MAKE IT HAPPEN!

apm

STUDENT PROJECT GUIDE

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Ever wanted to organise an event that was so great it went viral?

Or are you usually the one muttering 'Oops, should have thought of that before' as it all goes disastrously wrong?

Well, here's how we can help. This guide will help you achieve whatever project you have in mind; whether it's making sure the school prom is on point, creating a year book so legendary that Year 7's are dreaming about being you, or raising bags of cash for the charity down the road.

So, once you've decided on the type of school project you'd like run, simply...

1. Read this **Student Project Guide**. This will help you understand all the steps you'll need to take in order to make your project truly legendary.
2. Use all the project planning tools and templates in the **Project Planning Handbook**, to start planning your own project.

If you get stuck along the way, there are plenty of **Project Planning Examples** to show you exactly how to use a particular tool or template correctly. Our examples show you how to plan a student film festival, but you can use this example to help you plan your own project, whatever it is.

Along the way, we'll also show you how you can use the skills you've gained and put them to good use in a career in project management – yes, people get paid to do this! Watch out for the **top tips** to guide you to success.

If this is for you, you can even become a Student member of APM for free. Read on...

HOW TO PLAN YOUR PROJECT

Step by step we'll help you plan your project, making sure you're thinking about the right things at the right time. And we'll even throw in some help from professionals along the way. Here's how it breaks down:

Phase 1: Build your team (pages 4-5)

- [ ] Recruit candidates with a good mix of skills
- [ ] Assign roles and responsibilities that put those skills to good use

Phase 2: Develop your ideas (pages 6-8)

- [ ] Write a Business Case that sets out what you want to do, and how you intend to do it
- [ ] Visualise what success looks like and set out some KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)

Phase 3: Plan out your project (pages 9-13)

- [ ] Estimate how long it will take to plan your project, and how much it will cost
- [ ] Decide what you can (and can't do) given your resources
- [ ] Identify any risks to your project and minimise them
- [ ] Create a project schedule so you don't miss any important deadlines
- [ ] Ensure everyone is doing what they should be doing
- [ ] Keep track of your spending using a project budget
- [ ] Make sure people know about your project using our publicity tips

Phase 4: Make it happen! (pages 14-15)

- [ ] Monitor what's going on to make sure you follow your project plans
- [ ] Manage any issues or problems as they arise and stay in control

Phase 5: Reflect and review (page 16)

- [ ] Reflect on the positives and negatives so you can learn from your project to improve for the future
- [ ] Update your CV with your new project planning experiences and skills

Taking it further

If you're older than 16 and like the idea of working in the project profession, you can join APM as a Student member – for free. It's a great way to build your project knowledge, and network with project professionals. It doesn't matter what subjects you're studying or whether you plan to take an apprenticeship or go to university.
www.apm.org.uk/student

PHASE 1
Build your team

For years, teachers have asked you to complete 'projects', but when was the last time you got to run one, from start to finish, being the boss of who does what when? Well now's your chance – so let's get started by choosing your team:

The sponsor
The person, probably your teacher, who's got you reading this so that you'll run a project for them

Project manager a.k.a. The Boss
The person who runs the project day to day, making sure you meet the project objectives

The team members
The people that get things done! They are good at completing all tasks they are given, often to tight deadlines

The business
The people who are going to benefit from your project

"I worked on a project where team members were located in various parts of the UK and one was abroad. We knew from experience that effective communication would be key, so we set up weekly team calls and a shared mailbox. Having easy access to information helped the project succeed".

Gareth Beauvoisin, HR Project Co-ordinator, BAE Systems

Typical project roles and responsibilities

Most projects will need the following jobs doing. You may want to allocate one person to each job, you may decide to have more than one person on each role or you may have a smaller team doing multiple roles (this is a risky strategy so if you choose this, be careful not to overload your team and always pick reliable people).

Project Manager

The PM is ultimately responsible for the success of the project and making sure it is delivered on time and on budget. They make all the difficult decisions and report back to the Project Sponsor.

