



**Project Module Handbook for
Unit 7 Advanced Practitioner Project
Stage 3**

Chartered Trading Standards Institute

Table of contents

1.0	Introduction to the Advanced Practitioner Project	3
1.1	Learning outcomes	3
1.2	Submissions and deadlines	4
1.3	The purpose of this handbook	4
2.0	Getting started	4
2.1	Choosing a topic	4
2.2	Common problems	5
2.3	Preparing your project proposal	6
2.4	Devising aims and objectives	8
2.5	Collecting and analysing data – primary data projects.....	9
2.6	Collecting and analysing data - practical enforcement projects.....	9
3.0	The Final Research Project	10
3.1	Style and academic writing	10
3.2	Project structure	10
3.3	Title page	11
3.4	Declaration	11
3.5	Abstract	12
3.6	Acknowledgements	12
3.7	Table of contents	12
3.8	List of tables, graphs or figures	13
3.9	Introduction	13
3.10	Literature review	14
3.11	Research methods	15
3.12	Results, analysis and discussion	16
3.13	Conclusion and recommendations	16
3.14	Reflection	17
3.15	References	18
3.16	Appendices	18
4.0	Final checklist	19
5.0	Assessment, marking and classification	19
5.1	Assessment and marking	19
5.2	Marking process	21
5.3	Classification criteria	23

1.0 Introduction to the Advanced Practitioner Project

The Advanced Practitioner Project constitutes Unit 7, Stage 3, for students that have completed and passed both Stages 1 and 2 of the qualification's framework (or have a suitable antecedent). The project unit runs in place of a traditional dissertation and as such is the pinnacle of achievement within the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) qualification.

Undertaking the Advanced Practitioner Project (APP) (the project) will be a long but rewarding process in which you will produce a piece of work that explores in depth an area or topic of your choice, within your subject discipline. The project draws upon and consolidates earlier work throughout the qualification, and is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your learning, knowledge and research.

The scope for the project topic is very wide. You are responsible for selecting your own topic; however, your choice should fit within the broad remit of the trading standards profession, rather than the narrower role of management within local authorities. The research and final work should benefit the broader profession, whether locally to a relevant authority, or regionally or nationally, and have the potential for publishing within the CTSI members' publication. The topic should therefore be relevant to the trading standards profession and other stakeholders. Further guidance on choosing your topic is discussed in section 2.

The word guide for the project is 8,000 words with an upper and lower threshold of +/- 10%. The word count excludes the abstract, table of contents, any graphs or tables, as well as your references. Everything else from the beginning of the 'Introduction' to the end of your 'Conclusion and recommendations' is included in the word count. Penalties will be applied for failing to meet or exceeding the word guide. In these circumstances, the final mark will be capped at 40%. **This handbook includes a guideline for the word allocations for each chapter; this is a guideline rather than a prescription** but it is useful to observe these to ensure you meet the assessment criteria for the overall submission.

1.1 Learning outcomes

The project is an opportunity for you to identify, select and research a topic that is of interest to you. The Project is a substantial piece of independent research intended to demonstrate that you are able to:

- identify a relevant project focus and provide research objectives to explore key issues
- utilise academic and relevant resources to critically evaluate theories, models and key issues that are relevant to the project focus (namely to conduct a review of relevant literature)
- formulate and justify appropriate research methods to address the research objectives
- apply skills of critical analysis and evaluation of data in the context of real-world situations, and draw suitable conclusions and/or recommendations
- reflect upon the research and learning undertaken to complete the project

1.2 Submissions and deadlines

The **project proposal** is an electronic submission and should be submitted by either:

1 April [each year]

OR

1 September [each year]

The **final project submission** is an electronic submission and should be submitted by either:

1 May (the following year - 1 year to complete) - to be ratified at the July QAB meeting

OR

1 October (the following year - 1 year to complete) - to be ratified at the December QAB meeting

For example: if submitted for the 1 April deadline, your completed project submission will be expected no later than 1 May the following year.

1.3 The purpose of this handbook

This handbook will assist and guide you through the project journey. The handbook includes a wealth of information, including guidelines on choosing a topic, preparing and developing a research proposal, as well as advice on writing up your final project. There is also guidance on the marking and assessment criteria. **You are strongly advised to take some time to read the handbook** in its entirety before embarking on preparation of your research proposal or project submission.

2.0 Getting started

2.1 Choosing a topic

An essential feature of your project is that it is relevant and of interest to you, and relevant to the trading standards profession and local authority trading standards services' communities. The project topic should ideally develop further understanding of real problems, issues or opportunities that regulators and stakeholders currently face. The consequential understanding of the issues will inform conclusions and recommendations that may include improvements, amendments to practice or policy, or a perhaps confirmation of current practice. Research projects should arise from your experience, and areas of particular interest, within the regulatory environment. Whatever the topic, it should be something for investigation in order to better understand it, to solve a problem or perhaps to evaluate and make recommendations. You should also consider what kind of data you will need, and how you will collect and analyse it.

By way of guidance, consider and reflect upon any:

- problems or issues you have experienced when using a system, or enforcing or advising on a piece of legislation in practice
- problems or opportunities that may be affecting the performance of officers or regulators; such issues may have been reported in the press or highlighted within your organisation
- particular topics in which you have had a longstanding interest
- topics that have sparked your interest during your studies or assessments at Stage 1 / 2

Also consider the following:

- is the topic of interest to you? Researching an area in which you have no interest will prove far more challenging than one that provokes your curiosity and attracts your attention
- is it of manageable size and scope? Smaller projects may be easier to complete and draw valuable results from. For example, you will not be able to survey all SMEs in the UK, but you may be able to get a good sample from a smaller geographical region
- can you secure access to the data that you will need to collect? For example, from SMEs, consumers, or officers within the regulatory arena. If data required is not accessible, or ethical issues make collection difficult, then an alternative choice of topic may be advisable

2.2 Common problems

Common causes of difficulty in an individual research project are often related to the choice of topic, or a lack of focus or clarity for the project, as well as poorly defined aims and objectives.

