Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

Topic Guide

DCM 302 – Project Management: Design and Assessment

Adapted from SUNY – Empire State College

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is meant to help you understand the knowledge and skills typically expected of someone who can demonstrate the learning outcomes for DCM 302 – Project Management in a PLA Project. This guide is also meant to help you go through the processes of thinking about your experience, refining your academic knowledge, and demonstrating a connection between your experience and knowledge. Answering the following questions and following the prompts will help you develop the essay, which will be your PLA Project.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND REQUIREMENTS

DCM 302 – Project Management: Design and Assessment Syllabus

Number of Credits
DCM 302 – Project Management is a 4-credit course. Students who have their PLA Course Match Projects for this course accepted will receive 4 credits.

Level of Learning
As a 300-level class, DCM 302 – Project Management should be treated as an advanced college-level course**.**

Page Count and Sources Guidelines
- at least 12 pages (2400 words)
- at least 8 sources appropriate for scholarly or professional discourse
- APA style

Additional Resources
- PLA Advisor (SCPSPLA@depaul.edu)
- University Writing Center (https://condor.depaul.edu/writing/programs-writing-center-scheduling-appointments.html)
- Purdue Online Writing Lab APA Style Guide (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.htm)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Your PLA Project will need to demonstrate how your experience directly meets the Learning Outcomes for the course. Importantly, you will also need demonstrate the Academic Knowledge associated with your experience.

The Learning Outcomes for DCM 302 are:

1. Communicate effectively in a business setting.
2. Recognize different roles required in a successful project team.
3. Establish a Project Communications Plan to keep a project on track.
4. Recognize how innovation and technology drive project economics.
5. Use computer software and the Internet for project documentation, control and information research.
6. Identify the basic steps and tools found in all modern project management methodologies.
7. Estimate project risk and formulating contingency plans to minimize it.
8. Assess project status via Gantt Charting.
9. Document and tabulating all project details.
10. Understand how project management applies to information systems.
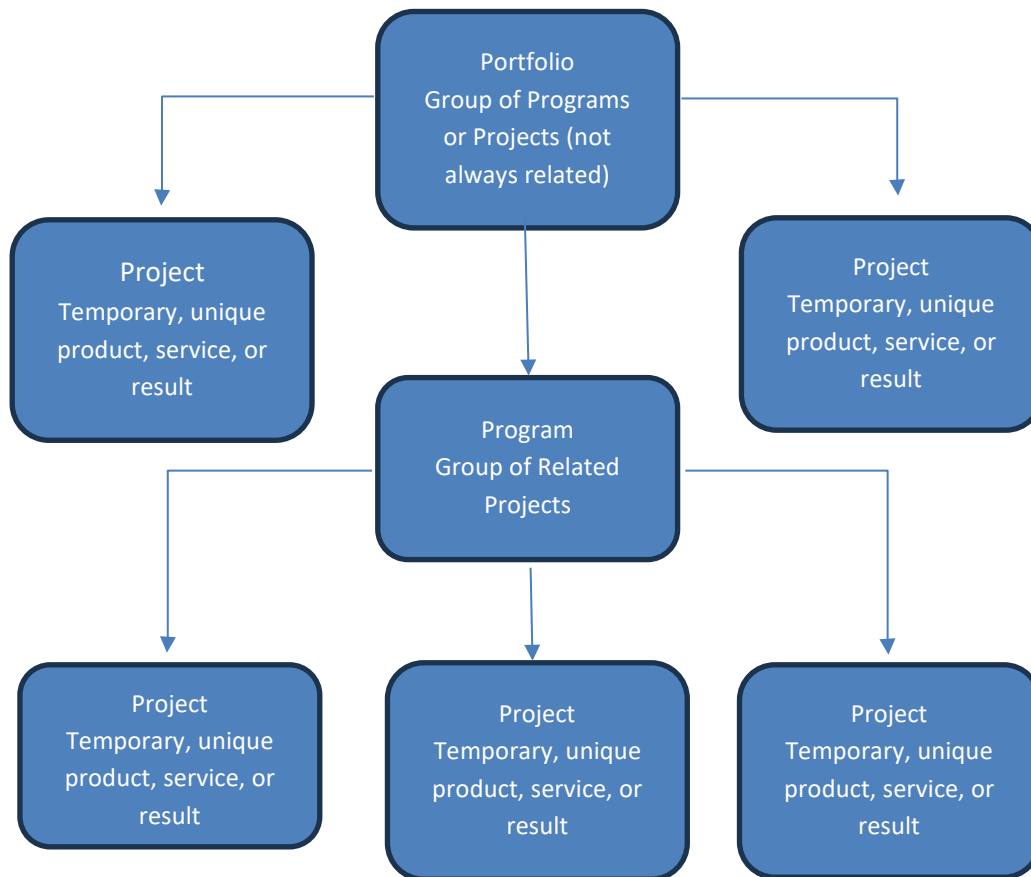
WHAT IS PROJECT MANAGEMENT?