Project Coordinator

This person will be very organised and proactive. They make sure the rest of the team are following the project plan and hitting important deadlines. If there are any problems, they quickly report these to the PM. They make the project happen on a day-to-day basis.

Financial Manager

This person is responsible for making sure the project stays within budget. This means finding the cheapest deals to make the budget go further and keeping track of all spending, so it doesn't get out of hand. They keep the PM updated and make sure other members of the team don't get carried away with their spending. They love a good spreadsheet!

Art Director

Responsible for the look and feel of the project. Any creative tasks will be carried out by them. It is up to them to realise the PM's creative vision, but they must also be realistic and resourceful too, so they can do it all on time and on budget. So, choose your creatives wisely!

Communications Manager

This person will make sure the world knows about your project! Whether it is selling tickets, promoting the project through social media or getting you publicity in the local newspaper, they will have the confidence and communication skills to make this happen. They know how to get likes, shares and followers!

So, who's made it into your dream team? Use the **Skills Mapping Tool** and **Dream Team Template** in the **Project Planning Handbook** (on **page 4**) to build your team.

TOP TIP

Don't forget to collect evidence of your skills as you carry out your project – they'll come in handy when you write your CV and personal statement.

PHASE 2
Develop your ideas

Once you've got your big idea, you need to convince your sponsor that your time and effort will be put to good use. If they're investing cash to kick-start your project, they're also going to want to see a return on their investment.

You can do all this by completing a '**Business Case**' for your project. This will help you record your ideas and get you started.

Below is a **Project Planning Example**, showing the business case for a student film festival. Use this to help you complete your own, using the **Business Case Template** on **page 5** of the **Project Planning Handbook**.

KEY WORDS

Business Case

A document that explains why your project should happen and how you plan to make it successful.

"A Project Manager should always have a business case. The most important part of project management is not only understanding what you are doing, but how you want to get it done. By writing it down in a business case, everyone has the same idea of what the project is, and you have proof that they agreed it was the best idea."

Sorrel Gilbert, Project Manager, Sorrel Project Solutions

Project Business Case Example

Set the scene	What is your project?	*Student Film Festival*
	Why do you want to do it?	*To showcase filmmaking talent in our school. To get other students to watch and enjoy our films.*
	Why are your stakeholders (your sponsor) going to be interested in your project?	*Because it helps to promote their after-school filmmaking club to other students. Plus, it will encourage more people to want to be involved in making films which will mean we can make even more films!*
Understand what you need	What are you going to do? Give a quick overview of the step by step process you'll go through	*1. Convince student filmmakers to screen their films.* *2. Secure locations for film screenings (ask if we can use the school hall and classrooms).* *3. Create a screening schedule over one week.* *4. Test the film screening audio visual equipment with help from Media Technician.* *5. Advertise film festival and screenings around school, on social media and in local newspaper.* *6. Sell tickets – proceeds go to after-school filmmaking club.* *7. Make and buy cinema snacks to sell.* *8. Screen films, encourage audience to review films and vote for favourite.* *9. Organise Student Film Awards ceremony during whole school assembly to promote after-school filmmaking club.* *10. Evaluate success.*

Understand what you need	How much will it cost? Give a quick overview – you can give more detail later	*£100*
	When are you going to work on the project? Think about planning time and any 'event' date in mind (where relevant)	*Weekly team meeting during after-school filmmaking club.* *After school and lunch times.* *Over Easter holidays.* *Film Festival dates:13th – 17th May.* *Student Film Awards Assembly: Friday 24th May.*
	Where are you going to do it?	*Classrooms, school hall, school gym.*
	Who will do the work?	*Katie – Project Manager in charge of curating films and securing screening locations and organising the Awards Assembly.* *Ben – Project Coordinator in charge of creating film screening schedule, ensuring technical/audio/visual equipment is tested and working, purchasing and selling snacks at screenings.* *Tom – Financial Manager in charge of monitoring budget, cinema snacks and ticket sales.* *Ryan – Art Director in charge of ticket and poster design, cinema props and food stands, creating show reels and awards for awards assembly.* *Evie – Communications Manager in charge of promoting films and event on social media, selling tickets and attracting publicity from local press*
Prioritise	What **must** you have to make your project work?	*Film screening audio visual equipment, seating, films to screen, printed tickets, posters to advertise.*
	What **should** you have: things that are desirable but not essential?	*Packet cinema snacks to sell, awards for assembly.*
	What **could** you have: things that would be 'nice to have' if they don't affect anything else?	*Red carpet, printed stands and banners (large posters) to advertise the films, trailers for films*
	What **won't** you have now but might like in the future if things change?	*Assembly set up like Oscars, person selling hot dogs, ice cream and fresh popcorn. Screenings in the local arthouse cinema.*
Communicate	How will you communicate your project? Think about who you will need to communicate with, how you'll communicate and when	*Face-to-face and email correspondence with school staff* *Promoting to students through:* *Posters* *Assembly and classroom announcements* *School newsletter and website* *Social media – snapchat and Instagram* *YouTube channel showing teaser trailers for films* *Promoting the event and after-school*