Choose a topic that is feasible and realistic within the timeframe available. Many candidates start with a topic that is too wide ranging or broad. Your topic should have a clear, specific and precise focus. If your focus is vague or your aims and objectives lack the clarity and precision necessary, you are unlikely to produce a piece of work which is clear, fluent and progressive. Your lack of focus will be transparent in the presentation of your writing.

Also, accessing relevant data/subjects is an important consideration when selecting a topic. For example, any topic that requires data from children or vulnerable adults will attract ethical constraints, while interviewing company CEOs may be unrealistic. (See section 2.5 for further guidance on data collection).

When deciding upon your research topic you may begin with a big idea but must focus this and narrow it down to a specific research question that has clarity and focus. The reader should understand the context and background to your choice of topic, see clear aims and objectives clearly articulated, and be guided through current literature to collection, discussion and presentation of data gathered.

Examples of topics might include:

- an analysis of the impact of a particular piece of legislation - for example, a particular part of the Consumer Rights Act 2015 or product safety provision
- the impact or merits of 'scores on the doors' on standards or consumer choice
- focus and discussion of issues in a particular field of regulation - for example, doorstep crime
- an analysis of enforcement mechanisms and their effectiveness
- understanding the issues facing vulnerable witnesses by speaking to agencies that provide support to vulnerable witnesses (remember there are ethical constraints in speaking to children or vulnerable witnesses)
- investigating the level of compliance with a particular piece of legislation - for example, the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 or regulations made under the Food Safety Act 1990
- analysis of officers' 'powers' in investigations etc

When considering your topic choices, it is worth thinking about one or two options and discussing these with your employing authority and with someone who has specialist knowledge of this subject field to explore viability and any practical issues. Your employing authority will need to agree to your topic and you must include a copy of the signed agreement when submitting your proposal.

2.3 Preparing your project proposal

The project is a substantial piece of independent work that is entirely your responsibility. Planning your work in a methodical and organised manner will ensure that your progress is smooth and successful, and developing a project proposal will aid this process considerably.

Your proposal helps you to understand and plan your project. It encourages you not only to get started, but also to keep on track. It will make you think about your objectives and how to accomplish them.

Your project proposal should constitute a short initial overview of your project and will enable the Assessment Team to consider the overall viability of your project. The project proposal will constitute 10% of the final submission. If your project proposal is rejected you will be asked to re-submit an amended project proposal.

Your proposal should be **750-1,000 words** (excluding any reference list and participant information sheets or consent forms) and should include the following:

- **a provisional title** - a clear and concise title that clearly identifies the topic you are investigating
- **aims and objectives** - the research aims and objectives of your project, which should identify your research problem or issue. For a project of this size you should include an aim and three to four research objectives (this is discussed further in section 2.4)

- **background and context.** A summary of your topic area, the scope and rationale for the project, why it is important and what research problem you are tackling
- **literature review.** Some indication of your consideration of existing secondary literature around the topic, which should demonstrate awareness of the current issues and knowledge of the topic and how your project extends or contributes to existing knowledge
- **proposed research methodology.** Projects may include either the collection of primary data or a practical enforcement project. If the project consists of collecting primary data you may do this - for example - through interviews, questionnaire surveys, focus groups, observations, etc. This section should discuss relevant research methods and justify the methods proposed, why they have been adopted and how they will be used to collect data. If the project is a practical enforcement project this should set out what statutory powers you have to undertake the project and explain briefly how the project will be undertaken - for example, whether you will be using sampling or test purchasing. This section should explain what you plan to do. Overall, this section should demonstrate *how* you will go about achieving your research objectives
- **ethical considerations, participant information sheets and consent forms.** This section should set out whether there are any ethical considerations with your project and, if so, how you plan to address them. If you are using research tools such as a survey, or plan to use interviews, you must include participant information sheets and consent forms where appropriate
- **timeframes.** It is recommended that you consider a project timetable setting out key milestones and dates for completion during the process - for example, a target date for completion of the literature review, completion of the research instrument, and analysis of the data right through to completion of the project. Whilst these are not rigid, they will help ensure that you stay on track for completion by the submission deadline. Candidates have one year to submit their completed project. See section 1.2 for submission deadlines
- **references.** These are important as they underpin and provide credibility to the discussion and commentary included in the project
- **employer approval.** It is essential that you have employer support for your project. If your project includes practical enforcement, they will need to agree that they are willing to provide resources for you to do this. They will also need to be satisfied that the project you are proposing to do is ethical and that any data protection issues are addressed. You must include a copy of the signed employer approval agreement

2.4 Devising aims and objectives

The primary focus of your research project is expressed in terms of aims and objectives:

- **aim:** what you hope to achieve on completion of the project
- **objective:** the action(s) you will take in order to achieve the outcomes of the research

Aims are statements of intent and are often expressed in broad terms. They set out what you hope to achieve at the end of the project. Objectives, on the other hand, should be specific, clear and concise statements that define measurable outcomes of the research. The assessment of the final project will include an assessment of whether your objectives have been achieved.

Gathering and organising your thoughts to devise your aims and objectives may be the most challenging part of the project. It will take some time to achieve this and may require a change of focus or several drafts. However, once you have clarity and are clear on your aim and objectives then the rest of the project should run more coherently and smoothly.

The aim

The project must have a clearly identifiable and feasible aim with an analytical or evaluative approach. This should be a single-sentence statement of what you hope to achieve on completion of the project.

Examples may include:

- an evaluation of the impact of ...
- an analysis of the perceptions of ...
- to examine the critical success factors within ...

The objectives

Your project should have no more than three or four objectives, which should be concise statements of the expected outcomes of the research. The objectives should not be a description of the steps taken to carry out the research. It is very important that the objectives are clearly stated and are achievable; you need to ensure that you can clearly demonstrate how they have been achieved at the end of the piece of work. It is common that one or two objectives may link to the literature review, one or two to the primary data and a final objective to the conclusions and recommendations. The objectives should be numbered and further illustrations include:

To define ... To explain ... To ascertain ... To determine ...
To explore ... To examine ... To assess... To analyse ... To evaluate ...
To provide an overview ... To compare and contrast ...
To draw conclusions and make recommendations for ...

