ISYS3207 Information Systems Project, Second Semester 2005

Marking Guide for Project Plan

The final mark for the Project Plan will be awarded at the end of the course. The plan is to be assessed in two stages:

1. The initial plan, due on Friday, 12 Aug: Peruse the plan considering the ‘Specific Points’ listed below and give as much feedback as possible on such issues as resource balancing and feasibility. You may find making a screen shot of various views of the project plan together with suitable comments a helpful way of giving feedback. It is possible to make the output more readable. Choose ‘Tools>Options>Hours per week’. Under Timescale... set the Major scale to ‘months’ and the Minor scale to ‘weeks’. Do not award a mark at this stage. Make a copy of the plan called ‘InitialPlan’ for later reference.

2. The final plan, due at the end of the project, on Friday, 14 Oct: Assess the plan at this time to confirm that it has been fully and accurately maintained throughout the project. Make final comments and use the holistic marking scale given below to arrive at a final mark out of 10. Make every effort to discriminate between work of various quality.

1. Extract from course outline

1.1 Project Plan

The project plan contributes 10% towards the final mark and is a group task. During the first three weeks of semester the team is required to prepare project plan using Microsoft Project. The file is to be saved to the team’s file space on the server. All members of the team should take responsibility for its initial quality and feasibility.

The plan is then to be maintained throughout the project to reflect actual progress made compared to the original plan. The data for this task will be derived from individual logbooks of team members.

The final mark, awarded at the end of the course, will reflect the following evaluations:

1. The initial plan is due on Friday, 12 Aug 2005. It will be perused by the supervisor and feedback provided to the team on such issues as resource balancing and feasibility.

2. The final plan is due at the end of the project, on Friday, 14 Oct 2005. It will be perused at this time to confirm whether it has been fully and accurately maintained throughout.

Detailed requirements for preparing your team’s project plan are given below under “Deliverables” on page 1.

1.2 Deliverables

The project plan is to be developed by the team using Microsoft Project. This software is available in all computer laboratories within the School of IT. The plan must be saved to the team’s project area, where it is available to the supervisor, and maintained there throughout the duration of the project.

The project plan sets out all the tasks that will need to be accomplished by the team in order to complete the project on time. Judgment should be exercised in arriving at an appropriate level of granularity for the tasks. For each task identified the plan should specify:

- the title or a brief description of task to be accomplished,
- name of the person responsible and names of any other people involved,
- expected start date or latest completion date,
- an estimate of the duration of the task (person hours).

Once all the tasks have been identified it should be a simple matter to draw up a schedule of tasks and assignments for each member of the team and to monitor progress of the project throughout its duration. When a task has been completed the actual time taken should be entered and noted taken of any variance.

At the end of each week, each member of the team will, making use of data from their personal logbook, update the Project Plan with the actual time spent on tasks allocated to them. Comparison of the project plan with actuals forms part of the Progress Report each week at the class meeting.

2. Specific points to look for

1. Task list: Check the granularity of task list. Tasks should have clear meaningful names. Tasks should be in fine enough detail to allow the allocation of individual members to tasks and the estimation of task durations in sensible chunks of time. If the tasks are too broad this is not possible. On the other hand if the granularity is too fine does not help either. Appropriate use of Summary tasks and Milestone tasks is desirable. If summary tasks include excessive number of sub tasks then cannot allocate tasks usefully.
2. **Durations**: For projects the size of hours duration of tasks should be expressed in terms of hours to aid estimation. There should be reasonable utilisation of the resources available. For example, all team members should have about equal allocations, totalling about 160 hours over the duration of the project (16 hours x 10 weeks). There should be no more than 16 hours in any one week per member. The total allocated for the team in any week should be no more that 96 hours (six member teams) or 80 hours (five members).

3. **Predecessors**: All tasks should have predecessors, except where they are sub tasks of a summary task. Even then, it is best to try to specify an order of precedence. There should be some attempt to identify processes that can be carried out in parallel, using sub-teams. This is done simply by giving two or more tasks the same predecessor. It is only then that the identification of the critical path becomes useful.

4. **Resource Names**: The only resources are people. Once the duration is estimated for a task, this can only be reduced by assigning multiple team member. The first name listed for a task should be taken to indicate responsibility. It is not useful to define a resource called ‘All’ or ‘Team’. The listing of all team members for a task is not very useful, except perhaps in the case of a meeting. Otherwise it is better to name two or three members only.

5. **Constraints and Milestones**: The maximum number of hours per week for each member should be set to 16. The maximum hours per day should be set to about 5 in order for the software to usefully point out instances of overload. Date for final milestone should be Fri 14 October 2005, when report is due. The start date can be no earlier than about 5 August 2005.

6. **Plan Maintained**: The plan should have been updated continuously throughout the project reflecting the actual work done and effort absorbed.

### 3. Holistic marking scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Mark out of 10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Task list: Appropriate choice of granularity. Task names clear and meaningful. Appropriate use of Milestone tasks and Summary tasks.</td>
<td>10, 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Durations: Expressed in hours. Check ‘Resource Usage’ view. When Timescale Major scale set to ‘months’ and Minor scale set to ‘weeks’ should show reasonable resource utilisation. No week with more than 96 hours for the team, no individual more than 16 per week, 160 hours overall.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Resource Names: All team members listed as resources. If more than one allocated to as task, first name indicates responsibility. Allocation of all names to a task is usually not acceptable. Definition of resource ‘All’ or ‘Team’ not acceptable. Allocation of tasks equitable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Constraints and Milestones: Maximum hours per week per member set to 16. Maximum hours per day set to 5 (or so). Some ‘slack’ time allowed for in last few weeks to deal with emergencies. Final Milestone Friday 17 Oct. earliest start date about 5 August.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Plan Maintained: Evidence that the plan has been continuously and accurately maintained throughout. Intelligent modifications made to keep project on track. Evidence of comparisons with initial plan.</td>
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Most of the aspects above are present and well dealt with, but one or two showing less than adequate treatment. For example, poor choice of granularity or task names, tasks not allocated to individuals, responsibilities not made explicit, tasks without dependent predecessor tasks, no evidence of parallel tasks, one or more over loads allowed to occur, some members not allocated enough hours in particular weeks, inappropriate scale for task durations (e.g. days or weeks instead of hours), incorrect milestones, plan not properly maintained, little evidence of comparison with initial plan.

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<td>All the major features are present and plan generally thoughtfully done. Three or four not too serious omissions or weaknesses.</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
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<td>Five or more omissions or weaknesses. Inadequate task list, inappropriate resource allocation, wrong start and finish dates, inappropriate scales, no plan maintenance.</td>
<td>0 - 4</td>
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