project management, meetings, discussions, giving feedback, brainstorming and making arrangements and sticking to them, working in a team will be much easier. It will allow you to convert what may look like a time-consuming activity into a situation in which you can achieve more as a group than you would ever be able to on your own. The strength or benefit of a collective approach is that you can use everyone's specific knowledge or expertise. This means that better decisions will be taken than when a person has to make all considerations and decisions on their own. Even if the eventual solution is a compromise between conflicting wishes and interests this would still be a better result than when there is just one stakeholder imposing their will. In a joint handling of the matter a further benefit is the fact that tasks can be allocated. This will increase productivity and quality of execution.

Collective decision-making does, however, come with some drawbacks of its own. There is a risk of misapprehension, chaos and conflict not just hampering good decision-making but actually stopping *any* decision-making whatsoever. For there may be much diversity of ideas, qualities and interests of the participants and this may make it difficult to arrive at a joint decision. Instead of collaboration there will be sabotage and conflict and meetings like these will end in chaos. The process of collaboration is then basically paralyzed by a lack of leadership and decisiveness. Although these things do happen, they can never be an argument *against* collaboration: all they do is speak *in favour* of *better* collaboration.

Below we will first discuss the different aspects of project management: Effective conferencing, brainstorming and the group process. Finally we will address the criteria you will be evaluated on.

4.2 Project Management

In a project there will be a number of people who temporarily work together to achieve a goal. During your studies you will regularly work on a group product. Various principles of project management may help you make this collaboration effective. We will discuss them based on three phases in a project:

- a) *Preparation: orientation, analysis, formulation of objectives and a starting document;*
- b) *Realization: execution, monitoring;*
- c) *Follow-up: presentation, evaluation.*

4.2.1 Preparation

Orientation

It is necessary to first discuss the project with your group. Because everyone will bring their own experience and knowledge into the equation it is important to first discuss everybody's motivations and expectations. This way it will become clear how everyone is viewing the task at hand and it will allow you to solve any uncertainties. It is much easier to clear mistakes at the start, while it will take up a lot of time and effort to correct things if you find out that the group started from the wrong assumptions at a later stage.

This is why you have to make a sound analysis of the question/task and check which aspects are linked to this question and what how they are relevant. Check what was the reason for the question being asked in the first place, what is the context in which it is placed, and what are the underlying interests. You will then list all these different aspects. By looking for information in internal as well as external sources, by talking to people and by studying literature you will try to find the first tentative answers to the questions posed. Questions that often come up during the orientation phase are:

- What are the bottlenecks? Why is this project relevant?
- Who are the stakeholders? What do they want and what do they expect?
- What role do the stakeholders play? How will they influence the project and the results?
- What is the context in which the project group is functioning?
- What is the actual problem that needs solving? Into which partial problems can this be split up? What knowledge do we need to solve these problems?
- What knowledge do we have ourselves and what do the various different sources have to offer (e.g. literature, experts et cetera)?

Properly discussing a project at the very start will also show you what all of you will be able to contribute to it. Make clear arrangements about the tasks and expected effort of all group members. Make a starting document (this is the project plan). In this document you will lay down the specifics of the project in clear terms. Think about the reason for the project, an analysis of the problems the project should try to solve, the project objectives or the expected output and products, the limiting conditions, if any, that the output must meet or the quality criteria the product must meet, the project budget or the investments in terms of time and means and the organisational planning of the project.

Further notes on brainstorming sessions: brainstorm

In a brainstorming session people can basically say whatever comes to mind (free association). The participants may not criticize or comment on other people's ideas. This will stimulate idea generation.

- Appoint a chairperson and someone who will do the minutes. The chairperson will see to it that no one reacts negatively to any of the ideas uttered, that there will be no discussion, and that everyone can have their say. During this brainstorming phase a chairperson cannot be too visible and may never push his own ideas. The person taking the minutes will write key words on a flip chart.
- Define the problem you will be brainstorming about in very precise language.
- Everyone will take 2 minutes to think about the problem in silence, and will write down their ideas without holding anything back, fast and in key words.
- Next, one of you will get to name all your reactions, ideas and solutions, without going into any details. The others may respond but only if they would like to add on to an idea mentioned. They are not allowed to come up with things like 'Oh, please ...', 'Like that would ever happen.', 'That's not what it says in the book.' and the like.
- If the ideas and reactions to what the first student has said peter out it is the next student's turn. They will read out whatever they've jotted down, insofar as it hasn't been mentioned already.

At the end of the session you will have filled a (few) flip chart sheet(s) with your takes on the problem, and ideas about the direction and method for solving it. Based on these you will devise your plan.

Analysis

While in the previous step a first orientation on the situation was emphasized, your analysis will focus on the actual product you are to develop or solution you will need to find for a particular problem.

Again, you will start by gathering any relevant information, via interviews with parties involved or with experts, via a literature search and so on. The questions you will be asking here include:

- What questions will the project have to answer?
- What are the requirements the end product must meet?
- Where is the product going to be used?
- What purposes will the product serve, what are its functions?
- What could it look like?
- Who will use the product and how will they use it?

A brainstorming session with the group will help gain insight into these questions. Brainstorming can be used to: Generate ideas, think up solutions for known problems, identify unknown problems, and find causes of problems. By first viewing the problem or question from every possible angle and thinking up all sorts of different solutions you will prevent the group from heading into one particular directing too soon. This might result in the group choosing a problem analysis and a method that are too limited. Even though you will eventually select one particular angle, it will be easier to solve any problems you may encounter further down the process and change directions if you have already considered other angles as well.

Tip:

Don't stop after you have come up with just one explanation or one model, or one direction for a solution, not even when everyone in the group agrees. Further down the project you will find that it will be worth your while if you have viewed the problem from various different angles and looked for a number of possible explanations, models and solutions at this stage.

Formulating objectives and starting document (see also 4.6.1)

Finally, you will summarize the process of the previous two steps (orientation and analysis) in a starting document, in which you will also describe the concrete objectives for the project. You will phrase these objectives as accurately as possible and do so in terms related directly to the end product the project is to yield. Any notions that might cause confusion or that are open to various different interpretations should be defined unambiguously as possible. In addition to the intended objective of the project you will also describe in further detail how you will be handling the project and what your project plan is like. You will submit your starting document to your tutor for approval.

Example: structure of a starting document

1. Assignment
 - background
 - objective
 - problem definition
2. Activities
 - project plan
 - organisation
3. Provisional bibliography plus explanation

Annexe 1 describes the different elements to be included in the starting document.

4.2.2. Realization

After these preparations you will start realizing the starting document. This is when you will start the actual data collecting and interpreting, make the first draft of the paper and start making any adjustments so that you will be able to finish it in time et cetera. The better your preparation was the less likely you will be to encounter unanticipated problems in the realization phase. Nevertheless, it may still be that the project does not progress as planned. In that case, you will need to jointly decide on an adjustment of the project plan. Part of the realization phase is the monitoring of the project results to check whether they meet your previously defined criteria for quality. In the projects you will do within the scope of the economics curriculum, project groups are supposed to decide for themselves whether their 'product' is ready for presentation. The eventual evaluation (which will include the process as a whole) will take place in the follow-up phase.

4.2.3 Completion

To complete the project you will record the results (in a final report) and present them to your 'client' (your tutor or possibly an external party). Within the scope of your studies, most projects will actually end here, and the only thing to follow is a process evaluation to see what you can learn from this project in terms of planning, organization and collaboration.

Further explanation: threats during a project

There are various reasons why a project could go wrong. The most common reasons are:

- The project's objective is not clear enough (or hasn't been clear enough for too long) and during the course of the project too many changes have been allowed;
- The team's motivation is good at the start, but dwindles over time; the atmosphere within the group is too goal-oriented and does not leave enough room for personal matters and informal contacts;
- The allocation of tasks within the group is not clear; some tasks are performed twice, some not at all, too late or rather too soon (i.e. before one of the other conditional activities has been completed);
- The project members are too focused on their own personal goals. Differences of opinion and personal conflicts interfere with good collaboration within the project team;
- The decision-making within the project is lacking in clarity or is too slow.

A good start in the preparatory phase and a good group process can prevent most of these problems. We will now discuss the group process.

4.3 Group process

4.3.1 Group roles (Belbin)

In addition to the formal roles during a meeting (chairperson, minutes secretary, participant), each group member will assume a role that is defined by their talents and personal characteristics. Meredith Belbin has researched team roles and has defined 9 different roles.

Belbin Team Role Type	Contributions	Allowable Weaknesses
PLANT	Creative, imaginative, unorthodox. Solves difficult problems.	Ignores incidentals. Too pre-occupied to communicate effectively.
CO-ORDINATOR	Mature, confident, a good chairperson. Clarifies goals,	Can often be seen as manipulative. Off loads personal

	promotes decision-making, delegates well.	work.
MONITOR EVALUATOR	Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options. Judges accurately.	Lacks drive and ability to inspire others.
IMPLEMENTER	Disciplined, reliable, conservative and efficient. Turns ideas into practical actions.	Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities.
COMPLETER FINISHER	Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors and omissions. Delivers on time.	Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate.
RESOURCE INVESTIGATOR	Extrovert, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities. Develops contacts.	Over - optimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed.
SHAPER	Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. The drive and courage to overcome obstacles.	Prone to provocation. Offends people's feelings.
TEAMWORKER	Co-operative, mild, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens, builds, averts friction.	Indecisive in crunch situations.
SPECIALIST	Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply.	Contributes only on a narrow front. Dwells on technicalities.

(Source: <http://www.belbin.com/belbin-team-roles.htm>)

No one can be strong in all of these roles, but in a team the members will complement each other's weaknesses. According to Belbin teams will function best when all team roles are represented in the team. You can test which roles suit you. There are a number of free online tests you could do:

- <http://www.managersonline.nl/mol/belbin.shtml>
- <http://users.castel.nl/~oschw/belbin.htm>
- <http://www.123test.nl/index.php?c=links/jump.php?ID=2>

These test are based on 8 team roles, while Belbin has recently added the role of the 'specialist'.

There are two things you need to be aware of when it comes to the Belbin team roles:

- No role is better or more useful than the others. All roles contribute to the end result. It's fine if you, for example, admire a fellow student for coming up with answers fast, but don't think you will need to learn how to do that yourself. It can be equally useful to be more contemplative about questions, and to not go for a solution straight away but first make an inventory of the different aspects of an issue and weighing up the pros and cons of a solution.
- Once you have adopted a role in one group it does not mean that you will always have that role in all the groups you will be part of in the future. Team roles will develop as you gain more experience. The roles people will adopt can also depend on the situation at hand (e.g. in response to other team members).

4.3.2 Dealing with group problems

In project groups you will jointly work on a task or assignment. The group members depend on each other for this. The collaboration of the group (the group process) is very important for the end result. If the collaboration is not working out, the quality of the end product will suffer. In addition to paying attention to the way in which you work on the content of the task it is also wise to reflect on how you interact in a more general sense. Some common group problems are:

- Being stuck, not knowing how to proceed;
- The absence of group members;
- Group members who fail to do what they should do;
- A chairperson who doesn't perform well;
- A conflict between different group members.

For each of these problems we will describe here how to prevent them, how to deal with them and how to solve them. We will end this section with some tips on how to manage conflicts.

Being stuck, not knowing how to proceed

When you are trying to solve a problem you may arrive at a point where you just don't know how to move on from there. Experienced problem-solvers will tell you that it is precisely at these moments when we will learn the most. Learning how to rise above situations in which you can see no way out is thus considered as essential to the development of your problem-solving capabilities.

In later life you will not be spared such situations. You will need to be able to make a thorough analysis of the situation, gather relevant information, think up possible solutions, approach the problem from various angles and so on. What to do when you are stuck? The general advice would be this: *First of all: gather around the table. Together you can achieve more than alone.* Especially in cases like these it is wise to systematically go over the different steps of problem-solving.

1. As a group, you will discuss the problem, or, in other words: you will identify and analyse the problem (= the reason why you got stuck) and the factors causing it.
2. Then think up different ways in which you can get out of trouble and eventually choose one plan for solving the situation.
3. Discuss the plan as a group. Consider the pros and cons of the all the steps you may need to take.
4. For the plan you eventually choose you should check that it is interpreted the same by all members of the group.
5. Make arrangements for the realization of the plan. Who will do what?
6. Evaluate the plan in the short term. What did and did not work out?

Only if none of this is getting you anywhere you will need to consult your tutor.

The absence of group members

Good collaboration basically requires the presence of all group members. If you are ill or have to go to a funeral and are thus unable to attend, you must report this to your fellow group members as soon as possible. The project group can make arrangements about what to do in such an event during their first meeting. You could agree, for instance, that the person who will be absent must make a proposition as to how this absence will be compensated. If members are absent too often (for the minimum requirements please refer to the course manual of the course in question) – whatever the reason for their absence – the tutor must be informed of the problem. For it interferes with the progress of the project and that may affect the other group members. Please note: Arriving late at a meeting may well have the same effect as not being present at all. Especially if you are always late, this will have a negative impact on the process.

Group members who fail to do what they should do

Making a good project plan is important, and sticking to it is just as important. Everything is limited by time: Your entire studies are, and so is the work of a project group. At the end of a period your project group is expected to present a product, and *each group member* must have made a substantial contribution to this end product. A very common problem within groups is that fast workers or active students take over the tasks of students who do not perform as well as they do. This is how there will always be students who sponge off the group without making any investments themselves. Freeriders are a problem the group must primarily deal with itself. In later life, at work for example, it will also be your own responsibility to deal with people like this. Know that you are not doing someone any favours by doing their work for them. It is much wiser to point out to them that they are not meeting their commitments. Only if repeated attempts to this effect prove to make no difference you should inform your tutor.

A chairperson who doesn't perform well

All students will chair a meeting at one point or other (see below for a description of the role of and the tasks of a chairperson in a project group). The first time you will chair a meeting you will obviously not do a perfect job but this does not have to interfere with the overall group process. A chairperson may have an extra task during the meetings, but all members of the group are jointly responsible for the proceedings within the group. Therefore you must continue to think along and come up with constructive ideas on how the group can make its way out of the problem zone, even if you don't chair the group. What's essential is that you learn from this experience. That is why you should always provide the chairperson with feedback on their performance. Only if you have and nothing has changed still you should inform the tutor.

A conflict between the different group members

In case of simple conflicts between different group members the chairperson could adopt the following procedure:

1. Stop all other activities at once. Ask the people involved what is going on. Let everyone have their say without entering into a discussion and try to establish what lies at the root of the conflict.
2. List everyone's ideas on how to proceed. What plans or ideas do the different members have? As a chairperson you are not to share your own views. Do not make any reproaches ('You should have been here on time').
3. Help the group devise a plan for solving the conflict. If the group fails to come up with a solution the chairperson decides. Consider whether you should make firm arrangements or present the problem to your tutor.