KPIs: What success looks like

How will you know if your project is a success? You will do this by setting out your 'key performance indicators'. These are measurable things that will show your project has been successful.

TOP TIP

In business, key performance indicators (KPIs) are an important way of proving you've been successful. By setting some goals to help you measure your project e.g. number attending an event, sales made, you can easily see how successful your project has been – and then shout about it!

A good way to decide what your KPIs should be is to visualise what success for your project would look, feel and sound like. This may sound a little strange, but for generations, it has been a common practice of athletes, entertainers, and entrepreneurs to use visualisation as a way to reach their goals. **Muhammad Ali**, **Jim Carrey**, and **Tiger Woods** all famously saw their goals achieved years before they arrived.

Close your eyes and imagine your project unfolding successfully at all stages of the planning process. Then, imagine the final outcome being a complete success. Write down what you have seen, heard, thought, felt and even smelt during your visualisation. Can you identify some of the factors needed to make your visualisation a reality? Then, write down some goals (KPIs) you will measure your success against and some actions to help you achieve them.

Project Planning Example: Student Film Festival

Visualisation: *All the screenings are almost full.*

KPI: *75% pf tickets sold for every film screening.*

Action: *Create exciting teaser campaign for films and share using social media. Think of incentives to ensure ticket sales (e.g. free cake with each ticket). Pick venues that will be easy to fill.*

Visualisation: *The films look and sound amazing.*

KPI: *100% of screenings free from technical issues.*

Action: *All audio/visual equipment tested in advance of screening.*

Visualisation: *The films that are screened are fully finished, are exciting/funny/scary/intriguing with some production value.*

KPI: *80% of audience rate films at 4 or 5 stars.*

Action: *Project team to view films to ensure they meet quality criteria. Work with filmmakers to make improvements where necessary.*

PHASE 3

Plan out your project

Step 1: Estimate how much time and money you'll need

So, you've written your business case, but how will you really know how long your project is going to take or how much it's going to cost? Well, you're just going to have to make an educated guess! Project managers have to **estimate** what is going to happen in the future based on the best evidence they have, and then build their project plan around this. You'll need to update your estimates with actual costs and timings as you go through your project to make them as accurate as possible.

KEY WORDS

Estimate

An educated guess about how long your project should take and how much it should cost.

Take the stress out of planning your project by following these simple steps; a similar process to what the professionals go through when they make a 'project management plan' (PMP). Use our handy planning tools and templates in the **Project Planning Handbook** to help you on your way.

Step 2: Know your limits

It's now time to make a plan to bring your project idea to life. Professional project managers will set a **scope** for their project to make sure there is no 'scope creep' This means deciding in advance what you can and can't do during your project, so that no one gets carried away. It's worth having a quick look over your business case every now and then to help you keep focused and on track.

KEY WORDS

Scope

A list of the tasks and jobs you need to complete in order to make your project a success.

