A checklist for project managers

The checklist presented below aims to help you decide what project documents are needed, approximately when you need to create them, and what other resources are available. No two projects are the same, so the checklist is meant to be flexible, however the minimum requirements for a project are given and you should ensure that you carry out at least those steps.

MMU provides a project assessment framework to categorise your project in terms of overall risk and impact – you should use this tool to help you decide which parts of the checklist are relevant, and the categories listed below are those that pertain to the assessment framework, i.e. not a project, small (Sml), medium (Med) or major (Maj).

How to use the checklist:

- The first column, “Item” lists the name of the document to be created or the process to be carried out.
- The second column, “Project type” refers to the project category to which the item applies: the three sub-columns show which items relate to each type of project.
- Items with a small filing cabinet icon denote that a template is available (🗐). Items with a hammer and spanner icon indicate that there is a toolkit available (🛠).
- Items marked with a tick mark (☑) are mandatory for all projects.
- You should work through the checklist in order, top to bottom, and may skip the items that don’t relate to your project.

Item	Project type: Sml	Med	Maj	What to do	Who owns	Created by	Reported to
Mandate	**Y for all projects. Type not known yet**			Document the basic idea for the project – what is its main aim? Ideally this should come from the **Sponsor**, but in practice the **Project Manager** should liaise with the Sponsor to confirm understanding and work up an agreed initial mandate. There is no template supplied for this as the document only needs to set out in high level terms what the project objectives are. It can be an email, hand written note or more formal document. If the mandate has been given verbally, a written note should be created to confirm it with the Sponsor.	Sponsor	Sponsor / Project Manager	Sponsor
Project Assessment Matrix	**Y**	**Y**	**Y**	Upon receiving and agreeing a Mandate, all project proposals should be assessed using the assessment matrix in order to categorise the project as one of: not a project, small, medium or major. Upon completion of the matrix, a copy should be sent to the Business Improvement Team (along with the Project Brief).	Sponsor	Project Manager	BI Team Sponsor
Project Brief	**Y**	**Y**	**Y**	The project brief document is created from the MMU template. It describes: • What: The main aim of project • Why: link to strategy, why it's worth doing • Where: what part of the organisation does it affect? • When: Estimated timescale • How: What solutions will be delivered (e.g. IT system) • How much: Estimated costs and resources • Risk: What are the main risks involved? Small projects use this as the business case, but medium and major projects should continue on to create a full and detailed Business Case after passing through the first governance gateway.	Sponsor	Project Manager	Business Improvement Team Sponsor Gateway 1
Project Site	**Y**	**Y**	**Y**	On receipt of the Assessment Matrix and Brief, the Business Improvement Team will set-up a new project site on the MMU SharePoint platform. This will be where all project documentation should be stored, and all of the templates and toolkits mentioned below will be available within the site. Also reporting to the BI Team will simply be a case of updating the relevant documents as the BI Team automatically be able to access them.	Project Manager	BI Team; Project Manager	

Item	Project type: Sml	Med	Maj	What to do	Who owns	Created by	Reported to
Gateway 1	Y	Y	Y	For IT-related projects the Brief must be presented to the **IST Strategy Steering Group (ISSG)** before the project can proceed. This is done by submitting the Brief to the Director of LRIS or the BI Team. For non-IT projects the Project Brief should go to the appropriate governance body for approval.	Sponsor	Project Manager	Decision: to Business Improvement Team
Project Board set up 🛠	Y	Y	Y	Assuming the project is approved, now is the time to set up a **Project Board**. This should comprise, as the bare minimum, the **Sponsor** (for small projects). For medium and major projects the Board should also include someone who represents the business unit(s) that will use the project's outputs (the **Senior User**) and someone who represents the supplier of the outputs that the project will create (**Senior Supplier**). A Board can have more than one Senior User and Senior Supplier, but ideally should not be more than six members overall. The **Project Manager** is not a member of the Board but reports to it. A toolkits is available to help with this, including defining roles and responsibilities (🛠).	Sponsor	Sponsor / PM can assist	
Detailed Business case 🗐🛠☑		Y	Y	This includes a more detailed Business Case than the Brief, using the MMU Business case template (or the Facilities template for Facilities-based projects). In addition to the above, it should include a full benefits analysis and an analysis of dependencies with other projects. Toolkits for risk analysis and cost benefits analysis are available (🛠).	Sponsor / Project Manager	Project Manager	Project Board Business Improvement Team
Gateway 2		Y	Y	For IT-related projects the Detailed Business Case must be presented to the **ISSG** before the project can proceed (unless the Group has granted full approval at Gateway 1). For non-IT projects the Business Case should go to the appropriate governance body for approval. The project cannot actually start until gateway 2 has been completed.	Sponsor	Project Manager	Decision: to Business Improvement Team
Project Team set-up		Y	Y	Small projects are unlikely to need dedicated resources to carry out the project and will likely call on operational staff to carry out relevant work as part of their day job. A small project's **Project Manager** will either be managing several projects, or manage this project alongside other duties. Medium & Major projects should identify the key resources required to deliver the project and, where appropriate, set up **Project Teams** with team leaders. Matrix management will usually apply.	Project Manager	Project Board / Project Manager	Project Manager