The Project Management Institute (2021) is a leading authority in project management standards and guideline publications, recognizing the importance of *project management* that is the

> "application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet project requirements. Project management refers to guiding the project work to deliver the intended outcomes. Project teams can achieve the outcomes using a broad range of approaches (e.g., predictive, hybrid, and adaptive)" (p. 4).

and the *definition of a project* that is a

> "temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result. The temporary nature of projects indicates a beginning and an end to the project work or a phase of the project work. Projects can stand alone or be part of a program or portfolio" (p. 4).

The role of a project manager is to perform the functions and work with project team/stakeholders to ensure the project is initiated, planned, executed, monitored, and controlled to meet project objectives within the stated scope, and planned timeline, and budget baselines.

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │      Portfolio       │
                    │  Group of Programs   │
                    │  or Projects (not    │
                    │   always related)    │
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```

Portfolio
Group of Programs or Projects (not always related)

Project
Temporary, unique product, service, or result

Project
Temporary, unique product, service, or result

Program
Group of Related Projects

Project
Temporary, unique product, service, or result

Project
Temporary, unique product, service, or result

Project
Temporary, unique product, service, or result

Project Management Institute. (2021). *A guide to the project management body of knowledge (PMBOK® guide)* (7th ed.). Newtown Square, PA: Author.

COMPOSING YOUR PLA PROJECT

Follow the details below by considering the prompts to develop your PLA Project. Simply answering the questions or restating the prompts is not sufficient – you will need to expand your writing to demonstrate the depth and comprehension of your understanding of project management.

You will be preparing a cohesive essay in which a content expert will assess your PLA project based on your 1) Experience, 2) Knowledge and/or Practice, and 3) Reflection & Self-Assessment.

Experience

This criterion requires you to communicate relevant descriptions and explanations of personal and/or professional experience related to learning outcome(s). Describe the experience(s) and how you achieved college-level learning. Provide the context and background of your experience, and provide relevant details regarding what you did. For example, you might include a new skill you acquired, what you observed, how you approached the situation, how you solved a problem, and the outcome.

Knowledge and/or Practice

This criterion requires you to demonstrate understanding of relevant theories, models, or best practices related to learning outcome(s). You must demonstrate understanding of relationship among relevant theories, models, or best practices. Describe and cite the relevant theories, models, practices, and perspectives related to your experience.

Remember you will need to use at least 4 sources appropriate for scholarly or professional discourse and use APA style for citations.

Reflection and Self-Assessment

This criterion requires you to demonstrate reflect upon experience and critically assess your abilities and experiences in relationship to the sources you have included. You must provide self-assessment of your experience showing how it relates to the academic sources you are citing.

As you reflect upon your project management experiences, consider including those that show how you meet the Learning Outcomes for the course.

