READER
Academic Consultancy Training, ACT (YMC60809)

1 Introduction

This Academic Consultancy Training provides students the possibility to work in a team on a "real world" project for an external client. As a large range of studies participate there are ample opportunities to work on projects in multi-disciplinary teams. Since students differ in interests and aims, the course offers a large variety of projects for which you can apply as if it were your first job.
In the Masters (and sometimes in the Bachelors) you have been trained in academic skills. This course trains the application of the Master level academic skills in an almost professional setting of a small consultancy team working for a true client on a real work assignment. To strengthen the professional skills needed for such team work, brief workshops on project proposal writing and on communication and personal development are integrated in the course.
The Academic Consultancy Training course is a 9 ECTS course which starts in periods 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 (the course starting in period 3 continues during period 4, the re-exam weeks are not scheduled). The course is generally scheduled in the mornings of the first three weeks and the last week, and full-time during weeks four through seven. years.

This reader provides you with all the organisational information needed during the course and prior to the course when registering and applying for a function in a project team.

1.1 Learning outcomes

After this course students are expected to be able to:

1. determine, with a team and in interaction with a client, the goals of a project and formulate tasks and a project plan on the basis of their disciplinary knowledge and general academic skills and attitude;
2. adjust, with their team and in interaction with the client, the formulated project goals and plan when and if necessary;
3. defend and sell their viewpoints and conclusions in a professional and representative way and academically correct;
4. contribute at an academic level to the execution of an interdisciplinary project both in terms of process and content related to their own disciplinary training by gathering, selecting and analysing information and integrating this into project deliverables;
5. implement reflective learning by an assessment of their personal functioning in and contribution to a professional team and reflection on this in writing and during an assessment interview;
6. assess the contribution of other team members and other stakeholders on team functioning and execution of project tasks and appropriately reflect on these and give feedback in writing and verbally

1.2 Time schedule

Below a general timeline is given which shows the most important **deadlines** and *meetings*. For every period a detailed time schedule is made available on the ACT website. Several meetings have already been planned and take priority over team planning (see timeline below, *underlined*).

The project team and the individual students are responsible for planning of all other meetings and activities, including meetings with the Expert and a mid-term and/or final presentation at the Commissioners'. Arrangements about draft products and who provides feedback on these at what time are also the full responsibility of the team.

Available rooms and computer facilities
Every period several project offices are available and a schedule of the assigned room for each team is available on the ACT website. In addition, meeting rooms and computer rooms

have been assigned to the ACT students. Teams have to share the available facilities and therefore are responsible for keeping to appointments about the use of these shared facilities.

Schedule

Week	Individual student	Team	§
Pre	. **2.1 Pre-registration** . Check on pre-registration . Read ACT reader . Buy CPD reader at WUR-shop . **Apply for the ACT**		2.1 2.2 2.5 2.5 2.3
1	. *Meeting financial controllers with financial supervisor* . Write expectation paper . Make appointment for individual starting interview . **Hand in expectation paper**	. *Kick-off meeting of the course* . *First meeting with coach* . *Proposal Writing workshop* . Prepare first meeting with commissioner; formulate mission for the team . *First meeting with commissioner* . Arrange first meeting with assigned advisor . *Communication and Personal Development workshop 1*	5.1 5.1 8 5.2 4.2/5.3 4.2
2	. *Personal starting interview*	. Hand in progress on project proposal . *Meeting on expectation papers and application letters*	5.2 4.6
3	. *Meeting team managers with period coordinator*	. **Hand in draft project proposal** . *Meeting with WP teacher and coach on project proposal* . *Meeting with expert on project proposal* . **Send revised draft project proposal to commissioner**	3.1 5.2 5.2 5.2
4	. Write midterm reflection paper . **Hand in midterm reflection paper** . Plan midterm interview	. **Hand in draft budget** . **Finalise project proposal** . Discuss mutual assessment with coach . *Communication and Personal Development workshop 2* . *Communication and Personal Development workshop 3*	8 3.1 4.3 4.3/5.3 4.3/5.3
5	. *Midterm performance interview* . Mutual assessment	. Work on project . *Mutual assessments and feedback*	5.4 4.6
6	. *Meeting team managers with period coordinator*	. Work on project	5.4
7		. Work on project . **Hand in final product to commissioner coach and academic advisor**	5.4 3.2
8	. Write final reflection paper . **Hand in final reflection paper** . *Final performance interview* (based on complete self-assessment dossier) . *Final meeting controllers with financial supervisor*	. *Rehearse presentation with other teams, give feedback on other presentations* . *Present final product at the commissioner's and discuss* . *Final team assessments, including mutual assessments*	4.4 4.4 4.6 3.3 3.3 7.1 8

1.3 Course information and materials

1.3.1 ACT reader (this document)

The ACT reader (this document) is the central guideline for the ACT. It is meant to be read, entirely, before the start of the course. The ACT reader refers to a number of other documents, which are available as indicated. The documents are shown between “quotes”.

