



SAMPLE



LRN Sample Assessment Assignment

LEVEL 7 Diploma

Leadership, Change and People Management

Learning Resource Network

Assignment Guidelines

Leadership, Change and People Management

What does the assignment require?

As this assignment is being undertaken in the context of a Postgraduate Diploma qualification, its scope must embrace the choice of a scenario requiring investigation (either because of the need for remedial action or because the situation presents a visible opportunity for competitive advancement), the exercise of analytical and investigative skills, the development of strategically-defensible action proposals (reinforced by evidence-based thinking), and the persuasive presentation of a business case for change.

It is also crucial that the assignment embraces **all** the Learning Outcomes related to the syllabus for Leadership, Change and People Management.

The purpose of the assignment

The assignment is intended to test the student's capabilities in several key areas that are concerned with the achievement of world-class levels of people performance, leadership and change management, especially through the strategies and processes linked to High Performance Working.

The specific capabilities which the assignment seeks to develop in students, and which should be demonstrated within the final version of the assignment text, are as follows:

- (1) **The effective management of change** – both incremental and transformational.
- (2) **The mobilisation of support for change** – through the application of suitable leadership skills and techniques intended to overcome resistance and also create commitment to whatever courses of action are ultimately proposed.
- (3) **Integrative thinking and action** – developing alignment (bundling) between connected functional strategies so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts (synergy).
- (4) **Situational analysis** – identifying the core issues, the opportunities and the threats, and the relevance of factors in the present, probable and possible future environment.
- (5) **Investigative skills** – generating evidence-based proposals by means of primary or secondary research methodologies.
- (6) **Information management** – separating facts from assumptions, beliefs from empiricism, in a spirit of academic, professional and clinical detachment.
- (7) **Problem-solving and decision-making** – both analytical and creative, taking lessons from world-class enterprises but also, where relevant, developing entirely original „solutions“ for situations never previously encountered.
- (8) **Influence and persuasion techniques** – when defending or promoting recommendations in relation to their commercial cost-beneficial outcomes.
- (9) **Presentation methods** – to create a reader-friendly, business-focused, strategically-convincing report that will be favourably received and endorsed by the visualised high-level recipients/addressees.

It is important to emphasise that the above capabilities are critical parts of the manager's toolkit.

The selection of an assignment topic

It follows that an acceptable assignment topic must fulfil a number of expectations, not least that it should permit or enable the student to demonstrate the above capabilities. Therefore, it must:

- (1) Be concerned with a 'live', authentic problem or opportunity.
- (2) Be linked directly with a specific organisation, business sector or economic environment.
- (3) Exhibit a comparative thrust, i.e., a comparison between organisations, between sectors or between nations.

- (4) Represent a theme for which there already exists an available, preferably research-based literature.
- (5) Incorporate opportunities for an integration between 'theory' and 'practice'.
- (6) Have a strategic rather than a solely operational orientation.
- (7) Reflect the values of integration that underpin the whole assessment process, i.e., have resonance for all the principal dimensions of the 'Leadership, Change and People Management' syllabus.

An assignment topic will **not** be acceptable if:

- (1) It is entirely 'theoretical' or 'academic' in nature and scope.
- (2) It is entirely historical, i.e., simply recounts past events without drawing lessons for future business practice.
- (3) It has no grounding in the reality of organisations.
- (4) It presents no opportunity for learning, i.e., conclusions to be drawn, lessons to be learned, solutions to be devised and advocated.
- (5) It only addresses one aspect of the syllabus for 'Leadership, Change and People Management'.

Note: Submitted assignments that contain any of the five features above are unlikely to receive a pass grade. Tutors should take account of this provision when advising students about a suitable assignment topic so that time and effort are not wasted in producing an assignment that will not fulfil LRN's requirements.

Examples of acceptable assignment topic titles

It may be helpful for both tutors and students to consider the following topic titles as exemplars of what would be acceptable against the selection criteria outlined above.