2.5 Collecting and analysing data - primary data projects

When collecting primary data, you must consider ethical issues and the use and storage of the data collected. In relation to the collection of data, you must ensure that you have ‘**informed consent**’ from any person or organisation who is being surveyed, interviewed, observed, etc. This means:

- I. **they must be capable of understanding what the research is about and what the implications of their contribution and co-operation are.** To help those from whom you are collecting data understand your research, the background, nature and the purpose of it, and any implications resulting from their co-operation, need to be included in a covering letter or a statement shown at the beginning of your questionnaire, or advised at the beginning of an interview. Often referred to as a ‘participant information sheet’, this should provide clear insight into your research activities
- II. **they must be capable of giving consent.** To be capable of giving consent, research subjects should not be children, nor part of any other vulnerable group such as the elderly or infirm. In such situations, you would need the consent of parents or other responsible persons in writing
- III. **they must give their consent.** Consent in writing should be obtained where possible. With questionnaires and interviews, respondents may be provided with a participant information sheet or, if necessary, respondents may complete a separate consent form

Respondents should be reassured about the use and storage of any information collected, and advised that the data will only be used for the research project and will not be shared or otherwise made available. This should be explicitly stated in any covering letter, participant information sheet or consent form. Respondents should also be advised regarding anonymity, namely that no personal information, views or opinions will be identifiable. These issues should be considered when selecting your research methods, designing your research instrument, analysing and presenting the results.

Participants should also have a right to withdraw if they choose. The information provided in any covering letter, participant information sheet or consent form should inform them that they can stop co-operating at any stage and can withdraw any information already supplied. For recorded telephone or Skype calls, information should be provided verbally.

Finally, any data collected must be stored securely and in accordance with your local authority data protection policies.

2.6 Collecting and analysing data - practical enforcement projects

If your project is a practical enforcement project you must also consider ethical issues and the use and storage of the data collected. As indicated above, any data collected must be stored securely and in accordance with your local authority data protection policies. In relation to the collection of data, you must also ensure that you have the necessary statutory powers to undertake the project.

3.0 The final research project

3.1 Style and academic writing

In addition to the academic content of your project, your work will be assessed on the clarity and articulation of your discussion, and the coherence of the objectives and arguments presented, as well as the standard and style of academic writing. Some general conventions of academic writing include the following:

- do not write in the first person. Maintain the third person in all academic writing. Avoiding using ‘I’, ‘We’, ‘You’ etc. For example, “the research data concludes ...”, “The literature suggests ...” or “It is submitted that ...”
- each chapter should have an introduction to the purpose and structure of the chapter
- chapters should be broken down into sections and subsections with appropriate headings
- chapters and subsections should be numbered but there is no need to number every paragraph
- any graphs, tables or figures should include a citation and support or relate to discussions in the text
- reference all material and text referred to or quoted in your work. You may select Harvard referencing or footnote style. Whichever you choose you should ensure consistency in citation and references. Information is available online, below are two potential links:

[https://student.unsw.edu.au/footnote-bibliography-or-oxford-referencing-system#:~:text=Footnotes%20\(sometimes%20just%20called%20'notes,directly%20following%20the%20source%20material.](https://student.unsw.edu.au/footnote-bibliography-or-oxford-referencing-system#:~:text=Footnotes%20(sometimes%20just%20called%20'notes,directly%20following%20the%20source%20material.)

<https://ask.library.harvard.edu/faq/81735>

3.2 Project structure

The project should follow the structure outlined below:

- title page
- declaration
- abstract
- acknowledgements
- contents page(s)
- introduction
- literature review
- research methods
- results, analysis and discussion
- conclusions and recommendations
- reflection
- references
- appendices

3.3. Title page

The title page must include the following information, in this order:

- (a) the CTSI Logo
- (b) Trading Standards Advanced Practitioner Project - Unit 7 (TSAPP)
- (c) the full title of your topic
- (d) the month and year of submission
- (e) your candidate number
- (f) the precise total word length of the text (including quotations and references)

Do not put your name on the project submission at any point. Submissions of the Unit 7 project will be marked blind. The only permitted identifier on your project, is your candidate number.

3.4 Declaration

Your project should include a declaration that the work submitted is your own. You should include the following statement:

Trading Standards Advanced Practitioner: declaration of authorship

I, [please print name] declare that this project is an original and authentic piece of work prepared and presented by me resulting from my own research and analysis. The work has not been presented in whole or in part for any assessment elsewhere.

[project title]

I confirm that:

- 1. This work was completed wholly or mainly while in candidature for research during the Unit 7 project.*
- 2. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is clearly acknowledged and attributed;*
- 3. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;*
- 4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;*
- 5. Where the project is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself.*

Signed:

Dated:

3.5 Abstract

The abstract is a short summary of the main features and conclusions of your project. It is not an introduction to your project, nor is it a conclusion. **The abstract is a short summary of the overall project** that should inform the reader at a glance of the project's focus and contents, and should include brief insight into the results. It should highlight the project aims, objectives and significant points from the literature, methodology and results.

It is difficult to summarise 8,000 words; nonetheless, it is important to do this exercise well, since the abstract is the first part of your project that the examiners will read. You need to ask yourself: what is my project's central argument? This is where you have the opportunity to stress what is novel and original about your project and how your conclusions relate to the existing literature. You should avoid including any of your evidence, and concentrate on your argument, approach and conclusions. Write the abstract once your project is complete.

3.6 Acknowledgements

This is your opportunity to mention or acknowledge individuals and/or organisations who have been particularly helpful. Acknowledgements should be a short statement to identify and thank people who have contributed to your work.