1.3.2 ACT communication personal development (CPD) reader

For the communication and personal development workshops, a reader with theoretical information and assignments is available. The reader must be purchased at the WUR-shop prior to the start of the ACT course.

1.3.3 ACT website (actregistration.wur.nl)

The ACT website is the central source of information. The website has several tabs, some of which are accessible for everyone and some which are accessible only for those students that have registered for ACT in a specific period.

- The *ACT homepage* tab is where students can pre-register for ACT.
- The *Readers and Documents* tab contains a library with the ACT reader and the general documents and forms to which it refers. Here, you can find:
    - “ACT reader” (this document)
    - “Proposal Writing Guidelines”
    - “Oral Presentation Form” (for preparation of your presentations and for giving feedback on presentations of fellow teams)
    - “Reflection Form” (to be used to reflect on specific situations during the course)
    - “finance_act.xls” (the form which is used by the financial controllers)
    - “ACT-collaborationtools” (contains information on how share documents, track the project, have a shared calendar and that can be accessed anywhere)
    - “Plagiarism definition and other information” (contains some information and tips about plagiarism and how to prevent it);
    - “Disclaimer rules”
    - “ACT Time writing”
- The *period-specific tab* you will see refers to the period for which you have registered and contains period-specific information, such as:
    - a detailed time schedule,
    - a list of projects,
    - a list of teams and participants,
    - PowerPoint presentations of the CPD and PW workshops.

  You will get access to this tab a few weeks before the period starts for which you pre-registered.

2 Course preparation (start in time!)

2.1 Pre-registration

What?
We ask students to pre-register with the Academic Consultancy Training as soon as they start planning their master courses.

When?
You should register as soon as you have an idea of your MSc study schedule. Discuss this schedule with your study advisor and then pre-register. When your schedule changes, adapt your registration (see 'Changing your pre-registration'). The pre-registration for a period is closed six weeks before the end of the previous period. Pre-registration for period 1 therefore closes six weeks ***before*** summer holidays.

Why?
Every period a major effort is put into acquisition of enough appropriate projects for the ACT. The only way we can provide you with enough projects covering your expertise and interest is when you make your expertise and interests known to us in time. Also for organisational reasons it is essential to know well in advance how many students are planning to follow the ACT course during the different periods of the year.
Furthermore, once you are pre-registered we will contact you when appropriate with further information on the required application letter and project selection; not pre-registering may therefore lead to being wrongly or badly informed.

How?
Register on the ACT website. Fill in all fields and do not forget to mention topics of your interest as we use these when searching for new projects. You only have to subscribe on this site. We will take care of the SSC registration for you!

Changing your pre-registration
On the pre-registration site you can find a link to delete your pre-registration and re-register. You can use this if you need to change the period for which you pre-registered but also if you want to edit the expertise and topics of interest or any other information you entered.

When can I plan and start the ACT course?
Before applying for a position in an ACT project team the student must have successfully completed at least 12 but preferably 24 credits of MSc-level courses or a first MSc-thesis." In addition each student must have information literacy, presentation and oral and written English skills that enable full functioning as a member and that allow communication and oral and written self-assessment. Your pre-registration should take these formal requirements into account but can be completed before they have been fulfilled. Based on the learning outcomes it is actually advisable to plan the ACT after a first thesis or internship. The ACT-course builds on this individual experience with an academic project and takes it one step further as you carry out a project as a team.
On the basis of the pre-registrations for a period study advisors will be asked to assess which students have passed the minimum required level and can be allowed to start the ACT course during that period. We will inform you if problems occurred during this check.

2.2 Check on pre-registration

Six weeks before the start of the ACT course you will receive a first e-mail notifying you that you have pre-registered and that your study advisor will be asked to indicate if you have met the minimum requirements for enrolling the course as indicated above. If this check is positive you will receive further e-mails inviting you to apply for a job in one of the project teams. If you cannot yet apply you will also be notified and asked to re-schedule the course. For period 1 this will be six weeks before the summer holidays start.

2.3 Project selection

Why apply?