Project Scoping Example: Student Film Festival

Major tasks to be completed	Constraints, considerations or limitations
Convince student filmmakers to screen their films.	*Budget constraints around AV equipment. Maximum of five films, one screening per day.*
Secure locations for film screenings.	*Ensure venues are reasonable capacity – the more seats the more tickets need to be sold.*
Create a screening schedule over one week.	*Budget constraints around AV equipment. Maximum of five films, one screening per day.*
Test the film screening audio visual equipment.	*Budget constraints around AV equipment. Involve Media Technician to follow H&S policies and risk assessment.*
Advertise film festival and screenings around school, on social media and in local newspaper.	*Budget constraints around printing costs – 30 colour posters maximum.* *Ensure trailers and teasers are edited to show school in positive light – not offensive.*
Sell tickets – proceeds go to after-school filmmaking club.	*Ensure all tickets are sold at the same price. Instead of lowering price to sell more, offer incentive (free cake).*
Make and buy cinema snacks to sell.	*Monitor budget. Consider allergies and hygiene. Speak with school catering company in first instance.*
Screen films, encourage audience to review films and vote for favourite.	*Needs to link in with Film Award categories. Use 5-star rating system. Anonymous voting system.*

Step 3: Manage any risks

How will you know if your project is a success? You will do this by setting out your 'key performance indicators'. These are measurable things that will show your project has been successful.

KEY WORDS

Key milestones

Project task deadlines – when each task needs to be completed by in order for the project to be a success

Project Planning Example: Student Film Festival

What might happen?	How likely is it to happen?	What might be the impact of it happening?	Who should 'own' the risk?	What action should the 'risk owner' take?
People don't buy tickets	*Medium Risk*	*You don't make enough money to cover the costs of putting the event on*	*Poor ticket sales – Project Manager and Financial Manager*	*Advertising campaign before tickets go on sale, plan regular checks of ticket sales, carry out additional marketing if needed, monitor spending if ticket sales are slow*
The audio/ visual equipment stops working	*High Risk*	*The film screening can't go ahead, audience complains or leaves, demand refund*	*Technical issues – Project Coordinator*	*Ensure audio/visual equipment is tested the day before any screening and there are contingency plans in place (spare speakers, alternative screens/venues)*
Your film festival gets covered in the local press	*Low Risk*	*The press coverage about a certain film paints your school / college in a negative light*	*Press coverage –*	*Write a press release draft to share with local press, ensuring you highlight the films you want them to write about.*

Step 4: Create a schedule

Remember those exam revision timetables you spent hours making to keep your studies on track? Well, creating a schedule for your project will work in the same way and help you keep in control of your project. Professional project managers will use tailor made software such as **Gantt charts** to plot their projects, but you can write a simple schedule using a calendar, or create a shared calendar using Google Calendar. The important thing to remember is to plot **key milestones** during your project:

KEY WORDS

Gantt chart

A type of bar chart that shows a project schedule as a time line. They show the start and finish dates of the work to be done and how the tasks relate to one another.

For example:

a. When will your event take place?

b. When will you need to have designed and made your publicity?

c. When do you need to start selling tickets by?

Project Schedule Example: Student Film Festival

Milestone	Start date	Deadline
Pick films to be screened, secure venues and equipment	*Monday 18th March*	*Friday 29th March*
Create posters and social media promos	*Monday 1st April*	*Monday 29th April (after Easter Holidays to coincide with tickets going on sale)*
Sell tickets	*Monday 29th April (after Easter Holidays)*	*Tickets sold out by lunchtime before each after-school screening*
Film festival starts	*Monday 13th May*	*Everything ready by Friday 10th May*
Collect votes and allocate Awards	*Feedback forms ready by Monday 13th May*	*Votes collected after every screening and counted by Tuesday 21st May*
Awards Assembly	*Friday 24th May*	*Friday 24rd May*

"Under the pressure of strict timeframes, working as a team and ensuring effective communication is critical".

Christina McCormack, PA Consulting Group

Step 5: Manage your resources

No one wants to waste time or money, so it's important you crack **resource management**. You will need to decide if you have enough of the right people to carry out your project, and that you know what everyone is going to do and what resources they will need. Communicating this clearly to your team will avoid any awkward conversations about who's doing what.