3.7 Table of contents

The contents page will show the structure of the project. It includes the titles and page numbers of all sections and subsections. By way of guidance, a suitable structure is detailed below:

- include the heading "TABLE OF CONTENTS" in capital letters
- the table of contents should not contain listings for the pages that precede it, but it should list all parts of the project that follow it
- presentation is important so entries must align with the document's left margin or be indented to the right of the left page margin using consistent tabs
- major subheadings within chapters should be included in the table of contents. The subheading(s) should be indented to the right of the left page margin using consistent tabs
- information included in the table of contents must match the headings, major subheadings, and numbering used in the body of the project

3.8 List of tables, graphs or figures

Use of graphs and figures is acceptable providing they are relevant to the text and discussion. These should be referenced; they should be listed at the beginning.

- include the heading(s) 'LIST OF TABLES' all in capital letters
- each entry must include a number, title, and page number
- assign each table, figure, or constants in your project an Arabic numeral. You may number consecutively throughout the entire work (e.g., Figure 1, Figure 2, etc.), or you may assign a two-part Arabic numeral with the first number designating the chapter in which it appears, separated by a period, followed by a second number to indicate its consecutive placement in the chapter (for example, Table 3.2 is the second table in Chapter Three)
- numerals and titles must align with the document's left margin or be indented to the right of the left page margin using consistent tabs
- numbers, titles, and page numbers must each match the corresponding numbers, titles, and page numbers appearing in the project

3.9 Introduction (1,000-1,250 words)

The introductory chapter will inform your reader of the background and scope of your project. It will define the area of your research topic, and demonstrate why it is important, and needs investigation as well as showing how you undertook your research. It will also demonstrate the relevance to the programme you are following. The introduction will also provide details of the aim and objectives of the project.

The introduction should briefly identify the nature of the research problem, develop the conceptual framework and indicate the implications of the problem for methodological choices, and describe the steps to be taken. The rationale for the methodology should demonstrate the links between the nature of the research problem, the aim and the methods. Relevant literature may be cited to support your arguments and decisions.

Finally, briefly introduce the subject matter and content into each of the chapters. A short introductory passage setting out what is to be reported in each chapter will make your project much easier to understand, and will maintain the reader's interest. Similarly, a short final summarising passage at the end of each of the following chapters is helpful and this should provide an onward link to what is to come next, improving the fluency and progression of your writing.

Although this is the first piece of writing the reader comes to, it is often best to leave its final preparation and editing until the end as, until then, you will not be certain about what you are introducing. The introduction has two main roles:

- to expand the material summarised in the abstract
- to signpost the content of the rest of the project

3.10 Literature review (guideline 2,500-2,750 words)

The researcher cannot be confident about what needs to be done, and how, unless they thoroughly understand the topic, are familiar with the important research that already exists, and know what the key areas of discussion are. The literature review provides the conceptual base and develops the topic through a critical review of pertinent and current published literature from a range of sources. This might include books, journal articles, websites, news reports, market data, published statistics, etc. You should use credible sources and avoid online sources such as Wikipedia, Business Balls, etc. The purpose of this chapter is to show that you are aware of where your own piece of research fits into the overall context of research in your field. Any primary data collected and discussed should link to the literature reviewed. This chapter should be in the region of 2,500-2,750 words.

To do this you need to:

- describe the current state of research in your defined area
- consider whether there are any closely related areas that you also need to refer to
- identify a gap where you argue that further research is needed
- explain how you plan to attend to that particular research gap

This can lead logically into a clear statement of the research question(s) or problem(s) you will be addressing. In addition to the research context, there may be other relevant contexts to present - for example:

- theoretical context
- methodological context
- practice context
- political context

It can be difficult to identify the best order for sections in this chapter because the rationale for your choice of specific research question can be complicated, and there may be several inter-linked reasons why the research is needed. It is worth taking time to develop a logical structure as this will help to convince examiners of the relevance of your research, and that you understand its relevance. It will also provide you with a framework to refer back to in your discussion chapter, when you reflect on the extent to which your research has achieved what it set out to do.

The literature review not only helps refine the research focus, it will also inform preparation of your research instrument (questionnaire, structured or unstructured interview questions, etc) if you are collecting primary data, and should link to the results, analysis and discussion.

3.11 Research methods (1,000-1,250 words)

This chapter explains and justifies the methodology adopted to complete your research. The methodology section appears immediately after the literature review in your project, and should flow organically from it. Up until the point of writing your methodology, you will have defined your research question and conducted a detailed review of what other scholars in the field have to say about your topic. In this section there should be a discussion of relevant research methods and justification for using them for your project. Discussions are likely to focus around the use of qualitative or quantitative data, and means of analysis.

Every project is individual and will therefore have its own unique methodology. Consequently, it is not possible to give a definitive list suitable for every project. However, if your project has gathered primary data the chapter should refer to literature on research methods, and provide a detailed account of both the approach to the project and justification for the decision to adopt the particular approach. If your project is a practical enforcement project, it will explain what you did and why with clear justification for the approach and decisions taken.

The methodology needs to establish a clear relationship between the research question, the existing research in your field as part of your literature review, and the means by which you will come to your conclusions. Therefore, no matter what subject area you are working in, your methodology section will include the following:

- a recap of your research question(s)
- a description of your design or method for both secondary and primary research
- the background and rationale (justification) for your design choice
- an evaluation of your choice of method, and a statement of its limitations

3.12 Results, analysis and discussion (1,500-2,000 words)

This chapter should present the analysis and findings in a clear, written format. In some ways, it can be argued that this is the most important chapter in the project as it provides evidence of intellectual ability to analyse and interpret data and present this analysis in a logical, methodical and intelligible manner.