- "How leadership and people engagement can transform the future for [name of organisation]."
- "How change could have been better managed during the merger between [name of business] and [name of business]."
- "What next for [name of organisation]? A strategic study of leadership and people performance in a successful organisation."
- "Why and how [name of organisation] should turn itself into a High Performance Working enterprise and an 'employer brand' through superior leadership and people management."
- "Linking research with reality: evidence and experience about the methods of change management used by [name of organisation] when confronted by competitive challenges."
- "Effective leadership and people engagement: solving the problem of poor profitability at [name of business]."
- "Turning a commodity product/service into a competitive differentiator: the role of leadership and people commitment at [name of business]."
- "Reactive and proactive models of change management applied to [name of business or business sector]."

These titles are intended purely as guidelines and are not compulsory. However, students should ask their tutors for advice before committing themselves to the assignment topic and timetable.

Choice of the assignment topic depends upon satisfactory answers to the questions below:

- What is the problem or opportunity around which the assignment is to be written?
- What is the named organisation or business sector or economic environment around which the assignment is focused?
- What are the likely comparators to be used – between organisations, between sectors, between nations, e.g., as examples of 'good practice' or leading-edge strategy or high performance working practices?
- What are the literature/research sources that are relevant to this assignment's theme?

- In what ways does the proposed assignment topic demonstrate the possibility of links between 'theory' and 'practice'?
- How 'strategic' is the assignment's subject-matter?
- To what extent does the assignment topic reflect all the major dimensions of the Leadership, Change and People Management syllabus?

Producing the assignment

Ideally the assignment should be presented in the form of a report as if addressed to the Chief Executive of the organisation around which the assignment is focused. If that is not the approach adopted, however, the assignment should still be written as a report, with the following sections:

- (1) **Title page** – title of the assignment, author's name, date
- (2) **Acknowledgments** – people who have helped in preparing the assignment
- (3) **Declaration by the author** – that the assignment is an original work (with signature)
- (4) **Executive summary** – a one-page outline of what the assignment contains
- (5) **Contents page** – each section itemised with page numbers
- (6) **Introduction** – an outline of the assignment theme, reasons for selecting it, and the general background
- (7) **Method of investigation** – the techniques used to ascertain the problem and the facts
- (8) **Literature review** – a survey of the important literature related to the assignment's theme
- (9) **Facts, findings, discussion and analysis** – with headings appropriate to the subject-matter
- (10) **Conclusions** – inferences and deductions from the facts and findings (no new facts or findings)
- (11) **Recommendations** – reasoned proposals for change, problem removal, improvement, etc.
- (12) **References** – sources cited in the text
- (13) **Bibliography** – sources consulted but not cited
- (14) **Appendices**
- (15) **A self-evaluation section** – about the learning that has taken place during the various processes concerned with the production of the assignment, i.e., the selection of a suitably manageable topic, the literature search, the other methodologies employed, and the production of the assignment report itself. What has the student learned from this exercise which they can apply to their future careers?

Criteria for assessing the assignment

There are five criteria which will be applied to an evaluation of the assignment. These can be conveniently remembered through the acronym 'BACKUP':

Business orientation and acumen
Application
Capability
Knowledge of the subject-matter
Understanding
Presentation/persuasion skills

Business orientation and acumen

- Evidence of strategic thinking which connects people performance, leadership and change to competitive outcomes (the protection of a competitive advantage or the securing of additional competitive advantages in the future).
- A grasp of business priorities and an understanding of the commercial imperatives (both short- and long-term) which drive strategic action in organisations.
- A broad rather than a narrow perspective embracing people as potential contributors to corporate success and advancement.

Application capability

- The demonstrated willingness to analyse a situation and generate sensible, cost-effective yet imaginative and creative recommendations for change.
- The clear application of pragmatic and 'political' skills so that the assignment exhibits 'the art of the possible' in action.

