

Section Three

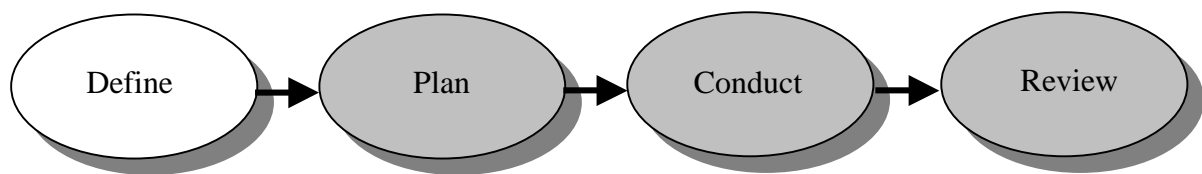
Learning Module B: Focusing On The Outcome

3.1 Module B: Objectives

At the conclusion of this module you will be able to:

- Explain the importance of effectively defining the project outcome.
- Use techniques necessary to define the project.

3.2 Content of Module



This module introduces you to the first phase of the Project Management Cycle, **Define**. It deals with the importance of clarifying the purpose of the project and risk management. You will learn how to complete a project definition form and to conduct a risk management analysis.

3.3 The Importance of Clarifying the Project Purpose

Introduction

The project definition phase, also called project inception, is the critical element in project planning. How well a project is defined will by and large determine how effectively it is planned. It has been our experience that many teaching and learning projects tend to fall down at this stage. If there is no clear direction of what needs to be achieved, it is very difficult to effectively plan for it.



There are many ways that a project gets started. This can be from a grant application or a policy initiative from the University or simply an idea for a new unit generated by an academic staff member. Essentially a project need is generated and a project manager then takes responsibility for the project.



An amusing (but not necessarily uncommon) project start was initiated at UNE during the course of the 'Enhancing Project Management' program conducted during 2000. We call this the 'last person standing in the tea room' method of project allocation. The Head of Department announced to colleagues at morning tea that he had decided a research unit was required. All the experienced staff disappeared immediately and the last staff member still in the room was given the job of project managing this unit development project. Needless to say this person lacked commitment and time to give the project the attention it deserved, consequently it did not progress well.

The point with the example above is that the project manager needs to feel ownership of a project if it is to progress successfully. A project manager should have a clear idea of what is to be achieved in the project. Obviously, if the project manager is the holder of a successful grant application then this is fairly obvious. However, if a project manager has been appointed by a similar system to the example above, then more information is going to be required.

Whilst the project initiation comes in many forms, in an ideal world it begins with a briefing by a stakeholder and from there, the planning process progresses. In this ideal scenario the designated project manager receives a written brief. This brief should encompass the scope of the project, anticipated outcomes and any constraints, for example budgetary considerations. If there is no written brief, the project manager will need to clarify the project requirements. The project definition process is an ideal way to achieve this. A planning form is provided later in this section for your consideration. However, **any project definition process should at least include the following steps.**

A Clear Objective

The project may have a number of objectives; these are the benefits or outcomes of the project. For example a project objective for a teaching and learning project might include the production of a workbook. This is a clear outcome. It is precise and realistic and once the parameters of the workbook have identified, will form the basis for the planning process.

A Deliverable

According to the PMBOK a deliverable is any measurable, tangible, verifiable, outcome, result or item that must be produced to complete a project. The deliverable is the physical manifestation of the project. In the example above of producing a workbook, the deliverable would be the final printed (or electronic) workbook completed and available.

A Clear Understanding of the Scope of the Project

The scope is usually considered to be the sum of the products and services that are provided by a project. In teaching and learning another way to view the scope is in terms of what needs to be done. For instance, in our example of producing a workbook as one of our objectives, the scope would be what is to be included in the workbook. This would then provide a useful basis for planning the breakdown of work.

The Constraints

Constraints are issues that you know will definitely impact on your project. For example, a team member undertaking study leave is a constraint as is the budget.

The Risks to the Project

Project risks are normally defined as the probability of a loss through the occurrence of an undesired event. Put another way, a risk is a constraint that might happen.