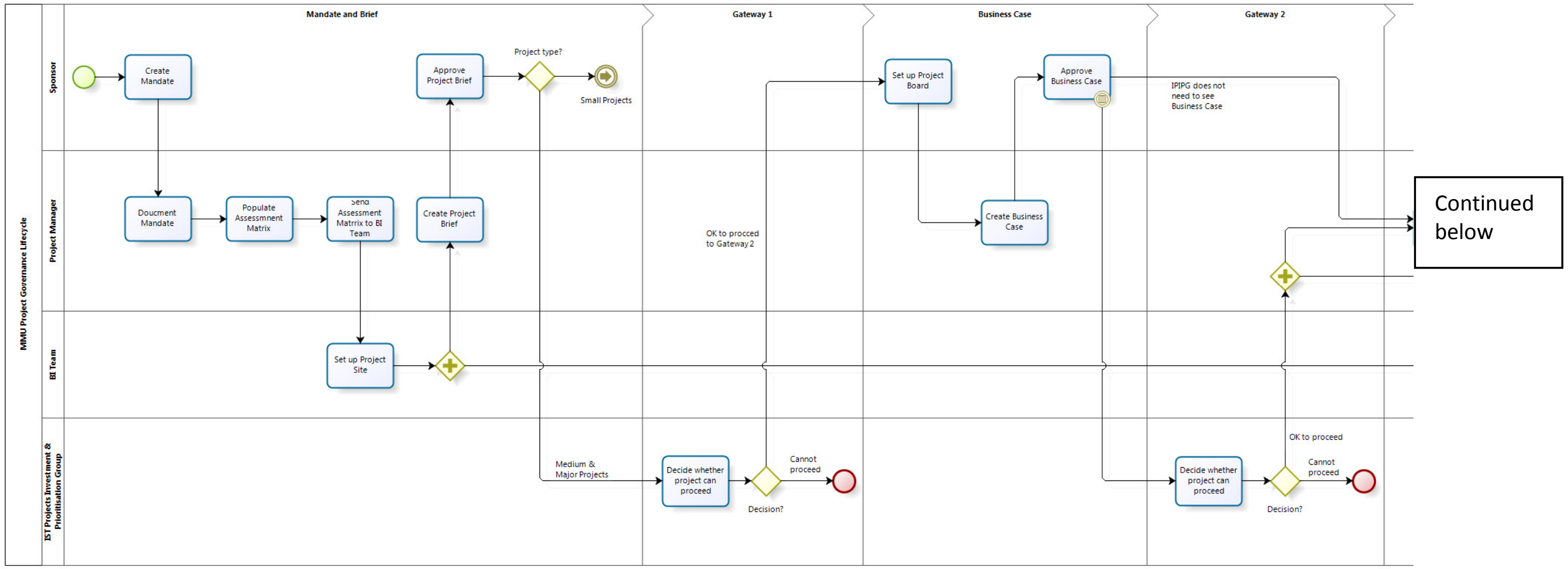
Item	Project type: Sml	Med	Maj	What to do	Who owns	Created by	Reported to
Product Breakdown Structure		?	Y	A Product Breakdown Structure (PBS) should be created before a detailed Project Plan is drafted (or Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) – either is acceptable). This defines all the products (or tasks) to be undertaken, so helps to set up the basis from which a project plan can be created.	Project Manager	Project Team/ Project Manager	Project Manager
Product Description document		?	Y	Major projects are likely to have to create a large number of products, both internal to the project and final outputs. Product Descriptions enable a consistent approach to be maintained in order to ensure that everyone understands what the product is for and how to test whether it is fit for purpose. The Product Description should also show dependencies so that it is also obvious how the product affects other products within the project. Product Descriptions form an important role in acceptance testing.	Project Manager	Project Team/ Project Manager	Project Manager
Activity Network			Y	Once the PBS (or WBS) has been created, for Major projects (where the tasks are likely to be many and complex), an Activity Network is created to show the logical sequence of the products or tasks. This is another foundation for creating the Project Plan. Note that if you are creating a project plan using MS Project (or similar) and you fully define all task dependencies, an activity network is generated automatically.	Project Manager	Project Team/ Project Manager	Project Manager
PERT analysis			Y	The last step before creating a Project Plan for Major projects is to carry out a PERT analysis. This enables you to assign task durations using the algorithms built in to a PERT analysis. Note that if you are creating a project plan using MS Project (or similar) and you fully define all task dependencies, a PERT analysis is generated automatically. *Note that an important side-benefit of PBS / Activity Network / PERT is that it helps to build a shared, detailed understanding of the project within the Project Team.*	Project Manager	Project Team/ Project Manager	Project Manager
Project plan	Y	Y	Y	A project plan should show the estimated timescale for the project, broken down by tasks. For small projects, a Word or Excel document with a list of tasks, dates and resources is sufficient. For medium and major projects a Gantt chart ( ) should be used with tasks linked to show dependencies, and resources allocated to tasks. Related groups of tasks should be grouped so that a high level view of the plan can be shown, and milestones (key output points) should also be identified (usually one milestone per group of tasks). If using Agile, the plan will only show the initial tasks in detail. The project plan should be regularly updated throughout the project, including (if possible) a budget tracker using Earned Value Analysis ( ).	Project Manager	Project Team/ Project Manager	Project Manager/ Project Board