- Select a project in which the Learning Outcomes can be demonstrated in your application of knowledge, experience, and expertise.
- If any required artifacts are proprietary and cannot convey actual data, they may be modified or anonymized to represent a similar, but fictional project.
- For the Learning Outcomes based on best practices in project management, use an example (citing references), that provides evidence of your understanding of the Learning Outcome.

- Each Learning Outcome will identify the related rubric category used to validate competency.
  - **E = Experience:** Effectively communicates relevant explanation of personal and/or professional experience(s) related to learning outcome(s).
  - **K = Knowledge and/or Practice:** Effectively communicates relevant theories and/or best practices related to learning outcome(s). Should refer to academic and/or professional research.
  - **R = Reflection and Self-Assessment:** Effectively reflects upon experience and critically self-assesses abilities in relationship to relevant body of knowledge.
- The essay outline below also aligns with the required College Learning Levels used in the PLA Assessment Rubric to assess the student's mastery of the Learning Outcomes.

Table of Learning Outcomes matched with Rubric Expectations

LO	DCM 302 Learning Outcome (LO)	Rubric Category
1	Communicate effectively in a business setting.	E, K, R
2	Recognize different roles required in a successful project team.	K, R
3	Establish a Project Communications Plan to keep a project on track.	E, K
4	Recognize how innovation and technology drive project economics.	K
5	Use computer software and the Internet for project documentation, control and information research.	E, K
6	Identify the basic steps and tools found in all modern project management methodologies.	K, R
7	Estimate project risk and formulating contingency plans to minimize it.	E, K, R
8	Assess project status via Gantt Charting.	E, K
9	Document and tabulating all project details.	E
10	Understand how project management applies to information systems.	K

Writing Your PLA Project

The following outline format (heading titles) should be used for the essay. The headings and content should adhere to proper APA formatting and guidelines. Use transition sentences at the end of each section to prepare the reader for the next section.

Each essay outline section details the elements to be presented with the corresponding Learning Outcomes. Outline elements without associated Learning Outcomes are provided to meet PLA Rubric mastery requirements. The Essay Outline is as follows:

Title Page

1. Separate first page with proper APA formatting (Title, Student Name, PLA Course Match, Date).

Introduction

1. Student's project management background/credentials.
2. Overview of what the essay will present/include/discuss.

Project Background and Planning

1. Present the title and scope of the project selected for the essay.
2. State the major deliverables (WBS), schedule and cost baseline for the project.
3. Provide an overview of the primary project stakeholders.
4. Discuss how the project was initiated and how the team was compiled[1].
5. Discuss how the project correlates with how innovation and technology drive project economics[2].
   a. For example, the purpose of the project may be to meet consumer demand for a better product, service, or result.

Project Planning

1. Present how the communications plan was established and provide an example/artifact (screen shot) of the Communications Plan[3].
   a. If there was no formal communication plan, what strategies were used?
   b. Were they effective?
2. Discuss the method used for managing the project documentation[4].
   a. What resources/applications were used to plan the project scope, schedule, and cost baselines?
3. Provide the project management methodology used for this project (e.g. waterfall, agile, hybrid, etc)[5].
   a. Include an overview of the basic steps and tools found in all modern project management methodologies, but specifically in the one used for the project.
4. Describe how risks were identified and planned for the project[6].
   a. Consider presenting an example/artifact of a risk register.
   b. Discuss the various types of risk mitigation strategies (e.g. avoidance, reduction, transfer, and acceptance) and how they were applied to the identified project risks.
   c. Were risk mitigation plans established or contingency funds set aside to address risks if they materialized?

Project Execution and Monitoring/Control

1. Explain how the project maintained forward momentum (or maybe it did not).

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[1] Learning Outcomes 1 & 2
[2] Learning Outcome 4
[3] Learning Outcome 3
[4] Learning Outcome 5
[5] Learning Outcome 6
[6] Learning Outcome 7

     a. If there were delays, how were they managed and/or rectified to get the project back on track?
2. Provide an example of a project status report using a Gantt chart[7].
     a. Consider providing an artifact such as a dashboard that was used to identify project progress.
     b. Were earned value management metrics used (e.g. schedule performance index (SPI), cost performance index (CPI)?
3. Describe how the project documentation and project details were managed[8].
     a. Did the team have a common place to refer to or store project documentation?
4. How were the changes during the project managed?