Risks need to be identified and the likelihood of the occurrence and the severity of the impact on the project analysed. We can divide risk into two types - project risk and strategic risk.

- **Project risk** is risk that is associated with the actual project. For example, a change in availability of people and materials. At some Universities the likelihood of industrial action by academic staff would be considered a risk. An identified risk requires an appropriate strategy.
- **Strategic Risk** is a risk associated with reputation and the impact of other products. For example, a new unit offered in one Faculty may draw students from a unit in another. This impacts on the University as a whole rather than the particular project.

NB: Project risk will be explored in greater detail later.

A Broad Breakdown of Work

The breakdown of work into tasks is often called the Organisational Breakdown Structure (OBS) or the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS). In this workbook we will refer to the WBS as it is more commonly used. WBS is helpful when using software packages such as MS-Project.

The Nature of Defining your Project

The project definition process enables you to clarify the outcome of the project and therefore makes it easier for you to plan and conduct. After you have worked through the definition process you must be in a position to be able to answer the question – do I have a project? Project definition though, should not be a one off event – it may require you to revisit the definition a number of times. Also, the earlier you can get the project team involved in the definition process the better. The project definition may require you to interview stakeholders, conduct a brainstorming session with your team or negotiate with the accounts department. The more people you involve and effort you put in at this early stage, the better will be your ultimate result.

The Project Definition Form

To assist you with defining your project, we have designed a Project Definition planning form.



Exercise Three

At the end of the manual there is a blank project definition planning form. Your mission is to either define the exercise project that we looked at in Section Two or alternatively, you may wish to define a project that you have been involved in. Once you have completed the form, compare your project definition with the completed example on the following pages.



On the following pages are a project definition form and a completed example.

Project Definition

Project Name:

Faculty/School/Project ID:

Where applicable

Projection Description, Rationale and Scope:

Description – an outline or explanation of the tasks,
outcomes and deliverables associated with the project

Rationale – Reason or justification for the project

Scope – Statement which draws boundaries around
the project

Project Stakeholders:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Project Role</u>	<u>Contact details</u>
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A list of the people with a vested interest in the outcomes
of the project

Project Team:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Project Role</u>	<u>Contact details</u>
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A list of the people who will be working on the project

The first name listed should be the person
responsible for the project ie the Project Manager

Project Objectives:

List the project outcomes

Project Deliverables:

How will you know when the project is completed?

Project Constraints:

Constraint

Strategy

Definite, identifiable obstacles that will impede the
progress of the project

Project Risks:

Risk

Strategy

Factors that *might* impact on the progress of the project

Resources Available:

List the resources which have been allocated to the

project – people, money, equipment etc

Budget Issues:

Monetary factors which may affect the funding for the

project

Further Detail/Action:

Any other factors which may affect the project

Project Start _____ Project End _____

Project Definition

Project Name:

Development of a distance education teaching materials for Unit ABC000

Faculty/School/Project ID:

Example

UNE A- 01 - 000

Projection Description, Rationale and Scope:

The project will involve the creation of a new academic skills module which is to be delivered by distance education using print based/on-line material, CDROM and website. The package will be jointly sponsored by the Arts, Science and Education faculties and will be developed by a team of representatives from each faculty.

First year students enrolling at the university do not have basic academic skills such a note taking, research, referencing, essay writing, sitting for examinations etc. The university does not currently have a unit on this subject yet students remark in their evaluations that there is a requirement for such a course.

The new academic skills unit will be used by first year students enrolled in the Faculties of Arts, Science and Education and should address all the skills identified as deficient in first year students. The unit is to be a 100 level unit and to include CD ROM, readings, activities. It is to be delivered in first semester next year.

Project Stakeholders:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Project Role</u>	<u>Contact details</u>
Prof Smith	Sponsor	67 730 XXX
Prof Jones	Sponsor	67 730 XXX

Example

Project Team (first name listed is person responsible for the project):

<u>Name</u>	<u>Project Role</u>	<u>Contact details</u>
Dr Harris	Project manager	67 730 XXX
Mary House	Instructional Designer	67 730 XXX
Tim Jenkins	Graphic Designer	67 730 XXX
Dr Garden	Author	67 730 XXX
Dr Barker	Author	67 730 XXX
Dr House	Author	67 730 XXX

Project Objectives: **(the project outcomes)**

Enhance the quality of academic skills in the Faculties of Arts, Science and Education.

