



TEACHER WEBINAR SERIES - THE PROJECT

#1

GD EDUCATION

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Introduction / Resources

- **Specification**
- **Guidelines to support the Investigative Study NCCA**
- **Sample Brief**
- **Formatted document for projects (student)**

Overarching principles

	Students demonstrating a high level of achievement	Students demonstrating a moderate level of achievement	Students demonstrating a low level of achievement
Planning	<p>-demonstrate effective engagement with planning throughout their study and clearly reflect on and evaluate the extent to which the planning undertaken contributed to the effective completion of the study.</p> <p>-develop a clear and probing research question that is underpinned by the relevance or importance of business locally, nationally and/or internationally.</p>	<p>- demonstrate engagement with planning throughout their study and reflect on the extent to which the planning undertaken contributed to the completion of the study.</p> <p>- develop a clear research question that is underpinned by the relevance or importance of business locally, nationally and/or internationally.</p>	<p>-demonstrate limited engagement with planning throughout their study and present limited reflections on the extent to which the planning undertaken contributed to the completion of the study.</p> <p>- develop some form of research question.</p>

Planning

- Create a clear probing question - set out to show some cause & effect, before/after, impact/conclusion so that you can measure something from your investigation
- Evidence of ongoing project management needs to come through
- Evaluate how the plan was helpful in the process
- Set out tasks, resources (have/required), timeline and risks faced
- Evidence reasoning for changes to plans and impacts from the changes
- Set out clear success criteria

Overarching principles

	Students demonstrating a high level of achievement	Students demonstrating a moderate level of achievement	Students demonstrating a low level of achievement
Investigating	<p>-identify and evaluate the potential value of a wide range of appropriate sources related to the research question created based on the brief.</p> <p>- complete an in-depth analysis and evaluation of data and information from a range of reliable sources justifying the choice of sources.</p>	<p>-identify and evaluate the potential value of a range of appropriate sources related to the research question created based on the brief.</p> <p>-analyse and evaluate data and information from a range of reliable sources justifying the choice of sources.</p>	<p>-identify a limited range of sources related to the research question created based on the brief.</p> <p>-present limited analysis and evaluation of data and information from a range of sources.</p>
Investigating (continued)	<p>-present conclusions justified by the analysis and evaluation of the data and information, related to the research question developed.</p> <p>- clearly identify limitations in the investigative study across the design of the research question, the research gathered and/or analysis conducted.</p>	<p>-present conclusions related to the research question developed.</p> <p>- identify some limitations in the study.</p>	<p>- present limited conclusions demonstrating engagement with the topic.</p> <p>-do not identify limitations in the study.</p>

Investigating

- Use a wide range of appropriate sources
- Show multiple perspectives
- Justify choice of data used
- Identify limitations of data used / process
- Analyse the data - take out and state the important points - don't just describe it (so what?)
- Conclusion - answer your question directly, tie in points to evidence discovered
- Apply findings to the practical relevance of it

Overarching principles

	Students demonstrating a high level of achievement	Students demonstrating a moderate level of achievement	Students demonstrating a low level of achievement
Applying	<p>-demonstrate capacity to reflect on how the findings relate to the world of business and business-related stories in the media where relevant, and how their perspectives have been influenced by the investigative study.</p> <p>-clearly and appropriately relate the findings of the investigation to the cross-cutting theme(s) within the specification.</p>	<p>-demonstrate some capacity to reflect on how the findings relate to the world of business, business-related stories in the media where relevant, and how their perspectives have been influenced by the investigative study.</p> <p>-relate the findings of the investigation to the cross-cutting theme(s) within the specification.</p>	<p>-demonstrate limited capacity to reflect on how the findings relate to the world of business, business-related stories in the media where relevant, and how their perspectives have been influenced by the investigative study.</p> <p>-make limited links between the findings of the investigation and the cross-cutting theme(s) within the specification.</p>