Tips for mitigating conflicts (and the ensuing emotions):

- Use the I-form ('I understand that ...; 'what I notice is that ...')
- Speak for yourself only ('My views on that are somewhat different')
- Ask for the other person's view ('So how do you feel about this?')
- Focus on the discussion not on the person ('there's a lot of money involved' rather than 'you're a big spender')
- Never make dogmatic assertions ('Well, the fact is ...')
- Avoid the words 'never' and 'always' ('You never ever consider...' or 'You always want to...')
- Leave the door open ('should you want to reconsider...')

If a conflict really threatens to get out of hand your tutor is the one to discuss it with and possibly solve it. Know that the longer a conflict exists the more difficult it will be to really solve it.

4.4 Evaluation criteria of the skill

During the Bachelor's Programme your collaboration skills will be evaluated on a number of different criteria. We will explain the criteria below.

4.4.1 Participation

Attendance

Good collaboration basically requires the presence of all group members. If you are ill or have to go to a funeral and are thus unable to attend you must report this to your fellow group members as soon as possible. The project group can make arrangements about what to do in such an event during their first meeting. You could agree, for instance, that the person who will be absent must make a proposition as to how this absence will be compensated.

Preparation

Your contribution to a meeting is to add to the purpose of the meeting. This implies you will need to be well-informed on all matters to be discussed during the meeting. This requires sound preparation: you perform the tasks assigned to you, read other people's contributions and the minutes of previous meetings beforehand, and make notes or write down questions you want to raise during the next meeting.

Active participation in the project and in discussions during a meeting

All participants in a project team are expected to:

- Correctly perform the tasks defined for them and assigned to them in consultation with the project group;
- Deliver the required work according to the plan as defined by the group and inform the group in time if through unforeseen circumstances they are not able to make it in time.
- Report on their progress to the group or the project manager, including an account of how they have spent their time.

All participants in a meeting are expected to:

- Contribute to the exchange of information, the forming of the group's opinion and the decision-making. Think up suggestions for solving tricky problems and come up with arguments in favour or against a proposal;
- Promote communication and collaboration during meetings. If one of the participants can never get a word in edgewise you will have to help them. Defining differences and looking for compromise is also useful; it will keep the group together.

Tip:

Know that if your being present in the group has no influence on the group's output whatsoever, your contributions are probably not very effective. Acknowledge this in time, think about what you could do to improve this and discuss it with the rest of the group, explaining to them that you wish to be more productive.

Responsibility: Taking the initiative/being cooperative

Taking the initiative means taking it one step further than *active participation*. You are not just thinking along, but you are actually steering the process into a direction that you think is useful. You point out problems and take action to arrive at a solution, for example by discussing the matter in a team discussion. To be able to show responsibility in your behaviour you should consider the following tips:

- Show responsibility for the group proceedings. Make suggestions as to how the group could be working. Come up with ideas and various alternatives. Actively participate in the group process;
- Come up with proposals;
- Take collective decisions about your group's objectives, the allocation of tasks and the schedule. Make sure that you establish an effective way of conferring, discussing and making arrangements. Take decisions in a democratic manner;
- Give each group member room to develop their own initiatives within the group's collective initiatives.
- Make sure every group member has a say about the issue at hand;
- Stimulate people's creativity by creating a positive group climate, so that all good ideas are heard;
- Keep a close watch on progress and the quality of your group's output; Urge the group to comply with the arrangements made. Take the lead if the pace is slowing down;
- Solve any differences of opinion and other conflicts within the group;
- Define problems and obstacles;
- Let your own wants and needs be heard;
- Formulate your own personal learning goals.

Evaluation

In evaluating this step of the skill your tutor will be looking at four aspects:

Aspects to be evaluated	Criteria for evaluation
Attendance	Did you attend the required minimum number of meetings? See the requirements listed in the course manual of the relevant course.
Preparation	Did you always come to the meetings well-prepared?
Active participation in consultations/discussion	Did you provide effective input during these meetings?
Responsibility: taking the initiative/being cooperative	Is there a good balance between what you give and what you take? I.e.: do you show sufficient initiative but also: do the group members stimulate each other to a sufficient extent?

4.4.2 Collaboration and communication

Fair distribution of workload, meeting your commitments

The quality of collaboration depends on many things, including the way in which the different tasks are allocated. To make sure the project can be successful each member of the project group must know what is expected of them. Making clear arrangements and a fair allocation of tasks will contribute to this. Record the tasks of the different group members in the starting document; i.e. before you start. Working together should always start with agreeing on individual commitments and with making sure you will meet these. In part this will be a matter of discipline, but good planning helps. Therefore: always agree on a date, a time (start and end time) and a location, and copy these in your own appointment diary.

Time management: planning and monitoring

What's important if you work in a project group is that you make clear arrangements about the planning of work over time and about the allocation of tasks to the different members of the project group. If the tasks are allocated, make clear arrangements as to what is expected of every member of the group. The secretary (everyone will take turns where this role is concerned) will draw up a written statement of these in the project log to which all members of the group have access. The log should provide insight into the extent to which the collaboration is successful. Just a few short lines will thus not suffice. Also, it will be pointless to paint a rosy picture of how things are going while in actual fact things aren't going so well. It is actually better to define any problems as soon as they arise, and to have the courage to talk about this with each other. The end result will greatly benefit from this. If you fail to do so and your collaboration does not work out this will be reflected in a lower group grade.

Further explanation: The Log

In the log you should at least record the following:

- When did the project group meet to confer in the past reporting period;
- Who were present, who were absent (and why);
- Do you work with an (alternating) chairperson and/or minutes secretary? If so: how do you like that. If it doesn't work: why not?
- How would you describe the nature of these meetings: constructive, chaotic, poorly/well prepared et cetera.
- What arrangements were made: who will look up what, who will write which part, et cetera.
- To what extent have people lived up to what you all agreed on, and what are the (provisional) results of your research? If people did not stick to the agreements: record why they didn't.

You will remain in control of your own work and study progress by laying down what exactly the different tasks comprise. Make sure your task is defined as precisely as possible. Define the intended result of your collaboration, as this will make it easier to work towards that goal and establish whether you have in fact achieved it.

Consider whether the location where you have your meetings is the most suitable place for your objectives. Check if all the materials you will need are present and any equipment you might need in good time, e.g. video equipment. If you need to make a computer print-out: don't wait until the last minute to make it. Always factor in possible technical failures, meaning a task might require more time than you had anticipated.

Communication (listening, feedback, argumentation); contribution to the work atmosphere

The success of a project largely depends on how well the project groups works together as a team. That is why it is important to pay attention to team-building. Team-building can be described as the welding together of a group of individuals into a well-functioning team. For this, the individual members should show an interest in the insights of their fellow group members about economic issues. Also, the individual members should not be afraid to share such insights and experiences. In a well-oiled team, the members listen to each carefully and are not afraid to give each other critical feedback, taking account of the rules of giving and receiving feedback.

Further explanation: rules for giving feedback

- Describe the other person's behaviour (negative or positive in your perception) as objectively and explicitly as possible. The other person will understand your feedback best if it concerns a recent and concrete situation.
- Use the I-form to describe how you feel about it, how it affects you. For example: 'If you fail to meet your commitments, the group will not be able to solve the case. It means another member of the group will have to do your task and that will delay everyone else's work.'
- Don't wait too long before you give feedback. If you get more and more annoyed without saying anything, you may eventually react too emotionally.
- Don't be negative only. It is very rare that all other person does is make a mess of things.
- In case of negative feedback, makes suggestions as to how things could be improved. Since you want the negative behaviour to make way for something else, explain what would be acceptable to you.
- Be inviting, don't get too emotional and don't take out your aggression on anyone. Ask the other person to imagine your view and how you feel. Obviously he or she is free to have their own take on things.
- Observe non-verbal behaviour as that will tell you how your feedback is taken in.
- Only ever give negative feedback if the other person can do something with it. Pointing out behaviour that the other person will not be able to change anyway will only frustrate them. (Think of a tic the other person cannot overcome).
- Parcel your feedback in portions that the other person can handle. Changing behaviour can only be done in small steps. Too much negative feedback at once will discourage people.
- Check if the other person understands what you are saying and ask them how they feel about what you are proposing.
- Be as clear and concise as possible.
- In phrasing your feedback be aware of the other person's feelings.

Further explanation: rules for receiving feedback

- Have an open mind when listening to the feedback and try not to cut in and defend yourself.
- Summarize what the other person has just said to check that you understood them correctly.
- Ask them to name concrete situations and examples to clarify the matter.
- If necessary, ask others how they feel about it.
- If the other person doesn't volunteer the information, ask how your behaviour affects them.
- Accept that not everyone will have the same ideas that you have. This also means of course that you don't always need to agree with what the other person is saying.
- Show that you are taking the feedback seriously and that you will take it to think about it.
- Decide whether you think you should change your behaviour or not. It may be that you do understand what the other person is saying but that you do not think that is reason enough for you to change. Be sure to explain this.

Structured consultation (proper allocation of tasks chairperson and minutes secretary)

The main goal of a meeting is to arrive at collective decisions. When you meet as a group you will do the following:

- Pass on and discuss information;
- Point out and define problems;
- Think up and analyse solutions; the more views on the problem you allow to come up, the more solutions you will be able to generate. Some of these solutions may prove useful;
- Take your position: all participants should form their own view on the possible solutions; is this solution useful, feasible? what are the drawbacks it entails?;
- Taking decisions: If all individual views have crystallized the participants should arrive at a collective decision;
- Team-building: The useful side effect of conferring is that you meet up as a group on a regular basis, which means you will get to know each other better and will be more inclined to ask each other for advice or help outside the scope of the meetings as well. Meetings add to the feeling of togetherness.

For smooth proceedings and for the efficacy of the meeting it is essential that you appoint a *chairperson* and a *minutes secretary*. The tasks of these two roles are described in the text boxes. Information about the role of a chair person in a meeting can be found in Annexe II. To prepare for a meeting and during the meeting you may dwell on the purpose of the meeting and your role in it. Questions to this effect can be found in Annexe III.

Further explanation: the tasks of a chairperson of a project group

- Prepare the discussion/ consultations, check the previously allocated tasks that people should be able to report on now, draw up an agenda;
- Open and close the meeting, introduce the items on the agenda, monitor time;
- Make sure that everyone will be able to have their say, stimulate people to join in (in case of very modest group members);
- Step in if people all start talking at the same time, if the discussion takes up too much time, if the subject of discussion is not relevant or if people are just repeating themselves;
- Probe when something is not clear or ask for an example;
- Summarize the discussion during the course of it and at the end of the meeting;
- Guide the decision-making process, decide on it by vote if necessary, make sure clear arrangements are made and talk these over;
- If the atmosphere is not pleasant: discuss this (discuss the process), mediate in conflicts, briefly evaluate the efficiency and productivity of the meeting (process and product).

Tasks of the minutes secretary in a project group:

- The minutes secretary will draw up a record of the arrangements made during a meeting. The record should at least include the following:
- People attending the meeting
- What about the tasks everyone had been allocated; what has been accomplished? If people have not performed certain tasks, record these and also write down why.
- What are the new arrangements/agreements?
- Who will do what?

Internal communication

Good communication within the project group is essential to make sure everyone within the group is on the same page. In addition to your goals you should also agree on a

working method that you will use to achieve these goals. Will you exchange drafts only or will you present each other with questions about relevant sources and theories found? Will you do so in writing or in person? In addition to the theoretical aspects, will you also discuss more the practical aspects? Will you work according to criteria of evaluation defined at the start of the project? The form of collaboration you agree on will define the efficacy of it. Create a project file in which you keep all things to do with the organization and management of the project. The documents you keep in these files are temporary in nature and serve the purpose of facilitating internal communication and of being able to account for the proceedings and working method chosen afterwards.

The file thus serves as a log in which you keep the following:

- The project assignment;
- The (draft) project plan;
- Notes made of ‘outsider’ comments (tutors, relevant experts and so on);
- (Adjusted) schedules;
- Progress reports and time sheets of the project group members;
- Agendas and minutes of the various meetings;
- Letters received and sent;
- Memos.

Aspects to be evaluated	Criteria for evaluation
Fair distribution of workload, meeting your commitments	Distribution of work and minutes.
Time management: planning and monitoring	Planning and evaluation of the planning.
Communication and contribution to work atmosphere	Do you confer with your fellow group members in a pleasant, constructive manner? Do you leave room for others to share their views?
Structured consulting	Agenda.
Internal communication	Do you communicate in a clear way?

Online collaboration and communication with WIKIs

Depending on course specifications in the study guide it may be required to partially coordinate and write the research project online by means of dedicated WIKIs. Each project team will then be able to write the project document (.doc and .exe) online and also to communicate/protocol in separate communication documents. The advantage of such online collaboration is that all individual contributions and changes are automatically recorded with a time and identity stamp. Older versions of the project document are automatically saved and all versions/contributions can be observed by the supervisor and other team members at any time. In such a case the team is not required to keep a separate log book. However, the team may nevertheless be required to protocol their physical team meetings and upload these in the (separate) communication document. Individual team members are responsible to make sure that they regularly contribute to the WIKI(s) so that their effort is properly tracked by the system. If the project is the joint preparation of a presentation instead of a written paper the preparation of the analysis for the presentation should be done with the WIKI in order to allow for an evaluation of the skill *effective teamwork*.

4.4.3 Problem-solving capabilities

Gathering, contributing and using information

It is important for all group members to contribute to the growth of the group's knowledge. To be able to carry out an assignment you will often need new information. You should not just fall back on literature you are already familiar with: it is crucial that you will also actively look for new information. The next step is for you to properly apply this new knowledge.

Don't keep any relevant information to yourself, but share it briefly with the rest of your group. If during the course of the project you find relevant literature it is wise to record at least the following:

- Where did you find it, including the code/volume of the book or magazine;
- Title, authors, place and year of publication and, if relevant, the volume, issue and page numbers.

Aspects to be evaluated	Criteria for evaluation
Gathering, contributing and using information	Do you provide the group with information? Do you make sure that relevant information is included in the group product (paper, presentation)?
Making deliberate choices	Do you consider the consequences of the decisions you make? Do you pay enough attention to devising and considering alternative options?