Project Deliverables: **(how you will know when the project is completed)**

Produce a first year academic skills unit in Print, CD ROM, and Internet form

Project Constraints: **(definite obstacles that will impede progress)**

Constraint

Strategy

Workload of staff

Set deadlines, Back up staff

Leave

Identify replacement staff

Project Risks: **(factors that might impact on project progress)**

Risk

Strategy

Overtime

Set deadlines, regular update meetings

Printing press breakdown

Identify alternate means of printing

Errors in product

Allow sufficient review time

Copyrighted material not cleared

Allow sufficient time

Styles inconsistent

Set styles initially

Broad Work Breakdown (WBS): (a broad list of tasks that are needed to be done to complete the project).

<u>WBS</u>	<u>Task Name</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Predecessor</u>
1	Develop outline	5 days	Nil
2	Identify reading material	5 days	1
3	Design CD ROM	20 days	1
4	Graphic design	2 days	3
5	Trial materials	2 days	3, 4
6	Review materials	3 days	5
7	Desk Top Publishing	5 days	6

Example

Dependent Projects:

Nil

Resources Available:

Dr Harris	Project manager	67 730 XXX
Mary House	Instructional Designer	67 730 XXX
Tim Jenkins	Graphic Designer	67 730 XXX
Dr Garden	Author	67 730 XXX
Dr Barker	Author	67 730 XXX
Dr House	Author	67 730 XXX

Example

Budget Issues:

Printing, DTP and graphic design should be done internally

Further Detail/Action:

Nil

Project Start _____

Project End _____

3.4 Risk and Uncertainty in Project Management

Overview

Many of the concepts in the project definition phase are reasonably self-explanatory. However, one that is worth spending more time on is the notion of risk. Project risk has been previously defined as the probability of a loss through the occurrence of an undesired event.

All projects offer the promise of success and the risk of failure. We should not avoid risk, rather understand and manage it. An accurate risk assessment early in a project can eliminate problems before they occur. It has been our experience that whilst risk is a fundamental project planning tool it is often ignored in teaching and learning projects. Yet risk identification, quantification and control are fundamental to project success.

Risk of the Project

As discussed earlier in this section, risks need to be identified and the likelihood of the occurrence and the severity of the impact on the project analysed. We can divide risk into two types - project risk and strategic risk.

- **Project risk** is risk that is associated with the actual project. For example a change in availability of people and materials. At some Universities the likelihood of industrial action by academic staff would be considered a risk. An identified risk requires an appropriate strategy.
- **Strategic Risk** is a risk associated with reputation and the impact of other products. For example, a new unit offered in one Faculty may draw students from a unit in another. This impacts on the University as a whole rather than the particular project.

Risk Identification

It is important to determine which risks are likely to affect the project. The risks should be divided into project risk and strategic risk (as mentioned above). Once identified, they will then need to be quantified along with probability of occurrence and potential impact.

Remember that risk identification is about management rather than avoidance. During the project definition phase the project team members need to produce a risk management analysis (RMA). This will conclude with a list of risks and appropriate strategies. These strategies should be transcribed onto the project definition planning sheet.

Risk Management Analysis (RMA)

In teaching and learning projects RMA can be a straightforward process as the range of risks that impact on teaching and learning projects are relatively clear-cut. Consider the example on the next page. A number of risks have been identified (normally this is done during the brainstorming process). The risks are graded 1 to 5 where 1 is low and 5 is extremely likely. The potential impact of the risk is then listed. Finally, an appropriate strategy is identified. The identified strategy (listing who is responsible) is then transcribed to the project definition form. Risk analysis is an ongoing process. At each milestone it will need updating as the threats to your project change over time.



On the following pages we have included a RMA and a completed example.