Your pre-registration is not enough to be finally allowed to participate in the ACT course in the period you indicated. The philosophy of this course is to approximate a real work environment. This means you have to apply for a job in a project. Based on the application you will compete with others for a position in that project. Both the availability of places in a project team, the relevance of you expertise for the project and the quality of your application letter will guide us in assigning students to the different projects.

How?

Write a formal application letter once you received an e-mail that the procedure has been opened for the period you selected. Before writing the letter, carefully read the information in the e-mail and in the paragraph 'Application letter' in chapter 4.

When?

Four weeks before the start of the ACT course, after we checked whether you can enrol, you will receive an e-mail notifying you to apply for a job in one of the projects and about further procedures. For period 1 this will be four weeks before the summer holidays start.

Where?

You can upload your preferences for projects and team function as well as the application letter and curriculum vitae as indicated in an e-mail you will receive. When the information on preferences or the letter do not provide the appropriate information your registration is not considered final and you will be asked to make amendments.

2.4 Assignment of projects

Based on all the application letters the period coordinator will assign projects to teams of 5 to 7 students. It's not possible to grant every individual his or her first choice project. Some projects will not be carried out because of a lack of interest and other projects may be so popular we will have to make a selection. When the first, second and third choice cannot be granted the period coordinator will contact the student to propose another project. Assignment is always based on preferences, relevance of your expertise for the project and the required disciplinary mix to compose a strong project team.
The assignment of the team functions is based on the indicated preference and the supporting reasoning in the application letter.
Students will be notified by e-mail when the list of teams is available on the ACT website. The team composition is then final. Team functions may be re-assigned during the course in consultation with your team coach.

2.5 Further preparation

We expect you to read all the information in this ACT reader prior to the start of the course. For the communication and personal development (CPD) workshops you have to buy a communication personal development (CPD) ***reader*** at the WUR shop. You should have this reader with you during the CPD-workshops.
All scheduling information for a period including venues, starting times etc. can be found in the course schedule for that period which will be made available on the ACT website before the start of the period.

3 Products: team

3.1 The project proposal

The ACT project starts with writing a project proposal. During the Proposal Writing (PW) workshop the background for the project proposal will be discussed. In the “Proposal Writing Guidelines” on the ACT website you can find information on the standard format and the required contents. The draft project proposal is assessed by the PW teacher and the Coach. After feedback the revised version is the first version communicated with the Commissioner. This project proposal is also handed to the PW teacher and the coach, who will give a mark. After possible changes requested by the commissioner the final version will have to be signed by the commissioner. For the deadlines see the course schedule on the ACT website.

3.2 Final product(s)

The final product(s) will be a report and/or a CD, a website, or any other product agreed with the commissioner.

You could consider the following as the minimum criteria for the team product or output :

- Is the information in the final product (e.g. report, business plan, prototype software) presented in an appropriate well-organised way, is it easy to read/use and well formulated?
- For written products: Is the division into chapters, sections and sub-sections logical? Is the use of appendices correct and supportive, is the ***executive*** summary correct and useful and finally is the explanation of the organisation in the introduction clear and supportive?
- Are the organisation and the language of the final product a reflection of the way the product will be used by the commissioner?
- Are the problem definition and the choice of methodology clearly presented?
- Are all recommendations clearly stated in the final product?
- Are all conclusions and recommendations supported by the provided information, and have all presented findings been translated into conclusions or recommendations?

3.3 Presentation(s)

The team arranges date and time of at least one oral presentation during or at the end of the project period. In principal the presentation will be organised at the commissioners’ office, but when the commissioner prefers it to be in Wageningen the ACT-coordination can help to find a venue. The presentation is compulsory for the whole team and the coach. In cases the academic advisor may be able to attend.

Checklist for a successful presentation:

- Make use of professional presentation software (e.g. PowerPoint)
- Practice your presentation (see below)
- Representative appearance
- Imagine and prepare for potential questions
- Structure the discussion

The presentation at the commissioners’ must be rehearsed with at least one other team from the PW workshop groups for feedback. The coach will assess the quality of the presentation, also based on the extent to which the feedback is used for improvements. Feedback can be structured using the “Oral Presentation Form”, which is available on the ACT website. This form can also provide criteria for a good presentation. Teams should arrange with whom they rehearse and during which time slot. Venues for the rehearsal can be found in the course schedule. When the available venues do not suffice you may ask for help in finding a solution from the ACT-team (coordination.act@wur.nl).