It is perhaps the most demanding chapter since the discussion section seeks to identify the significance of the findings from the project. This can be achieved firstly with an analysis and evaluation of the findings:

- what is the profile of the respondents/sample?
- break the results down into logical groupings and emerging themes rather than a simple chronological order of the questions asked or points raised
- what insights can you see? Are there any emerging patterns, themes or issues?
- what anomalies or contradictions are emerging within the data?
- what insights come from an evaluation of any non-supporting data, from what has not emerged, that might have been expected?
- what insights are generated by an evaluation of the findings in the light of the theoretical framework that emanated from reading, and interpretation of the secondary literature?
- this discussion can then be extended to relate findings from the primary research to existing knowledge in the subject via the literature review
- where does the research support the existing knowledge, and where is it saying something different? In the latter case, you should then try to see if you can explain why this might be

It is important not to just report the results, rather to analyse them. What do the results mean, what are the implications and do they concur and support, or contrast and disagree, with the literature. After you have interrogated your primary data, you may wish to present the results of the research both in discussion and by way of visual support - such as tables, graphs, bar charts and statistical analysis - where appropriate. If you have used a qualitative approach you may include quotes from interviews or focus groups. Any visual presentation of results should be carefully cross-referenced to the text. Summarise the main findings before moving on to the concluding section of your project.

3.13 Conclusion and recommendations (1,000-1,250 words)

The conclusion is the very last part of your 8,000-word project. The conclusions are a critical evaluation of the overall topic and aim, rather than a simple repeat of the findings. You should develop the discussion related to the introduction presented at the beginning of the project and conclude on the overall aim of your research. How does the research meet your aim and each of your objectives?

Its main purposes are to:

- clearly state the answer to the main research question
- summarise and reflect on the research
- make recommendations for future work on the topic
- show what new knowledge you have contributed

The conclusion should be concise and engaging. Aim to leave the reader with a clear understanding of the main discovery or argument that your research has advanced. If there are any recommendations to be included you can address these in this section; recommendations will be unique to your project and research, and may include opportunities for further research arising from the project.

3.14 Reflection (250-500 words)

Reflection means thinking deeply about something. It requires conscious active thinking to increase awareness. Reflecting on the project will require consideration of the research experience, any strengths and weaknesses of the approach adopted, and perhaps the appropriateness of the research methods or suggestions for improvement or lessons learned. Your reflection should contain a critical appraisal of the project, including any limitations and/or features of the research process that may influence findings.

You are aiming to strike a balance between your personal perspective and the requirements of good academic practice and rigorous thinking. This means:

- developing a perspective, or line of reasoning
- demonstrating that you are well informed, have read relevant literature and reflected on its relevance to your own development
- showing that you recognise that situations are rarely simple and clear-cut
- writing about the link between your experiences/practice and your reading

3.15 References

When you are writing an essay, report, dissertation, project or any other form of academic writing, your own thoughts and ideas inevitably build on those of other writers, researchers or teachers. It is essential that you acknowledge the sources of data, research and ideas on which you have drawn by including references to, and full details of, these sources in your work. Referencing your work allows the reader to:

- distinguish your own ideas and findings from those you have drawn from the work of others
- follow up in more detail the ideas or facts that you have referred to

Whenever you read, or research material for your writing, make sure that you include in your notes, or on any photocopied material, the full publication details of each relevant text that you read.

You must use a **Harvard referencing or Footnote** style - please refer to a comprehensive Harvard referencing guide if you are unsure as to the requirements.

3.16 Appendices

The appendices offer the opportunity to present supplementary information to support the project that would disturb narrative flow if presented in the main text. Any detailed information that is not immediately needed to make your point can go in an appendix. This helps keep your main text focused and not unnecessarily long. It should be borne in mind that appendices *must* be referred to as part of your in-text narrative, or they will not be consulted. It is also important to bear in mind that readers have to be able to understand your project with the appendices. This means it is important to make sure you don't move anything that is critical into an appendix. The appendices only serve to provide additional information.

Further, the normal protocols governing presentation of the appendices themselves should be observed:

- each appendix is numbered as it appears in the text and has a title
- if the content of an appendix is not self-explanatory (and was not explained in the narrative of the project itself), appropriate instructive commentary within the relevant appendix is advised
- each appendix appears on its own page
- Appendices should be used for the intended purpose.

4.0 Final checklist

Before handing in your project, you should ensure that you have fulfilled each of the requirements by ticking off the boxes in the following checklist.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Is the length of your project no more than 8,000 words? (+/- 10%) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you ensured that you have avoided plagiarism? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you done a spell check all through the text? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you proof-read a printed copy of the text? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you included a title page, which has a precise word count? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you included an abstract? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you included the contents pages? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does your project have an introduction? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Has it also got a conclusion? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you referenced consistently? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you included references? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you numbered all of your pages? | <input type="checkbox"/> |

5.0 Assessment, marking and classification

The following section outlines what the Assessment Team will look at.

5.1 Assessment and marking

Introduction.

- is the quality and feasibility of the topic suitable and appropriate?
- have the background issues been identified?
- is the context of the topic clear and is it significantly related to the specific course or field?
- is there a clear and strong argument emerging?
- are the aim and objectives clearly stated and are they achievable?
- is the structure clearly outlined?

Literature review

- does the discussion contain interesting and relevant material?
- has this material been included because it provides the justification for and raises the issues that guide the empirical part of the study?
- does the discussion move from the general to the specific so that the focus is on the main research area?
- is this material evaluated in a critical manner and are alternative viewpoints (where relevant) discussed and analysed?
- is this discussion underpinned by the correct citing of source material and does it conform to the Harvard system or Footnote style as instructed?
- is the selection, application and critique of relevant ideas, concepts, theories and empirical research appropriate?
- does the candidate demonstrate interaction with an appropriate range and depth of appropriate literature?

Methodology

- does the methodology 'fit' the issues to be examined?
- is it likely to produce relevant, reliable and valid data?
- for practical enforcement projects does the candidate / local authority have the appropriate statutory powers to undertake this project
- is the data collection sample appropriate for the objectives?
- is the data collection method appropriate and sufficient?
- is the data collection research instrument - for example, questionnaire or interview questions - well designed with clear questions and instructions?
- for practical enforcement projects is the enforcement plan well designed and appropriate?
- do the questions arise from the literature review?
- are the questions related to the objectives?
- have the secondary research and primary research data collection methods been explained properly?
- have they been justified by reference to the research methods literature?
- has the methodology been carried out in an appropriate way?
- has the candidate considered and addressed any ethical or data protection issues?