Risk Management Analysis

Project Name

Brief statement of the outcome of the project

Project Manager

Name and contact details of Project Manager

Date_____

Part A Project Risk

Factor Likelihood Impact Strategy

Factor – events associated with the actual project which are likely to affect the project

Likelihood – scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not likely and 5 is extremely likely

Impact - scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is little or no effect and 5 is a large effect

Strategy – actions which can be taken in the event the risk eventuates

Part B Strategic Risk

Factor Likelihood Impact Strategy

Factor – events associated with the actual project which are likely to affect the project

Likelihood – scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not likely and 5 is extremely likely

Impact - scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is little or no effect and 5 is a large effect

Strategy – actions which can be taken in the event the risk eventuates

Part C Summary of Key Risks

List risks which are highly likely to occur ie 5/5, 5/4, 4/5

Risk Management Analysis

Project Name

Development of a distance education teaching materials for Unit ABC000

Project Manager

Dr Harris

Project manager

67 730 XXX

Date ?/?/?

Example

Part A Project Risk

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Likelihood</u>	<u>Impact</u>	<u>Strategy</u>
Overtime	3	5	Set deadlines, regular update meetings
Breakdown	1	5	Identify alternate means of printing
Errors	3	5	Allow sufficient review time
Copyright	2	4	Allow sufficient time
Styles	2	4	Set styles initially

Part B Strategic Risk

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Likelihood</u>	<u>Impact</u>	<u>Strategy</u>
Negative Impact	2	4	Monitor

on other units

Example

Part C Summary of Key Risks

Overtime	Set deadlines, regular update meetings
Breakdown	Identify alternate means of printing
Errors	Allow sufficient review time

3.5 Practical Conduct of the Project Definition

Before leaving the project definition phase it is worth looking at the best way that it should be conducted. The project definition process is an extremely useful tool, to not only to clarify the project outcome, but also to gain commitment from all project team members.

One of the fundamental issues when dealing with projects of any kind is that project team members have a clear understanding of their involvement. Everyone needs to be clear on their roles and responsibilities within the project team. In our experience at UNE, one of the main causes of problems and frictions within the team was the lack of role clarity. The earlier roles are defined within the team the better.

The people side of project management will be dealt with in detail Section Six. However, the more people who can be involved during the initial stage, the better. We will make an assumption at this stage that you have a grant of some description or you have decided to develop a new unit. Your first step is to get the project team members together as soon as possible. Working through the project definition is a great way to develop team work and enhance team commitment. Ensure all team members are clear on their roles. For instance, you may have an inner and outer team. The inner team consists of the core group on the project. The outer group just joins in for specific issues, such as to provide expert advise. In the example mentioned earlier in Section B, regarding the development of a new research unit allocated by using the ‘last person standing in the tea room’ methodology. This project made a number of fatal errors. One of the most fundamental, was failing to get commitment from the team. The project team were unclear of individual roles (interestingly the allocated project manager did not see himself as the project manager) consequently meetings broke down. In this example, they stopped the project, went back to the stakeholders and recommended that the project go back to the project definition process six months after the project was originally started!

A common reason for projects to fail is that the project team do not clarify the outcomes of the project. The process, at an intellectual level, is very simple but it is seldom done effectively. Projects which run the greatest risk of going ‘off the rails’ are those for which the objective and outcomes are not clearly defined.

The purpose of the definition phase is also to identify the risks (factors to which the project could be exposed) and the constraints (definite obstacles that will impede progress). An example of this was a project manager who went on sabbatical midway during a project. There is nothing wrong with going on sabbatical. It was not considered during the project definition and planning phase, nor were the effects, real or potential, identified and nor were the required measures to address these specified.

Diagram 3.5.1: UNE Project team working through their project definition.



3.6 Module Summary

- Effective project definition is vital to solid project planning and consequent project success.
- Involve the project team in the definition process.
- Define succinctly and iteratively
 - Clarify roles
 - Determine objects
 - Define the deliverables
 - List constraints
 - Conduct a risk management analysis (RMA)
 - Conduct a broad breakdown of work to be done
- Ask the question – do I have a project?