Project Resourcing Example: Student Film Festival

Team member	Action	Resources	Deadline
Katie – Project Manager	*Select films to screen*	*Classroom with audio visual equipment to view films, project team to input*	*Friday 29th March*
Tom – Financial Manager	*Create budget*	*Budget template, total event budget, project team to give their cost estimates and update with actual costs*	*Monday 25th March*
Katie – Project Manager	*Secure venues around school*	*Information about films and equipment needed for screenings for meetings with school staff*	*Friday 29th March*
Ben – Project Coordinator	*Create screening schedule*	*Access to final list of films shared Google Calendar*	*Monday 1st April*
Ben – Project Coordinator	*Secure and audio/visual equipment*	*Budget allowance to hire external equipment if not available in school. Support from Media Technician. H&S Risk Assessment*	*Friday 29th March*
Ryan – Art Director	*Design and print posters*	*Access to Photoshop, camera, costumes and props, photography studio and lighting, colour printer and printer credits*	*Monday 1st April*
Ryan – Art Director and Evie – Communications Manager	*Edit trailers and teasers for social media campaign*	*Footage from selected films, access to editing software, sponsor permission to set up social media accounts for snapchat, Instagram and YouTube*	*Monday 1st April*
Evie – Communications Manager	*Sell tickets*	*Ticket designs from Ryan, printer and printing credits, money float for giving change (Tom), table and posters to set up in canteen*	*Monday 29th April (after Easter Holidays)*
Evie – Communications Manager	*Collect audience votes for awards*	*Audience feedback forms printed – spares available – in time for each screening*	*Feedback forms ready by Monday 13th May*

Step 6: Monitor your budget

Let's get down to the nitty gritty bit of the planning – the budget. You need to plan what money you'll have coming in and out, so you can monitor things before it's too late and you run out of cash. Don't forget to update any estimated costs with actuals to ensure you stay on track. Use the **Budget Template** on **page 11** of the **Project Planning Handbook**.

TOP TIP

Checking your budget on a weekly basis will make sure you don't get a nasty surprise half way through your project! Keeping on top of your budget will help you to take early action and make changes to avoid any risks to your project.

Step 7: Publicise your project

Finally, you need to think about publicity – if your project is an event, you need to plan how you're going to get the word out to the right people without spending the earth. Don't forget the power of your mates and your social media channels before spending loads on printing posters.

Get sharing	Create a Facebook or Instagram campaign for your project as a free and simple way of sharing information about your project
Get personal	Where you can, find the names of journalists and personalise your communication to them. If your email feels like a mass outreach email it's just going to get deleted. You need to know who you'll send it to, what they write about and why your project will interest them
Keep it simple	Your press release needs to catch the attention of busy journalists! It needs to be less than a page, with a clear hook and only include the main information: • Who is involved and who is benefiting from your project? • What you are doing? • When you are doing it? • Where you will be doing it? • Why you are doing it? • How you are doing it? • Interesting fact or quote about your project? • Contact information for your Communication Manager?
Grab their attention	Think about what makes your project newsworthy or interesting to journalists and their readers. • Does your project raise money or shine a light on a worthy cause? • Does it involve lots of students and therefore their friends and families will want to read about it? • Does it celebrate someone's success in some way? • Is it topical? • Does it help the local community or is it open to the wider community?
Create the story	Don't leave it to chance - describe your project the way you want others to see it. Use quotes from your sponsors or the business (your customers) and a photo to bring it to life

TOP TIP

Remember to keep a copy of any press coverage your project attracts. This can be used as a talking point to showcase your project management experience in your CV and personal statement.

PHASE 4
Make It Happen!

So, enough of the planning - this is where you put your plans into action and 'Make it Happen'! If you've followed our advice through the first three phases, your project should run nice and smoothly. However, the more complicated your project, the more you will need to monitor and control what is going on so that things don't get out of control. Here are some top tips from APM (Association for Project Management):

- **Manage the issue:** Inevitably there will be some problems you'll face as your project gets underway, but most of them you'll be able to solve with a bit of clever thinking. Carefully managing any risks you identified at earlier (see **Manage any risks** on **page 9**) should prevent these risks from turning into issues, but sometimes issues will arise that mean you'll have to get help from your sponsor. Writing down the issue in an **Issues Log** (on **page 13** of the **Project Planning Handbook**) and communicating it clearly will mean you're most likely to successfully solve it.

