BSN Mentor Guidelines

1.0 Introduction

Business School Netherland's International Action Learning MBA programme has evolved substantially over the past few years and is designed to test a student's knowledge and insight in a number of core course disciplines, with the overall objective of achieving the programme's learning outcomes.

As a result of the ongoing evolving process of the IALMBA programme, there are students who are at different stages of their studies and who may also be participating in different versions of the IALMBA programme.

As a mentor you will need to check with BSN Registrar or Registry as to which programme version your students are participating in prior to commencement of your mentoring.

1.1 Purpose and role of a BSN Mentor

The IALMBA is a distance-learning programme, wherein all students are required to attend one or two study blocks in the Netherlands, where they attend core course workshops. Once they have completed each of these workshop blocks they return to their own countries and this is when they need to be mentored and encouraged in their studies.

While they have access to BSN Learning Coaches and tutors for all technical issues, our research experience has reflected that it is during the time following the workshops in the Netherlands that they are most vulnerable to a variety of distractions, including work, travel, and family pressures, all of which detract them from their studies.

Therefore, the purpose and role of mentoring IALMBA students is:

- To provide morale support and encouragement to IALMBA students
- To guide them during their studies and provide advice based on your own personal experiences
- To provide a brief quarterly report to the BSN Academic Director on your group's academic progress

Each mentor will be responsible for mentoring 5 BSN students, and all communication will be conducted online and mentors will be selected based on their expertise in specific areas of business and their geographical proximity and cultural backgrounds, all of which could prove invaluable to IALMBA students.

1.2 Remuneration

Mentors will be remunerated as follows:

- Six months support at R 500.00 per student with an expectation of at least 5 to 6 hours contact per student.

1.3 Mentor Application Requirements

Prospective mentors must submit the following:

- A Mentor Application Form (MAF)
- Copy of current CV

2.0 BSN's Vision regarding Learning outcomes

Business School Nederland's Action Learning MBA programme is aimed at developing and enabling leaders and managers to work in strategically important positions within any organisation worldwide. This could be an owner of a small scale business, or as a manager-director in middle or large-scale enterprises. The leadership and entrepreneurial roles of a manager can only be fulfilled through thorough knowledge acquisition and skills development in solving business-related problems, whether of a strategic nature or due to a change in business policy, or a new process method.

3.0 BSN's Vision for Leadership Development

The Action Learning MBA programme is aimed at developing existing knowledge, building new knowledge, and enhancing skills and leadership qualities that are strategically important in the ever-changing, 21st Century business environment.

Management disciplines in the fields of Research Methodology, HR, Marketing, Operations, Finance, Information management, Strategic Management and International Management will be dealt with extensively in the core courses and master classes, where the emphasis is placed on analysing and discussing the latest trends and developments within each specific core course discipline. This is deemed critical to effective leadership development because organisational knowledge and insight within each of these disciplines is crucial to solving problems at strategic, tactical and operational levels. The Action Learning Projects (ALPs) provides insight through the application of knowledge through the multi-disciplinary integration of each of these core course disciplines.

Skills are learned and developed while researching, writing and implementing the Action Learning Projects, which are conducted for selected core courses. These skills are supported by a series of further Action Learning interventions which are indispensable for achieving the learning outcomes.

Business School Nederland has organised the Action Learning MBA courses in such a way that the focus is not so much on *What the student did* in order to graduate, but rather focuses on *what the student can do* both *during* the course of their studies, as well as *after* graduation.

This knowledge development and application of knowledge is described in the Action Learning MBA programme *learning outcomes*, which describes what the student is expected to *know*, to *understand* and *demonstrate* on completion of the learning process.

The Action Learning MBA programme targets six cognitive levels, namely:

1. Remembering: Ability to recall knowledge from memory
2. Understanding: Ability to interpret, to provide examples, to summarize, to compare and to explain.
3. Application: Ability to carry out a procedure or to implement. To apply what is learned by means of models, presentations, interviews or simulations.
4. Analysis: Produce order out of multiple data by means of spreadsheets, diagrams or graphical presentations.
5. Evaluation: To pass a judgement on the options that meet the criteria best, before taking action.
6. Creativity: To combine elements, concepts, and convert into meaningful information through innovation.

Learning at a certain level presumes that earlier learning levels have been realised. For instance, remembering and understanding are necessary conditions in order to apply point 3 listed above. By making use of the Action Learning method (working with problems and challenges in their own organisation), students will learn and develop their knowledge and skills at all six cognitive levels.