4.4.4 Other qualities

Aspects to be evaluated	Criteria for evaluation
Creativity in terms problem-solving	Are you creative when it comes to thinking up alternative solutions?
Independent judgement	Do you contribute your own views or do you always agree with the majority or with the person with the loudest mouth?
Critical-reflective attitude	To achieve a good end product it is important that you critically assess the work of other group members and the progress of the project as a whole). You should also make sure that the end product must be a collective product that includes the work of all the group members and that has been made into a coherent end product.

4.4.5 Strongest points of your work in the project group

Here the tutor will tell you which strengths you possess in terms of collaborating with others.

4.4.6 Aspects deserving further attention

Here the tutor will give you pointers as to the aspects you need to further develop during the course of your studies.

4.5 Bibliography

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4.6 Annexes

4.6.1 Annex 1: Making a starting document

Example: structure of a starting document

1. Assignment

- background
- objective
- problem definition

2. Activities

- project plan
- organisation

3. Provisional bibliography plus explanation

Annexe 1 describes the different elements to be included in the starting document.

1) Assignment

Background

Based on this description even non-insiders should be able to form an idea about the project and the people who are realizing it:

- Briefly state who is/are responsible for the realization of the project (the 'line-up' of the project group);
- Describe the background of the case and in doing so explain which theories you will be using to explain the key aspects of this case.

Objective

You will carry out a project to find a solution to a problem that exists within or outside of your organization, create a new product, examine a situation et cetera.

- Formulating clear goals for the project is very important: Why do we do this project?

Problem definition

If the project is a research project you will need to define both an objective and the problem. A problem definition is always phrased as a question.

- If the project concerns relatively simple, exploratory research, an open-ended question will usually suffice. If it is a more complicated research project the problem is usually defined as a hypothesis that will either be confirmed or rejected;
- Phrase subordinate questions the answers to which will serve as input you need for solving the problem defined.

2) Activities

During the realization of the project the project group will be performing a number of different tasks:

- Describe the activities to be performed in a to-do list, in as much detail as possible. Include the preparation in the to-do list as well.
- Try to logically group the activities, using sub headers.
- Put activities that demand a similar amount of work 'on the same level'. You could for example distinguish between the following levels: per project phase, per group and per type of activity.
- Define the limits of the project, stating the elements or activities that will not be included, contrary to the probable expectation of outsiders.
- It will not be necessary to include the weekly project meetings in the to-do list. Set elements like the meetings will be included in the 'organisation scheme' or 'planning'.

Planning

Your planning will provide an overview of when the activities will be performed. It will also state when which project team members will perform the different activities. The planning allows you to make a more realistic estimate of your project's duration:

- Name a commencing date and an end date for the project. State the consequences of the project starting later than on the commencement date or ending later than the end date;
- Put the different activities in a chronological order. The start of some activities will depend on the previous activity being completed;
- During the project you will often work with a number of 'intermediary products', e.g. a provisional draft of the intended end product. By stating when each of these intermediary products must be ready the progress of your project will become measurable. We call these intermediary products *milestones* in your planning;
- The planning should also include the weekly meeting or other more or less regular elements;
- Describing the limiting conditions that have to be met in order to realize the group objectives. Think of the availability of group members or tools and the dependency on other projects.

Organisation

All people involved must have a clear understanding of the role they and the other group members will play in the project and what the social rules are:

- Allocate the internal functions within the project group or draw up a diagram of the task allocation as the project goes along (project manager or chairpersons, minutes/secretary plus log of file, project group members);
- State how and to whom the members will report, or in other words, to whom they are accountable. This could be a steering committee or the management. In projects within the scope of your studies you will be accountable to the relevant tutor;
- If you wish you can also describe the manner in which you will communicate with the 'outside world', in order to keep it informed of the project's progress.

3) Provisional bibliography and explanatory notes

You will conclude the starting document with a provisional bibliography plus explanatory notes. The project group will list which articles, books, memorandums, policy documents and so on they think are relevant in terms of solving the problem on hand and will provide an explanation with this list.

4.6.2 Annex 2: Pointers for chairing a meeting

Ideally a chairperson adopts a style that fits the purposes of the meeting and the relevant required working method. As a chairperson you will need to ensure that the following requirements are met:

1) Process-related elements

The participants are familiar with each other

Everyone's name and role should be clear to all members of the group. If you are dealing with meetings with a regular group of participants this will not be a problem. You will in that case only need to introduce any new members. In a meeting with an alternating group this is an important element. It is very annoying for participants if they don't know where certain ideas are coming from. It will make them insecure and it will delay the actual discussion and decision-making. Name tags are a simple tool for learning each other's names.

Creating an atmosphere in which people will ask questions and exchange ideas

Make sure that everyone who wants to contribute ideas or respond to someone else can have their say. A non-specific question such as 'Who would like to say anything?' won't work, because that will only get people talking who like to talk. It is better to ask specific questions, such as: 'Here a new holiday scheme is suggested. Does anyone have any objections against the proposal? What are your objections?' If more than one participant would like to comment on this, you could jot down the names to make sure they all will have a say.

Structuring the discussion and argumentation

You can lend the discussion structure by means of short interventions, for example: 'This item has been prepared by Nina. Nina, would you give a quick recap of the difference between this scheme and the old one?' After Nina has given her recap, which will have drawn the participants' attention to the pros and cons of the scheme you will ask: 'Is this clear to everyone? Any questions? Because only if it's perfectly clear to everyone, I would like to hear how you all feel about this proposal.' If the group understands the matter at hand the actual discussion can start. The risk this entails, however, is that the discussion will become very fuzzy, because everyone will want to raise a particular point that they can only raise once it is their turn to speak. And then it might well be that there is no direct link anymore to the former speaker's contribution. All comments and arguments in favour of and against the proposal and any further views will all just end up in a clutter. You will get a better idea of all the different arguments if you ask: 'Does anyone have any objections against the proposal? Tell us: what are they!' If people come up with objections, you will summarize them and then ask: 'What are the pros of the proposal? I would like to hear about these as well!' Make sure that all participants can have their say and that the discussion is not monopolised by one advocate and one opponent.

If someone wishes to respond to the former speaker, you could first ask: 'Would you like to respond to this or would you like to raise a new point? Because if yours is a new point I would first like to hear from others who want to react to what was just said.' That way the discussion will be substantive, and it will allow the group to list arguments and views in an orderly way. It will then be easy for everyone to take it all in and to make up their mind about the matter.

Dealing with chasms and tension during the meeting

Note that there can be all manner of tension and chasm between participants. Making clear that everyone will get equal opportunities for expressing their views can reduce the tension. People will always have their differences, but as chairperson you can make sure that they don't express themselves in too fierce a manner and that everyone sticks to the rules of

common decency. If things are still spinning out of control you have no choice but to adjourn the meeting and use the break to calm everyone down.

Teamwork

Encourage people to work as a team by underpinning the common grounds. ('People, it will really look bad if we can't work this one out. We must take a decision. Everyone just sticking with their own proposal is not getting us anywhere. We simply have to be more creative than this. Let's have just give it one more try and see if we can come up with some solution.') If the views are too different you could adjourn the meeting or introduce a break during which you can work on a compromise. Teamwork also benefits from social interaction between participants: going out for a meal is a good idea.

2) Output-related elements

Comprehensiveness of information

All participants must receive the documents that will be discussed during the meeting, including any explanatory notes, in good time. Check that everyone did in fact receive everything at the start of the meeting and if not make copies of the documents that are missing. Make sure you know all of the proposals that have been put forward, including any amendments, and that you have a very clear idea of what should be achieved during the meeting. Which of the items on the agenda are just about sharing information? Which are the items that we need to form an opinion about? Where will we need to reach a decision?

Comprehensiveness of argumentation

Make sure all arguments are well-probed, so that you won't be surprised by an outcome that is based on arguments that weren't heard. Correct inaccuracies and comment on opinions, especially if the other participants fail to do so. ('Mr van Zanten claims that absenteeism exceeds 12%, but this is not exactly true. It only exceeded 12% in December but the average figure for Q4 was actually 9%, as it says on page 5 of the report.')

List the main arguments heard: 'We've heard the following arguments in favour of a more active role of the inspecting medical officer:... and the arguments brought in against it were:...'.

Clear alternatives

Make sure you know the different opinions and who are the supporters of each opinion. That way you can gauge what the majority vote will be. You don't want too many alternative options. It is confusing and it will make it even more difficult to arrive at a decision that is supported by the majority. Try to combine alternative options that are too similar into a single proposition. 'This proposal uses different words to say the same thing that was said for the first proposal. I would suggest that we combine the two, by adding to the first proposal the following phrase:... ..'.

Correct use of procedures

During the discussion and the decision-making you must make sure that the correct procedures are followed. You don't want the results of the meeting to be contested on procedural grounds. Be sure the meeting is correctly reported, so that later you will not get any different interpretations about what was said. You can ask the minutes secretary to read out the different sections of transcript during the actual meeting.

Clear implementing orders

Give clear implementing orders that give a precise definition of who is expected to what and at what time. A list of action points appended to the minutes is really helpful in this respect.

3) Technical elements

A clear agenda

It should be clear to all participants what is expected of them. What will they be informed of? What will they need to form an opinion on? Are there decisions to be made? For each item on the agenda explain what is expected of the group and make a suggestion as to how you will handle the item.

Purposive communication

Make sure all contributions made fit in with the objective: In processing information you will often need to clarify it through questions. In forming an opinion you will focus on idea generation and in decision-making argumentation is emphasized. Make sure you spend sufficient time on these, but never more than necessary. Cut short a discussion if it is getting long-winded.

Managing conflicts

Make sure that conflicts do not escalate. Demand that all participants behave in a civil manner.

Neutrality

Adopt an evident neutral attitude towards people as well as proposals. Do guide the discussion towards a conclusion, but never let your own preference transpire.

The above list may prompt you to think that the chairperson is the only one actually doing anything during the meeting. Quite the contrary, however, the chairperson assumes a very modest role and will only spring into action if certain important purposes of the meeting are not being fulfilled.

4.6.3 Annex 3: Efficient meeting check list

1) Preparations

Objectives

- Do I know the objective of the assignment? Do I know the purposes of the meeting?
- Do I know the people attending the meeting? Do I know their motivations for attending?
- Do I know what my own motivations and interests are?
- Am I a useful contributor? Do I have any influence on the proceedings?
- Do I have any influence on the outcome of the meeting?

Meeting rules

- Do I feel at ease during these meetings? Do I want to comply with the rules and regulations?
- Do I agree with the order of the meeting? Do I know when to make an order-related proposal? Are there any rules that need amending? Do I have any influence on this?

Documentation

- Do I know the place and time of the meeting? Do I know the agenda? Do I want to add or strike items from the agenda?
- Have I submitted my items in time? Have I included the necessary documentation?
- Do I know what we're supposed to do with each item?
- Do the explanatory documents give sufficient information? Do I need to look for further information? Do I know where to find it?
- Do I know the issues to be discussed? Do I want to discuss them? Do I know how this item will be discussed? Do I want to change that?
- Do I know what decisions will have to be made? Do I have view on these issues? Do I want these to be discussed? Do I want to take a decision?
- Do I have the minutes of the previous meeting? Are they complete and correct?
- Do I know which decisions were made during the previous meeting? Do I know who will implement these decisions?

2) During the meeting

Communication

- Can I see everyone? Can everyone see me?
- Can I hear the speaker? Do I understand the key message of a person's contribution? Do I have any questions?
- Am I hearing the viewpoints? Do I hear any arguments? Are the facts correct? Do I understand the underlying principles?
- Do I understand the language, notions and jargon used? Do I see any non-verbal messages? Am I interpreting the non-verbal messages correctly?
- Do I speak up at the right moment? Is my message clear? Do people hear my message? Is there anything interfering with them getting my message? Can I do something about it?
- Is the discussion useful? Are there any misunderstandings? Do I see through the rhetoric? Does anyone have a hidden agenda?

Role performance

- Do I know what I want to achieve? Should I contribute, defend, or advise against proposals?

- Do I pay enough attention to the views and interests of the other participants? Do I need to make some compromises? Am I sufficiently concerned with the mutual relationships within the meeting?
- Do I know what the role of the chairperson is? Do I agree with the manner in which they are chairing the meeting? Can I influence the chairperson? Are the minutes correct? Do I have any influence on how they are made?

Decision-making

- Are the problems that people point out relevant? Is it clear what causes them? Do they have serious consequences?
- What solutions can I think of? Any other? Do I know the pros and cons of the different solutions? Are the pros and cons certain enough?
- Can I defend my preference? Will my preferred solution be effective? What if the proposals that I like are rejected: will I be able to live with that rejection?
- Do we need to hold a vote? Is the vote done correctly?

3) Proper perception of your own qualities in meetings

- Do I know my own strengths? Do I know my own weaknesses?
- Do I have any 'blind spots'? Do I know how other people feel about me?
- Am I sufficiently prepared?
- Am I a good listener? Am I prejudiced against anything/anyone? Do I have the courage to face up to my own prejudices?
- Am I capable of expressing my views in a clear and concise way? Can I control my emotions?
- Do I pay enough attention to the interests of others? Am I not afraid to stick with my own needs and interests? Do I have good negotiating skills? Am I playing it by the rules?

5. Skill V. Oral presentation skills

Giving a good presentation takes more than a profound understanding of the issue at hand: you will also need a set of presentation skills. In the Economics curriculum the skill ‘effect oral presentation’ is roughly subdivided into two categories: skills that concern the *content* of your presentation v. skills that concern the actual *presenting*. In this introduction we will set out the different subskills and how these can be used to achieve a particular impact on your audience. But before we will go into the subskills we will first give a general outline of what effective presenting is all about.

5.1 Plan / Preparation

When addressing a group of people you need to have an idea of what it is that you hope to achieve by it. You may want the bank to believe that your new company will be a huge success so that they are willing to give you loan, for instance. In other words: you need to have a *goal* in mind. Two common goals are informing people and persuading them. So, if you want to give a presentation, the first important thing to do is wonder what your goal really is and whether a presentation is actually the right means towards achieving that goal. Then, if you think it is, you should define the parameters for your presentation as this will make it easier for you to prepare for and actually give the presentation, meaning you will be more likely to achieve your goal at the end of the day.

The parameters come in three different categories:

- 1) Parameters to do with your *audience*:
Who is your audience? How many of them will you be addressing? What does your audience want to learn from you? What is their motivation? What is their level of knowledge? Can you gauge their feelings as to the subject at hand and you as a speaker?
- 2) *Situational* parameters:
What is the context in which you will give your presentation (a conference, a demonstration, a graduation speech, a presentation for fellow students in your tutorial, and so on)? What is scheduled before and after your presentation? How much time do you have for it? What about the room in which you will present and the facilities at your disposal?
- 3) Parameters to do with *you, yourself*:
What do you want to tell people? Why do you want to tell them this? What assets do you have that will help you here? What things do you find tricky, and what can you do about these?