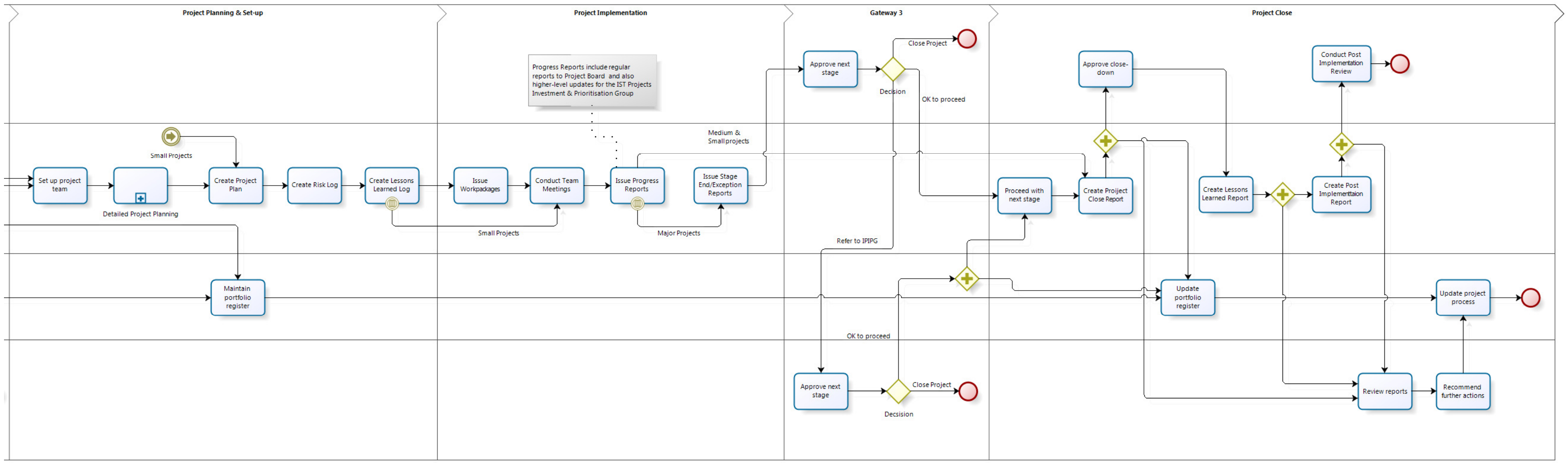
Item	Project type: Sml	Med	Maj	What to do	Who owns	Created by	Reported to
Stakeholder analysis 🛠		Y	Y	A stakeholder analysis is essential for the project board and customers. It should also consider whether there are other important people who could be considered stakeholders (basically, anyone who could impact upon the project) – for example sponsors of competing projects. The stakeholder analysis toolkit should be used for this purpose (🛠).	Project Manager	Project Manager / Project Team	Project Sponsor
Communications Plan 🗐	?	Y	Y	It is vital to draw up a plan of who needs to be communicated with about the project, and for each category, decide on appropriate channels and mechanisms. For example the project board will not want to see the same level of detail that the project team will require for specific tasks. For key stakeholders, ask them what, how and how often they want to be communicated with. Think about the user community and also the wider staff and student community. *Note: it is almost impossible to create a communications plan without carrying out stakeholder analysis and the MMU template includes stakeholder analysis within the communications plan for this reason.*	Project Manager	Project Board / Project Team / Customers	
Risk log 🗐 🛠	Y	Y	Y	A risk log for a small project should contain a list of the risks and for each one an indication of likelihood and impact on a high-medium-low scale, plus an indication of what measures are being taken to manage the risk. Medium and major projects should use a similar approach but the likelihood/impact scale should be a 5x5 matrix and a plot of the risks should be created in order to clearly identify those that are most critical (🛠). The risk log should be regularly reviewed and updated. It is good practice to set calendar reminders to review and update the log. Note that the SharePoint project sites have a risk log built in and it is recommended that this be used.	Project Manager	Project Team/ Project Manager	Project Manager/ Project Board
Lessons Learned log 🗐	Y	Y	Y	As soon as a project starts, a log should be maintained to record any lessons learned. It is imperative that this is regularly reviewed and updated and not left until the end of a project, by which time many of the lessons will have been forgotten. It is good practice to set calendar reminders to review and update the log.	Project Manager	Project Manager	Project Board