4.0 Dublin descriptors

The learning outcomes are partly determined by the 'Dublin descriptors' (JQI, 2004). These descriptors describe in general terms the level that a graduate needs to have realised upon completion of a master's level programme.

The Dublin descriptors are written in five dimensions. These are summarised below and are aligned to the programme learning outcomes in which the descriptors are integrated:

1. *Knowledge and Insight:*
   Has demonstrable knowledge and insight, which exceed and/or deepen the level of Bachelor and at the same time offer a basis or chance to offer an original contribution to the development and/or implementation of ideas, often in the context of research (Refer learning outcomes 1, 2, 3, 6).

2. *Applying:*
   Is capable of applying knowledge and insight and problem-solving abilities in new or unknown circumstances within a wider (or multidisciplinary) context that is related to the profession; is capable of integrating knowledge and dealing with complex matters (Refer learning outcomes 1,2,3,4,6).

3. *Formation of a judgement:*
   Is capable of formulating a judgement based on incomplete or limited information and thereby taking into account the social and ethical responsibilities that are connected to the application of own knowledge and judgements (Refer learning outcomes 1,7, 10, 12).

4. *Communication:*
   Capable of conveying conclusions, as well as the underlying knowledge, motives and considerations in a clear and explicit manner to an audience of experts and non-experts (Refer learning outcomes 1.5.6.8.9).

5. *Learning skills:*
   Possesses learning skills that enable him or her to start a follow-up course with a mainly self-driven and autonomous character (Refer learning outcomes 10, 11).

4.1 Learning Outcomes

Business School Netherlands has specified 12 exit learning outcomes for its Action Learning MBA, which are listed as follows:

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1. Strategic policy development

The development of or contribution to a challenging organisation strategy based on conceptual and visionary skills and taking into considerations recent and future developments. Is capable of formulating and implementing future plans in such manner that it creates support both within and outside the organisation.

2. Improving/developing working methods

Independently developing and/or improving a work method whereby the approach shows insight in both research methods and work processes and whereby the result leads to demonstrable improvement in efficiency, quality, flexibility and sustainability.

3. Policy development / implementation Year plan

Contributing to, developing and realising of policy targets related to business (professional) problems or challenges, thereby taking into account the connection between strategic, structural and cultural aspects of the organisation and anticipating future changes (internal and external).

4. Entrepreneurship

Developing and utilizing business opportunities for both new and existing products / services. Also stimulating and supporting such a pro-active, entrepreneurial attitude of co-workers / colleagues. Being capable of assessing risks and daring to take risks.

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5. Leadership

Judging the effects and quality of own leadership style at any desired moment within any context. Is capable – if necessary – to adjust in a natural way and does this in such a manner that co-workers consistently receive the correct guidance/direction in the light of both task fulfilment and motivation.

6. Decision-making

Independently integrating of relevant scientific insights, theories and concepts from the practice. Can generate new insights and solutions based on that and on behalf of complex, multidisciplinary problems. Can present these convincingly and have them implemented.

7. Ethical responsibility

The justification of own actions based on professional attitude which shows concern for normative cultural aspects, respect for others and regard for the social (living) environment. Lays down conditions in the organisation to enable this responsibility and stimulate it internally.

8. Cooperation

The integration of relevant knowledge and skills with which all desired roles within the team can be filled and which contributes to growth (individually or as a group) and to realisation of set targets.

9. Communicating

Conveying information and conclusions in a convincing and understanding way and, if necessary, the recommendations and developed implementation plans that follow from this. Can also choose for the most applicable form of communication tuned to the target group, kind of information and anticipated effect. Is capable of accurately reformulating received messages irrespective of the form of communication.

10. Analysing, information-processing and problem-solving abilities

Can manage problem-solving teams. Following a structured decision-making approach whereby the participants are stimulated to participation. Utilizing existing, relevant theories and seeing to sufficient acceptance of the implementation of the decision.

11. Learning and personal development

On own initiative integrating of existing knowledge with new, complex and abstract information from various sources. Hereby taking responsibility for further development of learning experiences and reflection thereupon. Deciding on possibilities for improvement and independently developing a learning route with which this can be realised.

12. International awareness

Analysing of relevant complex patterns and trends in the international business world. Also based on this one is capable of formulating recommendations regarding the (im-) possibilities in the field of doing business internationally and where necessary organising the execution thereof.