Results

- have the results of the data collection been presented in a clear and unambiguous manner?
- are they easy to follow?
- have they been analysed to the correct degree of sophistication, such that the objectives are achieved?
- have the appropriate statistical tests been used (where relevant)?
- are the results of sufficient quality, reliability, validity and relevant to the findings?
- is the relationship to the literature reinforced?

Conclusions, recommendations and reflections

- what is the overall quality and appropriateness of the conclusions?
- do the conclusions evaluate the whole aim of the project properly rather than simply summarise the results?

-
- do they place the results within the context of the background issues identified in the introduction?
 - do the conclusions identify where and to what extent the aim and objectives have been achieved?
 - overall, have the aim and objectives been achieved to a satisfactory level?
 - are the practical implications recognised and appropriate recommendations made?
 - does a process of 'reflection' take place in which the issues are re-evaluated and the methodology scrutinised?
 - are there any recommendations for future research?

Overall presentation:

- has the project been presented in such a manner that there is a clear structure and coherent flow of argument and evidence of a logical thought process?
- is the style of writing of an appropriate level of sophistication and grammatically correct?
- does the project conform to the 'style' as instructed in the guidelines for presentation?
- has the project been consistently justified with correct numbering?
- are all the tables and figures numbered and labelled?
- is the use of appendices appropriate and are these referred to in the text?

To summarise:

- the project should have a feasible, course-specific focus
- the aim and objectives should be clear and should have been achieved, or an explanation given as to why not
- this standard should be appropriate for a Level 6 honours graduate
- it should achieve the overall aim and learning outcomes of the Advanced Practitioner Project unit

5.2 Marking process

The subject examiner will mark the project. Where a project is picked for moderation this will be independently moderated. A final mark will be presented to the QAB for ratification.

It is occasionally deemed necessary in the course of assessment, for markers to discuss directly with a candidate in order to gain clarification about specific aspects of a submission. Candidates called upon to attend such a discussion will be given fair notice in this regard, and the Education Team will seek to arrange the meeting/discussion at a time of mutual convenience. This will be conducted remotely via a webinar.

Consistency of marking across all projects is assured through a process of moderation. This will provide a further opportunity for any necessary adjustment to be made. Projects where the agreed mark is on the border between grades will be moderated as part of a sample that contains projects from across the range of marks awarded and includes projects where third marking was required.

Marks are ratified by the examination board and candidates are notified by letter after the ratification meeting. Two ratification meetings occur each year. Information can be found on CTSI website Stage 3 area on timelines and ratification points.



5.3 Classification criteria

Stage 3 (Level 6 / 9 for Scotland) learning outcomes / classification criteria

Provides guidance on what should be covered at Stage 3 (level 6/9) in relation to: Knowledge and understanding; Practice: applied knowledge and understanding; Generic cognitive skills; Communication, ICT and numeracy; and Autonomy, accountability and working with others.

Learning outcome	INSUFFICIENT (FAIL) 0 - 28% extremely limited OR insufficiently critical OR missing analysis OR inappropriate material	INADEQUATE (FAIL) 29 - 39% incomplete OR inadequately critical superficial analysis OR inadequate material	SATISFACTORY 40 - 49% sufficient theory, descriptive observation, flawed but adequate	COHERENT 50 - 59% consistent, good coverage, some thoughtful analysis, allowable flaws	THOROUGH, 60 - 69% fluent, rigorous critical insight and observation, analytical and, precise	SOPHISTICATED 70- 85% - fluent, rigorous critical insight and observation, analytical and, precise. Ambitious intellectual depth	OUTSTANDING 86-100% rigorous critical insight and observation, analytical and, precise. Ambitious intellectual depth, excellent innovative, exacting quality of work
Identify a relevant research focus and provide research objectives to explore the key issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extremely limited identification of research focus insufficient articulation or explanation of relevant professional, social and community contexts within the disciplinary field incoherent explanation of research objectives inappropriate reference or links to theory and/or practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inadequate identification of research focus superficial articulation and explanation of relevant professional, social and community contexts within the disciplinary field inconsistent research objectives (inconsistent with themselves OR with research focus) mainly irrelevant reference or links to theory and/or practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adequate attempt to identify research focus sufficient explanation and articulation of relevant professional, social and community context within disciplinary field satisfactory research objectives (loosely expressed or connected to research objectives) descriptive reference or links to theory and/or practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clear identification of research focus careful explanation and articulation of relevant professional, social and community context within the disciplinary field research objectives are consistent with research issue thoughtful reference or links to theory and/or practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> rigorous identification of the research issue thorough explanation and articulation of the relevant professional, social and community context within their disciplinary field precise articulation of research objectives fluent reference and links to theory or practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sophisticated identification of the research focus persuasive articulation and explanation of the professional, social or community context within their disciplinary field meticulous identification of research objectives ambitious reference and links to theory and practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> authoritative identification of the research focus insightful articulation and explanation of the relevant professional, social and community context within the disciplinary field exacting identification of the research objectives illuminating reference and links to theory or practice, bringing unexpected insights to the link between theory and practice
Critically evaluate models and theories, use of academic sources relevant to project focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> insufficient evidence of having read existing models and theories relating to the project incoherent or non-extant conceptual framework (for example theory used to guide research design, analysis of data, and interpretation of results) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses superficially the existing literature with little evidence of having read and critically reflected on extant models and theories relating to the project limited or incomplete conceptual framework (for example, theory used to guide research design, analysis of data, and interpretation of results) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses the extant literature sufficiently with some evidence of having read and critically reflected on extant models and theories relating to the project conceptual framework is provided, albeit of more descriptive rather than analytical value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> confident critical evaluation of extant literature in respect to extant models and theories relating to the project conceptual framework thoughtfully articulated in respect to guiding research design, analysis of data, and interpretation of results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> thorough critical evaluation of a wide range of appropriate and relevant literature conceptual framework is rigorously analysed in respect to guiding research design, analysis of data, and interpretation of results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sophisticated critical evaluation of appropriate and relevant literature: a sophisticated discussion understanding of the relationship between theory and practice conceptual framework is thoroughly analysed in respect to guiding research design, analysis of data, and interpretation of results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creative critical analysis applied to appropriate and relevant literature: academic terminology used ambitiously demonstrates insightful understanding of the relationship between theory and practice

