

Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

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PROJECT TITLE, INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM DEFINITION and ASSIGNMENT

Complete all fields, keep information clear, specific and concise

Project title Balancing business and welfare: A strategic design approach for animal-friendly sale of rodents and rabbits

Please state the title of your graduation project (above). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.

Introduction

Describe the context of your project here; What is the domain in which your project takes place? Who are the main stakeholders and what interests are at stake? Describe the opportunities (and limitations) in this domain to better serve the stakeholder interests. (max 250 words)

Living with an animal offers many benefits for humans (Aragunde-Kohl et al., 2020). However, in a study done by Fenton et al. (2025), European veterinary experts rated the severity and prevalence of a large number of issues in several species of small animals (such as rodents and rabbits) and they concluded that many owners often fail to meet their pets' welfare needs. Similarly, Grant et al. (2017) identified a major threat to pet welfare arising from owners who lack the knowledge or facilities to meet animals' specific needs in captivity. These studies, as well as other experts in the field (Roney, 2017), highlight the importance of educating owners to prevent neglect or rehoming of their pets.

At the same time, animal welfare is receiving growing attention, through awareness weeks (SPRAW, 2025), company blogs (Ownat, 2025; Pet Hero, 2021), and efforts by municipalities and online platforms to share expert information (Huisdier Informatie Punt, 2025; Platform Verantwoord Huisdierbezit, 2025; RSPCA, 2025). Social media, awareness campaigns (Den Haag Newsroom070, 2024), and pet ownership programmes (Purina, n.d.; FOUR PAWS International, 2023) further amplify this message. Governments are also introducing stricter regulations on commercial pet care (Rijksoverheid, 2020).

Pet stores also play a key role in informing customers about animal welfare, as they are often the primary point of contact for customers and can influence responsible purchasing behaviour (von Jessen, 2020). But on top of welfare, business viability remains a major concern for them (Rijksoverheid, 2020). Meanwhile, the main priority for animal welfare organisations is the health, safety, and ethical treatment of animals during and after sales (Dierenbescherming, n.d.; Sophia Vereniging, n.d.; Stichting DierenLot, 2024).

→ space available for images / figures on next page

introduction (continued): space for images



image / figure 1 Rabbits in a pet store (Sophia Vereniging, n.d.)



image / figure 2 Pet store concept Happy Konijn by Dibevo and Dierenbescherming (Dibevo, 2017)

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Problem Definition

What problem do you want to solve in the context described in the introduction, and within the available time frame of 100 working days? (= Master Graduation Project of 30 EC). What opportunities do you see to create added value for the described stakeholders? Substantiate your choice.

(max 200 words)

Within the network of organisations involved in the sale of animals, there are many different opinions about animal welfare. In combination with all the different opinions from experts and other people online, there is a lot of (mis)information out there, which makes it difficult for prospective pet owners to make decisions about buying animals (Black, 2024). On top of that, with regulations getting stricter and consumer behaviour changing, pet stores are pushed to raise their standards and embrace their role as advocates for animal welfare (Precious Petite Puppies, 2023). And with online sale of pets increasing, pet stores should be mindful of maintaining their advisory role as well as maintaining business viability.

The project aims to construct a strategy, consisting of a future vision and a roadmap with interventions that will act as guidelines for pet stores involved with the sale of rodents, rabbits and/or related products. The strategy will also include the roles of other organisations within the network and how they can work together to make sure that customers will get the proper knowledge about pets before buying them (either in store or online), ensuring a responsible and animal-friendly sale.

Assignment

This is the most important part of the project brief because it will give a clear direction of what you are heading for.

Formulate an assignment to yourself regarding what you expect to deliver as result at the end of your project. (1 sentence)

As you graduate as an industrial design engineer, your assignment will start with a verb (Design/Investigate/Validate/Create), and you may use the green text format:

Design a strategy that will help pet stores cater to upcoming needs of customers regarding buying rodents and rabbits, so that they will be able to seamlessly adapt to growing animal welfare needs and regulations, while maintaining business viability.

Then explain your project approach to carrying out your graduation project and what research and design methods you plan to use to generate your design solution (max 150 words)

The research phase will consist of carrying out qualitative desk research, on top of field visits to pet stores, animal shelters and animal welfare organisations and conducting interviews, as well as a quantitative survey if needed. This will help me understand the underlying systemic issues as well as the current state and trends of rodent and rabbit welfare in the pet retail industry. After analysing all the insights from this research, I will collaborate closely with a range of stakeholders, including pet stores, customers, branch organisations and advocacy groups and gather insights through co-creation and ideation sessions, next to carrying out individual ideation. To conclude the project, I will provide a future vision with a strategic roadmap, including actionable interventions for pet stores and other stakeholders to not only cater to growing animal welfare needs and trends, but also support business viability and commercial success in the pet retail industry.

Project planning and key moments

To make visible how you plan to spend your time, you must make a planning for the full project. You are advised to use a Gantt chart format to show the different phases of your project, deliverables you have in mind, meetings and in-between deadlines. Keep in mind that all activities should fit within the given run time of 100 working days. Your planning should include a **kick-off meeting**, **mid-term evaluation meeting**, **green light meeting** and **graduation ceremony**. Please indicate periods of part-time activities and/or periods of not spending time on your graduation project, if any (for instance because of holidays or parallel course activities).