Knowledge of subject matter

- A thorough grasp of the relevant themes covered by the assignment, bearing in mind the requirement to write an assignment which addresses all the Learning Outcomes for the Leadership, Change and People Management unit.
- The use of appropriate literature and research sources in order to provide an evidence-based analysis. Material from (preferably named) organisations to bring the theoretical content of the assignment to life.

In-depth understanding

- A challenging, (constructively) critical approach to the use of evidence whether derived from research or authoritative literature.
- An approach to the assignment visibly characterised by clinical detachment and analytical impartiality.

Presentation and persuasion skills

- The systematic organisation of the assignment's material.
- Cogent and concise language.
- Reasoning which is sensitively connected to the likely values and priorities of senior managers and Chief Executives.

Marking Scheme

Business orientation and acumen [marks 0-15]

- Evidence of strategic thinking as shown by the incorporation within the text of ideas, thinking or evidence from authors/researchers in the fields of corporate strategy, strategic leadership, people performance and change management [marks 0-10]
- Grasp of business/commercial priorities and a broadly-based perspective which integrates people performance, change and leadership into a wider corporate context [marks 0-5]

Application capability [marks 0-20]

- Situational analysis, i.e. the key factors which provide the basis for the assignment's central theme, either remedial (Weaknesses and Threats) or proactive (Strengths and Opportunities) [marks 0-5]
- Development and review of possible remedial action choices or strategic alternatives [marks 0-5]
- Articulation of clear, defensible recommendations and action proposals [marks 0-10]

Subject matter knowledge [marks 0-30]

- Visible familiarity with the themes addressed by all six Learning Outcomes as indicated below: [marks 0-15]
 - LO1: The organisation's workforce as a source of competitive advantage and as a contributor to the organisation's strategic, high-level purposes.
 - LO2: Strategies for people resourcing, retention and development, with special reference to the organisation as an 'employer brand'.
 - LO3: Strategies for enhancing employee commitment and engagement within the organisation, especially through performance management, positive employee relations, and total reward.
 - LO4: Leadership approaches linked to High Performance Working at all levels in the organisation.
 - LO5: The theories, concepts and tools associated with organisational change, together with the application of these instruments to identified scenarios.
 - LO6: The intellectual, leadership and managerial capabilities associated with change management and the optimal contribution of people to organisational purposes.
- The use of appropriate literature and research of third-party sources in order to provide an evidence-based analysis [marks 0-10]
- The incorporation into the assignment of exemplars featuring 'good practice', 'next practice' or leading-edge organisations [marks 0-5]

In-depth understanding [marks 0-15]

- Demonstration of a (constructively) critical approach to the use and interpretation of evidence from all sources, i.e. the absence of any unquestioning acceptance of information [marks 0-15]

Presentation and persuasion skills [marks 0-20]

- The systematic organisation of the assignment's material into a logically coherent and reader-friendly document [marks 0-5]
- Adherence to ABE specifications concerning the use of a standardised report design and structure [marks 0-10]
- Inclusion of a professionally-codified Bibliography (list of sources consulted) and References (list of sources specifically cited in the text of the assignment), with all sources identified in accordance with the Harvard system [marks 0-5]

Total marks for the assignment = 100 marks

Word count

The word count for this assignment is 5,000 words. A tolerance of +/- 10% is allowed where no penalty is incurred.

Where an assignment falls outside this tolerance the total mark awarded will be reduced. Assignments which are up to 10% under or above the word count tolerance will be subject to a deduction of 5 marks, with subsequent penalties of an extra 5 marks deducted for every further 10%.

For clarification the word count applies to the entire body of the text (i.e. including headings, citations, content of tables and diagrams) but does not include the reference list or the appendices.

Materials included in appendices should add to the reader's understanding of the assignment. All appendices must be cited within the body of the assignment and must be clearly numbered.

An accurate electronic word count must be noted on the front of all assignments. The penalty for not providing a word count, or for providing an inaccurate word count, will be a deduction of 3 marks.

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