

ROTTERDAM SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
ERASMUS UNIVERSITY
MASTER EXCHANGE PROGRAMME (MEP)

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS PROJECT



WELCOME FROM THE DEANS



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Management
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and

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Programmes

THE BENEFIT OF THE IBP

The RSM International Business Project has proven to be a uniquely valuable experience for the students and companies that participate. For the teams of students charged with solving real-life business problems for real companies, the IBP offers an unparalleled, life-changing opportunity; students spend up to four months working together with a highly diverse international team, focused not only on their assigned business issue, but also on learning to work, manage, and rely upon fellow students from other cultures. Simultaneously, companies have access, via these project groups, to fresh ideas and potential solutions to specific issues experienced within their organisation.

This intense intercultural experience provides students with the opportunity to develop personally as well as professionally; in fact the IBP is one of the great attractions for many students of our global partner schools, who are anxious to come to RSM to do their international exchange. The IBP reflects all of RSM's greatest strengths as a Top 10 European business school, recognised for the international diversity of our participants and the close relationship we maintain with business.

We hope you will take advantage of the IBP and consider the many ways it can add value to your management education.

INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

The driving force behind all RSM Bachelor and Master exchange programmes, the International Office operates on multiple levels of support for exchange students, both coming to and from RSM, and both before and during exchange. For incoming exchange students, we assist with visa-, housing- and insurance applications. Further, we organise orientation programmes, social events, a buddy system and monthly evaluation sessions, to ensure the highest quality exchange experience for participants.

Additionally, the International Office organises and facilitates the IBP, after a project has been selected by the Career Services Office. Once the Career Services Office selects a project, the International

Office coordinates and ensures proper matches between students and companies, based on student and company profiles and preferences and, in so doing, form the IBP teams. The International Office also organises IBP kick-off and introduction activities, including seminars and feedback meetings. The International Business Project (IBP) has come to be regarded as the cornerstone of the Master Exchange Programme at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University.

The IBP is a key factor in attracting graduate students from all over the world to do their exchange at RSM – an opportunity to work as a consultant in an international team, working on a real project for a real company.



INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS PROJECT

HOW DOES THE IBP WORK?

The IBP is an opportunity for our graduate exchange students, plus a select group of Dutch students, to solve a real-world management problem as they work together within a highly diverse, multidisciplinary and multinational team. The consultancy project on which they collaborate represents a 'business challenge' that comes directly from one of RSM's many corporate contacts. Over a period of three to four months, with supervision by two coaches – an academic coach from RSM and an in-company coach from the client organisation – the teams face an exciting, challenging and intense period as they strive for solutions.

WHERE 'CRITICAL THOUGHT' MEETS 'PRACTICAL ACTION'

Most students are already familiar with a variety of business disciplines and theories through their course work. It is the capacity to translate this knowledge into practical solutions that is very often a new challenge. The IBP provides essential real-world experience that enables students to combine theory with practice.

In the IBP, students learn how to:

- formulate a project proposal and relevant research questions;
- analyse problems; develop recommendations and propose solutions to the problem;
- work cooperatively and collaboratively in a multicultural team;
- communicate, negotiate, and make presentations confidently in the business environment.

REAL REWARDS FOR STUDENTS AND COMPANIES

The outcome of the IBP is often outstanding for both students and companies. Not only do exchange students find the project enormously rewarding in terms of cross-cultural learning and hands-on experience in management; very often, their proposals are implemented within the companies involved. For the participating companies, the IBP provides a unique, opportunity to access valuable data, knowledge, recommendations or solutions for a specific business problem. Further, company coaches often remark that student teams introduce fresh perspectives and innovative new ideas as they address the company's project.

THE PROJECTS



Every year the IBP projects provide students an exciting business-related challenge. It is not just about doing a real-life research and problem-solving project for a company which expects useful results. It is also about the experience of working together in a multicultural team, with all the big cultural misunderstandings – and all the small planning problems! But the pressure of needing to make a professional presentation on a tight deadline creates energy and focus!

Prof. Dr. Lucas Meijs – academic coach

RSM Career Services is responsible for acquiring IBP projects. The Career Services Office seeks projects that represent a 'win-win' potential for companies and students. These projects are chosen to provide a good balance between added value for the company and the teams. The company gets recommendations and solutions; the teams get a stimulating, enriching learning experience that integrates their classroom knowledge while helping them develop intercultural skills.

There is no such thing as a typical IBP client or project. Client organisations can be large multinationals – such as ABB, ABN AMRO, Aon, Bosch Security Systems, Cytec Industries, Heineken, ING, Kone, Philips, Pricewaterhouse-Coopers and Shell – medium-sized companies or entrepreneurial firms. The projects can have an HR, marketing, strategy or logistics focus.

THE TEAMS

Teams consist of five students, generally one Dutch student and four international exchange students. Teams are composed according to skills and competencies required by companies (such as specialised areas of expertise, or language skills); and students' preferences, which they describe when completing their Profile Sheet. Further, international diversity is always taken into account to assure that the IBP provides an exceptional multicultural experience for each student working in a team.