Keep in mind that the standard presentation you may use for your thesis or during courses is inappropriate for most commissioners. You have come with an answer to a problem or

question they have presented to you a few weeks earlier (final presentation), or you have come at least with partial answers and need now an okay to proceed (midterm presentation). So what is the solution or answer? Why is this the best solution/answer? And what are the next steps you plan or the commissioner may need to make? The technical details of your methodology and an extensive introduction into the problem the commissioner already knows are irrelevant, unless at the end of the presentation questions relative to your methodology are posed. So prepare slides on all of these issues but select carefully what to present and what to have as additional information during discussions. Do not exceed 30 minutes for the presentation and allow ample time for questions and feedback. You should keep in mind and even see to it that the commissioner considers this the moment to reflect on your progress and to give suggestions. The audience are not simply listeners; they should be approached as active participants in a meeting in which you present in order to generate discussion and exchange views. The aims and total length of the session should be known to your commissioner well in advance so all those present will know what to expect.

4 Products: individual

To structure the monitoring of your progress on the Learning outcomes of the course and your self-defined additional learning outcomes we want each student to keep a self-assessment dossier. You will hand in elements of the dossier to your coach as indicated below or as the coach requests. The coach will give you feedback that should help you to assess and monitor your progress. Your dossier should at least contain the following items:

- Application letter (see paragraph 4.1)
- Expectation paper (see paragraph 4.2)
- Midterm reflection paper (see paragraph 4.3)
- Final reflection paper (see paragraph 4.4)
- Reflection forms (see paragraph 4.5)

There are three scheduled Interviews in which you discuss (elements from) the dossier with your coach (see paragraph 4.6). In addition you may ask others to give feedback on elements from your dossier (i.e. a fellow student or a teacher of the communication and personal development workshops).

4.1 Application letter

Around four weeks before the start of the course, you will receive an e-mail in which you are invited to apply with motivation for the project of your first choice and for the team function of your first choice. You have to write a formal application letter (including a curriculum vitae) in correct English. There is a separate form (which will be attached to the e-mail) to indicate the projects of your second and third choice and the team functions of your second and third choice as we will not be able to place everyone in the project and team function of their first choice.

Based on all the application letters and the expertise needed for the different projects the period coordinator will compose teams of 5-7 students for the different projects. When writing the application letter consider the project of your first choice as the first job you want to apply for. Make clear what you can offer the team in terms of expertise and vision on the project. The expertise you have to offer should clearly have disciplinary or project-content aspects as well as process aspects. The letter should also highlight your interest for the subject.

In addition to what you know and have already learned there will obviously be things you want to learn. Do not include this here, this will be part of your expectation paper (see paragraph 4.1.2). Remember that this course is inappropriate to obtain disciplinary knowledge in any field in which you have no background. Involved staff are simply not given the time for such teaching.

The coach will give feedback on the letter, to help you improve your application letters for future jobs. Assessment criteria for application letters and CV:

- Is there a good motivation for the project (positive choice, linked to appropriate personal skills and knowledge)?
- So does the letter clearly present what relevant disciplinary expertise (skills and knowledge) you have offer?
- And does the letter clearly present what project team related skills at MSc level you have to offer?
- What other characteristics make you the person to select for this project team?
- Is the letter attractive, well-organised, compact and written in correct English?
- Is there a personal touch that attracts attention?
- Is it clear that you start on the project with a contribution to the development of the vision of its direction? Do first and last sentences attract attention through their focus and formulation?
- Is the CV complete yet concise; with focus on relevant expertise and experience?

Guidelines on how to write an application letter (sometimes called a cover letter) and curriculum vitae (CV) are highly culturally dependent and examples can be found on the

Internet. Be aware that projects may have over 20 applicants at times so how do you make your letter the most catchy one?

4.2 Expectation paper

You will have to write an expectation paper (3-5 pages A4) during the first week of the course. For information on how to write the expectation paper, see the CPD reader, assignment 1b. In the first CPD workshop, the expectation paper will be discussed further. You must send the expectation paper to your team coach before the end of the first week.

4.3 Midterm reflection paper

In week 5 you will have a performance interview with your coach. Prior to this interview you hand in a midterm reflection paper. For information on how to write the midterm reflection paper, see the CPD reader assignment 4. The Thursday following the communication and personal development workshop 3, you send the midterm paper to your coach by e-mail before 17 h. The coach will discuss the papers with your communication and personal development workshop teacher and give their joint assessment during the interview. When a reflection paper is insufficient you are instructed what changes are needed in the final reflection paper in order for you to pass the course. When the paper is sufficient you will have to keep up the good work so also the final reflection paper will be sufficient.
As part of the midterm reflection paper, you will be asked to do a mutual assessment of your team members. It should allow you to help each other to improve and to alleviate possible problems that have risen during the first part of the project. The mutual assessment at the end of the course partly determines your mark, and the exercise in the midterm paper is also meant to prepare you for this.