Based on all of the above you decide what your *goal* for the presentation will be, in other words: what you want the audience to take out of it, to learn from it, to believe and/or recall from it. Once you’ve taken this first step in your preparations you move on to determining the *content* of your speech, lecture or paper, then its *structure* (the discourse itself) and finally its actual *delivery*.

This is how you will work your way towards a presentation that will fulfil the general criteria as to what makes a good presentation; a good presentation has a clear focus (goal), is informative (content), well arranged (structure) and effective (delivery). The first three of these criteria mainly concern the content of your presentation and will be discussed in the next section. The last criterion mostly concerns your presentation techniques, and will be discussed at the end of this document.

Tip: Consider your options

Students often fail to look at these parameters, and just start from the document they wrote, using its chapters as the structure of their presentation. Don't do this. Instead, consider your options as to the goal of your presentation, its content (what to include and what not to include) and the structure that will make for an interesting presentation.

5.2 Criteria for evaluation

5.2.1 Content

Introduction / defining your topic

An introduction usually covers the following aspects:

- Opening lines;
- Objective of your presentation;
- Placing your topic in a wider context;
- Linking your topic to the knowledge you presume or require your audience to have;
- Pointing out how the topic ties in with the theory (notions, concepts, models);
- Outlining the key messages of your presentation;
- Duration of your presentation.

The opening lines are important for capturing your audience's attention and making them curious about the rest of your story. You have a number of different options as to how you start your presentation:

- *The current event opening*, where the speaker reminds the audience of current events and shows how the topic or theme of the presentation ties in with these;
- *The philosophical opening*, where the speaker shows how the topic or theme is linked to fundamental human issues;
- *The anecdotal opening*, where the speaker relates a (brief) story –which could but does not have to be about a personal experience- in which the topic features poignantly;
- *The funnel opening*, where the speaker starts with a very broad indication of the field of interest at hand and then narrow this field down until he arrives at the actual subject of his presentation.

Do realize that your opening should fit in with the rest of your presentation.

Structure of the discourse

If you want people to be able to follow your presentation your discourse will need a good composition, a clear structure. The most elementary structure you can create is a subdivision into:

- An Introduction;
- A Body Text;
- A Conclusion.

The body text of your presentation usually makes up 80% of the entire presentation, the introduction and conclusion both accounting for 10%. In your preparations you will start with the body text. The first important step here is that you start making a selection of aspects that are essential to your story. You can do so by asking yourself which questions your audience may have where your subject is concerned and which aspects they may be particularly interested in.

Alternatively, you can start from your subject matter and look at its most essential aspects. You will have made a successful selection of essential points if it helps you achieve your presentation goal as formulated earlier. Once you have established your essentials you start organizing them in coherent and clear discourse. If you want to, you can use standardized organization principles, the so called *fixed structures*. For some subject categories (e.g. problems, measures, descriptions, evaluations) you could use more or less fixed structures that audiences often find logical.

Example of a structure for presenting research results:

- What was your research about?
- Why was the research done?

- What was your method of research?
- What were the results?
- What conclusions can you draw as to the future, considering your results?

You could also opt for a slightly more interesting organization of your material, in the form of more dramatic structures like advancing a thesis or thrashing out a problem. For more information on these and other frequently used methods of organization please refer to Studentdesk, > Studentdesk Bachelor, > References, > Academic Skills.

Rules for determining the structure:

- First discuss the ideas, concepts, research methods, problems and events that your audience will already be familiar with and then move on to the ones that are not as well-known;
- First deal with the relatively obvious possibilities for solutions and improvements and then move on to the more complex ones;
- First bring up the issues that best tie in with what interests your audience;
- Move on from the concrete to the abstract, but at the end always return to something concrete;
- Make sure there is sufficient variation;
- Include examples in your structure / order, e.g. when you explain particular rules or systematics.

To help yourself stick with your structure during your actual presentation it is wise to use a *presentation outline*. A presentation outline comes in *different forms*:

- A fully written text (as long as you won't just read it out loud). You clearly mark any key words and in the margin you make notes as to timing, any media you will be using, answering questions and so on;
- One or more sheets or cards on which you write the key words and other pointers for your presentation;
- A hard copy of your slides; you can write additional notes with the key words on your slides.

It is important to flesh out your structure when you prepare your presentation and to make sure that your audience knows what structure you are using. You can do this by setting out the structure in your introduction, and by regularly returning to the structure during your presentation, recapitulating what you have dealt with so far, and explaining where you are now.

Separate your essentials from your side-issues

Depending on your goal you decide what *information* you should give: never too much and never too little. Subdivide your information into key points. Here is how you can use these:

- View the key points as stepping stones that will bring you from one aspect to the next. They are also very useful as prompts;
- Explicitly use the key points to mark the transition from one issue to the next, so that this is clear to your audience;
- Clarify the broad outline of your discourse by drawing attention to the correlation between your key points;
- Make sure the use of media fits the flow of your discourse; in your introduction, for instance, you can render the key content of your presentation in a sheet and during the body of your presentation you can mark the transition from one key point to the next by means of an overview presented in a slide.

To help your audience distinguish between essentials and side-issues you should make a distinction between:

- Principles v. elaboration/application;
- Facts v. opinions;
- Explanations v. examples.

Generally speaking, it is best to emphasize the main issues by drawing attention to them repeatedly. This can be established by repetition as you speak or by putting them in a slide. Also take into account the fact that the more time you spend on a detail, the more your audience will be inclined to think of it as an essential.

Depth/information density

- Limit the number of key points that you address;
- Make sure your presentation ties in with the level of knowledge of your audience;
- Make sure you repeat new and important information, for example by offering quick recaps before you move on to the next point.

Critical analysis & originality

This criterion builds on the skill of academic reasoning and working. Critical aspects in this respect are whether you have established connections in your presentation, whether you have approached your subject matter from different angles, and whether you have raised critical questions.

Illustrations (examples/charts/figures)

The use of illustrations, pictures, models and so on is quintessential if you want to visualize the substance and structure of your presentation for your audience. They also make for a nice change, meaning your audience will be able to stay focused on your presentation longer. Look for illustrations that really add something to your discourse.

5.2.2 Presentation

A presentation often reflects the personality of the person presenting. Our training is aimed at preventing an artificial way of presenting, allowing everyone to develop their own style. The general pointers that are useful in that they enhance someone's personal style should be considered as basic principles: if you don't take account of them it is useful to consider whether they are interfering with the goal you're hoping to achieve by means of your presentation. If not, you won't need to change anything about your presentation skills. What is true, however, is that good presentation skills can really contribute a lot to achieving your goal.

Language, fluency and phrasing

Proper usage depends on both proper use of the language at hand and on your ability to gear your *syntax* and *terminology* for your audience. Here are a few pointers that will help you speak plainly and clearly:

Phrasing:

- Speak as you would in ordinary situations; stick to simple and unambiguous words and notions;
- Check if everyone can follow the terminology that you are using. If you are using new or little known terms you should emphasize the meaning of such terms at least once;
- Avoid the unnecessary use of new notions and vague words such as 'somewhat', 'rather a lot' and 'somehow' et cetera;

- The words ‘so’ and ‘therefore’ are generally used too often, which implies that you audience will tend to ignore these conclusive words. Only use them if you really are drawing a conclusion;
- Use clear bridges to emphasize certain relationships between words. Avoid overly general words if the correlation you want to demonstrate is very specific, e.g. ‘X because Y’, ‘if X than Y’ or ‘X to..Y’;
- Make sure you clarify the status of certain assertions, e.g. "*In this view* such a diagnostic differentiation cannot be achieved via a strictly analytic/deductive method’ or: "*Let’s assume* that....., *in that case*.....; ‘We have now *proven that*....". The status is an indication as to how the statement should be valued, and what the audience should do with it, later on;
- Long, classically composed sentences and formal language should be avoided in presentations. Most audiences appreciate short, powerful statements;
- Be aware of the connotation certain words may have (examples of these are: ‘elitist’, ‘performance’ or ‘authority’).

Fluency:

- Make sure you articulate properly and finish your sentences (do not swallow words or rattle off the lines);
- Use proper intonation to mark essentials;
- Watch your breathing: take a deep breath in, relax your (neck and shoulder) muscles and breathe through your stomach (low breathing) as this will ensure the best volume, with plenty of intonation;
- If you use a microphone, speak slightly more emphatically, but don't overdo it;
- Alternate between soft and louder speech, and use your intonation to keep your audience attentive.

Non-verbal support (attitude/gesticulation)

Like you should use your voice you should also use *gestures in support of your spoken words*. You can use your hands to indicate a direction, dimension, a doubt, and so on. Or, to give another example, by walking to a different spot you can emphasize that the next view you are about to present takes a different angle.

- Pointing at the blackboard or flip chart; hold you hand or stick in place slightly longer than strictly necessary, so that you can be sure everyone will have seen it;
- To really involve your audience it is important to make regular eye contact;
- Use your facial expressions;
- Don’t just stand there, but try moving about a little;
- Try to avoid distracting non-verbal behaviour, like chewing gum, putting your hands in your pockets, fiddling with your hair etc;
- The rule for all non-verbal communication is: use it in moderation, it’s easy to go over the top and that will only distract people;
- Acknowledge the presence of your audience mainly by means of non-verbal communication, such as establishing eye contact. If you are afraid that this will set you off laughing, avoid looking people in the eyes, but look just over their heads so that they will at least think you are looking to make eye contact.

Tip:

If people in the audience are doing something that bothers you, show them that you're annoyed. You can do this by deliberately looking at them. If they continue to bother you, just say so.

Pacing and pausing

Pace as perceived by an audience is a complex matter: if we are talking about an ordinary presentation it is not just about the length of it, but also about such things as your speed of speech, your language and even the content of your discourse. If people find your pace annoying it is usually because there is not enough variation in it.

- Make sure you pause regularly; this could mean taking 3 seconds to think or taking for a 30-second pause (in which you allow your audience to take a look at a slide, for example);
- Always take a few seconds:
 - after an important statement, to underpin its importance;
 - after someone has asked you a question;
 - after you've asked your audience a (rhetorical) question;
 - when you point at the blackboard, as slide and so on;
 - when you move on to a new slide;
- If you want your audience to internalize what you have just said it is a good idea to pause slightly longer between the different phases of your presentation, e.g. between the introduction and the body text;
- Allow your audience some time to take notes;
- Adjust your pace to the situation (if, for instance, you are discussing complex problems that call for further explanation you should speak slower and pause frequently). Taking more time does not just mean you should speak slower, but also that you should repeat your statements more often or use more examples;
- Alternate your pace: if you have just presented something that is key to your discourse you don't want to move straight on to the next part of your presentation. It is better to shift down a gear, e.g. by giving a concise summary, examples, or by pausing.

Tip:

Don't bombard your audience with new information. Try to link new information to your audience's current knowledge, as that will make it easier for them to take in your story. Alternate new information with examples. It is much harder to take in new information listening to it than reading it!

Show enthusiasm/ be lively

Showing your own enthusiasm or interest in the subject at hand ensures that your presentation will be lively. Try to link the subject of your presentation to something that happened to you personally. Don't be afraid of overdoing it; we tend to be overly reluctant and therefore come across as timid presenters. Make sure you keep it *lively* and show your own enthusiasm where the subject is concerned. You could, for instance, share the problems you have encountered in tackling the subject, or explain why you are so fascinated by it. This will normally inspire your audience to listen more actively.

Make sure there is sufficient variation in the discourse itself, in the views presented or the angles from which you look at the problem you have defined:

- Vary your choice of words and syntax;
- Ask if everything is clear so far, as this will promote the contact with your audience;
- Go for examples your audience can identify with, make them 'see' what this would look like in reality. Also try the falsification technique, providing evidence to the contrary;
- By way of variation, in so far as this is possible within the context of your goals, you should introduce arguments, advice, examples, principles, comments that put things into perspective, considerations, empirical evidence, et cetera;
- Use stylistic tools such as metaphors, allegories, overstatements, understatement, et cetera, but don't overdo it. And be prudent, because poorly chosen similes, overstatements that are not identified as such and negative understatement (insinuations)

distract people's attention from your actual discourse and will lead to misapprehension or disapproval;

- In order to avoid the trodden path of the lists of pros and cons, try to present balanced views in the form of an advice in favour of your point, along with all the relevant arguments followed by an advice against it, also followed by arguments.

Using presentation media

Media serve three practical purposes: as a complementary tool (where they give new information), as a supportive tool (e.g. to structure your discourse) or for the sake of variation. Since in presentations media are often used to underpin the structure of the discourse it is important that the layout is a clear and easy-to-read reflection of your structure.

Here are some general pointers:

- Try not to be talking all the time, if at all possible. Consider the possibility of including short film or video footage, sound recordings and so on;
- Make sure that apart from the verbal information you also present your information in a visual form;
- Use the blackboard e.g. if you want to clarify computations, but also to write down key words et cetera. If you want to illustrate your story with tables, diagrams, charts and do on, use a Pdf file on your laptop (or use an overhead projector, with slides that you prepared beforehand);
- Make sure that the use of media lend added value to your presentation;
- Prior to your presentation you will want to check that everything is working and that you know how to operate any appliances you will be using;
- And last but not least: 'too much' is never a good idea.

Tips for using different media:

Overhead sheet:

- Only cover 1 issue per sheet;
- Limited the amount of information on a sheet, preferably sticking with key words. Figures should contain as little detail as possible;
- Try to stick with 1 particular layout, e.g. a chapter followed by the sheet title;
- Use ample margins or you will run the risk that your sheet cannot be projected as a whole;
- 7 - 10 lines at the most; 7 words per line maximum;
- Preferably use a round and clear font (no serif): font size at least 5 mm and in case of drawings the lines should be at least 0.5 mm: note that if you will present in a larger auditorium, these minimum requirements won't do;
- The use of colours can be very helpful, but don't use all the colours of the rainbow. Stick with a dark colour for a basis and use a brighter colour for accentuating (two colours at most).

During the presentation:

- It can be wise to not show the entire sheet at once, but to show it bit by bit. You can do this by first covering up the whole sheet and then gradually reveal it as you go along;
- Don't show the sheets in rapid succession (stick with the rule that you should leave a sheet in the projector for at least 1 minute);
- If you want to point at elements in the sheet, use a stick and point at the screen. If you can't, you could use a pencil or a pen that you place on the sheet itself;

- If you have a lot of sheets make sure you number them and that you make a list with the numbers and a short description and the desired order in connection with your discourse;
- If the sheet no longer bears any relevance to what you are saying, just switch off the projector.

