

PROJECT PLANNING TIPS

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Outlining a project plan at the beginning of the project enables team members, stakeholders and/ or supervisors to make clear agreements and set expectations. When developed collaboratively and discussed regularly, it can provide purpose and direction to team members, as it allows one to connect individual contributions to project goals and objectives. Furthermore, a well-documented project plan can serve as a valuable (process & progress) communication tool for the team and stakeholders.

Develop a project plan

A project plan typically describes the scope, schedule, tasks and responsibilities. It should include:

1. Project Scope

Together with team members discuss and define:

- Project Goal(s)
This can be in the form of a project statement.
- Objectives
- Deliverables/ key outcomes
- Stakeholders
- Any other contributors
- Criteria for success
How will you measure success? Maybe you want to define your grade expectation as a group.

Tips:

- **Make your goals SMART**, using the principles: Specific (concrete), Measurable (when is it good, when isn't it good), Achievable (within ethical and legal boundaries), Realistic (executable) and Time-bound (within a certain period).
- **Align your personal learning goals** with the group/ project goal. Clearly articulating and expressing these goals can help build commitment towards the project objectives

2. Project Schedule

Visualize a project timeline and include:

- Deliverable due dates
- Interim deadlines
- Stakeholder/ supervisor feedback meetings
- Team (+ process) meetings

A Gantt chart is a useful tool to describe a timeline across the different phases of the project.

Tips:

- Setting **intermediate goals** and **getting feedback** on that, rather than just getting a final evaluation at the end, will give teams a better idea of whether they are on the right track, in terms of what is going well and what could be improved.
- Setting up regular meetings to discuss and **address the process and progress** of the project will help manage any emerging challenges or conflicts before its too late.

3. Project Tasks

- Breakdown the objectives into actionable tasks; based on the resources (i.e. project teams and budgets)
- Assign tasks to team members collaboratively along with deadlines.
- Agree on how you'll communicate with each other throughout the project (email, WhatsApp, Dropbox, etc.) and who'll be responsible for handing in the assignments.

Tips:

- Consider your personal learning goals, and **behavioural Belbin roles** (Take the Belbin quiz) while taking on tasks, based on your strengths, and competencies you would like to develop.
- Discuss the division of responsibilities and assess each other's work at various stages throughout the project to create a sense of **collective responsibility** for the end result.

Lastly, be flexible, creative and don't forget to have some fun alongside your project work.

Documentation and Submission

Around the beginning of the project, discuss the project planning with your coaches and supervisors to align on expected and feasible scope. At the end, the project plan can be included in the final project report, as appendix, and when suitable as content.