Over the years hosting and coaching an RSM student team has proven to be a rewarding and worthwhile experience. The students bring us up-to-date on business theory and by doing so, serve as a reminder to Aon risk consultants of the importance of lifelong learning. I value this cooperation with RSM and its talented students; on behalf of Aon I am proud that we contributed to some of the winning business projects.

Mark van Nuland – Chief Commercial Officer, Aon Risk Services



THE COACHES

An academic coach from RSM and an in-company coach from the client organisation are assigned to each IBP. Successful student teams develop a cooperative relationship with both coaches, and manage to meet their academic and practical expectations.

The academic coach helps students to focus their project topic, and interfaces with the company's representatives to discuss the team's progress and to help align expectations and conditions for the project. He or she will evaluate student performance and offer valuable suggestions on how to address research issues and improve team processes.

The company coach acts as a liaison between the student team, RSM and the company. He or she helps student teams by ensuring the company provides them with access to information or other required resources. On average the company coach will spend half a day per week on meetings with students, reading their reports and helping them with their queries. The company coach is also responsible for evaluating the team's performance.

“ The International Business Project was one of the highlights of my semester abroad at Rotterdam School of Management. Not only was I given the opportunity to gain first-hand experience doing consulting for a well-known company but I also had the pleasure of working closely with a diverse team of international students from across the globe. My business experience and cultural awareness grew tremendously over the course of the semester and I feel even more prepared to enter the international business world.

Kevin Tucker – exchange student from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania



PRACTICAL MATTERS

PROJECT STRUCTURE

The International Business Project is structured in five stages.

1. INTRODUCTION

During this stage students receive information about the company, the business project and their fellow team members. A kick-off lecture provides background information about the business project and highlights potential pitfalls.

2. PROBLEM DEFINITION

The problem definition stage begins as teams have their first meeting with their academic and company coaches. Based on these meetings, teams draft a project proposal which entails a brief description and analysis of the issue. They then make suggestions for research, a time schedule and budgeting of resources needed. The problem definition phase ends with an official proposal that is approved by both the academic and the company coach.

3. CONDUCTING RESEARCH

During this stage each team starts collecting data by consulting secondary sources, conducting

interviews and analysing reports that will help to solve the business problem. This phase ends with a written report that must be approved by both coaches. Further, this written report must meet RSM's academic standards.

4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Towards the end of the project, the team presents its findings and recommendations to the company. In addition, teams will prepare a presentation for their fellow students and a jury of consultants at the University. Finally, each team submits a written consultancy report (even if not requested by the company) for evaluation by the academic coach.

5. EVALUATION

The project concludes with a reflection on the team effort and each student's individual learning experience. Each student writes an individual paper in which he or she analyses the team process and his or her individual role in this process. A key element is the question of what students have learned in terms of project and consultancy skills, research skills and team skills.

“ The IBP was a tremendously rewarding academic and team-building experience. It allowed me to work with an international team of students while essentially consulting for a leading Dutch multinational. It improved my communication, leadership, cultural awareness and research skills while immersing me in a real-life business situation. In addition, the friendships I made during the IBP will undoubtedly be ones that I treasure for many years to come. I would definitely recommend the IBP to all students seeking a stimulating and challenging course!

Denise Karen Pereira – MBA exchange student from McGill University Montréal, Canada

PROJECT SUPPORT

LECTURES AND SEMINARS

Lectures and seminars are offered to help students in mastering skills that are relevant for project management and consultancy. In addition, informal lunch meetings with group representatives are organised to discuss group progress and to solve problems.

LECTURES

Introduction to the International Business Project

This lecture introduces students to the business project they are assigned to. It provides instruction in consulting with company management, and in best project-management practices.

Intervision Feedback Session on Team Dynamics

Successful group dynamics are crucial to the success of a business project. Effective groups manage communication, agendas and working styles in a way that optimises their success. In this session, groups reflect on their unique dynamic with an eye to leveraging strengths and improving weaker areas.

SEMINARS AND TRAININGS

Negotiation & Conflict Management Skills

This one-day seminar provides students with practical training in negotiation and conflict management skills. These skills are highly relevant for project management teams addressing consultancy projects.

Interview Skills

During interviews with client organisations two tools are particularly important: Asking the right questions at the right moment, and listening skills. This seminar helps students to sharpen these skills.

Presentation Skills

This two-hour workshop provides students with training and feedback on how to effectively present their research findings to the business community.



PROJECT GRADING

EXAMINATION AND GRADING

Students spend approximately two days per week on the International Business Project. Students are graded both individually and as a team by the academic coach and the company coach. Attendance at all course components is compulsory for every team member.

Grading is based on completion of all written work; full and active participation in the project; and on meeting the criteria of the general aim of the project. The grade is calculated as follows:

Individual		Team	
Reflection Paper	15%	Project Proposal	10%
Participation	25%		
Academic coach	25%	Company Judgment	20%
		Final Report	30%
Total	40%		60%



Through internships and International Business Projects, we welcome many RSM students to the world of Heineken – a diverse world of customers and employees who span the globe and represent different cultures, customs, professions and interests. The international mindset of the RSM students provides a seamless match with Heineken and gives us access to fresh ideas.

Laurens van de Rotte – RSM alumnus, company coach and Manager of Corporate Distribution & Logistics, Heineken International



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