PowerPoint slides (extra, most of the above tips are also true here)

- Use your own laptop if you can; if you use other computers you can never be sure things will work the way you had planned;
- Don't include too much information in a sheet, and don't fill up the screen too much;
- Don't present too many slides in rapid succession;
- Avoid the lavish use of fun computer techniques
- Always have a few overhead sheets handy with the most vital information in case something goes wrong with your computer (e.g. a print of the screens);
- Make sure the light in the room is sufficiently dimmed.

Board

- If you prepare for this it is wise to make a so called board plan in which you write what you will put on the board, what part of the board you will use and at what point during the presentation you will do so;
- Don't talk into the board: this means you should say as little as possible when you are writing things down (just the essentials); write down as little as possible while you speak (stick with key words);
- Don't stand in front of your text;
- If you point at something on the board, be very precise and use a finger or a stick, but don't make a vague gesture in the direction of the board;
- Stick with key words and whatever you do: don't write out long sentences;
- Always start with a clean board;
- Wipe off what you don't need anymore, making sure you erase everything;
- Write in round normal letters, not capitals, as that will be easier to read; the letters should be at least 5 cm tall, depending on the size of the room;
- Limit your use of figures on a board to an absolute minimum, keep them clean and don't use excessive detail. Overhead sheets are better if you want to show figures, because you can make them in advance, when you have the time;
- Don't use too many different colours.

Contact with your audience / questions and discussion

A positive response to questions or remarks from your audience will add to their motivation to listen to you. The number of spontaneous contributions to a presentation, however, is usually small. You will normally get a few remarks, perhaps some questions to confirm and answers to any questions you posed yourself. If you appreciate getting feedback you will need to demonstrate this. Approving answers ("excellent, well spotted", "that's an interesting question") generally do the trick, also if you want to trigger further response. Negative responses on your part ("no, that's a silly approach....") will tell the person who gave the feedback that you did pay attention but it won't stimulate people to continue to pay attention themselves. Being positive is generally your best option if you want to keep your audience involved, plus it has a more lasting effect. If someone launches a supposition you think is incorrect at least try to also mention the part of the response you do agree with.

Time management

Make sure you will stay within the time limit. Try out your presentation to see how much time it actually takes. It is important that you do this in front of a real audience and to not start over or gabble out your story. Keep your eye on the clock during the course of your presentation, making sure you won't run out of time. Decide beforehand which portion you could skip, if pressed for time. Whatever you do, make sure there is plenty of time to wrap up properly. See also: Pacing and pausing.

A few last tips for presenting with *more than 1 person*:

- Decide beforehand who is going to do what;
- Present yourself as a team with the same goal in mind, never disagree in front of the audience but stand by each other and make sure your remarks tie in nicely;
- Don't pull a Huey, Dewey and Louie on your audience by taking too short a turn each! If one of you just does the introduction their turn will often be too short. This makes your presentation very cluttered to look at;
- If you do the presentation with more than 2 people, make sure the stage is not crowded by presenters doing nothing. If there's nothing for you to do, don't be seen doing just that.
- Know that there are other on-stage chores: operating the overhead projector writing something on the board, handing out stuff, or passing round an illustration. It is also a good idea to have a different voice read out excerpts from a book.

5.3 Source

- Markenhof, A., Bastings, M. & Oost, H. (2002). *Een onderzoek presenteren*. Baarn: Hbuitgevers.

Tip:

Prepare for the questions your audience is likely to ask you, and think about how you are going to answer them.

Tip:

Include timing cues in your presentation outline.

6. Skill VI. Writing skills

Writing Skills

based upon the writing skills tutorial sessions of Multidisciplinary Economics (ECB1EMNW)

Writing skill 1: How to avoid plagiarism

Writing skill 2: Writing and formatting a title page and an Abstract

Writing skill 3: Writing an Introduction

Writing skill 4: Writing a Conclusion

Writing skill 5: Writing a Body

6.1 Writing skill 1: How to avoid plagiarism

Goals

- Student knows what plagiarism is.
- Student is aware that plagiarism is a violation of academic ethics and knows punishment for plagiarism.
- Student knows when to give credit to other researchers' work.
- Student knows how to give credit to other researchers' work.

Activities

- Reading this document.
- Doing exercise about when to reference.
- Doing assignment about reference list.

What is plagiarism?

The Oxford Dictionary of English defines plagiarism as “the practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as one’s own” (“Plagiarism,” n.d.).

Forms of plagiarism

While some of the most flagrant forms of plagiarism are easily identified as such, other forms are more subtle. Common and flagrant forms are:

- copying a paper from another student and submitting it as your own work;
- copying sentences or paragraphs from the someone else (student paper, scientific journal, Internet) without using quotation marks and without proper acknowledgement;
- copying sentences or paragraphs from someone else, without using quotation marks, but with proper acknowledgement (suggesting that the idea comes from the source cited, but the choice of words is your own);
- using significant ideas from someone else, but putting them in your own words and not acknowledging the source of the ideas (suggesting that both the ideas and the wording is your own);
- heavy reliance on phrases and sentences from someone else without proper acknowledgement (suggesting that these phrases as well as the idea they express are your own) (University of Canterbury, Learning Skills Centre, 2005a).

A practice which is not dishonest in itself, but is nonetheless indicative of weak scholarship:

- excessive reliance on other people’s material, that is, direct quotations (with quotation marks and with proper acknowledgement), so that your sources speak for you and your own contribution is minimal (University of Canterbury, Learning Skills Centre, 2005a).

Try to limit your quotations to:

- when you want to comment on (e.g. criticize) what someone else has said, and it is important not to distort that person’s words by putting it into your own words;
- when someone else’s phrasing is uniquely appropriate and you do not wish to lose this (excessive use of quotations for this reason indicates at best a lack of originality and at worst laziness, and should be avoided) (University of Canterbury, Learning Skills Centre, 2005a).

Science is an ongoing debate, in which you are encouraged to participate. You do so by writing papers, in which you are encouraged to build on previous scholarship. It is important that the reader can distinguish between this previous scholarship and the writer’s contribution. The writer’s contribution need not be a revolutionary different way of looking at the subject, but can also consist in a different way of selecting, ordering, summarizing and interpreting

previous scholarship. It is therefore imperative that you know when and how to give proper credit to previous scholarship. This allows the reader to clearly identify and appreciate your own contribution (University of Canterbury, Learning Skills Centre, 2005a).

Punishment for plagiarism

Plagiarism is a very serious offence in the University. “In all cases in which fraud is found or suspected, the examiner will inform the Board of Examiners of this in writing” (Utrecht University School of Economics [USE], 2012a).

“Plagiarism will be punished by the Board of Examiners as follows:

a. In any event:

- invalidation of the paper or examination submitted;
- a reprimand, a note of which will be made in OSIRIS.

b. In addition to – depending on the nature and scale of the fraud or plagiarism, and on the examinee’s phase of study – one or more of the following sanctions:

- removal from the course;
- no longer being eligible for a positive degree classification (cum laude) (...);
- exclusion from participation in examinations or other forms of testing belonging to the educational component concerned for the current academic year, or for a period of 12 months;
- complete exclusion from participation in all examinations or other forms of testing for a period of 12 months.

c. In the event that the student has already received a reprimand:

- complete exclusion from participation in all examinations or other forms of testing for a period of 12 months.

d. In the case of extremely serious and/or repeated fraud, the Board of Examiners may recommend that the Executive Board permanently terminate the student concerned’s registration for the programme” (USE, 2012a).

Exercise: Do the following self-test about when to give credit and when not, which is copied and adapted from University of Canterbury, Learning Skills Centre (2005b).

Instructions: Cover the right side of each page with a piece of paper. As you answer each question, move the piece of paper to see if your answer agrees with ours.

Should you document your source (provide a footnote or otherwise indicate your source) when you directly quote what an author has said?	Yes, of course! You're clearly using someone else's words.
Should you document your source when you paraphrase what the author has said (that is, you put the author's ideas into your own words)?	Yes. You may not be using someone else's words, but you are using his or her ideas.
Should you document your source when you mention a commonly known fact or figure?	No, it's not necessary.
Should you document your source when you mention an unusual fact or figure?	Yes. If it's unusual - if it's something, for instance, that your source discovered - then you should document that discovery.
Should you document your source when you mention the results of other people’s experiments?	Yes. If someone has discovered something by performing an experiment, then he or she should certainly receive credit.

Thus quotations, ideas, experiments, and not-commonly-known facts and figures require documentation. Still you need to make difficult decisions. When for instance, is a fact or figure commonly known? You need to exercise judgement. Let's practice that judgement right now. Decide which of the following statements require documentation.

Lehman Brothers went bankrupt in 2008.	No. This fact is commonly known.
Greek debt-to-gdp ratio went up from 103.7 when the country entered the eurozone in 2001 to 165.3 in 2011.	Yes. Specific statistics, not generally known, require documentation. (My source is Eurostat)
The population of China is now well over a billion.	No. This fact is generally known by the well educated. Furthermore, it's just an approximation. An exact figure, however, and especially one that your source specifically calculated (for example, with statistical projection techniques), would usually require documentation.
Tjalling C. Koopmans won the Nobel Prize in economics in 1975.	No, probably not. You may not have known this fact, but you could readily find it in a reference book, and it would be considered generally known.
John Stuart Mill lived from 1806 to 1873.	No. You may not have known this fact, but you could readily find it in a reference book, and it would be considered generally known.
John Stuart Mill probably had an IQ of 190.	Yes, this fact is not generally known nor readily available. (I got it from <i>The Book of Lists</i> .) Furthermore, some researcher is responsible for calculating Mill's IQ (he lived before IQ tests were developed), and that researcher deserves credit.
Milgram found that most people are surprisingly susceptible to the influence of scientific authority; they will follow orders even when they think they are inflicting pain.	You've given some documentation in the sentence-by naming Stanley Milgram, but you should include more. You need to give him credit for his experiment.
At least one study has suggested that studying economics has a positive effect on subjective well-being.	Yes. For one thing, the idea is sufficiently striking and unusual that it should be attributed to a particular critic. For another thing, the phrase "At least one critic" suggests that you have a specific study in mind (in this case, Haucap & Heimeshoff, 2010), and thus you should name it. In general, whenever you say, "As studies show" or "One researcher disagrees" or the like, you should document the studies and researchers.
It is customary to associate operationalism in economics with the name of Paul Samuelson.	Documentation here depends on context. You probably do not need to document the statement - especially if you're writing entirely about operationalism. You may not have known these details before you started doing research, but they are generally known to scholars of economic methodology. Let me suggest, though, two situations when you might need to document this information. One would be if you were challenging the association. Then you would need to trace the

	<p>information in the sentence back to its original source and you would need very strong evidence to refute it.</p> <p>Another situation when you might want to document this sentence would be in a paper treating, say, operationalism in ten different scientific disciplines. Then you would not assume that your reader is knowledgeable about each discipline and would need to document the facts about each.</p>
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Now you should have some idea of when you need to document facts, figures, discoveries, ideas. Documenting quotations is simpler – every quotation should be documented. But quotations, too, require judgement. You need to decide when to quote in the first place. Let's go over some ground rules. Decide whether the following statements are true or false.

Whether you quote or paraphrase, whenever you use an individual's ideas you should document your source.	True, of course!
Lots of long quotations show that you have done lots of reading.	False. Lots of long quotations suggest that you're too lazy to organise your own ideas – you're relying too heavily on others'. If you include quotations, it's generally better to use short ones, just enough to support your points, not to make those points and structure your paper for you.
An occasional long quotation may be appropriate-when, for instance, you're going to analyze the wording or logic of the passage in detail.	True. If you're going to analyse the passage in detail, referring, for instance, to specific words in specific sentences, you may need to provide the reader with a context. You can include a long quotation to make the reader's work easier-not to make your own easier.
Quotations should correspond word for word with the source, omissions indicated with ellipses (...) and additions with brackets ([])	True. Be sure that you omit and add words not to misrepresent the author but only to fit his or her words into your sentences. For example, suppose you want to quote from this sentence: "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean-neither more nor less." You might write one of the following: As Humpty Dumpty says, "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less." Humpty Dumpty claims that in his use of a word "it means just what [he] choose[s] it to mean - neither more nor less."
Quotations are usually self-explanatory: you don't usually need to explain them.	False. Quotations should illustrate your points, not explain them for you. You need to do the explaining yourself, and you need to provide clear contexts for the quotations
You may want to quote a passage when it expresses something dramatically or vividly, or when you want to lend authority to what	True. If you're writing about the civil rights movement, for instance, you may well want to quote Martin Luther King's statements in

you say.	support of your own. His “I have a Dream” speech also makes vivid use of language.
Papers on philosophy of economics or history of economics often use more quotations than papers in microeconomics or macroeconomics.	True. In part the practice of incorporating more quotations is simply customary to the discipline. But in addition, the evidence for the points you’re making in a philosophical paper or an economics history is the words of the text.
Paraphrasing simply requires changing a few words – then a passage is in your own words.	False – absolutely not! Para-phrasing requires more than just changing a word here and there – most of the words and also the sentence structure need to be your own. A good rule of thumb: as soon as you’ve written three words in a row that are identical with three consecutive words in your source, you’re doing more than paraphrasing – you’re quoting.

Now let’s suppose that you’re writing a paper on endogenous preferences, which are preferences that cannot be taken as given. You come across the following interview with Daniel Kahneman in the German magazine Spiegel.

SPIEGEL: Professor Kahneman, you've spent your entire professional life studying the snares in which human thought can become entrapped. For example, in your book, you describe how easy it is to increase a person's willingness to contribute money to the coffee fund.

Kahneman: You just have to make sure that the right picture is hanging above the cash box. If a pair of eyes is looking back at them from the wall, people will contribute twice as much as they do when the picture shows flowers. People who feel observed behave more morally.

SPIEGEL: And this also works if we don't even pay attention to the photo on the wall?

Kahneman: All the more if you don't notice it. The phenomenon is called "priming": We aren't aware that we have perceived a certain stimulus, but it can be proved that we still respond to it.

Let's suppose you've decided to paraphrase parts of this passage. Which of the following is an acceptable paraphrase?

