**GUIDELINE**

Project Issue Management

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PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

Issues are events which have impacted a project’s ability to deliver its outputs to the plans, altering the project in a positive or negative manner.

This guideline defines how issue management is carried out in projects, including the key roles and where the relevant registers or data should be maintained in a typical project.

ISSUE MANAGEMENT PRACTISE

1. Overview

Issue management in projects follows customary practices used in the project management profession. The logic is similar to risk management and those two areas are closely related.

All identified issues are recorded, assessed and assigned an owner. All items rated ‘high’ are worked on urgently and continuously until they are resolved.

All stakeholders can raise new issues in the project and assist in the assessment and resolution of them, as requested by the Project Manager. The information related to an issue is added to the Issue Register and the Project Manager is notified.

The Project Manager reviews the currently open issues as part of the weekly review of the project controls. The issues rated ‘high’ are included in the milestone reporting.

1. Introduction to project issues

Issues can emerge from two sources:

1. A risk eventuates. The work to respond to this event is recorded as an issue.
2. An unforeseen event happens. It causes the project to deviate from its planned progress and necessitates the project to respond to it (e.g. a technical fault during equipment installation or testing).

Project issues are closely related to risks, changes and lessons, as shown below. The sequence takes place often but not for every risk, issue, change or lesson. Most issues lead to a change in the project, either a technical / product change or in its plans (e.g. schedule or cost). Technical changes are subject to the relevant change process (e.g. Change Advisory Board, CAB, for technology changes) and changes to plans are controlled as project changes (using a Project Change Request form). Many issues provide also an opportunity to learn a lesson and they should always be analysed retrospectively from that viewpoint.

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| Risk |  | Issue |  | Change |
| Lesson |

The key difference between risks and issues is: risks are *uncertain* *future* events while issues are *actual* events which have taken place outside of the plans and require action from the project.

It is a good practice to add each issue response as new activities into the project schedule. This way the impact to the resource usage and schedule becomes visible and the Project Manager has a more complete view of the remaining progress of the project.

1. Issue management process

Issue management follows an incremental process which should involve all the relevant stakeholders.

**Identify & Plan**

In this step, you identify and assess the issue, and consider & select the most suited option for resolving the issue.

The Project Manager, team members, stakeholders, Executive Sponsor, and subject matter expert(s) may all participate, as needed, in identifying an issue and documenting its characteristics. Often this effort is done by the subject matter experts (specialists). Issues can happen any time throughout the project, therefore the identification can happen any time, as well.

For each issue:

* Select the applicable issue category;
* Provide a title and description;
* Summarise the impact;
* Set the priority and outline the mitigation (action to be taken).

**Action**

The Project Manager or Executive Sponsor leads the response using the plans you had made to guide the work. The actions taken are logged into the issue register.

Each issue has also its estimated and actual completion dates recorded.

1. Issue categories

The following issue categories are used in ACU.

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| **CATEGORY** | **SUMMARY** |
| 1. Business | Factors or impacts related to the ACU operations, e.g. business processes. |
| 1. Technical | Technical problems, such as breakdowns or software malfunction. |
| 1. Commercial | Issues related to quotes or pricing, procurement process and product / supplier evaluation, or matters related to supply. |
| 1. Legal | Issues related to the contractual terms and arrangements, regulations and binding frameworks. |
| 1. Reputation | Issues which stem from or lead to poor reputation, e.g. in a local community. |
| 1. Security | Issues related to either information security (cyber) or physical security (e.g. physical access to a facility or venue). |
| 1. Constraint | External factors which limit the projects’ ability to deliver, as planned. E.g. an unexpected limitation on when a business system can be rolled out to a team. |
| 1. Other | Any other issue which can’t be categorised into the seven categories above.  Always try to use the categories above and use this category only if really needed. |

1. Issue register and other data

Project issues are listed and managed in the PPM System or an offline Issue Register (a part of the Project Controls Workbook[[1]](#footnote-1)). Both of these registers are project-specific.

If the project identifies any organisational or university-level issues which are outside of the control of the Project Manager or Executive Sponsor, the Executive Sponsor escalates them to the appropriate member of the Executive or Senior Executive.

The information expected for each project issue is itemised in the table below. Some issue registers have only a subset of the fields available but where possible, the project should use as many of them, as possible.

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| **IDENTIFY & PLAN** | * **Issue ID** – A unique running number for the issue. A prefix can be added to e.g. identify the project in a program (e.g. "TT-I18"). * **Category** – Which aspect of the project will be impacted by the issue? * **Title** – The name of the issue in one short sentence. Any reasons and explanations are given in the Description field. E.g. "Equipment delivery delayed" or "Process throughput too slow". * **Description** – A brief description of the issue giving the key reason or background for it.   + In Sensei IQ PPM System this information is in two fields: Risk event, Causes. * **Date Raised** – When was this entry added, i.e. the risk identified and added to the register? * **Source** – Where or by whom was the issue identified? This can be any individual, a meeting / workshop, specific event in the project environment, message or document, etc.   + In the Projects Control Workbook, this field is titled ‘Reported by’. * **Impact** – How is the issue impacting the project? A short paragraph with one or two key impacts. * **Status** – Status of the issue in the lifecycle as of now (see the list below). * **Priority** – The priority / severity rating for the issue. Use this to prioritise your attention and project team's efforts   + InSensei IQ PPM System this field is titled ‘Impact’. * **Owner** – Who owns this issue? This person is typically in a senior position and can prioritise and direct staff time and ACU resources to work on the issue when needed. * **Action plan** – How is the project going to act to respond to this issue? |
| **ACTION** | * **Action taken / comments** – A log / diary of the actions taken. All entries should be dated and have name or initials (e.g. "15/10/24 WG"). * **Target date** – When is this issue expected to be resolved and closed, or was closed? |

The possible issue status states are listed below. When a new issue is identified, the status is set to ‘New’ until the issue has been assessed.

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| **STATUS** | **DEFINITION** |
| New | A new issue which has just been identified. Work to assess it is yet to commence. |
| Assigned | The issue has been assessed and assigned to an Owner. |
| In progress | The work to resolve the issue is active, led or overseen by the Owner. |
| Pending | The work related to the issue is temporarily on hold. This status usually occurs only rarely. |
| Completed | The response to the issue has completed, Alternatively, the work on the issue has ended for other reasons. |
| Rejected | The issue has been cancelled or the assessment has deemed the event to not be a genuine issue in the project. In some cases, the issue has been escalated to outside of the project. |

The priority of each issue follows the guideline below.

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| **PRIORITY** | **DEFINITION** |
| Low | Project delivery stays within tolerance. Issue is worked on when possible. |
| Medium | Project delivery is likely to exceed the tolerance. Work is scheduled and managed. |
| High | Showstopper. Work commences immediately and continues until resolution |

1. Available from the [ACU Project Management Templates page](https://staff.acu.edu.au/our_university/projects/project_management_templates) in the staff intranet. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)