Item	Project type: Sml	Med	Maj	What to do	Who owns	Created by	Reported to
Issue log		Y	Y	For small projects it is sufficient to report Issues direct to the Project Sponsor as and when they arise for immediate decision. For medium and major projects a formal log of issues should be maintained, showing: what the issue is, its impact on the project if taken on board, its impact if not included, the originator of the issue, links to any risks, the decision taken (by the Project Board). The issue log should be regularly reviewed and updated. It is good practice to set calendar reminders to review and update the log. Note that the SharePoint project sites have a risk log built in and it is recommended that this be used. *Note: an issue is a risk that has actually occurred. Some issues occur without ever having been in the risk log, but actually they were simply unidentified risks.*	Project Manager	Project Team/ Project Manager	Project Manager/ Project Board
Project Team meetings	Y	Y	Y	Regular team meetings should be held throughout the life of a project – they need not be formally minuted, but any actions agreed should be documented and circulated to all concerned. Team meetings are as much about sharing information so that knowledge can be built and shared, so even when there are no actions arising they serve a useful purpose. They should be kept as short as possible.	Project Manager	Project Team	Project Team
Work Package document		?	Y	Each activity (or group of activities) must be managed and monitored. Work Packages help in this process as they describe, for the relevant teams(s) within the project, exactly what is to be achieved. Where relevant they should link to Product Descriptions. Work Packages are issued the Team Leaders or to the resource that is carrying out the work. Facilities projects should use the Facilities Project Execution Plan checklist.	Project Team	Project Manager	Project Manager
Progress Report ☑		Y	Y	Reporting for small projects can be via meetings between the Project Manager and Project Sponsor. Formal documentation, aside from action/decision notes, is not required. Medium and Major projects must establish a formal reporting method so that the Project Manager can report on project progress and issues to the Project Board as appropriate. The A3 template for project progress reporting should be used as a minimum .	Project Manager	Project Manager	Project Board
ISSG Update	?	Y	Y	As appropriate, the Project Board should provide updates to the ISSG to keep them up to date with project progress and issues. The template used is the same as the Progress Report, but the content should be appropriate to the higher-level reporting requirement	Sponsor	Project Manager	IST Projects Investment & Prioritisation Group