Applying

- Connect project to the cross-cutting themes
- Connect project to real world of business (practical application of your findings)
- Show how their perspective has changed / shifted
- 1-2 clear real world applications could be give - who should do what, when and with what target / why, based on the findings of the investigation
- Reaching an original conclusion based on data using critical thinking

Overarching principles

	Students demonstrating a high level of achievement	Students demonstrating a moderate level of achievement	Students demonstrating a low level of achievement
Communicating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-present clear and appropriate data and information and analysis using a range of relevant graphics as appropriate.-use coherent and consistent language throughout the report with clearly acknowledged appropriate supporting references and reflections on the study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-present adequate data and information and analysis; using relevant graphics as appropriate.-use moderately coherent and consistent language throughout the report with some acknowledged supporting references and reflections on the research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-present limited data and information and analysis, limited or no use of graphics.-present a report where the language used demonstrates limited coherence and consistency with limited supporting references and reflections.

Communicating

- Use a range of sources (not a data collection competition)
- Use relevant graphics (3-4 purposeful visuals)
- **KEY** - Explain visuals for the reader - analyse it - “so what?”
- Consistent sourcing
- Coherent / consistent language
- Signpost important information - guide the reader - each section could start with a one-sentence purpose
- “Skillful brevity” short, to the point sentences with a clear reason to be there
- The granny rule

Take home points from the sample brief

- **School/teacher authenticates work of students**
- **Any word processing software can be used with a clear format when finished**
- **Report structure with word count (total 1,500) for each**
- **Allocation of marks for each section**
- **<10 graphs/visuals can be used**

The stages of the process for completing the investigative study are listed below, please refer to NCCA [Guidelines to support the Completion of the Business Alive Investigative Study](#) for detailed guidance and support.

Stage 1: Getting Started

Stage 2: Developing a question to research

Stage 3: Developing a project plan

Stage 4: Identifying sources and gathering information and data

Stage 5: Analysis and evaluation

Stage 6: Applying learning and drawing conclusions

Compilation of the final report

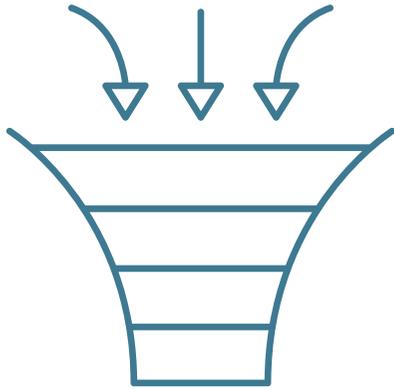
Your report should contain no more than **1500 words**. This word count does not include words used in references, in data tables, graphs, diagrams, images, or as labels.

Note that your report will gain marks for communicating clearly with skilful brevity, but fewer marks will be awarded if your report loses coherence through unwarranted length or excessive use of images.

Note that tables, graphs, diagrams, images, etc. may be produced using appropriate software, captured from secondary sources and embedded in your report. When referring to any specific image in the body of the report, the image must be properly labelled (figure 1, figure 2, etc.). Images should not be used as a means to include additional text. The total number of images allowed throughout the report is **ten**.

1. Getting Started

Ideas from the brief



2. Developing a SMART Question

Narrow in on a clear probing question that can measure something, link to the brief / cross cutting themes / business.

SMART

3. Developing a Project Plan

Set tasks, timelines, available resources, risks faced.



Set out the success criteria for the investigation.

6. Applying learning and drawing conclusions

Answer question directly (4-6 lines)
Show change in perspective
Identify 1-2 clear applications for a business from findings



5. Analysis and Evaluation of Data

Don't describe the data, analyse it - tell the reader the important bits



Show impact/relevance of findings on businesses

4. Identifying Sources & Gathering Information and data



Wide range of sources
Managing data (investigative folder)
Different perspectives
Justify choices
Identify gaps/bias

The Structure of the Report

6. Business Alive Investigative Study Report Structure

The structure of the Business Alive Investigative Study Report should consist of the following section headings, **each with a suggested word count**. You should include these headings in your Report. Suggested indicative content for each heading is given below.