“If the right picture is hanging above the cash register, people will contribute much more.”	Unacceptable. Notice how close the wording is to that of the source: "the right picture is hanging above the cash" and "people will contribute." The writer has not put the ideas into her own words. One technique is to turn the book over on your desk and then, without looking at the original wording, to write your own version.
“Even if people are unaware of it, if a pair of eyes seems to observe them they behave more ethically.”	Acceptable. The statement uses ideas from the interview with Daniel Kahneman and mentions one of his examples, but the wording is different.
Sentence no. 2 is an acceptable paraphrase - but now let me ask another question. Does it need to be documented?	Of course it does. The ideas are clearly not your own. You need to acknowledge SPIEGEL’s research. You're also using one of the examples that Kahneman mentions.

Thus, if you paraphrase SPIEGEL and Kahneman's information, you need to give them credit. As with quoting, paraphrasing requires acknowledgment. Suppose that you decide to quote from the passage to lend authority to your statement and to catch the flavor of his speech. Which of the following phrases might you want to use?

<p>A. You just have to make sure that the right picture is hanging above the cash box. B. If a pair of eyes is looking back at them from the wall, people will contribute twice as much as they do when the picture shows flowers. C. People who feel observed behave more morally.</p>	<p>I would choose B. The other phrases give less of the flavour of his speech. B also makes a good supporting example. Quotations should usually support rather than replace your own statements – and thus C would not be a good choice, for it is a general statement, something that you should state in your own words.</p>
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How to reference in the text?

All scholarly writing is to contain a reference to the published studies that it builds on or reacts against. References are mandatory when using original ideas of authors, when comparing the views of different authors or when presenting figures taken from publications. References show the reader which elements in your own text are actually borrowed from someone else's. Furthermore, they allow the person evaluating your text to check whether you have used the source correctly and also whether important sources are missing. Each reference made in the text should be included in your references list at the end of the paper. The reverse is also true: a references list may not include a book or article that you haven't referred to in your text.

The notation of references to academic source texts is bound to strict international standards. Submitted copy that does not comply with these standards will not be eligible for publication. Conventions for referencing differ per academic domain. In the social sciences (including economics) it is customary to adhere to the requirements as set forth by the American Psychological Association, APA for short. Referring to literature in a text and setting up a reference list is described in the APA's renowned 'Publication Manual'. These rules have been rendered below as conveniently arranged as possible, including examples. References to less common sources shall not be discussed. Truly finicky APA regulations for source acknowledgement have either been simplified or not included at all. Those who wish to learn more about less common types of publications can look up the details in said (272-page!) manual. The APA web address is: <http://www.apa.org/>

When referring to literature within your text you have several options, which are all explained below, including an example (adapted from USE, 2012b).

Referring to publication of author(s)

Author(s)'(s) last name(s) and year in parentheses.

Examples:

... (Overbeke, 1994) ...

... (Bouter & Van Dongen, 1995) ...

If the author(s) are mentioned in the sentence then just give the year in parentheses.

Examples:

According to Overbeke (1994) ...

According to Bouter and Van Dongen (1995) ...

Please note: If the reference is part of the text (and is thus not rendered in parentheses) the ampersand (&) is substituted by the full word 'and'.

Referring to publication in an edited anthology

Name of author(s) of the article in question and year.

Example:

... (Meertens, 1992) ...

In references to the complete anthology name the editor(s).

Example:

... (Meertens & Von Grumbkow, 1992) ...

Referring to corporative author

Institutions, companies and committees et cetera can act as an author: this is called a corporative author. In the first reference write the name in full, with the abbreviation in square brackets; in any further reference you can use the abbreviation.

Example:

... (National Institute for Public and Environmental Health [NIPEH], 1993) ...

... (NIPEH, 1993) ...

Referring to (or ‘including verbatim passages from’) certain pages in a publication

Examples:

... (Overbeke, 1994, p. 1824) ...

... (Bouter & Van Dongen, 2000, pp. 229-236) ...

Referring to different publications by different authors in the same place

Order the author names alphabetically, and separate names with a semi-colon.

Example:

... (Houweling et al., 1994; RIVM, 1993) ...

Referring to different publications by the same author(s) from the same year

If you are referring to various publications from the same author that were all published in the same year, you put the titles in alphabetical order and add letters to the year of publication. Be sure to use these additions in your reference list as well.

Example:

... Overbeke (1994b) ...

Referring to publications with more than one author

If there are two authors, always refer to them both.

Example

... Bouter and Van Dongen (2000) ...

If there are three, four or five authors, cite all of them the first time the reference occurs; in subsequent references include only the surname of the first author and add *et al.* (not italicized and with a period after al).

Example first mention:

... Jansen, Kuipers, Vergoossen and Smits (1999) ...

Example all following mentions:

... Jansen et al. (1999) ...

If the publication was written by six authors or more, you only need to mention the first author followed by *et al.* (not italicized and with a period after al) from the first mention. Note that the reference list should list the first six authors (if there are more than six authors, mention the first six and add *et al.*).

Referring to authors who share the same last name

When referring to authors with identical last names you must always list the initials in front of this last name. Please note: the initials are always placed *in front of* this shared last name.

Note: the initials must always be included, even if the year of publication is different.

Example:

... A. B. Pieters (2001) ...
... Y. Z. Pieters (2002) ...

Referring to a publication that has no identified author :

When referring to reports or brochures that have no identified (corporate) author, cite in text the first few words of the reference list entry (usually the title) and the year. Use double quotation marks around the title of an article, chapter, or a web page and italicize the title of a periodical, a book, a brochure, or a report.

Example:

... on free care ("Study Finds," 2007)
... the book *College Bound Seniors* (2008)

Personal communications

You can also gain information from experts via interviews, talks, lectures, fax messages, e-mail, telephone conversations, news groups and message boards. You may only refer to such information if it is extremely relevant, unique information that is yet to be published. Such 'personal communications' can hardly ever be used, though. If the information was gained through a personal interview, e-mail, over the phone or via a fax message, the expert you have consulted must give their written permission to use their 'personal communication' in a written publication. This requirement is not in place where lectures, message boards or news groups are concerned. Please note: a personal communication included in the text (plus initials, last name and full date) is *not included* in the reference list.

Example:

... (S. Sgilreeg, personal communication, March 26, 2002)...

Secondary sources

Use secondary sources sparingly (e.g. when the original work is out of print, unavailable through usual sources, or not available in English). Give the secondary source in the reference list; in text, name the original work and give a citation for the secondary source. For example, if Keynes' work is cited in Henderson and you did not read Keynes' work, list the Henderson reference in the reference list.

Example:

... Keynes' dairy (as cited in Henderson, 2008)

Classical works

When a date of publication is inapplicable, such as for some very old works, cite the year of translation you used, preceded by *trans.* (not italicized and with a period after trans) or the year of the version you used, followed by *version* (not italicized and with no period after version). When you know the original date of publication, include it in the citation.

Examples:

... (Aristotle, trans. 1931)
... 1 Cor. 13:1 (Revised Standard Version)
... Smith (1776/1983)

Note: reference list entries are not required for major classical works, such as ancient Greek and Roman works or classical religious works; simply identify in the first citation in the text the version you used. Parts of classical works are numbered systematically across all editions, so use these numbers instead of page numbers when referring to specific parts of your source.

How to make a reference list?

The reference list at the end of the paper contains all of the references included in the running text (with the exception of 'personal communications' and major classical works) and only references included in the running text. This reference list is arranged alphabetically according to (first) author's name. A corporate author must be written in full. Different publications of one and the same author are arranged in chronological order. Use double line-

spacing. The second and any following lines of a reference are given an indentation. When it comes to listing a book versus listing an article in your reference list, there are a number of general differences. The first difference is that in case of a book the title is rendered in italics and in case of an article, the journal and volume are. The second difference is that in case of a book you also mention by whom and where it was published. You don't do this in the case of journals. A third difference is that the key words in the title of a journal should start with a capital. You don't do this in the case of books. The following examples will clarify these differences.

Journal articles

The title of a journal is rendered in full and in italics, the key words to be spelled with a capital letter. The volume numbers are also rendered in italics. If a reference takes up more than one line the second and consecutive lines will be given an indentation.

The year of publications follows the author name(s) in parentheses, and in turn is followed by a full stop. Please note:

- Full stops, commas and colons must always be followed by a single space;
- After the title of an article you enter a full stop, after the title of a journal a comma;
- Give the volume number after the periodical title; italicize it. Do not use Vol. Before the number. Include the issue number only if the journal is paginated by the issue.
- First and last page with a hyphen, without spaces, followed by a full stop.

Examples:

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (year of publication). Title of article. *Title of Journal*, volume number, page # - page #.

Becker, M. B., & Rozek, S. J. (1995). Welcome to the energy crisis. *Journal of Social Issues*, 32, 230-343.

Electronic articles

Include the digital object identifier (DOI) in the reference if one is assigned. This can often be found prominently on the first page of an article. It is safest to copy and paste this DOI whenever possible. When a DOI is used, no further retrieval information is needed to identify or locate the content.

If no DOI has been assigned to the content, provide the home page URL of the journal or of the book or report publisher. If you are accessing the article from a private database, you may need to do a quick web search to locate this URL. You are looking for the journal homepage, not for the EBSCO or JSTOR database location.

Do not include retrieval dates unless the source material may change over time (e.g. Wikis (but Wikis do not make for a good source for your research anyway).

Do not use a full stop after the doi or the URL, as this may interfere with the retrieval process.

Example:

Becker, M. B., & Rozek, S. J. (1995). Welcome to the energy crisis. *Journal of Social Issues*, 32, 230-343. doi:10.1016/j.bbr.2011.03.031

Fafchamps, M., & Minten, B. (2002). Returns to social network capital among traders. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 54, 173-206. Retrieved from <http://oep.oxfordjournals.org.proxy.library.uu.nl/>

Book

The title of the book is rendered in italics. The same goes for the subtitle, if any. The publication year is in parentheses, followed by a full stop. The ampersand (&) comes before the name of the last author and before the comma. The geographic location of publication is followed by a colon and the name of the publisher. Please note:

- Last name of author is followed by a comma and a single space;
- The initials of the author are followed by a full stop and a single space;
- The edition or volume should follow the title, but unlike the title are not italicized.
- The first-named geographic location of the publisher is followed by a colon.

Examples:

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (year of publication). *Book title*. Geographic location of publisher: Name publisher.
Strunk, W., & White, E. B. (1979). *The elements of style* (3rd ed.). New York: Macmillan.

Chapter from an edited book (anthology, compilation):

When you refer to a section of a book you must render the book's title rather than the title of the chapter in italics. As opposed to the names of authors the initials of editors come in front of their last names. The names of the editors are preceded by the word 'In' and followed by the abbreviation 'Eds.' in parentheses. After the book title the pages in question are given in parentheses, preceded by the abbreviation 'pp.'. Please note:

- Place a comma after the initial(s) of the authors and the final full stop;
- After this you type the ampersand before entering the name of the final author;
- No semi-colon may follow 'In';
- If the compilation has been edited by a single person: (Ed.);
- Comma between (Ed.) or (Eds.) and the book's title.

Examples:

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., Author, C. C., & Author, D.D. (Publication year). Title of the chapter. In A. Editor, B. Editor, & C. Editor (Eds.), *Title of the book* (pp. xx-xxx). Geographic location of publication: Name publisher.

Piaget, J. (1970). The stages of the intellectual development of the child. In P. H. Mussen, J. J. Congor & J. Kagan (Eds.), *Readings in child development and personality* (pp. 291-302). New York: Harper & Row.

Publication by a corporate author

Example:

Utrecht University School of Economics. (2012b). *Reader academic skills 2012/2013*.

Retrieved from

http://www.uu.nl/SiteCollectionDocuments/REBO/REBO_USE/REBO_USE_STUD/2012-2013/Onderwijs/Bachelor/Vaardighedenreader_2012-2013_partII_EN.pdf

Working paper or discussion paper

The title of the paper (rendered in italics) is followed by the name of the paper series and the paper's number, which are in parentheses and not in italics, and followed by a dot.

Example:

Piplack, J., & Straetmans, S. (2009). *Comovements of different asset classes during market stress* (Tjalling C. Koopmans Research Institute Discussion Paper 09-09). Utrecht: Utrecht University School of Economics.

Piplack, J., & Straetmans, S. (2009). *Comovements of different asset classes during market stress* (Tjalling C. Koopmans Research Institute Discussion Paper 09-09). Retrieved from Utrecht University School of Economics website:

<http://www.uu.nl/faculty/leg/NL/organisatie/departementen/departementeconomie/onderzoek/publicaties/DiscussionPapers/Documents/09-09.pdf>

Entry in an online reference work

Example:

Graham, G. (2005). Behaviorism. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Fall 2007 ed.). Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/behaviorism/>

Entry in an online reference work, no author or editor

Example:

Plagiarism. (n.d.). In *Oxford dictionaries online*. Retrieved from <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/plagiarism>

Articles from newspaper or magazines

If you know the name of the author of the article, the name is followed by the full date of publication (first the months, then the day, then the year; In Dutch it is first the year, then the day and then the month). Then the title of the article is rendered, followed by the name of the newspaper or magazine (in italics), with the corresponding page number(s).

Example:

Wharton, N. (October 14, 1996). Health and safety in outdoor activity centres. *The Magazine for the Happy Skippers*, pp. 8-9.

If you don't know who wrote the article, you must place the reference in the reference list in alphabetical order, based on the first (key) word of the title of the article. This is followed the name of the newspaper or journal (in italics) and the page number(s) in question.

Example:

Anorexia nervosa. (October 15, 1969). *British Medical Weekly*, 529-530.

Note: the above rule implies that this article must be arranged under the letter 'A' in your reference list.

Statistics from database

Example:

OECD. (n.d.). *Gdp, volume – annual growth rates in percentage*. Retrieved from StatExtracts database.

Web log post

Example:

Rodrik, D. (2007, October 01). Is there a growth payoff to economic freedom? [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://rodrik.typepad.com/dani_rodriks_weblog/2007/10/is-there-a-grow.html

Non-English journal articles and books

Example:

Real Academia Española. (2001). *Diccionario de la lengua española* [Dictionary of the Spanish language] (22nd ed.). Madrid, Spain: Author.