4.4 Final reflection paper

When the final (team) product has been sent to the commissioner and the coach, you are asked to write your final reflection paper for this ACT. In the first week of the course you have defined learning outcomes and formulated expectations, in the weeks after you wrote reflections on specific events and made a mid-term reflection paper. At the end of the course it is time to lean back and reconsider the full period.

Criteria are the same as for the midterm reflection assignment. Use tools provided in the CPD workshop. Make links between the previous papers, reflections forms (if applicable) and the points raised during feedback in team meetings and meetings with your coach. Reflect on your learning outcomes and the levels you reached. Do not repeat what you wrote down in your midterm paper. The focus should be more on the successes and points for improvement. It is important to make an overview of your strengths and weaknesses translated into a plan for future improvements. The mutual assessment of your teammates should be in short written text rather than only marks.

So, in the final reflection paper you should reflect on:

- the learning outcomes you described in the midterm paper;
- all reflection forms filled out so far;
- an overview of your strengths and weaknesses translated into a plan for future improvements;
- other issues relevant for your functioning and the functioning of the team; and
- an overall conclusion on what you learned from this ACT.

In the mutual assessment please reflect on:
The functioning of the team and your teammates (provide this reflection both in short written text and as marks). According to the format provided by your coach and focused on the team goals and personal goals as agreed upon with the team.

4.5 Reflection forms

There will be moments during your team work, meetings, oral presentations and interviews with the commissioner, that provide possibilities to work on your learning and to assess to what extent you have reached your learning outcomes. There will also be moments that a conflict (nearly) arises or difficult decisions have to be made. These are perfect events to use for your self-reflection. You are asked to select those moments or events to write down your reflection in a so-called “Reflection Form” (available on the ACT website). Especially if you have problems with giving examples in your reflection or if you never reflected before it helps you to do this thoroughly. It is good practice to fill in one form every week. The necessity of doing this is to be discussed with your coach.

4.6 Interviews

During the course the coach will perform three (individual) interviews with each of the students: a starting, a midterm and a final performance interview.
During the starting interview with your coach (week 2), the expectation paper and the application letter will be discussed. You are requested to make a short note of the interview containing the decisions taken and appointments made. Add this note to your self-assessment dossier and make sure you refer back to the decisions and appointments in your midterm reflection paper.
During the midterm performance interview you discuss the midterm reflection paper and assess your learning outcomes with your coach. Are your goals reached, do they need to be changed or should new goals be formulated? How do you assess your input and that of all other team members in the group process and product so far and what needs to be changed? Which two important team goals do you want to work on the 2nd phase of the project? The outcome of this interview will define what at least will be discussed during the final interview. The starting point for the final performance interview is the final reflection paper and the underlying self-assessment dossier.

5 Activities

5.1 Introductory lecture and first team meeting

An introduction lecture to the course is scheduled on the first Monday of the period. After the lecture the project teams will have a first meeting with their team and their coach. In the first meeting, you will get introduced to each other and the coach will give you more information about the course and its different elements. You will discuss the organisation of the team and determine how to get started with the project.

5.2 Proposal Writing (PW) workshop and feedback

At the start of the project each team will have to establish a project proposal. The Proposal Writing (PW) workshop and the feedback sessions will provide information and help on how to achieve this. See also the “Proposal Writing guidelines” on the ACT website for more detailed information.
The PW workshop and feedback consists of the following sessions:

1) Workshop on proposal writing to prepare your meeting with the commissioner (week 1, 3.5 hours)
2) Feedback on the draft project proposal (week 3)
3) Optional extra discussion with the teacher on your proposal (week 4)

The Proposal Writing (PW) workshop in the first week guides you through the elements needed for a proper project proposal. After you first interview with the commissioner you will finish a draft proposal that you submit to the PW teacher. The next working day you receive written and oral feedback during a feedback session. Hereafter you can finish a concept proposal for your commissioner and submit the same as final proposal to your teacher for a mark and feedback. In some case an additional step may be needed in which case an extra appointment will be scheduled with your team.

The project proposal is your contract with the commissioner and serves as a check during the further execution of the project whether everything goes as planned or whether adjustments have to be made. In the latter case a renewed negotiation with the commissioner may be needed.