<p>To formulate and justify appropriate research methods to address research objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incoherent logic between research methods and research objectives • ethical standards erroneous, wrong or missing in the design of the research • missing or inappropriate evidence of chosen approach being informed by research methods literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incomplete or contradictory logic between research methods and research objectives • ethical standards inadequately applied in the design of the research • limited or irrelevant evidence of chosen approach being informed by research methods literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adequate logic demonstrated between research methods and research objectives • ethical standards adequately applied in the design of the research • sufficient evidence of chosen approach being informed by research methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a congruent logical connection made between the research methods and objectives • a careful attempt to apply ethical standards in the design of research • a clear attempt to evaluate chosen methods using a range of research methods literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a precise logical connection made between the research methods and objectives • a rigorous attempt to apply ethical standards in the design of the research • a fluent attempt to evaluate alternative approaches and justify chosen methods using a range of research methods literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a convincing logical connection made between research methods and objectives • a persuasive attempt to apply ethical standards in the design of the research with understanding of how this fit with broader ethical debates • an ambitious attempt to evaluate alternative approaches and justify chosen methods using a range of research methods literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an authoritative logic made between research methods and objectives • an insightful attempt to apply ethical standards in the design of the research with understanding of how this fits with broader ethical debates
<p>Apply skills of critical analysis and evaluation of data in the context of real-world situations, and draw suitable conclusions and/or recommendations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no recognisable analysis or evaluation of current issues or problems are evident • erroneous / inaccurate execution of analysis that does not address stated research question(s)/ objectives. • insufficient discussion of findings • extremely limited attempt to provide ethical and sustainable conclusions, recommendations or solutions • absent or formless consideration of professional and commercial issues emerging from the research. • communication skills appear to be characterised as extremely lacking in content or incoherent in expression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • little analysis or evaluation of current issues or problems. • inadequate execution of analysis that does not address stated research question(s)/ objectives. • superficial discussion of findings. E.g. Does not relate findings to the conceptual framework. • limited attempt to provide ethical and sustainable conclusions, recommendations or solutions. • inadequate consideration of professional and commercial issues emerging from the research. • communication skills appear to be characterised as inconsistent in content and unstructured in layout. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reasonable attempt at analysis and evaluation of current issues or problems • selection and use of research methods is somewhat confused • analysis addresses research question(s)/ objectives with some criticality • adequate but descriptive discussion of the findings • sufficient attempts to provide ethical and sustainable conclusions, recommendations or solutions • adequate consideration of professional and commercial issues emerging from the research • communication skills satisfactorily demonstrated in terms of quality of expression and content (albeit mainly descriptive) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • satisfactory level of analysis and evaluation of current issues or problems • addresses research question(s)/ objectives with a thoughtful critical analysis • congruent discussion of the findings mostly careful attempt to provide ethical and sustainable conclusions, recommendations or solutions • coherent consideration of professional and commercial issues emerging from the research • communication skills coherently demonstrated in terms of content and quality of expression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good level of analysis and valuation of clearly articulated current issues or problems • addresses research question(s)/ objectives through a thorough critical analysis • rigorous discussion of findings • analytical, precise and logical attempt to provide ethical and sustainable conclusions, recommendations or solutions • fluent consideration of professional and commercial issues emerging from the research • communication skills confidently demonstrated in terms of content and quality of expression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • excellent level of analysis and evaluation of clearly articulated current issues or problems • addresses research question(s)/ objectives with a meticulous critical analysis • excellent discussion of the findings • very good use of relevant research methods • persuasive attempt to provide ethical and sustainable conclusions, recommendations or solutions • convincing consideration of professional and commercial issues emerging from the research • communication skills persuasively demonstrated in terms of content and quality of expression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exceptional level of analysis and evaluation of clearly articulated issues/problems • research question(s)/ objectives are explored through an authoritative critical analysis • discussion of the findings is illuminating • outstanding use of carefully applied research methods • ethical and sustainable conclusions, recommendations or solutions are provided that are insightful emerging from the research • communication skills persuasively demonstrated in terms of content and quality of expression
<p>Reflect upon the research and learning undertaken to complete the project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • absent or formless reflection on personal learning of research skills and absent or insufficient evidence provided (for example, engagement forms, plans, etc) • reflection on progress to manage their professional development is absent or extremely lacking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inadequate reflection on personal learning of research skills (for example, engagement forms, plans etc) • superficial or limited reflection on progress to manage their professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • satisfactory reflection on learning although this aspect is not fully explored or needed more appropriate supporting evidence (for example, engagement forms, plans etc) • the key features of critical reflection on progress to manage their professional development is described sufficiently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coherent critical reflection on learning, with clear appropriate supporting evidence (for example, engagement forms, plans etc) • consistent critical reflection on progress to manage their professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rigorous critical reflection on learning, with thorough appropriate supporting evidence (for example, engagement forms, plans etc) • fluent critical reflection on progress to manage their professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persuasive critical reflection on learning meticulously supported with appropriate evidence (for example, engagement forms, plans etc) • sophisticated reflection on progress to manage their professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • insightful critical reflection on learning, supported by appropriate evidence (for example, engagement forms, plans etc) • illuminating reflection on progress to manage their professional development

Appendix I - Stage 3 candidate guidelines

Before commencing with this area, you will need to read through the following guidelines to ensure you have followed all procedures correctly. You are also required to be familiar with the CPCF regulations.