1. Introduction

approx. 200 words

- State your research question
- Explain the rationale for choosing this question
- Reflect on how you engaged with your project plan

2. Investigation and Findings

approx. 400 words

- Explain the purpose and relevance of the different research methods and sources used appropriate to your research question
- Present your research findings in appropriate formats
- Consider a variety of perspectives

3. Analysis and Evaluation

approx. 600 words

- Analyse your research findings
- Evaluate your research findings
- Demonstrate originality and critical thinking throughout your analysis and evaluation

4. Conclusions

approx. 300 words

The nature of your conclusions will depend on the requirements of the brief issued each year.

- Present conclusions justified by the analysis and evaluation
- Outline how your planning contributed to the successful completion of the study
- Discuss how your perspective evolved as a result of the study
- Consider how your findings connect to the real world of business

5. References

- Appropriately record the sources of all the information gathered.

* **Overall Coherence** is not a separate section of the Business Alive Investigative Study Report. Instead, marks for Overall Coherence are awarded based on the overall quality of the report, including the organisation, clarity, and cohesion of the material presented. Evidence of planning and reflection should be clear throughout. Marks are also awarded for logical structure, clarity of expression, originality, effective use of business terminology, and the inclusion of accurate references.

20
marks

100
marks

30
marks

50
marks

Breaking down the sample brief

Stage 1: Getting Started

Complete a Business Alive Investigative Study and Report based on the following brief:

In today's competitive and socially aware marketplace, ethics play a vital role in shaping modern marketing decisions.

Stakeholders are demanding greater transparency and accountability, placing businesses under growing pressure to align their marketing practices with ethical principles. At the same time, changing consumer needs are transforming how businesses engage with consumers, requiring constant innovation and awareness. In this dynamic environment, maintaining a competitive edge means not only keeping up with digital trends but also building trust through responsible and ethical marketing.

You are required to explore how ethical considerations impact marketing for a business of your choice operating in the service sector in Ireland.



Stage 1: Getting Started

Services sector

- Gyms and personal trainers
- Hairdressers and beauty salons
- Banks and credit unions
- Insurance providers
- Telecom and broadband providers
- Streaming services (Netflix, Spotify, etc.)
- Food delivery platforms (JustEat, Deliveroo)
- Online tuition or grinds companies
- Hotels, B&Bs, Air BnBs
- Couriers



What is ethical practice in marketing?

Ethical practice means being honest, fair, and responsible in how a business promotes itself.

Examples of good ethical practice:

- Showing real results e.g. authentic before/after images for gyms
- Being transparent about full costs (no hidden charges)
- Using testimonials with permission and accuracy
- Being honest
- Respecting consumer privacy (not misusing personal data)
- Not ripping off customers

Examples of bad ethical practice:

- Exaggerating results or making false promises
- Adding hidden fees at checkout ("drip pricing")
- Using fake reviews or testimonials
- Exploiting fears or insecurities in advertising messages
- Making cancellation difficult to trap customers into contracts
- Paying social influencers to lie about results/promote the service without using it

Stage 1: Getting Started



The Marketing Mix

- Product/Service – What is being offered? Quality or durability, features, branding, design, after-sales support.
- Price – How is it priced? Discounts, payment terms, hidden costs, fairness of pricing.
- Place – Where/how is it delivered? Online, in-store, through apps, distribution networks.
- Promotion – How is it advertised? Social media (hype/exaggerated/fake), influencers (paid, disclosed?), sponsorships, ethical messaging/guilt/fear used?
- People – Staff and customer interactions, training, culture, customer service.
- Process – The steps customers go through (sign-up, payment, cancellation, complaints).
- Physical Evidence – The tangible cues of the service: website, environment, contracts, uniforms, receipts.