A reference list that meets all these requirements is the one in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Reference list according to requirements of the APA

(WHY) ARE ECONOMISTS DIFFERENT?	17
References	
Blais, A., & Young, R. (1999). Why do people vote? An experiment in rationality. <i>Public Choice</i> , 99, 39-55. Retrieved from http://www.springerlink.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/content/	
Buchanan, J. M. (1954). Individual choice in voting and in the market. <i>Journal of Political Economy</i> , 62, 334-343. Retrieved from http://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/journals/	
Caplan, B. (2002). Systematically biased beliefs about economics: Robust evidence of judgemental anomalies from the survey of Americans and economists on the economy. <i>Economic Journal</i> , 112, 433-458. Retrieved from http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/	
Caplan, B., & Miller, S. C. (2010). Intelligence makes people think like economists: Evidence from the General Social Survey. <i>Intelligence</i> , 38, 636-647. doi:10.1016/j/intell.2010.09.005	
Carter, J. R., & Irons, M. (1991). Are economists different, and if so, why? <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> , 5, 171-177. Retrieved from http://www.aeaweb.org.proxy.library.uu.nl/jep/contents/index.php	
Cipriani, G. P., Lubian, D., & Zago, A. (2009). Natural born economists. <i>Journal of Economic Psychology</i> , 30, 455-468. doi:10.1016/j.joep.2008.10.001	
Durkheim, E. (1895/1938). <i>Les règles de la méthode sociologique</i> [The rules of sociological method]. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.	
Esser, H. (2003). Die Rationalität der Werte: Die Typen des Handelns und das Modell der soziologischen Erklärung [The rationality of values: The types of action and the model of sociological explanation]. In H. Albert (Ed.), <i>Das Weber-Paradigma: Studien zur Weiterentwicklung von Max Webers Forschungsprogramm</i> (pp. 153-187). Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.	

Assignment: A student will write about governments failing to pay their debt. In her paper she makes reference to the sources below. Make her reference list in APA style. Use left, right, upper and lower margins of at least 2.5 cm. Use Times Roman as typeface, 12pt as font size. Use double-spacing. Do not justify lines (to justify lines is the word-processing feature that adjusts spacing between the words to make all lines the same length). Hand your work in by submitting it to your tutorial teacher's e-mail address NO LATER THAN 17 SEPTEMBER 2012 11.59 PM CEST. Prior to handing it in, check your work with the assessment criteria provided below.

** Start sources **

Definitions of "sovereign" and "default" from Merriam-Webster's online dictionary.

This article: <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/10.2307/2118266>

This article: https://sites.google.com/site/upanizza/IMFSP_imfsp200921.pdf?attredirects=0

This opinion: <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/from-argentina-to-athens->

Chapter 16 from this book: http://www.amazon.co.uk/Sovereign-Debt-Safety-Default-Robert/dp/0470922397/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1343999292&sr=8-2#reader_0470922397 which she took out of the library.

Statistical data about Regulatory Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets for Greece from the Financial Soundness Indicators on the IMF website.

** End sources **

6.2 Writing skill 2: Writing and formatting a title page and an Abstract

Goals

- Student is able to write and format a title page according to APA requirements;
- Student is able to write and format an abstract according to APA requirements.

Activities

- Reading this document;
- Reading Di Tella, MacCulloch, & Oswald (2001);
- Writing and formatting a title page and an abstract for Di Tella et al. (2001)

What are the requirements for a title page?

The American Psychological Association [APA] (2010) requires that:

the title page includes five elements: title, running head, author byline, institutional affiliation, and author note. Identify the title page with the page number 1. The remaining pages should be numbered consecutively, using Arabic numerals (...). The running head is an abbreviated title that is printed at the top of the pages of a manuscript or published article to identify the article for readers. The running head should be a maximum of 50 characters, counting letters, punctuation, and spaces between words. It should appear flush left in all uppercase letters at the top of the title page and all subsequent pages. (p. 229)

Note: quotations exceeding 39 words, should be “display[ed] in a freestanding block of text and [with] the quotation marks [omitted]. Start such a *block quotation* on a new line and indent the block about a half inch from the left margin (...). Double-space the entire quotation.” (APA, 2010, p. 171)

According to the APA (2010)

A title should summarize the main idea of the manuscript simply and, if possible, with style. It should be a concise statement of the main topic and should identify the variables or theoretical issues under investigation and the relationship between them. (...) A title should be fully explanatory when standing alone. (...) The title should be typed in uppercase and lowercase letters, centered between the left and right margins, and positioned in the upper half of the page. (p. 23)

An example of a good title is: “Effect of Inflation and Unemployment on Well-being”.

“The preferred form of an author’s name is first name, middle initial(s), and last name (...) Omit all titles (...) and degrees”. (APA, 2010, p. 23)

“The affiliation identifies the location where the (...) authors were when the research was conducted, which is usually an institution. (...) When an author has no institutional affiliation, list the city and state of residence below the author’s name. (...) The names of the authors should appear (...) centered between the side margins”. (APA, 2010, pp. 23-24)

An author note should include the departmental affiliations for all the authors, disclose special circumstances, identify grants or other financial support for the study, provide a complete mailing address for correspondence, end with an e-mail address and no period (APA, 2010). “Place the author note on the title page, below the title, byline, and affiliation. Center the label Author Note”. (APA, 2010, p. 25)

As a student, do not forget to put your student number on the title page.

Never ever put a picture on your title page.

Figure 2 shows an example of a title page that meets all the requirements mentioned.

Figure 2. Example of title page according to APA requirements

<p>Running head: ECONOMIC GROWTH IN FRANCE AND SPAIN</p> <p>Differences and Similarities in Economic Growth in France and Spain from 1981-2010: The role of Economic Freedom, Entrepreneurship, Technological Progress, and Investment.</p> <p>Peter D. van der Meer</p> <p>Utrecht University School of Economics</p> <p>Author Note</p> <p>Peter D. van der Meer, Utrecht University School of Economics, Utrecht University.</p> <p>This paper was written for educational purposes only. It is a draft (version 9 October 2011). Please do not quote without prior permission.</p> <p>The author is grateful to John Doe for useful comments on an earlier version. All remaining errors are mine. The author gratefully acknowledges a financial contribution by the European Commission.</p> <p>Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to Peter D. van der Meer, Utrecht University School of Economics, P.O. Box 80125, 3508 TC Utrecht, Netherlands.</p> <p>E-mail: p.d.vandermeer@uu.nl</p>	1
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What is an abstract?

The APA (2010) defines an abstract as

a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of the article; it allows readers to survey the contents of an article quickly and (...) it enables persons interested in the document to retrieve it from abstracting and indexing databases. (...)

(...) Most people have their first contact with an article by seeing just the abstract, usually in comparison with several other abstracts, as they are doing a literature search. Readers frequently decide on the basis of the abstract whether to read the entire article. The abstract needs to be dense with information. (...) A good abstract is

- accurate: Ensure that the abstract correctly reflects the purpose and content of the manuscript. (...)
- nonevaluative: (...) Do not add to or comment on what is in the body of the manuscript.
- coherent and readable: Write in clear and concise language. Use verbs rather than their noun equivalents and the active rather than the passive voice. Use the present tense to describe conclusions drawn or results with continuing applicability; use the past tense to describe specific variables manipulated or outcomes measured.
- concise: Be brief, and make each sentence maximally informative, especially the lead sentence. Begin the abstract with the most important points. Do not waste space by repeating the title. Include in the abstract only the four or five most important concepts, findings, or implications. Use the specific words in your abstract that you think your audience will use in their electronic searches.

An abstract of a *report of an empirical study* should describe

- the problem under investigation, in one sentence if possible;
 - the participants, specifying pertinent characteristics such as age, sex, and ethnic and/or racial groups; (...)
 - the essential features of study method (...);
 - the basic findings, including effect sizes and confidence intervals and/or statistical significance levels; and
 - the conclusions and the implications or applications.
- An abstract for a *literature review or meta-analysis* should describe
- the problem or relation(s) under investigation;
 - study eligibility criteria;
 - type(s) of participants included in primary studies;
 - main results (including the most important effect sizes) and any important moderators of these effect sizes;
 - conclusions (including limitations); and
 - implications for theory, policy, and/or practice.

(...) begin the abstract on a new page and identify it with the running head or abbreviated title and the page number 2. The label *Abstract* should appear in uppercase and lowercase letters, centered, at the top of the page. Type the abstract itself as a single paragraph without paragraph indentation. (pp. 25-27)

Figure 3 shows an abstract that meets the requirements set forth in this document.

Figure 3. Abstract according to APA requirements

GENDER, OVERCONFIDENCE, AND COMMON STOCK INVESTMENT

2

Abstract

Theoretical models predict that overconfident investors trade excessively. We test this prediction by partitioning investors on gender. Psychological research demonstrates that, in areas such as finance, men are more overconfident than women. Thus, theory predicts that men will trade more excessively than women. Using account data for over 35,000 households from a large discount brokerage, we analyze the common stock investments of men and women from February 1991 through January 1997. We document that men trade 45 percent more than women. Trading reduces men's net returns by 2.65 percentage points a year as opposed to 1.72 percentage points for women. Our tests provide strong support for the behavioural finance model, suggesting a simple and powerful explanation for the high levels of counterproductive trading in financial markets: overconfidence.

Keywords: investment, overconfidence, gender, trading volume, behavioural finance

6.3 Writing skill 3: Writing an Introduction

Goals

- Student is able to write and format an introduction

Activities

- Reading this document
- Reading Wheeler, Moore, and Hart (2012)
- Writing and formatting an introduction for Wheeler et al. (2012)

What is an introduction?

“The body of a manuscript opens with an introduction that presents the specific problem under study and describes the research strategy. Because the introduction is clearly identified by its position in the manuscript, it does not carry a heading labeling it the introduction”. (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010, p. 27)

Instead, the introduction is labelled with the full title of the paper as it appears on the title page. This title should be centered. After this title, there is no blank line, but the first paragraph of the introduction is indented.

You start the introduction by introducing the subject of the paper. You can do that by using a specific example or an anecdote. Make sure that the example or anecdote is both completely accurate and absolutely relevant to the subject of the paper. Then explain why the problem is important. For basic research this “might involve the need to resolve any inconsistency in results of past work” (APA, 2010, p. 28). For applied research, this “might involve the need to solve a social problem” (APA, 2010, p. 28).

You may also need to briefly clarify some concepts that are central to your research. “Conclude the statement of the problem in the introduction with a brief but formal statement of the purpose of the research.” (APA, 2010, p. 28)

This purpose of the research, the research question, is *the* singlemost important part of the introduction. Do not write “my research question is”, but “this paper studies” (it is true that papers do not study, but that people do, but this is about the only category mistake that is allowed in your paper). Use the phrase “this paper studies” only once, to indicate the research question; repetitive use of the phrase “this paper studies” leaves the reader confused about the real research question.

“After you have introduced the problem (...) explain your approach to solving the problem”. (APA, 2010, p. 28) In empirical studies this can be done by indicating briefly the method used and your hypotheses. In literature reviews and policy papers you indicate how your research question is broken down in subquestions. Again, as with the research question, you do not write “My subquestions are ...”, but something like: “To this end, we first study ..., followed by a comparison of ..., and we end with ...”. Thus you give the reader an overview of the chapters to come and how they relate to each other. You do not write that you end with a conclusion, because that is self-evident.

Figure 4 shows a fairly decent introduction. Remark about the style, whereby sentences are well-connected. Sentences that are well-connected imply that there is no jumping from the one subject to the other. Not jumping from the one subject to the other makes for better understanding. Well-connected sentences can be achieved by having the next sentence refer to the previous sentence, and doing that consistently. In referring to the previous sentence, the author makes it clear how the current sentence relates to the previous one. Thus the author does not leave it up to the reader to guess how the current sentence is related to the previous one. In a scientific paper you should never leave anything to the reader’s imagination (unlike in a novel).

In the first paragraph the author defines one of the concepts in his research, which is economic growth. The author has asked himself: What is economic growth? Answer: An increase in real gdp. Question: What is real gdp? Answer: It is gdp corrected for price increases. Question: What is gdp? Answer: It is the sum of all goods and services in an economy in a year at current prices. Question: Why is gdp corrected for price increases? Answer: Because well-being is more served by increases in the amount of goods than by price increases. If you would measure increases in uncorrected gdp, you would measure both price increases and increases in the amount of goods. After breaking down the concept of economic growth, the author has reconstructed it for the reader.

Figure 4.

Differences and Similarities in Economic Growth in France and Spain from 1981-2010: The role of Economic Freedom, Entrepreneurship, Technological Progress, and Investment.

Although alternative measures of well-being in countries have been proposed (source), gross domestic product (gdp) is still widely used to indicate the wealth of a nation. Gdp is the sum of all goods and services produced in a country in a year (source). Gdp may increase from year to year due to both increases in the amount of goods and services produced and the prices of the goods and services produced. As well-being is more determined by the number of goods and services than by the prices of the goods and services, gdp increases often are corrected for price increases. The resulting increase in the amount of goods and services available is called an increase in real gdp. Such increases in real gdp are often referred to as economic growth.

Many factors have been suggested to account for economic growth. Schramm (2011) mentions ten key concepts: "regulation/rule of law, income distribution, economic freedom, culture, specialization, comparative advantage, innovation/technological progress, entrepreneurship, (internal and external) economies of scale, production function/production factors/investment" (p. V). The precise mechanisms by which these key concepts relate to economic growth are as yet not completely clear, however (source).

As countries may differ in these key concepts, their economic growth performance may differ as well. Hence, a comparison of the economic growth performance of two countries may provide useful insight in the way the key concepts contribute to economic growth. This paper compares the economic growth performance of France and Spain over the period 1981-2010 and investigates the role of economic freedom, entrepreneurship, technological progress, and investment in the differences and similarities in economic growth in these two countries. The outcomes of this research are not only contributing to the academic literature about the precise

role of these four key concepts in furthering economic growth, but would also be interesting for policy makers who want to design policies and institutions that bring about more economic growth in their countries.

The paper starts with a comparison of the economic growth performance of France and Spain from 1981-2010. In four subsequent chapters the role of each of the key concepts economic freedom, entrepreneurship, technological progress, and investment is investigated.

6.4 Writing skill 4: Writing a Conclusion

Goals

- Student is able to write and format a conclusion

Activities

- Reading this document
- Reading Anscombe and Gallagher (2012)
- Writing and formatting a conclusion for Anscombe and Gallagher (2012)

What is a conclusion?

In the conclusion of a literature review you open with answers to the subquestions that you discussed in the body of the paper, as well as an answer to the overarching research question (after you found an answer to all the subquestions, you should be able to give an answer to your research question, else your subquestions were wrong).

Alternatively, if you write an empirical paper, you open

with a clear statement of the support or nonsupport for your original hypotheses (...)

If hypotheses were not supported, offer post hoc explanations. Similarities between your results and the work of others should be used to contextualize, confirm, and clarify your conclusions. (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010, p. 35)

“Your interpretation should take into account (...) limitations or weaknesses of the study” (APA, 2010, p. 35).

Furthermore, you should “acknowledge the limitations of your research, and address alternative explanations of the results. Discuss the generalizability, or external validity, of the findings” (APA, 2010, p. 36).

