

Project Management Roles

The following are the key roles within a typical project. Small projects may not need all of the roles (e.g. just a sponsor and project manager may be appropriate). The lists of responsibilities given below is not exhaustive, but show the main accountabilities for each role.

1. Project Board

Project management is not easy in the sense that it requires a broad mix of skills in handling, processing and communicating information. But above all, project management is about people. Unless you invest in and engage with the people of your project, you cannot hope for it to succeed. The Project Board plays a critical role in this respect, as outlined below.

1.1 The Project Board

This is there to provide overall governance. It is not the project manager's job to make decisions about whether a project should continue if exceptional circumstances arise (e.g. major new functionality is required or there is serious time slippage): this is the job of the Project Board. Board members should be clear and open about their stake in the project – what aspirations and fears do they have? Are they aware of what their role entails? What specific support do they expect the project manager to provide?

1.2 The Project Sponsor

The Project Sponsor¹ is where the “buck stops” – he/she is the boss in terms of the project. They are vital in escalating and “unsticking” issues that are causing project problems and delays. The sponsor owns the Business Case. Key responsibilities include:

- Creates the Project Brief²
- Agree Project priority rating in collaboration with PIP Group³;
- Authorise project commencement and closure;
- Ensure a project budget is secured;
- Ensure project resources are secured;
- Final decision making on expenditure and resource allocation;
- Chair the Board meetings;
- Recommend actions to PIP Group, Directorate/Executive or other appropriate University management bodies;
- Ensure Business Case benefits have been realised (via project review).

If the project is primarily focussed on delivering benefits through IT systems, the Sponsor will usually be the appropriate Service Owner or System Manager (see Appendix).

The Project Board is not a democratic structure: the Sponsor has overall authority for decision making.

1.3 The Senior User

This is the person (or sometimes people) who represent the interests of the customer in the project (the customer being the people who will actually use the products that the project will create). Thus he/she is a vital link with this community, both in terms of helping you to understand what is needed, and to help to communicate with that group and to embed the business change.

1.4 The Senior Supplier

This is a person (or people) representing the “makers” within the project. This can be both internal and external. For example if you are implementing an IT system there could be an external supplier and a

¹ Executive in PRINCE2 terms

² The Project Manager may assist in this if one has been determined at this stage

³ This is only for projects with an IT component: see the information about the PIP Process on the Project Management Website: <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/bit/project-management-toolkits.php>

representative from internal ITS. It is vital that they understand both the project's requirements and constraints, and it's their responsibility to clarify these if necessary. One of the biggest problems that can arise within projects is conflicting or lacking resources, so it is vital that the Senior Supplier(s) flag resourcing issues as early as possible. For example, an external supplier will sometimes schedule a piece of work with the expectation that an internal resource will be available at that time.

In IT-related projects, Senior Users might include the System Manager, Application Manager and/or Technology Manager (see Appendix).

2. Project Manager

The project manager is not responsible for the project: he/she is responsible for managing the project and ensuring that the project board (and especially the sponsor) is updated with any issues that could affect project outcomes.

The sponsor should do everything he/she can to support the project manager and it is essential that there is an open and honest relationship between these two roles.

The project manager:

- Helps to draft the Business Case and other key documents;
- Maintains the risk log and other key monitoring elements;
- Produces and monitors plans for how and when the project is to be carried out;
- Provides direction to project teams (note that project managers are seldom line managers of project teams, but they should have delegated authority to issue jobs to teams and expect teams to report to them on progress and issues that arise);
- Ensures that the sponsor and project board are kept up to date with project progress without overburdening them with unnecessary detail;
- Monitors project budget, and – under delegated authority from the sponsor – purchase resources as required.

3. Project Team Leader(s)

Large projects may require specific teams to be engaged in the work of the project. In which case the team leader role is usually necessary. Team leaders will often be supervisors or managers of existing teams, and thus have a well-defined job role within that context. Here we are concerned only with their role within the project, which is to:

- Ensure that the work packages issued by the project manager are carried out;
- Update the project manager in a timely fashion on any issues with the work;
- Clarify any ambiguities.

For significant work packages, a team leader may need to carry out some project management duties as well, such as planning the tasks and managing risks for their work package.

4. Project Support

In small projects, this function will normally be carried out by the project manager, but in large projects there should be a dedicated support function that provides:

- Document administration (e.g. version control, document librarian functions);
- Change control management (i.e. configuration control – including updating of product descriptions if there has been a scope change, for example);
- Meeting organisation and minute taking;
- Day to day upkeep of risk and issue logs.

Appendix: Service Owner and Systems Manager

These terms refer to **Key Information Systems and Technology Roles** within MMU which were approved by Executive in July 2014. An extract from the paper approved by Executive defining them, is provided below:

Service Owner

- Has overall business responsibility for identified services (eg the MMU Print Service or the Procurement Service). Note this includes everything that is required to deliver that service not just the IS+T systems
- Is responsible for ensuring that all the Systems that are required to deliver that service have clear System Managers and can deliver the required levels of service

System Manager

- Has responsibility for the budget and expenditure for allocated systems (recorded in such a way that a university-wide view of total expenditure on systems is easily obtained)
- Is responsible for decisions on availability including the need to take systems out of service for planned or emergency maintenance
- Has overall responsibility for prioritising business as usual improvements to the identified system
- Has overall responsibility for the data quality and rules for access to that data that balance ease of use against the risk of unauthorised access
- Has overall responsibility for ensuring that clear processes for using the system are identified, documented and appropriate

Application Manager

- Is responsible for the overall design (architecture), configuration, management and support throughout their lifecycle of an allocated set of systems. This function also has a major role in working with the System Manager, Development Team and Technical Manager in the design testing and improvement of these systems.

Technology Manager

- Is responsible for the design (architecture), provision, management and support of IT infrastructure (hardware, operating systems, software platforms etc.) and staff in the most effective way to deliver an allocated sets of systems