Curriculum Reflection Questions for Sr. Projects Post-Mortem Discussions

These questions are to provide qualitative information about our degree program. We collect information about our program on a regular basis to determine how well we are meeting our students’ needs. During the process of reflecting on Senior Projects is an excellent time to collect valuable information.

The questions below are intended to spark discussion. As part of a post-mortem discussion by the team, sponsors, and faculty coach, please gather and discuss answers to these categories of questions and other topics you feel are appropriate. The project team will act as the scribe during the discussion, and provide a summary of the discussion to the faculty coach with the Final Team Self-Assessment at the end of the project. We encourage the sponsor to be part of this post-mortem project reflection. The sponsor may provide the faculty coach with an independent submission, if necessary.

* To what degree do you think the senior project course helped the members of the project team better prepare themselves for professional practice? What worked and what did not?

For one, senior project went through the entire gamut of software development, with the exception of maintenance, which was a first for the team in terms for depth (we’ve all worked on parts of projects before, but not all one, large, all-inclusive project). This helped the team understand the different issues that arise at the different parts of the development process (difficulties gathering requirements and understanding the domain, settling on a design, fighting implementation bugs in 3rd party libraries, etc.). Also the team experienced the “usual” crunch time at the end of terms in order to finish portions of the project.

* What technical resources (or skills, training, tools) were missing that would have helped make the senior project experience more successful?

The lack of graphic design/image manipulation knowledge made making the poster challenging. Luckily there were some members on the team with some experience so that this was not a major issue.

* Did the team possess adequate management and process skills (team building, planning, risk management, change management, process definition and tracking, etc.) to carry out the project? If not, what were the results or how did you mitigate the problem?

The team was effective in their calculation of risks and project planning. When the team made an effort to track process statistics, these were also useful. The team could have been more diligent in tracking metrics the second semester.

* Did the team possess adequate technical skills (requirements, design, coding, testing, quality reviews, etc.) to carry out the project? If not, what were the results or how did you mitigate the problem?

The team’s diversity in technical knowledge allowed us to share information as needed to complete the project. With the exception of XML, the team had sufficient experience in all required areas to complete the project.

* **Student team**: What sort of "real-world" problems did you incur, unexpectedly?

We encountered some problems using 3rd party libraries. SLRE and RGEN for example lacked sufficient documentation. SLRE also contained a few problems significant enough for one team member to open a bug report with them. The team also struggled at times with hard customer requirements (C++ 98/03) but was able to produce a functional project regardless.

* **Student team**: What were the significant issues, good and bad, that you found while completing the Final Team Self-Assessment?

The team did not encounter any major issues completing the final team assessment.

* What advice would you give to future teams, sponsors, and faculty coaches to help them be successful?

Project design and maintaining good customer relations are probably the two most critical components for producing a successful project. Although at times the team has been criticized for spending too much time on design, the repercussions of this are far less severe than spending too little time.

* What advice would you give the department of software engineering in regards to the senior projects course?

The team is happy with the current state of senior project.