5.3 Communication and Personal Development (CPD) workshops and assignments

Communication and personal development workshops are an important part of the ACT. There are a number of skills needed for successful team work. Training on the following skills is provided during one half day session in the first week and one full day session in the fourth week of the ACT-course: reflective learning, communication and meeting skills, negotiating skills, problem solving skills, team roles and personal qualities, self-reflection and feedback. The CPD-workshops are especially helpful for becoming more aware of your communicative behavior and will assist you in formulating and achieving your learning outcomes. They also provide you some excellent opportunities to practice. See the CPD-reader for more detailed information.

5.4 Working on the project

The work on the project starts with the establishment of the project proposal, but often you will feel you really start once the project proposal is final and can be executed. Execution has to start no later than in week 4, but may start earlier. Each team will be assigned an ’office’ or working place. The team may have to share the place with other team(s). A schedule will be available on the ACT website. The team will have to establish a working regime in which team meetings become less frequent and sub-teams or individuals work on assigned tasks, while simultaneously the coherence of the team thinking is guaranteed. The project proposal of each team should take into account the re-exams and other obligations of the team members on the basis that each student works full time (so 42 hours per week) on the project during four weeks and halftime (so 21 hours) during the remaining four weeks.
Keep an eye on the course schedule for plenary meetings and deadlines. These always take priority over team planning.

5.5 Finishing the project and project presentation(s)

At least one presentation to your commissioner and coach should be scheduled during the project. In principle it is wise to plan a midterm presentation in order to inform your commissioner and potential other stakeholders of your progress and to receive feedback. Such a midterm presentation often is the moment for the commissioner to invite people from within their own organisation who can shed a new light on your work. It could be very wise to ask your assigned academic advisor to join during the presentation, though when a lot of travelling time is involved the assigned expert may not be able to participate. There are options to give the presentation in Wageningen, but often it will be better to plan this at the commissioners' office. It is obligatory to rehearse the presentation together with at least one other group and your coaches, so you can learn from each other and give each other feedback.

In order to allow the commissioner, coach and assigned expert to read and assess the final product, it has to be ready and handed in to the team coach, assigned expert, commissioner and period coordinator on the Friday of week 7 no later than 17.00 h. The nature of the product is determined in the project proposal. In most cases it will be a report, but it could also be a website, a demonstration CD or another product, or combinations of these.
A final presentation can be planned in the last week, but often a final discussion is more appropriate at that stage.

5.6 Final team and personal assessments

After the final product(s) are handed in the team assessment will be based upon the team process and a number of products. The exact date and timing of this final assessment during the last week of the period is left to the coach and the team. The assigned academic advisor, the coach and the commissioner will assess the final team product(s). The project proposal is assessed by the PW-teacher and the coach. The coach will assess the process and will help you to analyse the team process and team products. The students assess each other, based upon a set of mutual assessment criteria which are determined by the coach and the team.

Individually each student will write his or her final reflection paper and hand in the self-assessment dossier to the coach. A final performance interview is scheduled during the last week of the period.
See the chapter 'Mark' in this reader for the way the final mark is calculated.

6 Roles and functions

6.1 General coordinator and examiner

The general coordinators are responsible for organisation of the course throughout the year and are the formal examiners. They can be contacted through the general e-mail account for the course (coordination.act@wur.nl) when you are uncertain about the organisation of the course. They can answer questions about subjects that have not been specifically assigned to other staff members as indicated below.
The general coordinator does not independently determine the marks of students or teams, even though s(he) is formally the examiner. In principal coaches, assigned experts and the teachers of PW assign the marks to the team. In exceptional cases the examiner may revise the mark after consulting the teachers.
In all cases where students cannot pass the course as they have been given an Insufficient marks the examiner will either assign additional work or will decide the course has to be taken once again later.
Any requests for an exemption should be addressed to the examiner after due consultation with your study advisor. The study advisor will provide you the information about a format if the request seems eligible and for quick processing all requests should be addressed to the general e-mail address of the course (coordination.act@wur.nl)

6.2 Period coordinator

For each period a specific period coordinator is responsible for the coordination of all the ACT project teams. The period coordinator is available when organisational issues are unclear, problems with your coach occur, when a student does not function in a team or when a problem with the commissioner cannot be solved by the team and the coach. For the name of your period coordinator see the chapter ‘who to contact’.