Project Closure and Lessons Learned

1. Summarize how the project ended.
     a. Was it successful or did it terminate early?
     b. Were all the scope objectives met?
     c. Did the project come in on time and on budget?
2. Incorporate your reflection of how your project management experience influenced the project outcomes.
     a. Was your expertise based on best practices in project management?
     b. What went right and what could have been improved on the project?
3. Use self-reflection and examples from your project to describe how project management applies to information systems[9].
     a. Information systems may be technical (computer-related) or manual (the communication systems and way information flows throughout the project).

Summary - Project and Personal Reflection

1. Provide a recap of the project and how it progressed.
2. Summarize the impact the project outcomes had on the organization and project stakeholders.
3. Reflect on your personal strengths, weaknesses, and experience(s) during your involvement in this project.
4. Critique your application of knowledge and expertise of project management skills as they relate to relevant concepts and best practices in project management.
5. Provide evidence of the learning and growth that occurred for you and the organization during the project and how this will be applied to future projects.
6. Provide a summary/closing statement for the essay.

References

Include a separate last page with proper APA formatting (author/date, hanging indent, etc.)

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[7] Learning Outcome 8
[8] Learning Outcome 9
[9] Learning Outcome 10

PLA ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

The content expert who will assess your project will whether you have demonstrated mastery of the learning outcomes for the class with the following rubric.

Score	Result	Meaning
9-7 Points	Accept	Student is awarded credit for PLA project.
6 or fewer Points	Revise and Resubmit	Student has 2 weeks to revise PLA project based on content expert feedback.

	Accomplished College-Level Learning	Developing College-level Learning	Beginning College-level Learning	Not College-level Learning
	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
EXPERIENCE: Effectively communicates relevant explanation of personal and/or professional experience(s) related to learning outcome(s).	Explanation of experience(s) is comprehensive and detailed. The context and background of experience(s) are described with specific details. There is a clear relationship between the description of the experience(s) and learning outcome(s). Provides specific evidence that learning occurred.	Explanation of experience(s) and the context and background of experience(s) are generally present though with some gaps. There is a general relationship between the description of experience(s) and the learning outcomes(s). Provides general evidence that learning occurred.	Explanation of experience is simplistic and/or incomplete. Minimal context or background of experience(s) was provided. Explanation of relationship between experience(s) and learning outcome(s) is linked but superficial, and is assumed but not explicit. Provides minimal evidence that learning occurred.	Explanation and description of the experience(s) is unclear and/or non-specific. No context or background of the experience was provided. The relationship between experience(s) and the learning outcome(s) is non-existent or scholarly investigation irrelevant. Provides no evidence that learning occurred. Experience is conflated with learning (i.e., length of time is equivalent to mastery).

