

# **MSc in Electronic Commerce**

## **CA550 Practicum – Guidelines**

*Version approved by programme board on 15 Feb 2001.*

*Revised with updated schedule Feb 2002, Feb 2003, Feb 2004.*

*Revised with emphasis on separation from Entrepreneurship, Feb 2005.*

*Revised with updated schedule March 2006.*

*Revised with updated schedule March 2007.*

### **Work to be Undertaken**

The choice of content for the practicum is at the discretion of the students but must however be practical in nature and have a technical and entrepreneurial component. Both the topic and the group composition must be approved by the program board. As begun in 2005, the practicum is now distinct from the taught module on Entrepreneurship and the work done in that second semester module can not be re-used for the practicum. The practicum group may be the same in composition to that used in the Entrepreneurship module, but the topic of the practicum must be different to the topic covered in assessment for the Entrepreneurship module.

The aim of the practicum is to expose the student to some real-world problem in the ecommerce area in order to allow the theoretical work covered in the earlier modules, to be put into practice. The practicum is an academic exercise and is seen as an essential component of the M.Sc. programme as it gives an opportunity to put into practice the theoretical materials covered during semesters 1 and 2. The practicum should not be seen as an opportunity to undertake consultancy or other work for a third party. We discourage completely company-driven practicum projects with corporate deliverables and tight company involvement but company ideas and company support is welcome. Practicum projects which are potentially commercially exploitable are encouraged to avail of the facilities of the University's innovation and enterprise centre.

### **Group Composition and Size**

Practicum projects will be done in groups and a group will be composed of between 2 and 4 students including both the technical and business specialisms of the programme. Solo practicum projects, and projects involving more than 4 students are discouraged. In the case of students wishing to undertake a particular piece of work where this is not the optimum group composition then other arrangements can be approved but only in cases which must be justified by the group. Group composition and an outline of the proposed practicum must be submitted according to the timetable below, and using the pro forma provided on the course web page.

### **Supervision**

Each group will be assigned at least one, but mostly two supervisors (one from Computing and from the Business School). The role of the supervisor(s) is to assist and guide the practicum as it develops. Sometimes a supervisor will provide pointers to related or important work, sometimes a supervisor provides technical assistance, and sometimes it is straightforward advice. These supervisors will be available for consultation and advice until the end of June 2007 to assist students in framing the scope and content of their project in detail. Subsequent to the end of June 2007, supervisor availability cannot be guaranteed because of vacation and other University commitments and students should bear this in mind. Students should make contact with their supervisor(s) upon one being assigned and should remain in regular contact with their supervisor(s) throughout the practicum, and not just at the beginning and end. Although supervisor(s) do not have a direct input into assigning marks for the practicum, they do have an influence, which in turn will be influenced by the amount of contact and briefing they will have had from the group.

### **Other Assistance**

At any time throughout the practicum students should feel free to approach any academic in the DCUBS or in CA with questions where the specific questions are within that academic's area of expertise. It is helpful if questions are well thought out and preferably emailed in advance of any meeting to allow the academic to prepare and thus gain maximum benefit from the consultation.

### **Practicum Assessment and Marking Scheme**

*The purpose of this marking scheme to provide a standard marking framework for use by both staff and students. However, the approach to using it may need to be flexible to take account of unusual, non-standard, etc, styles project work - for example, all projects may not involve the development of software and conversely not all projects may be theoretical only.*

A panel consisting of the supervisor, and one staff member from each of CA and DCUBS will assess each practicum and will be constituted shortly after the submitted practicums have been approved. The supervisor will chair the panel and will not be directly involved in marking.

The practicum will be assessed using a three step process:

- The practicum report will be submitted to the Practicum Co-ordinator who will make it available on the web for the programme board to read, with a mark being awarded by the panel.
- The group practicum interview and oral examination will provide a formal mechanism for the panel to discuss in-depth, probe and further analyse the practicum work.
- The group will deliver a presentation and Q+A session to their classmates, DCU staff and perhaps some outside parties.

As the interviews and presentations are an examinable component of the degree program, students may be excused from attending this full day of activities only on medical or other extenuating grounds.

The split of marks across the three elements for assessment will be as follows:

#### **Practicum Report 40%**

The deliverable report will be more substantial than reports prepared prior to 2005, it will have a mark reflecting this. In formulating a mark, the panel should consider issues such as: innovation, uniqueness, contribution of idea / product / research, quality of presentation of results / outcome (this could include layout, expression, flow of argument, materials).

#### **Group practicum Interview 50%**

This interview / investigation into the practicum work may include a demonstration of the system (if one was implemented) and quality of analysis / design / implementation of the system (or study if a system was not implemented). Other issues which could be taken into consideration here include (but are not limited to) practicum approach / methodology (this could be academic research, market research, project management, understanding / appreciation of context ... depending on the nature of the practicum).

#### **Group Oral Presentation 10%**

The rationale for having a mark for the oral presentation is to highlight the seriousness/importance of the presentation.

**Timetable:**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Week begins</b>	
11	16 April	Practicum proposal due ( <b>Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April</b> ) to practicum coordinator using pro forma proposal form available on course web page at <a href="http://www.computing.dcu.ie/current/projects/ecommm_info/index.html">http://www.computing.dcu.ie/current/projects/ecommm_info/index.html</a> Proposal due Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup> April.
12	25 April	Last week of lectures.
	20 April	Exam study
	7 May	Exam study
	14 May	Exams
	21 May	More exams possibly – else Practicum work
	28 May	Practicum work
	4 June	Practicum work
	11 June	Practicum work
	18 June	Practicum work
	25 June	Practicum work – last week of guaranteed supervision
	2 July	Practicum work
	9 July	Practicum work
	16 July	Practicum work
	23 July	Practicum work
	31 July	On 31st July, 10AM – practicum project reports are due to practicum coordinator (me)
	<b>6 Aug</b>	Practicum presentations and orals ... taking place <b>the between the 8-10 August</b> . Final dates and schedule to be arranged.