End the (...) [conclusion] with a reasoned and justifiable commentary on the importance of your findings. (...) In this section, you might briefly return to a discussion of why the problem is important (as stated in the introduction); what larger issues, those that transcend the particulars of the subfield, might hinge on the findings. (APA, 2010, p. 36)

The APA continues:

You may also want to consider the following issues:

- What is the theoretical (...) or practical significance of the outcomes, and what is the basis for these interpretations? If the findings are valid and replicable, what real-life (...) phenomena might be explained or modeled by the results? Are applications warranted on the basis of this research?
- What problems remain unsolved or arise anew because of these findings?

The responses to these questions are the core of the contribution of your study and justify why readers (...) should attend to the findings. Your readers should receive clear, unambiguous, and direct answers. (p. 36).

6.5 Writing skill 5: Writing a Body

Goals

- Student is able to write and format a body of a literature review

Activities

- Reading this document
- Reading Curley and Brown (2012)
- Writing and formatting a chapter for Curley and Brown (2012)

What was a literature review again?

The American Psychological Association [APA], (2010) defines literature reviews as critical evaluations of material that has already been published. (...) By organizing, integrating, and evaluating previously published material, authors of literature reviews consider the progress of research toward clarifying a problem. (...) authors define and clarify the problem; summarize previous investigations to inform the reader of the state of research; identify relations, contradictions, gaps, and inconsistencies in the literature; and suggest the next step or steps in solving the problem. The components of literature reviews can be arranged in various ways (e.g., by grouping research based on similarity in the concepts or theories of interest, methodological similarities among the studies reviewed, or the historical development of the field). (p. 10)

What is a body of a literature review?

You may want to have a look at the Kim (2011) paper that we used in week 5. Student Kim did quite a decent job in his literature review. Look for example at the way he structured the body of his review in chapters that coincide with subquestions. Together these subquestions cover the whole of his research question, no more, no less. After he has found an answer to all the subquestions, the answer to his research question is there as well. In every chapter he answers a subquestion. Some of the papers he discussed appear in several chapters, as they contribute to the answers on several subquestions. Each chapter ends with a subconclusion, which is the answer to the subquestion discussed in the paragraph. In the subconclusion, like in the final conclusion, he does not discuss things that have not appeared earlier in the chapter or earlier in the paper (so no new information in the (sub)conclusion). Notice also how well the chapters are linked. He has offered the answer to the one subquestion in a subconclusion and then links it to the next subquestion to be discussed in the next chapter. In general he linked sentences quite well, although this could have been improved. There were no big jumps from the one subject to the other. For every paper he discussed he should have mentioned what the purpose of the investigation was, then briefly the method, then the results, and then the conclusion (which he did sometimes, but not all the time). And what is highly appreciated in his work is that he showed himself very critical in his evaluation of the studies. He discussed the pitfalls of the methodology wherever he could, and did not subscribe to the authors' conclusion if he was not convinced by the results himself. And most of the time, he did so in a well-argued way.

7. Skill VII. Purposeful management of own development

7.1 Description of the skill

Developments in today's society and on the labour market make great demands on academics. They are not just supposed to be well-versed in their own areas of expertise and to have acquired a set of academic skills, but they should also be capable of progressing from there, of developing themselves. In order to be able to manage your own development in a purposeful way, (self) reflection must be one of these well-developed skills. This means that from time to time you will need to consider the way in which you handle a particular problem or issue and to critically assess what you are doing and whether you are on the right track. You know your own strengths and how to use them, just as you should know your weaknesses and how to improve them in a purposeful manner.

In this skill you will write several reflection assignments that are supported by sufficient illustrating materials (such as papers and assessment forms). In addition, you can fill a portfolio with updates on your study planning and on your progress in the development of the academic skills.

7.1.1 Method Reflection

Roughly speaking there are two types of reflection: *reflection on experience* and *thematic reflection*. These two types of reflection will be clarified below.

Reflection on experience

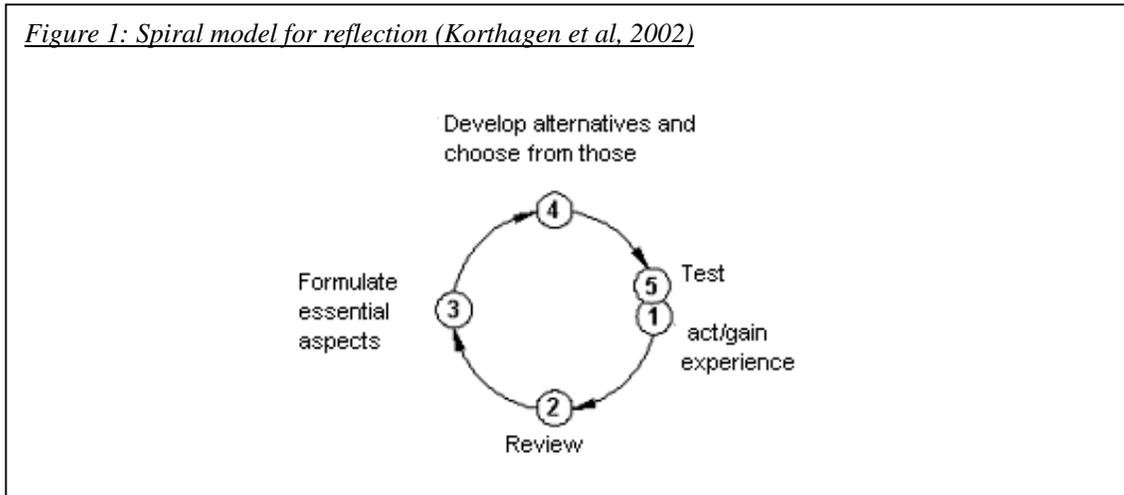
When reflecting on experience you will reflect on concrete events and you will ask yourself questions such as: What was the context? What happened? What went well and what needs to go better next time? Within the economics curriculum this type of reflection will mainly take place within the scope of the courses for which you do assignments. For these assignments you will regularly need to reflect on your method of working, adjust it accordingly and learn from it for next time.

Questions you can ask yourself in this respect are:

- What did I want to achieve (intention, purpose)?
- What did I do (approach, concrete actions) or what happened?
- How did I feel about that?
- To what extent do my actions and my objectives match?
- What are the alternative options?
- How am I going to proceed? (here it is important to make concrete, feasible plans).

The diagram below shows how in this type of reflection the interaction between acting and learning is pivotal.

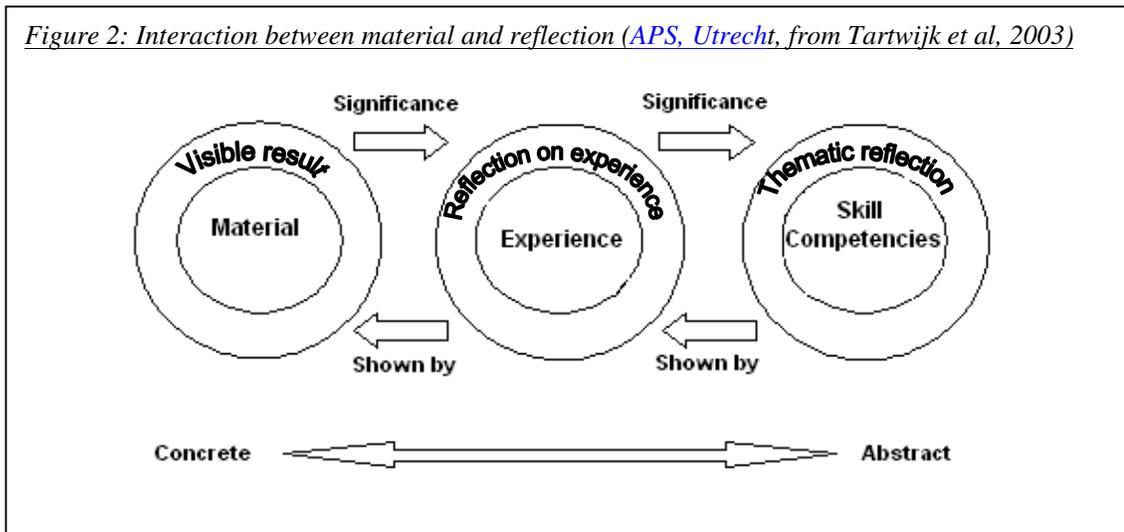
Figure 1: Spiral model for reflection (Korthagen et al, 2002)



Thematic reflection

In thematic reflection you will look back on a particular period and consider your own progress and development during this period. In all your experience, views and ways of handling things you will look for patterns and you will draw conclusions as to the level you have reached in terms of the skills at hand. Thematic reflection can be done in two ways: From the concrete to the abstract and from the abstract to the concrete. So: from concrete experience and (supportive) materials to a conclusion as to your acquired level. Sometimes, however, you will be asked to start your reflection at the abstract level, e.g. by describing the type of economist you would like to become (in relation to your major, e.g. Business & management).

Figure 2: Interaction between material and reflection (APS, Utrecht, from Tartwijk et al, 2003)



This figure demonstrates that in your reflection you will establish a link between the materials you have produced (papers, presentations, evaluations and so on), your experience and your competencies and skills. In doing so you can go from the concrete to the abstract: You establish the link between your materials and experience while looking back on your experience. Collecting and selecting materials may lead you to adjust your perception of the experience and your own related actions. For instance: reading your lecturer's feedback might lead you to reconsider your own original perception. In the next phase you will establish the links between your own experience on the one hand and your perception of competencies or skills on the other. This is how you learn from your own experience.

You can also use this model for going from the abstract to the concrete. In this case you start from a competency or skill profile, e.g. the one rendered in a job advert (for instance that of a policy officer for the 'Nederlandse Bank'). You start from the description and first check what relevant experience you have in terms of the required competencies. Then you want to analyse your own performance: to what extent is your performance of a sufficient quality, given the competency profile. The conclusions of that analysis can finally be substantiated with materials (e.g. a written application or a CV).

7.2 Assessment criteria for a reflection assignment

A good reflection meets a number of criteria. An explanation for each of these criteria is given below.

7.2.1 The reflection is specific and in-depth

Your reflection is to include a clear, concrete description of the events and the situation from which you have learned. Don't use vague or general terms: be very specific (facts, materials).

Example of incorrect reflection

I'm a good team player. I think I have acquired a sufficient level where this skill is concerned.

Example of correct reflection

For 'International Economics' we have worked in small groups. At first the collaboration wasn't great. We had not allocated the tasks very clearly, and it soon proved that our work lacked structure and that we weren't making sufficient progress. Once we realised this, we made a planning including the arrangements made (see the included log). From that moment on our collaboration was a lot more structured. We did have to work hard to catch up, but we managed, because we finished our report one day before the deadline.

What's also important is that you clearly state whether you are rendering an interpretation (views) or facts, in other words: whether the information you are giving is subjective or objective.

Example of incorrect reflection

Collaboration went well.

Example of correct reflection

We consulted each other both at the start and at the end of each day. That is how we knew everybody's progress and it allowed us to help each other out in case of problems. The collaboration thus went well.

7.2.2 You ask yourself the right questions and answer them clearly

This first of all implies that you must have performed the assignments successfully. This means that it is evident that you have spent time on it, that you have taken it seriously and that in terms of your acquired level where the skill is concerned you have understood and described it correctly.

Furthermore, a reflection on experience must at least always comprise the following three elements:

- Looking back on a concrete experience or on a particular period
- Acknowledging the essential aspects and drawing your conclusions
- Formulating your plans for the future.

If you have formulated plans or intentions at an earlier stage, it is important to refer to these in later reflections. Your plans should meet the following criteria: They should be *concrete* (what, when and how), *logical*, *realistic* and *practicable*.

Example of incorrect reflection

The first period was OK. I think I can work well with others, but since my fellow group members didn't put in a lot of effort it didn't work out this time.

Example of correct reflection

For 'Economics of the Public Sector' I was part of a group in which things didn't work out quite so well. We failed to allocate the tasks properly, and then one of my fellow group members did not participate very actively. The result of this was that I took upon myself most of the work. At highschool I have also noticed that if someone who is in my group says they don't have a lot of time or just have a lazy attitude, I would automatically do their work for them because I don't like having to do everything at the very last moment. It makes me feel very uncomfortable and in the future I would like to handle this differently. So as for the skill 'Effective teamwork' it is my intention to first agree on a clear allocation of tasks and a schedule with my fellow group members, and to record these in a log.

Naturally it is also important for your reflection report to be consistent, meaning that what you state about your experience, the evidence you include and your conclusion should all correspond. When drawing conclusions you must account for the *context* in which you have demonstrated a particular skill. The fact that you have given proof of a skill in one context does not mean that you will automatically demonstrate it in another context as well.

Example of incorrect reflection

I always start working too late. In the future I will make a better schedule and start reviewing earlier.

Example of correct reflection

I tend to procrastinate where my studying is concerned. That is why I intend to do the following: at the start of the next course the first thing I will do is make a schedule, where I will distribute the text to be studied over the available time. I will make a plan for all days of the week. I will keep the weekends and the last week before the exam free, so that I can use that time for reviewing. I will make a brief summary each time I have studied the material, and I will ask myself questions to check whether I have actually understood the matter at hand. I have found that I get distracted easily, so from now on I won't do my studying in the same room as my flat mates. I will stay in my own room, because there I can concentrate much better.

7.2.3 The reflections are well-founded

If you reflect on your skills you will say something about your acquired level at that point in time. If you do so, it is important to substantiate your statement. For that you will need to describe both sufficiently relevant concrete experience and include sufficient evidence. As you progress in your studies you will be expected to include evidence from a variety of sources and of various different types, e.g. products, feedback and your own analysis. This means that a feedback form for one single presentation will not count as sufficient evidence.

Example of correct reflection

I have been doing quite well at oral presenting, lately. During my first presentation I noticed that it is important for your audience to be able to take out one main message. That's why when I'm doing a presentation these days, I try to answer the following question: 'What is the single most important thing I want them to remember?' and that is what I will build my presentation on. By way of example I have appended my PowerPoint presentation for 'International Economics', in which the key message is used both in the title and in the conclusion. See also the feedback form I received from the lecturer and an e-mail message sent to me afterwards by someone who attended the presentation. This clearly shows an improvement compared with my previous presentation for 'Macroeconomics', where the feedback I received stated that my story was lacking a point. The feedback did mention that I need to better monitor the time available to me, and that I am too jovial towards my audience. Thus I intend to be less jovial during my next presentation and to keep a closer watch on the amount of time available to me.

7.3 Bibliography

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