KNOWLEDGE AND/OR PRACTICE: Effectively communicates relevant theories and/or best practices related to learning outcome(s).	Explanation describes relevant concepts and/or practices and provides analysis (compares/contrasts) with other relevant ideas. Explanation demonstrates critique of strengths/weaknesses of ideas. Secondary sources are appropriate for scholarly or professional discourse.	Explanation generally describes relevant concepts and/or practice, and references other relevant ideas. Explanation may demonstrate adequate description of key idea(s) but there may be gaps in relating it to others. Secondary sources are generally appropriate for scholarly or professional discourse but may exclude key disciplinary concepts and/or be out-of-date.	Explanation superficially describes concepts and/or practice. Conceptual focus may be misdirected or ancillary. Explanation is mainly factual with limited analytical engagement. Secondary sources are included but markedly exclude key disciplinary concepts, are misused, and/or are inappropriate for scholarly or professional discourse.	Lack of evidence or understanding of relevant concepts and/or best practices. Lack of appropriate secondary sources and understanding of knowledge related to learning outcome(s).
REFLECTION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT Effectively reflects upon experience and critically self-assesses abilities in relationship to relevant body of knowledge.	Reflection on experience(s) specifically connects to broader body of knowledge. Recognizes relationship and provides clear critique and/or explanation of the significance of the connection. Provides critical self-assessment including descriptions of personal strengths and weaknesses as it relates to the experience(s).	Reflection on experience(s) generally connects to broader body of knowledge. Recognizes overall relationship and provides some critique and explanation of the significance of the connection. Provides some level of self-assessment including general descriptions of personal abilities	Reflection on experiences(s) minimally connects to broader body of knowledge. Recognizes that there is a relationship but is unable to critique or adequately explain the significance of the connection. Provides superficial level of self-assessment that focuses on what one accomplished rather than how	Lack of reflection on how experience connects to broader body of knowledge. Lack of evidence connecting experience within body of knowledge. Lack of self-assessment on one's abilities or performance.

		as it relates to the experience(s).	well they accomplished.	

EXAMPLES OF GENERAL PLA TOPICS AND LEVELS OF LEARNING

	Building	Project Management	Spanish Culture	Professional Communication
NOT college-level	Know how to put up wallboard	Work to complete items on a checklist given to you	Traveled in Spain twice, for two weeks each time	Sends emails and text messages at work
Beginning college-level	Describe why walls are constructed a certain way	Create a timeline and supervise the completion of tasks	Describe trends and practices related to daily life, holidays, food, religion, etc.; familiar with some Spanish history related to contemporary attitudes and practices List trends and practices related to daily life, holidays, food, religion, etc. Describe some aspects of Spanish history	Communicates in the workplace by writing emails, instant messages and reports for a general audience
Developing college-level	Describe why walls are constructed a certain way Understand how to design a building so the walls stay up Explain why walls are constructed a certain way List the advantages and disadvantages of different methods for building a wall	Create a timeline and supervise the completion of tasks Work to create cooperation of all parties concerned with the project	Discuss trends and practices related to daily life, holidays, food, religion, etc. Identify sub-groups within the overall culture Describe some aspects of Spanish history related to contemporary attitudes and practices .	Communicates in the workplace by writing emails, instant messages and reports for a variety of stakeholders Identifies characteristics of different professional communication genres

Accomplished college-level	Make decisions to design a building so the walls stay up Explain why walls are constructed a certain way Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of different methods for building a wall	Create a timeline and supervise the completion of tasks Work to create cooperation of all parties concerned with the project analyze problems or issues and amend the plan; evaluate the outcome of the project	Analyze nuances related to attitudes and practices Identify sub-groups within the overall culture and analyze the sub-groups relationships with each other Compare Spanish history with contemporary attitudes and practices	Analyzes professional communication genres to develop complex, diverse, and effective written and oral communication Adjusts communications to mindfully consider audience, situation, context, and style

This topic guide was modified from SUNY – Empire State College's Diversity in the Workplace PLA Topic Guide.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Office of Prior Learning Assessment (OPLA)

The Office of Prior Learning Assessment website provides guidance for students seeking to be awarded college credit for prior experience.

PLA Advisor (SCPSPLA@depaul.edu)

A Prior Learning Assessment advisor is available to help you throughout the process. They can help you understand the requirements of a PLA project and are happy to provide feedback on in-progress work.

Course Match PLA Examples
Scroll down to find a few examples of completed Course Match PLA projects.

5 Tips About PLA from a Student
Just what it sounds like—a student who has successfully completed PLA projects shares their tips for success.

The Writing Center
Peer writing tutors are available to help at all stages of the writing process. They can review completed work, in-progress drafts, and even assist with planning and outlining. You can meet with a tutor in-person or online!