Stage 1: Getting Started

Develop your idea

Think about the brief: “Explore how ethical considerations impact marketing for a service-sector business in Ireland.”

1. Which of the service businesses operating in Ireland interests you most?
2. Can you spot one ethical and one unethical practice for a business in that area that would impact their marketing?
3. Which of these practices could you investigate further?
4. How/what could you measure? (e.g. trust, likelihood to click, perception of fairness, likelihood to purchase/recommend to a friend)
5. Who are the key stakeholders? (consumers, the business, competitors, regulators...)
6. What sources of information could you use? (survey, interview, competitor websites/social media/websites, news articles, regulator guidelines)
7. How could your findings be useful to the business with real-life application? (e.g. build trust, increase sign-ups, improve reputation, reduce complaints)

Develop your idea (worked example)

- **Which of the service businesses operating in Ireland interests you most?**

Local gyms and online personal trainers that offer fitness services as I see so many of them on my social feeds promoting their services.

- **Can you spot one ethical and one unethical practice for a business in that area?**

Ethical: Honest and transparent client progression and results that give potential clients realistic expectations.

Unethical: Fake claims / using edited or misleading before/after images where lighting, filters, poses, or even stock images exaggerate the results. This creates false promises, pressures people with unrealistic body standards. They might also use guilt/aggressive marketing.

- **Which of these practices could you investigate further?**

I could investigate the impact of exaggerated results e.g. dramatic before/after photos, are on clicks and trust with customers.

- **How/what could you measure? (e.g. trust, likelihood to click, perception of fairness, likelihood to purchase/recommend to a friend)**

I could identify ads or create sample ones to measure how much people trust a type of ad and whether they would click to learn more, or trust the seller.

- **Who are the key stakeholders? (consumers, the business, competitors, regulators...)**

Consumers, business and competitors (pressure to exaggerate in the industry?), regulator (is enough being done to protect consumers)

- **What sources of information could you use? (survey, interview, competitor websites/social media/websites, news articles, regulator guidelines)**

Survey with target market/students, interview with a local trainer/owner, competitors gyms/trainers Instagram ads, and the ASAI advertising code.

- **How could your findings be useful to the business with real-life application? (e.g. build trust, increase sign-ups, improve reputation, reduce complaints)**

If customers say they trust honest ads more, the gym could focus on realistic marketing to build long-term loyalty instead of exaggerated claims.

Develop your idea (worked example)



- **Which of the service businesses operating in Ireland interests you most?**

Food delivery platforms like JustEat or Deliveroo, because I use them and always notice the price changes at checkout.

- **Can you spot one ethical and one unethical practice for a business in that area?**

Ethical: Showing the full cost upfront at the start of the order (meal + delivery + service charge).

Unethical: Adding hidden costs at the very end of the process, which can make people feel tricked and already committed so they order anyway.

- **Which of these practices could you investigate further?**

I could investigate how hidden fees at checkout affect customer trust and whether they make people abandon the purchase / or are more likely to order than seeing full price on menu.

- **How/what could you measure? (e.g. trust, likelihood to click, perception of fairness, likelihood to purchase/recommend to a friend)**

I could compare reactions to two mock screenshots and measure

1. Likelihood to complete the order when costs are shown upfront vs when hidden fees appear at checkout
2. Impact on trust/experience being hit with a high price at checkout

- **Who are the key stakeholders? (consumers, the business, competitors, regulators...)**

Consumers (frustration, fairness), businesses (short-term profit vs long-term loyalty), competitors (do they lose trust if others are more transparent?)