Registration

- You must be registered with CTSI first as a Stage 3 candidate.
- All registrations are completed on-line. <https://bit.ly/3dNvjJ0>
- For information on the fees associated with Stage 3, please read the **CPCF Stage Fees** document which can be found on the Training and Exams tab. The following link will take you to the correct area. <https://bit.ly/37dBcwJ>
- There are **no** exemptions available for this stage.
- CTSI will confirm you are eligible to complete this stage via email. This letter will be emailed to you, using the email address supplied with your booking.
- You will be required to read through and sign the Academic Misconduct and Integrity Statement form.
- Set up your own Microsoft account (if you do not have one already). CTSI will set up your own SharePoint area that you will use for submitting your project proposal form as well as your completed project.

For information on this, please use our SharePoint guide found on the Stage 3 area (use following link): <https://bit.ly/30jECe6>

It is important that when you supply your project proposal to CTSI via SharePoint, that you also provide the signed Academic Misconduct and Integrity Statement.

Reading

- Prior to completing the project proposal form, you must read through the **Unit 7: Trading Standards Advanced Practitioner Handbook**. The handbook provides guidance on how to complete the 8,000-word project. This includes what you will need to do and the evidence you will need to provide with your project proposal.
- You should also download the **Unit 7: Research Methods Guide**. The guide outlines information on research methodologies, including what type of methodology you should use for your project. Is it Qualitative or Quantitative? Read this guide prior to starting the project proposal.

Support/mentor

- It is expected that your employer will nominate a person/mentor (or if your employer is not supporting you through Stage 3, you will find a or colleague/peer) who will provide you with support during the process of compiling your project.
- The mentor will act in an advisory capacity, **but will not undertake any of the work associated with your project**. [See Unit 7: Mentor Guide].
- This person, where possible, will have an expertise in the subject area you are covering within your project.
- You will ensure your mentor is aware of their role during this process and have read the guide.
- You and your mentor will complete the Candidate Progress Log and include with your final submission.

Project Proposal

- Your project should be of benefit to your authority, your region or the profession overall.
- Once you have read through the handbook and guide and confirmed the subject you want to base your project on and the specifics of what you are looking at, you will need to complete the **Unit 7: Project Proposal Form**.

You can download the proposal form from off the Stage 3 area on the website. Use previous link.

- Ensure you complete it in accordance with the handbook.
- You should discuss and seek approval from your employer on the subject area you want to cover, you must gain their approval as part of this process.
- When your employer has approved your choice of subject, they are required to complete the **Unit 7: Employer Approval and Support Form**. This must accompany your proposal form.
- Have you got all your consent forms? You must provide these with your project submission form.

Timelines

- There are two submission points each year.

For project proposal form submissions:

1 April [each year] OR 1 September [each year].

For project submissions:

1 May [each year] OR 1 October [each year].

Depending on which submission point you aim for, will determine when your project will be marked and the outcome taken to the exam boards for ratification.

- Once your project proposal is signed off, you will have **1 year** to complete your project.

For example, if you submit your proposal for 1 September 2020 and it is agreed, then we will expect your completed project no later than 1 October 2021.

Submissions

- Candidates will have available to them three attempts to complete Stage 3.
- If you fail to submit your project at the designated deadline, this will be deemed a fail.
- You will be given a second submission deadline by the Education Team. If you fail to submit to this deadline, this will be deemed a fail.

To submit the portfolio for your third attempt, this will be at the next published deadline as outlined in the Timelines section. If you fail to submit the project for the final deadline, you will have failed Stage 3.

You can choose to re-register for Stage 3 and begin the process again. You will be liable to pay the appropriate fee at that time. You can choose to re-submit your original project proposal form and have it re-approved, or you can choose a new area to look at.

- If you miss the project proposal submission deadline, you will have to wait until the next submission point.
- Should you fail the project, the examiner will provide you with feedback on how you can rectify the issues. This will be specific to the areas the examiner feels needs further work.
- Any mark under 40% is deemed a fail.

Re-submissions

- Where the examiner feels there is a minimal deficiency within your project that could be easily rectified, you will be given two weeks to re-submit your updated project. The examiner will provide you with basic feedback on what you need to concentrate on to improve your submission.

If the examiner feels that there is substantial work required still on your project, this will go through the normal process of marking and the final mark will be taken to the boards for ratification. You will be able to re-submit at the next submission point.

- On resubmitting your work, this will be re-examined and moderated.
- Your mark will be taken to the next available ratification meeting.
- If you are unsuccessful on the re-submission of project, you will be provided with a final date to submit your work again. If you do not achieve a pass, you will have failed Stage 3.

You can choose to re-register for Stage 3 and begin the process again. You will be liable to pay the appropriate fee at that time.

Capping of marks

The following sets out where capping will occur. All effort should be made in avoiding this outcome.

- If you miss any deadline whether for initial submission or re-submission of your completed project, your final project mark, if passed, will be capped at 40%.
- If the project is submitted and the examiner/moderator can clearly see that it is not ready for submission, the following will occur:
 - You will lose one of the three attempts allowed;
 - Your project will be marked and moderated and if the project does not achieve a mark of 40% or above, this will be failed.
 - Feedback will be provided on what is required to bring the project up to standard.
- If your project is required to be re-submitted, it will be capped at 40%.
- Your project has a specified word count. You are given an allowance on that word count +/- . If your final word count is outside of this word count allowance, your

Ratification

- Once the marks from the projects are supplied to CTSI, these will be prepared for ratification at the next available ratification meeting. These meetings occur in July and December of each year.
- You will be notified via email one week after the ratification meetings of your final mark. Where you have passed, a second letter is sent to you notifying you have passed Stage 3. A certificate will be produced and sent to you approximately one month after all examination cycle processes have been completed.

IMPORTANT – ELECTRONIC STORAGE

It is important to note that loss of material due to computing error and/or corruption of storage media, will not be grounds for receiving an extension to the submission deadline.