

# G52GRP 2009–2010: Lecture 2

## *Team Working and Group Meetings*

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## This Lecture

- Some notes on team working (Partly based on slides by Prof. Dave Elliman)
- Group meetings
  - Purpose
  - Suggested structure
  - Minutes
  - Roles

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## Miscellaneous Points

- Have you read the *Handbook* yet? Questions?
- Next G52GRP support lecture: 16 October on Sharing Documents and Version Control. Check the web page and your e-mail.
- **NO** G52GRP lecture next week (9 October).
- Industrial placement information meeting **29 October**, 12:00, C33, The Exchange!

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## Groups

- You have now been divided into groups of 5–6 students and assigned a supervisor and a project.
- Check <http://www.cs.nott.ac.uk/~nhn/G52GRP>.
- If you are **not** in a group, but think you should be, let me know ASAP.
- If you have tried but failed to get in touch with some member(s) of your group, let me know ASAP.

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## What Now?

Unless you have already done so:

- Get in touch with your group mates.
- Familiarise yourself with your project.
- Elect a group leader
- Arrange a first formal meeting with your supervisor.

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## Team Working (1)

Teams can be fun!



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## Team Working (2)

But sometimes they don't work well ...

- Inadequate organisation
- Low commitment
- Apathy
- Conflicts



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## Characteristics of teams that work

- Balance of member skills — and making good use of those skills
- Clear goals
- Clear responsibilities
- Good organisation
- Good communication, including *listening*
- Commitment to goals: willingness to put group goals before ego and/or comfort
- Mutual respect and valuing

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## Necessary Roles

- Motivator (initiator)
- Idea generator
- Team worker (“getting the job done”)
- Specialist (technical, writing, . . . )
- Coordinator (administrator)
- Censor (devil’s advocate)
- Mediator (supporter, mentor)
- Monitor (tester)
- Completer-finisher

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## Formal Roles (1)

It can be a good idea to explicitly identify responsibilities through various formal roles. For example:

- Group Leader
- Editor in Chief
- Chief Software Architect
- Software Quality Tsar
- Repository Master
- Artistic Director
- Open Day Producer

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## Formal Roles (2)

Note:

- All roles are not equally relevant and burdensome all the time.
- Some roles could be shared.
- Just because someone is “in charge” of an aspect does not mean others cannot or should not contribute.
- Holding a named role does not exempt you from doing work outside of that role!

***Everyone should pull their weight all the time.***

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## Formal Roles (3)

Why do I think formal roles can be useful?

- A different way of thinking about all things that needs to be done. Useful input to planning.
- Clearly identified, long-term responsibilities can help getting everyone involved.
- Designated responsible people for key activities can help initiate those activities in good time.
- Suitably adapted roles can help people contribute according to personal strengths and make those contributions more visible.

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## Some tips

- Be positive: see challenges, not problems
- Remember that a “smooth ride” often does not give the most valuable experience.
- Work on the assumption that every team member really want to do his or her best. If someone seems to not “pull their weight”, try to find out why, and what can be changed to help.
- Be aware that cultural differences can get in the way. But again, this is not a problem, but a big opportunity!

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## Group Meetings

Two kinds of meetings:

- Informal meetings
  - Only the group members.
  - Usually one per week, more if necessary.
- Formal meetings
  - All group members plus the supervisor.
  - One meeting per week, about 30 min.
  - Compulsory!

If you cannot make it, apologies to the meeting chair well in advance.

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## And if things really does not work?



- Up to a point, you are expected to try to resolve issues
- But ultimately, talk to your supervisor or me.

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## Informal Group Meetings (1)

Purpose: coordination and getting some real work done.

Typical activities:

- Develop a group-wide understanding of what the project is and a consensus about its aims.
- Organisational matters:
  - electing group leader
  - division of work
  - developing time plans
  - developing work procedures

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## Informal Group Meetings (2)

- Design discussions.
- Discussions about specific technical problems.
- Reviews and inspections:
  - design documents
  - reports
  - code
- *Prepare for the formal meetings.*

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## Formal Group Meetings

Purposes:

- Formally monitor progress by reviewing minutes from preceding formal meeting.
- Formally take major design decisions.
- Formally decide on what should be done over the next week, and who is responsible.
- Keep supervisor informed about where the project is going.
- Seek input from supervisor.
- Discuss problems.