- **What sources of information could you use? (survey, interview, competitor websites/social media/websites, news articles, regulator guidelines)**

Survey with classmates, screenshots from food delivery apps, articles about consumer complaints, and regulator articles/stories on online pricing or pricing display regulations and potential fines (look at if it is incentivised to avoid fines adequately)

- **How could your findings be useful to the business with real-life application? (e.g. build trust, increase sign-ups, improve reputation, reduce complaints)**

If customers say they prefer upfront costs, a delivery platform could market itself on transparency, gaining trust and loyalty over time rather than risking complaints.

Progress Tracker Timeline

Stage	Task Description	Completed? (Yes/No)	Notes / Reminders
Stage 1: Getting Started Time 2-3 hours	Brainstorm the theme and explore resources. Consider cross-cutting themes and impact of the them on the business world.		
Stage 2: Research Question Time 1-2 hours	Develop and refine a SMART research question.		
Stage 3: Project Plan Time 1-2 hours	Create and review your project plan.		
Stage 4: Gathering Data Time 3-4 hours	Identify sources and gather information and data.		
Stage 5: Analysis Time 3-4 hours	Analysis and evaluation of data.		
Stage 6: Conclusions Time 1-2 hours	Draw conclusions / recommendations, and apply them based on your learning. Reflect.		

Stage 1: Getting Started (2-3 hours)



Goal for this stage: To understand the theme set by the SEC, explore possible directions your research could take, and start forming early ideas that connect with your interests and the world of business.

Step 1: Write the theme of the brief in here

Step 2: Brainstorm the theme – answer these questions to help you

What do I already know about this theme?

How does this theme relate to what I've learned in class so far? Or to anything I know from the world of business? Or to other things I've learned about before?

What else should I learn more about this theme before going further?

Step 3: Explore different sources to deepen your understanding of the theme and find new ideas. Discovering new information and evolving your thoughts are key to the process.

Ideas for research sources: Your Business book, articles shared with you in class, news articles online, interview with local businesses (email/phone), business websites, YouTube...

Write down any new ideas or information that you are interested in here. You should log sites and links or places you found information so that if you use them in your project later, you will be able to reference them correctly.

By now, hopefully you have an idea of something related to the theme that you have an interest in. Now you could consider the main issues or problems or gaps in your knowledge to help you figure out what you need to research in more detail.

Step 4: Organise your thoughts e.g. by using a Mind Map

Write out the theme and branch out from them with what you know and what you want to learn. Colour-coding can help - (e.g. **green = known info**, **red = questions**, **blue = possible focus areas**) to help you see gaps and patterns in your research.

As you map ideas, consider whether your topic links to any of the four cross-cutting themes. Strong projects will integrate one or more of these themes:

Step 5: Make a clear link between your ideas to at least one cross-cutting theme

Write down how this idea links to any theme:

Ethics and Sustainability

Entrepreneurial Thinking

Business and Financial Literacy

Digital Transformation

Stage 1: Ongoing Monitoring & Reflection

Has anything surprised me so far or changed how I think about something related to the theme? Has any of my previous thinking shifted? Did any issues arise at this stage? How did I overcome those issues?

Checklist before moving to stage 2

checklist

- I've highlighted one or more specific aspects of the theme that interest me.
- I've written down what I already know about the theme.
- I've listed things that I *don't* know about yet and want to learn more about.
- I can explain how this theme connects to topics I've covered in class.
- I've kept track of sources I might use again (in my investigative folder or notebook).
- I have created a visual mind map or written list showing what I know and what I want to explore.
- I've reflected on whether or not anything has surprised me or challenged my thinking.
- I have filled in the reflection section honestly (what worked, what didn't at this stage).

Take-home point: Strong projects will show curiosity, be relevant to the brief, have a clear business context, and include links to one or more of the cross-cutting themes.

If you have found an interesting theme or topic, move to stage 2!

What if I'm stuck?



I'm stuck -> If you're unsure where to start, try searching recent business news for stories that connect to the theme. Work with classmates to develop ideas around the theme or ask your teacher or use online tools to help brainstorm topic ideas. Use your textbook's "Business in Our World" boxes for connections to the theme.