# How to assess client-led group projects

The issue of assessment procedures and criteria for client-led group projects was raised at almost every event we attended. Two potential difficulties exist: making an accurate assessment of individuals' contributions to a team effort and making a justifiable comparative assessment of students working on different client briefs. In forming these judgments, assessors are frequently reliant on statements made by students, supported by their own observations. There is always the possibility that students will make false claims and that observations are inaccurate, however careful the assessment process is. If the assessment procedure in a university is particularly rigid and does not admit students' self assessment as legitimate evidence of achievement, it may not be possible to run projects such as ours at that institution.

### *1 Who makes the assessments and when*

There are three stakeholders in the system, the students, the clients and the academic staff. All have a role in the assessment of the projects.

Firstly the client is giving up some time and money and needs to be satisfied with what they receive. In our system they formally assess the quality of the products delivered and provide marks broken down into categories for such things as, ease of use, functionality, robustness, quality of user manuals and so on. This is done at the end of the project.

The students are asked to assess the project both as a team an individually. They can describe the problems that they experienced and what they have learnt from it all. we ask them to identify the contributions of all the team members and to sign the report. This can help us to identify both a team mark and an individual mark.

The lecturers also assess the quality of the processes and the products generated throughout the project. We look at the timesheets and the minutes of the meetings as well as the designs, documentation, code, test strategies, etc. This aspect will provide the other 50% of the module mark.

### *2 What are the assessment criteria*

For the client the assessment is as follows.

The criteria are negotiated with the clients. We have found that a simple mark sheet with about 7-8 criteria works well. The clients are asked to allocate a mark from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) against each criteria
for all the systems they evaluate. In the Software Hut this then counts for half of all the assessment and is a good means of motivating the students to satisfy the client, where this can be achieved!

The students are asked to assess the module in terms of its interest, its relevance and enjoyability. They also state how difficult it was, how time-consuming and whether they were satisfied with the support provided by the lecturers.

The lecturers look at the quality of the products and also the success of the management process and the team work.

### *3 What evidence of performance and achievement is assessed*

We collect almost everything that we can. The students submit, electronically, weekly timesheets, minutes of meetings and all key deliverables such as requirements documents and designs, the code and test results. All of this information is useful in the assessment process.

### *4 Justifying the assessment process*

The assessment methodology has evolved over a number of years. We are happy with both the process and the results it produces. We have had very few problems or complaints from the students - or from colleagues!