IMS2000: Second Year Studio
Week 2: Studio Activity

These notes are available on the IMS2000 Web site via http://www.sims.monash.edu.au
Please contact your tutor if you require assistance with these exercises. Tutor email address and consultation times are available on the subject’s Web page under Staff.

Objective of session
- To identify skill sets
- To apply identified skill sets to formalizing team roles and responsibilities
- To assign tasks to team members
- To start defining system functionality
- To start defining project standards
- To start recording initial plan of activities and estimated schedules

Activity 1 – Identification of Skill Sets
Successful projects rely on having the right people with the right skills, and matching these skills to the required task. It is therefore important that technical specialists are well aware of the specific nature of their own skill set to ensure they apply for and get the right positions. It can also be useful to you for the following reasons:
- In small teams where every member is a technical specialist, everyone has to multi-task and fill a variety of roles
- It highlights those areas you need to focus on to improve your existing skills and increase the range of skills available to you
- When applying for job positions, employers are sometimes impressed if you can specify specific skills.

If you haven’t done this already, get each member of the team to write down all their skills in order from their greatest skill to their weakest. Be specific in the type of skill – don’t just list systems analyst, specify the techniques at which you are skilled.

Some things you may wish to consider are project management, requirements gathering/defining, process analysis/modelling, data analysis/modelling, database design/implementation, interface design, programming, testing, technical writing/documentation, spoken communication, and.

Once all team members have completed their list, compare them to see what range of skills the team possesses. Also note those areas where there are deficiencies – you will need to work a little harder to acquire those skills over the course of the project.
Activity 2 – Formalisation of Team Roles and Responsibilities
Using the lists you prepared in Activity one, start assigning team members roles based on the skills identified on the list. You must have a Project manager!

The role of project manager is crucial to the smooth running of your project. You should choose somebody who you think you can trust to coordinate the project and its activities, solve problems, resolve conflicts, keep everyone motivated, and make the hard decisions when the team can’t. It helps if the project manager wants to be the project manager, and is prepared to accept the responsibility and be accountable for their actions and decisions.

Activity 3 – Assigning Tasks
Once you have decided on the roles that each team member will play you can start assigning the specific tasks that will need to be performed during the project. You should identify all task areas that you think you will need to address but you should focus more on the specific tasks that need to be performed now because you are at the beginning of the project and have a clearer idea of the particular tasks that need to be performed.

Some of the activity areas you might want to consider at this stage are commencing the project plan, estimating task and activity duration, assessing feasibility and identifying risk, considering standards, and probably most importantly, refining your understanding of the system, its functionality and its requirements.

These are not the only things you should consider. This is your project and you should conduct it the way you wish to. If you are not sure what you should be doing it is worth having a look at the summarized Guide to the Project Management Body Of Knowledge (PMBOK). This document provides a useful high level summary of most activities you would ever want to consider doing in almost any project. The document can be downloaded from the Project Management Institute web site. There are many other useful resources available to you on the web and don’t forget about textbooks and the library!

Activity 4 – Project Plan
You should commence your project plan as soon as possible. At this stage it does not have to be at a high level of detail, but you should include estimates for all the activity areas even though you are not sure yet of many of the specific tasks you will be performing. Your project plan could also include your initial assessments of feasibility and any obvious risk areas that need to be considered.

You must submit your initial project plan next week (week 3) to your tutor, at a time and place agreed to by the tutor or studio academic. Don’t forget to do this – it is a hurdle requirement!

Activity 5 – Project Presentations
During the Studio classes in weeks 3, 6, 9 and 12, each group will be required to give a brief presentation to their academic and tutor reporting on the status and progress of their project. This does not have to be a formal presentation and you should seek any additional information about its content and format from your academic. However informal your presentation, it is still a professional activity and should be treated accordingly.

Choose your spokesperson and start to plan what you intend to present and how you will present it. Try and make the report as up-to-date as possible – a little work may be necessary on the day!
Activity 6 – Web-based Information Resources
The following resources could be useful to you as references and guides to how you might conduct your project, and also as sources of advice and insight into project management and it’s current state of practice:

**The PMBOK**
The Guide to the PMBOK can be obtained from the Project Management Institute web site at

[http://www.pmi.org](http://www.pmi.org)

This document is very useful and it would be worthwhile for each team to have a hard copy as reference.

**The CHAOS Reports**
The CHAOS Reports are a series of regular small reports produced by the Standish Group. They document the results of research into the state of the art of IT Project Management. They provide interesting statistics taken from real projects, and highlight key success factors for successful project management. Much insight can be gained from these articles.

These reports are available at the Standish Group web site at


**The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**
When it comes to projects, few do it as efficiently as the army. This site has some interesting stuff on it.


There are many other sites dedicated to project management that are worth visiting - spend the time and its amazing some of the stuff you can discover.

Activity 7 – Reflective Journal Entry [15 mins]
By now you should have started forming impressions about the case study, your project, your role in it and how you feel about it. You should have some impressions of the team you are in and it’s members. You definitely should have started work on the initial activities, as well as gaining ideas about activities to come. You may even have learnt something in the seminars and studios, and from your own independent research and resource gathering.

Aaahhh! So much to write about!

Preparation for next week
- Prepare project management plan for submission to tutor and next week
- Prepare for presentation in studio on your project’s progress and status
- Prepare questions to ask your academic/client to help you clarify the system and it’s requirements.