6.3 Coach

The main task of a coach (or process coach) is to support and guide the team and each individual to function well and at an academic level. You can expect the following:

- The coach will organize the first meeting of the team.
- The coach will attend at least one team meeting and/or working session a week during the course.
- The coach will be present during the first and the final meeting with the commissioner. It is up to the team and the coach to discuss whether presence during other meetings between team and commissioner is necessary.
- During the PW workshop the coach will join parts to observe team functioning and provide process feedback. The coach will be present during the feedback session on the project proposal.
- The coach will perform three individual with each team member: a starting interview, a midterm performance interview and a final performance interview.
- The coach is available for all questions or issues related to the team functioning
- Be aware that your coach is not necessarily an expert in the fields relevant to your project. If the coach is also an expert make consultation appointments next to coaching appointments to avoid a mix up of process coaching and content advising.
- Being present during a meeting does not imply that the coach will tell you what to do. The coach will observe, make notes and discuss the observations after the meeting to help the team with self-reflection and functioning.

6.4 Academic Advisor

In addition to the process coach each team is assigned a content coach or academic advisor from within Wageningen University who will assist the team. In case the team has a very good reason to replace the assigned academic advisor with another academic advisor this is possible, provided this replacement takes place before the project proposal is finished and has been agreed by the period coordinator. The assigned academic advisor should be consulted on the project proposal prior to

submitting the final version to the commissioner. The team has a total of 6 hours of consultation with the assigned academic advisor at its disposal. When asked the assigned academic advisor will also read and give feedback on the draft product. She or he will assess the final product for its quality. The coach will consult the assigned academic advisor on the final mark.

6.5 Commissioner

The commissioner is the contact person of the organisation for which you do your project. In the first instance, all your contact with the organisation will be through the commissioner. After a while though you may recognise that next to that person there are others of this or other organisations who are also stakeholders in the project. Trying to get a clear picture early on is essential for your team. At times, also, your contact person may be overruled by someone else in the commissioning organisation when it comes to financial arrangements or access to sensitive information.

6.6 Team functions: project manager, secretary, controller, project member

The most important role of each person in the team is to provide disciplinary input into the work on the proposal and later on the products of the team. In order for teams to function, though, some people should guarantee that the team stays on track, follows the planned activities, revises plans if needed and communicates properly with the outside world. During meetings someone will have to be the assigned chair and someone will have to be the assigned reporter. These functions may well rotate as all students are expected to be able to carry out these tasks. To make teams perform more professional though, we assign the following teams functions to individuals.

Project manager
The project manager is responsible for the general coordination and functioning of the project team, for defining the project goals and for the contacts with the commissioner and third parties. The project manager will usually chair the group meetings with the commissioner.
Specific skills: communication and interpersonal skills. Management and decision making skills.

Secretary
The secretary is responsible for the planning and preparation of team meetings (together with the project manager) and sees to it that minutes of meetings are available and that decisions have a follow-up. The secretary is also responsible for administration, correspondence and public relations.
Specific skills: communication skills, organisational skills.

Controller
The controller is responsible for planning, budgeting and controlling of both the team work and the project.
Specific skills: Skills in financial book keeping and planning. He/she is able to keep track of the project's actual and planned progress and persuade team members to deliver or the team to revise the planning. Experience with Excel.

Project member
Where the former functions are mainly management related the team members are the ones who should guard the quality of the work so this is the more content related function. Together with the other group members they are responsible for general and specific tasks, like exploring available sources of information and the correct selection and analysis of relevant data (e.g. from libraries and the internet).
Specific skills: Good assessment ability regarding the quality and relevance of information. Experience with analysing and presentation techniques (e.g. SAS, Genstat, Excel, PowerPoint, and GIS packages).

7 Mark

The final mark is calculated as follows:

- Project proposal **(15%)** (50% coach, 50% PW teacher)

- Product **(42.5%)** (50% academic advisor, 25% coach, 25% commissioner)
  The oral presentation part is included in the mark of the coach and the commissioner.
  Note: The product is always both a true group product and effort and partly based on individual inputs. The product grade is therefore fully personally assigned by the coach. In case all individuals have contributed more or less equally to the product the coach can assign the same grade to every student. In case some students contributed substantially more or less than others to the product the coach can assign a higher or lower grade to individual students. The group can discuss reasons for differentiating in grades but the coach decides. The assigned academic advisor and commissioner are in general not able to distinguish between students, their grades are therefore seen as an average for the group and differentiation between individual students made by the coach will also be valid for the grade given by the assigned expert and the commissioner.