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## Informal Group Meetings (3)

Of course, there is a lot more to the project than meetings. Much work needs to be done outside meetings, individually or in small subgroups, e.g.:

- Background research
- Detailed design
- Writing design documents and reports
- Coding
- Testing
- Debugging

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## Chairperson and Secretary

- There should be a **Chairperson** (or **Chair**) and a **Secretary** for each meeting.
- These roles should **rotate** within the group.
- The Chair **organises** and **leads** the meeting.
- The Secretary **records** what happened and what was decided during the meeting in the **minutes**.

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## The Chairperson

The Chair runs the formal meeting:

- Prepares a written agenda **prior** to the meeting, e-mails it to the group and supervisor, and brings printed copies to the meeting.
- Leads the meeting by following the agenda.
- Ensures that the meeting remains focused.

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## The Supervisor

The role of the supervisor is to:

- Provide the problem specification
- Monitor the progress of the project
- Prompt discussion if necessary
- Offer advice on writing and speaking
- Mark the project

He or she may also

- Offer technical advise
- Act as the "customer"

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## The Secretary

The secretary records the meeting:

- Takes notes during the meeting:
  - Who are present & apologies
  - Summary of major points
  - All decisions
- Compiles these notes into minutes **immediately after** the meeting
- E-mails the minutes to all group members and the supervisor, who then checks that the minutes correctly reflects the meeting.

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## Minutes (1)

- A written summary of a meeting is called the **minutes** of the meeting.
- The minutes help keeping the work organised and focused.
- The minutes should be **included** as an appendix in the group reports.
- It is a very good idea to appoint a specific person to archive the minutes.
- It is an even better idea to set up a **shared repository** for source code and **all documents** including the minutes.

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## Minutes (2)

The minutes should record:

- Date, time, and place of the meeting.
- Chair, Secretary, who is present.
- Apologies from those who are absent.
- The main points discussed during the meeting
- All decisions.
- All action points.
- Date, time, place, Chair, and Secretary of the next meeting.

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## Example of Action Points

- **John:** Find a good Visual Basic Book  
Done by: 11 Nov (next group meeting)
- **Mark and Sarah:** Fix the “sorting bug”  
Done by: 8 Nov (urgent)
- **All:** Finish individual report drafts  
Done by: 11 Nov (next group meeting)

It can be helpful to clearly identify particularly urgent action points to help ensure they get priority.

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## Action Points

- Each meeting generates a list of action points. Three parts:
  - **What** the task is.
  - **Who** is assigned to the task.
  - **When** the task should be finished.
- The purpose of the action point list is to:
  - provide a clear and concise record of the work that needs to be done
  - ensure that tasks are not forgotten
  - make it easy to ensure an evenly distributed workload.

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## Structure of the Formal Meetings (1)

The following structure has been found to work well:

1. The Chair prepares the agenda prior to the meeting.
2. The Chair opens the meeting.
3. The secretary notes down who the Chair and Secretary are and who are present/absent.
4. The Chair consults the minutes of the last meeting and writes down the list of action points onto the whiteboard.

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## Structure of the Formal Meetings (2)

5. The chair leads the group through a discussion of each action point, writing any new or unfinished point onto the whiteboard.
6. The Chair leads the group through the other points on the agenda. Any emerging action points are recorded onto the whiteboard.
7. The Chair reviews the new list of action points to make sure everyone understands what their tasks are.
8. The secretary meanwhile takes notes, in particular action points and decisions.

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## Structure of the Formal Meetings (4)

Typical agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Apologies
3. Review of progress since last meeting.
4. ...
- ...
- ...
- $n - 2$ . Any other matters
- $n - 1$ . Next meeting: Date, Chair, and Secretary
- $n$ . Closing of the meeting

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## Structure of the Formal Meetings (3)

9. The Chair asks if there are any other matters anyone wants to raise.
10. The Chair confirms the date, time, place, Chair, and Secretary of the next meeting, and then closes the meeting.
11. The secretary compiles the notes into minutes, which are e-mailed to the group and supervisor and archived.

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## Personal Logs (1)

- In addition to the minutes of the formal meetings, it is useful to keep your own personal log.
- The log can be used to:
  - keep track of your tasks
  - record how your time is spent
  - note down any ideas you have

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## Personal Logs (2)

- The log is very useful
  - to organise your own work
  - in group meetings
  - when writing the individual reports

## Final Remarks

- The group meetings are essential to the success of the group projects.
- You are expected to attend all meetings.
- If you cannot attend, let people know well in advance.
- Take the meetings seriously!  
Treat them just as you would if you were involved professionally.