Item	Project type: Sml	Med	Maj	What to do	Who owns	Created by	Reported to
Project changes (Facilities projects only)		Y	Y	For Facilities projects, templates are supplied for project change requests and a project change log: all changes to the project should be logged on these form. For non-Facilities projects any proposed change of scope should be raised via an Exception Report if the project will exceed tolerance, or a Progress Report if not.	Project Manager	Project Manager	Project Board
Stage end Report			Y	Not required for small and medium projects. Major projects should be divided into stages to give an opportunity for the **Project Board** to review whether the project is still needed and also to manage the project in smaller chunks that are easier to plan. The Stage End Report is similar to a Progress Report, but should also include an analysis of whether the business case is still relevant and plans for the next stage.	Project Manager	Project Manager	Project Board
Gateway 3a (Stage end)			Y	Stage end reports should be submitted to the relevant governance body (ISSG for IT-related projects) together with a recommendation from the Project Board as to whether the project should proceed, be postponed, or cancelled. This Gateway may be repeated several times for long-term Major projects.	**Project Sponsor**	Project Manager	Decision: to Business Improvement Team
Exception Report	Y	Y	Y	If the project exceeds tolerance (or is at imminent risk of doing so), a report should be drafted for the **Project Sponsor** (Small) or **Project Board** (Medium and Major) outlining what has "gone wrong" and options for proceeding. The options should always include an impact assessment for project cancellation. *Tolerances should be set for cost, time and quality and agreed as part of the set-up stage of the project.*	Project Manager	Project Manager	Project Board
Gateway 3b (Exception)		Y	Y	The Project Board should agree a recommendation for the relevant governance body (ISSG for IT-related projects) for any project that has exceeded tolerance. The recommendation should include the options of postponement and cancellation as well as continuation.	**Project Sponsor**	Project Manager	Decision: to Business Improvement Team
Project Closure report ☑	Y	Y	Y	The Project Closure report exists to check that the Project is complete within the tolerances set down by the Project Board and that that the objectives have been met. It should also identify and make recommendations for follow-on actions. In Small and Medium projects it should document the lessons learned during the project for use in future projects. Finally it should ensure that arrangements for support are in place and handover to an operational management and document these.	Project Manager	Project Manager	Project Board / governance body / BI team

Item	Project type: Sml	Med	Maj	What to do	Who owns	Created by	Reported to
Lessons Learned report		?	Y	A separate Lessons Learned report should be written for Major (and larger Medium) projects because it is likely that there will be several. The report should include implications for the University as a whole and give recommendations for changes / additions to existing procedures as a result of the lessons.	Project Manager	Project Manager	Project Board / governance body / BI team
Post Implementation Review	Y	Y	Y	At an appropriate time after the close of a project, there should be a review carried out. This is because the benefits of a project will usually not be immediately evident (even if it delivers all its products on time and within cost). The purpose of the review is to assess the extent to which benefits have actually been achieved and to draw additions lessons from this. It should also report on any further actions that need to be taken. The review is prepared by the Project Manager and carried out by the Project Board.	Project Manager	Project Manager	Project Board / BI Team
Post Implementation Review report	Y	Y	Y	The outcome of the PIR should be fully documented, setting out: • Were the benefits met? • What success factors have been achieved. • Any unanticipated success factors. • What benefits have not been achieved. • Any unanticipated negative effects. • Recommendations for further action.	Project Sponsor	Project Manager	Project Board / BI Team
Final reports for ISSG		Y	Y	All Major and Medium project closure, lessons learned and post implementation review reports should be sent to the relevant governance body (ISSG for IT-related projects) The final reports are reviewed and recommendations for actions arising are made, e.g. changes to approach for future projects.	ISSG	ISSG	BI team


MMU Project Governance Lifecycle
Mandate and Brief
Gateway 1
Business Case
Gateway 2
Sponsor
Project Manager
BI Team
IST Projects Investment & Prioritisation Group
Create Mandate
Approve Project Brief
Project type?
Small Projects
Doucment Mandate
Populate Assessmnent Matrix
Send Assessment Matrix to BI Team
Create Project Brief
Set up Project Site
Medium & Major Projects
Decide whether project can proceed
Decision?
Cannot proceed
OK to procced to Gateway 2
Set up Project Board
Create Business Case
Approve Business Case
IPIPG does not need to see Business Case
Decide whether project can proceed
Decision?
OK to proceed
Cannot proceed
Continued below


Project Planning & Set-up
Project Implementation
Gateway 3
Project Close
Small Projects
Set up project team
Detailed Project Planning
Create Project Plan
Create Risk Log
Create Lessons Learned Log
Small Projects
Maintain portfolio register
Issue Workpackages
Conduct Team Meetings
Progress Reports include regular reports to Project Board and also higher-level updates for the IST Projects Investment & Prioritisation Group
Issue Progress Reports
Major Projects
Issue Stage End/Exception Reports
Medium & Small projects
Approve next stage
Decision
Close Project
OK to proceed
Refer to IPIPG
Approve next stage
Decision
Close Project
OK to proceed
Proceed with next stage
Approve close-down
Create Project Close Report
Create Lessons Learned Report
Update portfolio register
Conduct Post Implementation Review
Create Post Implementation Report
Review reports
Recommend further actions
Update project process