- Team process **(10%)** (100% coach)

- Individual process **(32.5%)** (50% coach, 50% mutual assessment team)
  Note: The mark of the coach is leading for the average mark of the students' mutual assessment, as only coaches have the experience and role to compare different groups and to cross-check this with other coaches and the examiner. This implies that the average of the mutual assessment given by the students is set equal to the average of the individual process grades given by the coach. The variation around this average can obviously differ between coach and mutual student assessments. Also when students are treated unfairly (too high or too low grades) during the mutual assessment, the coach may overrule.

All parts – written self-assessment, project proposal, product, team process and individual process – have to be sufficient (5.5 at least) to pass the course.

7.1 Mutual assessments

As an element of training professionalism, students are requested to assess each other's performance. This is a formal way of giving feedback on each other's functioning next to the informal feedback given during meetings, coffee breaks, joint outings etc.
The exact format for the mutual assessment is explained by the coach and during the communication and personal development workshops.
As the mutual assessment from your team mates is a substantial part of your individual mark you will want to have an idea of the assessment others make well before the end of the project, so provide and listen to feedback and use it to improve yourself. Any plans for improvement of your performance may be discussed during the midterm interview.

7.2 Insufficient marks

Insufficient written self-assessment
If the final reflection paper is insufficient, you may be requested to improve it on the basis of clear indications as to what parts are insufficient. In principal this is done under supervision of your coach and/or a communication and personal development teacher. If the revision takes too long or otherwise fails to make the paper sufficient you will be sent to one of the course examiners.

Insufficient project proposal
If the project proposal is insufficient, the team will have to improve it at the risk of a delay in project execution and thus an unfinished project at the end of the period. Not having a sufficient project proposal, though, carries with it a much larger risk of failure.

Insufficient product or contribution to the product
If the product is insufficient, this is a team responsibility. Depending on the exact shortcomings, the product will have to be upgraded or members of the team will have to follow the course again. In this case the students will be assigned to different new teams, in a later period of their choice. When a product has to be upgraded this has to be done within three weeks after the end of a period or the team will have to redo the course.
Alternatively it can be that the product is sufficient but the contribution of one or more individual members is insufficient in the eyes of both the team members and the coach or only the coach. In such a situation the concerned student(s) should be warned in advance so they may improve their input. In case the situation continues the student(s) will be sent to one of the examiners. The examiner will either arrange an additional assignment or might decide that the student has to redo the course.

Insufficient team process
In case a team does not perform well in terms of the team process, this is most likely also going to have an effect on the product and the individual performance. Coaches will give clear signals about the lack of performance, will warn the team about consequences of continued insufficient performance and will suggest ways to improve. Teams that continue to under-perform and that receive an insufficient mark will be dissolved and all members will have to follow the course again in another period. Members will be assigned to different teams to reduce the risk of repetition.

Insufficient personal performance
An individual student may have contributed too little or even negatively to the group process. In this case the student will be sent to one of the examiners, who may give an additional assignment or may decide that the student has to redo the course.

8 Financial Procedures

Financial management is carried out by the financial supervisor (FS), who is a staff member. The financial controller of each student team will be informed by the FS about the financial arrangements in a meeting in week 1 (see course schedule). For the financial administration the controller will have to use the Excel file “finance_act.xls” which is available on the ACT website.

Each team receives €300 pre-payment. Details on the address and account number of the financial controller are necessary to issue the payments. Please bring these data to the first meeting.

The procedure for the budget is as follows:

- The controller sends a draft of the budget by e-mail to the FS in week 2.
- The FS will send comments as soon as possible.
- The team improves the budget if needed.
- The team discusses the budget with the commissioner until an agreement is reached.
- The controller sends either a digital copy of the signed budget or an e-mail in which the commissioner confirms the budget to the FS in week 4.
- If necessary an extra payment will be issued.

The FS will make an individual appointment with the controller in the second half of the last week of a period to discuss the final accounting. After finishing the project the FS will send a bill to the commissioner!

9 Who to contact

For general questions please use the ACT e-mail address: coordination.act@wur.nl

General coordinators and examiners:	Valentina Tassone	4 82426
	Stefan Wahlen	4 82186
General coordinators:	Peter de Jong	4 82244
	Elsbeth Spelt	4 80237

Period coordinators:

Period 1	Stefan Wahlen
Period 2	Peter de Jong
Period 3,4	Elsbeth Spelt
Period 5	Valentina Tassone
Period 6	Stefan Wahlen, Elsbeth Spelt and Peter de Jong

Financial supervisor	Ans Hofman	4 84084
Web manager	Henriette Drenth	4 84084
Logistics	Henriette Drenth and Ans Hofman	