Make sure to attach the full plan to this project brief.
The four key moment dates must be filled in below

Kick off meeting 9 okt 2025

Mid-term evaluation 12 dec 2025

Green light meeting 19 mrt 2026

Graduation ceremony 28 apr 2026

In exceptional cases (part of) the Graduation Project may need to be scheduled part-time. Indicate here if such applies to your project

Part of project scheduled part-time	<input type="checkbox"/>
For how many project weeks	<input type="text"/>
Number of project days per week	<input type="text"/>

Comments:

The project will be carried out 4 days a week instead of 5 due to a sidejob

Motivation and personal ambitions

Explain why you wish to start this project, what competencies you want to prove or develop (e.g. competencies acquired in your MSc programme, electives, extra-curricular activities or other).

Optionally, describe whether you have some personal learning ambitions which you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project itself. You might think of e.g. acquiring in depth knowledge on a specific subject, broadening your competencies or experimenting with a specific tool or methodology. Personal learning ambitions are limited to a maximum number of five.

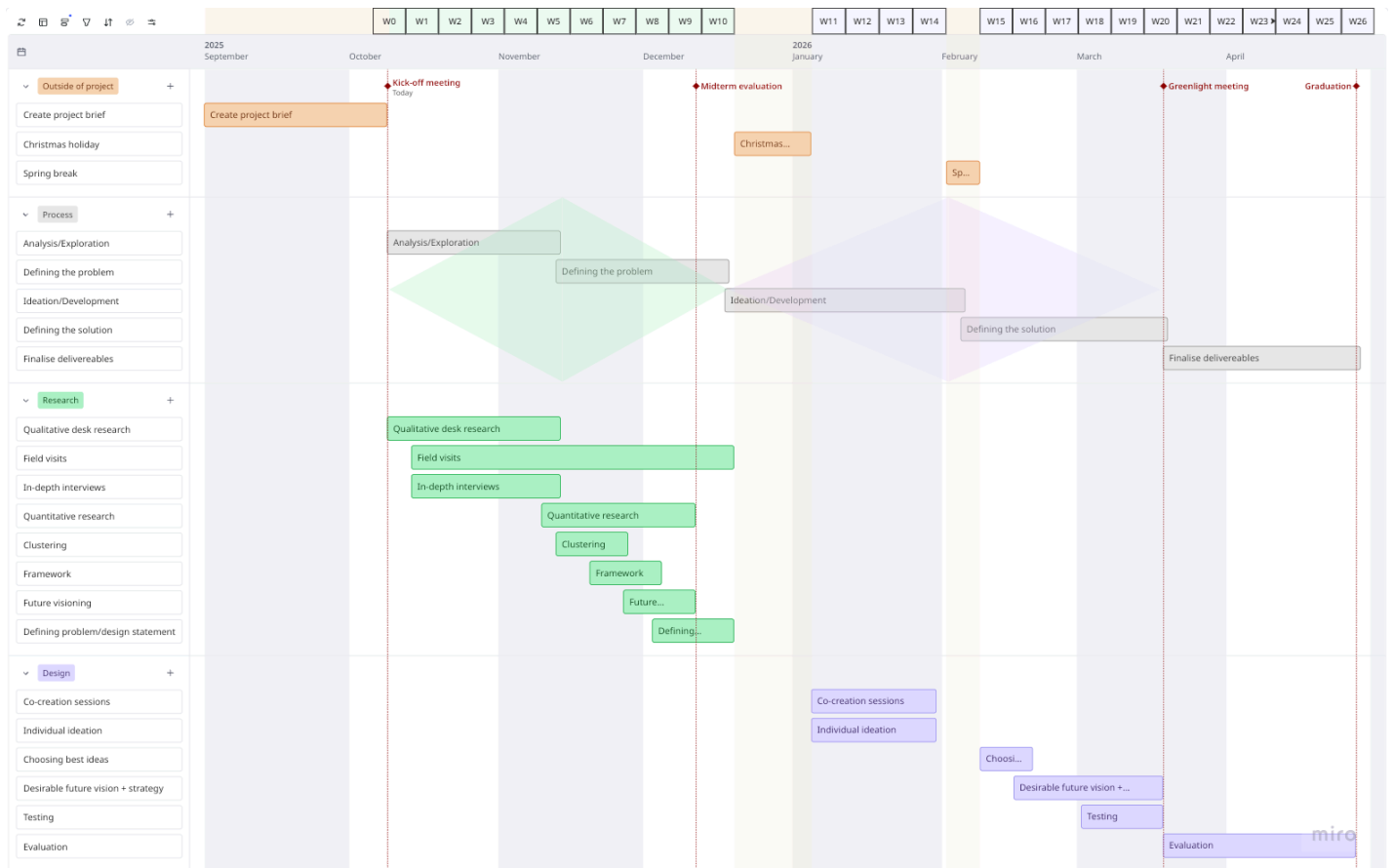
(200 words max)

This graduation project offers me the opportunity to apply the full range of knowledge and skills I have developed throughout my studies, while also aligning with a personal passion of mine: animal welfare. It allows me to explore how research and strategic design can be meaningfully applied within a domain I care deeply about.

One of the key competencies I aim to develop is the ability to collaborate effectively with diverse stakeholders and co-create solutions. This project provides a valuable opportunity to gain hands-on experience in involving others in the design process, learning how their input can lead to more impactful and well-rounded outcomes than I could achieve alone.

Additionally, I want to explore possibilities of solving underlying issues in a such niche branch. While transforming an entire industry is a long-term challenge, I see this project as a chance to contribute to the early steps of that shift, helping pet retailers cater to trends of animal-friendly and responsible sales practices.

Planning



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