

Project Team Charter

MIME Capstone Design

Signed copy of charter is due at Status Meeting 1

The purpose of a team charter is to:

- Identify the Project Manager
- Define the team's purpose and establish a common set of team goals;
- List agreed-on strategies to achieve these goals;
- Identify the team's collective strengths as well as potential challenges, taking into account the specific learning styles, talents, and constraints of individual team members;
- Specify strategies for overcoming any challenges that may arise; and
- Formalize and document team members' agreements and commitments to one another and to the collective enterprise.

To create a team charter for your capstone project, follow these steps:

1. Schedule a face-to-face meeting that all group members will attend.

2. In advance of the meeting, all group members should:

- a) Review the attached "Ground Rules for Difficult Group Discussions" and the School of MIME's "Principles for Communication." These documents contain helpful information and useful parameters for team conversation and discussion.
- b) Review the attached team charter form and prepare your input for the meeting. Every team member is expected to contribute to charter development.

3. During your meeting:

- a) Designate one team-member as project manager. This person will be a single point of contact for the team and will be responsible for spring-term Engineering Expo display
- b) To ensure that everyone's ideas will be heard and considered, establish a protocol for sharing team member input on charter contents. For example, will each team member present all prepared input up front, or will you share input and develop the contract section by section?
- c) Using the protocol you've agreed on, conduct a group discussion that results in a team charter for your senior project.
 - Take this discussion seriously and participate fully. The power and success of your team's charter comes from the conversation and agreements on which it is based.
 - Moreover, **the roles and responsibilities documented in your charter will provide the concrete benchmarking data for assessing one another's project participation in the end-of-term peer performance review.**
- d) To formalize the specifications and agreements documented in the charter, all team members must sign and date this contract prior to turning it in. In addition, the team (or a designated team representative) must review this contract with your faculty advisor, who should also sign the contract.

4. During the term:

This charter is a living document, and the roles and responsibilities specified herein are the benchmarks by which you and your team members will be assessing one another's performance at term's end. **If any of the team member roles and responsibilities specified in this document change during the course of the term, revise the charter accordingly.**

Team Charter for MIME Capstone Design Project No. _____

1. **Project Manager:** *Identify who will be the team's project manager*
2. **Team Purpose:** *State the reasons for this team's formation and the team's purposes. Who are your stakeholders, and what are their expectations of and for the team?*
3. **Team Goals:** *What are the team's project, process, and quality goals? To what level of performance are team members willing to commit, and what course grade are you collectively aiming for? Articulating these goals will make a difference in your team's performance.*
4. **Team Member Roles/Responsibilities:** *While some team responsibilities are shared by all members, collaborative teams work best when members also have unique roles and responsibilities. These could be technical and/or project management-related (eg team leader, meeting facilitator, documentation coordinator, information manager, point person for sponsor/advisor communications, etc.). **Consider these assignments carefully. This information will constitute the benchmarking data for your end-of-term peer performance evaluations.***

| Team Member | Roles/Responsibilities |
|-------------|------------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |

5. **Ground Rules:** *How and when will this team meet? What are the norms and ground rules the team will agree to? How will you conduct discussions and make decisions? How will you handle dissenting views among members? How will you hold each other accountable for living by these rules and for task completion? What kind of participation and level of commitment do you expect from one another?*
6. **Potential Barriers and Coping Strategies:** *What barriers to effective teamwork might potentially arise in the course of completing your senior project and other team obligations, and how will you handle them if they materialize? What problems with team dynamics have you experienced in the past, and how will you handle them if they come up again?*

7. **Charter signed and dated by all team members and faculty advisor (legible signature, please!):**

Team member _____

Team member _____

Team member _____

Faculty advisor _____

GROUND RULES FOR DIFFICULT GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Ideally, group discussions should be calm, focused conversations in which various ideas and opinions are considered, leading to useful, productive outcomes. But in the real world, many groups just can't pull this off. When members have conflicting interests, personal agendas, or aggressive personalities, meetings often deteriorate into angry conflicts, thereby wasting time and harming relationships.

If you anticipate that your group could head down this destructive path, try to get agreement on how the discussion will be conducted before leaping right into the issues. Unless they just enjoy anger and hostility, group members will usually agree to a reasonable set of Ground Rules. Then, if things start to get out of hand, the leader or facilitator can simply remind the wayward members of their previous agreement.

Although each group may have specific needs, the Ground Rules listed below are often useful. (These can apply to personal conversations as well.)

1. Stay focused on the purpose and goals.

The group should clearly define what they hope to accomplish at the beginning of a discussion. This makes it easier to determine when people are getting off track.

2. Listen when others are speaking.

During difficult discussions, people often mentally rehearse their next comment while someone else is talking, with the result that no one is really listening. When this happens, the conversation tends to turn into a pointless debate.

3. Be sure that all viewpoints are heard.

Since most groups have both talkative and quiet members, efforts should be made to invite the quiet people to share their thoughts and keep the talkers from dominating the discussion.

4. Consider different points of view.

People easily get "locked in" to their own opinions and don't even think about the possible merits of other ideas. Members need to be encouraged to think beyond their own point of view.

5. Look for areas of agreement.

Argumentative group members often agree on more things than they realize. Before discussing disagreements, members should identify the things they do agree on.

6. Discuss differences respectfully.

Hostile, insulting remarks add nothing to a group discussion and often permanently damage relationships. Members should be reminded about basic "good manners" for meetings.

7. Remember that facts can be wrong, but opinions are just different.

Most of the time, people are not arguing about facts, but expressing differences of opinion. However, they often act as though their views are "right" and others are "wrong". It helps to recognize that they are simply different.

8. Look for the good points in new ideas.

Useful ideas may get rejected when people are too quick to find flaws. By initially exploring the benefits of an idea, the group can avoid becoming overly critical.

9. Focus on the future, not the past.

Disagreements can easily deteriorate into finger-pointing about past mistakes and problems, which accomplishes absolutely nothing. Use past experience to inform your decisions, but focus the discussion on future goals.

10. Look for solutions, not someone to blame.

The worst debates about the past are those which involve placing blame. Any conversation focused on blaming is unproductive and should be turned into a search for solutions.

11. Don't use group time for individual issues.

When two or three members start discussing their own issues in a group meeting, it just wastes everyone else's time. If this happens, the people involved should be politely asked to continue their personal discussion after the meeting.

12. "Sidebar" any issues that are important but off-topic.

Occasionally, important matters are raised that have nothing to do with the goals of the meeting. To keep the group on task, but avoid losing the issue, create a "sidebar" where these topics can be listed and dealt with later.

13. Agree upon specific action steps.

In most situations, members need to end the discussion with specific "next steps" that can be acted on after the meeting. Otherwise, the whole thing may turn out to be a waste of time.

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**School of Mechanical, Industrial, and Manufacturing Engineering
Principles for Communication**

We all want the school to be a great place for faculty, staff and students, and to strive for excellence. This is a value of the faculty and staff of the school.

1. We all want to be open and honest and want our colleagues to be open and honest with us.
2. We will assume that our colleagues are acting, speaking, and writing with positive motivation.
3. In our interactions with colleagues and students, we will strive to acknowledge and consider their perspectives.
4. If we have a concern that a colleague has not acted in accordance with these principles, we will speak to that person directly.
5. These principles will guide our interactions with our colleagues and with students.
6. When we do not operate within these principles, we will acknowledge this and take steps to improve our communications with colleagues and students.