TOP TIP

Remember, risks are things that might happen, and issues are things that have happened. Keeping an issue log will make sure that things aren't forgotten, and show what steps were taken to resolve it.

- **Monitor what's going on:** Is everyone working the way they should be? Is everything getting done? Check your schedule and budget regularly to keep everything on track and of a high quality.
- **Take control:** If things seem like they're getting out of hand, here's some ways you can take back control:
  - Re-plan the project
  - Re-schedule the activities
  - Re-prioritise the work
  - Give more / better resources to the activity – but don't forget this will affect the costs so look for ways to save money elsewhere
  - Ask someone else to do the work – but this may also increase costs
  - Reduce the quality – this might make it cheaper and quicker, but your sponsor might not be happy so always ask for their advice first
  - Do less – by reducing the scope, you're more likely to achieve something, but you might not deliver the project you've promised
- **Write it up:** Make your sponsor happy by keeping them up to date with what's going on through a regular **project report** (see **page 13** of the **Project Planning Handbook**).

"I was in charge of a broadband Internet project for a theatre, and in order to deliver this project, I had to settle a conflict about where the cables were laid between the Properties & Facilities department and the telecommunications company. I offered a meeting with a high-profile manager of the telecom company and the theatre manager, where both sides were able to present their arguments. I set out a common goal, and we began to look for a solution that suited everyone, keeping everyone on topic. After two hours of negotiations, we managed to find a solution." **Gennadii Miroshnikov, Technology Manager, London business School**

Project Issues Log Example: Student Film Festival

Issue	Steps taken	Issue resolved?
Audio equipment in classrooms not loud enough to produce cinema quality sound	*Spoke to Media Technician to explore in-school alternatives.* *Investigated cost of hiring from external supplier*	*Yes – negotiated student rate with external supplier and checked with Media Technician that it was compatible with in-school visual equipment*
One of the films selected has poor quality sound	*Working with filmmaker to dub sound to make it clearer*	*Ongoing – hoping to be resolved over Easter holidays*
Missed the deadline for designing and printing posters	*Extra push over Easter holidays to ensure all promotions are in place for first week back*	*Yes – posters printed and ready to go for first week back to coincide with tickets going on sale*

PHASE 5
Reflect and review

You've made it happen! Your project is complete and, by all accounts, was a resounding success. But for professional project managers, the story doesn't end here. You will always have odds and ends to sort out before you've reached closure and your sponsor is totally happy.

Carrying out a **post-project review** of the positives and negatives means you can learn from what happened during your project to improve for the future. Whilst project managers create a report to detail the lessons learned followed a project, we'll let you off by just thinking about the following:

KEY WORDS

Post-project review

A review of your project with the aim of producing lessons learned for future improvements.

Post-Project Review Example: Student Film Festival

What was positive about the planning of your project? *We negotiated a student rate for some professional audio equipment which meant the sound was very cinematic*	**What was negative about the planning of your project?** *We missed the poster printing deadline because Evie was ill. This meant we missed our ticket sales target*
What went well? What were the real successes? *We got coverage in the local newspaper and the local cinema invited us to screen our films at their venue*	**Think about all the even better if...'s What would you differently in the future?** *Have more than one person looking after each role so if they are sick or busy the jobs still get done*

So, now that you've read all the tips and advice in this guide, you're ready to get started planning your own legendary project! Go straight to our **Project Planning Handbook** for all the tools and templates and digital apps you'll need to make your dream project a reality.

Don't forget to share **your** project stories with #APMstories and connect with other inspirational young people starting their own project management journey as apprentices and graduates in APM's ambassador network.

The Association for Project Management (APM) is the chartered body for the project profession. We have over 26,000 individual members and 500 corporate members, making us the largest professional body of its kind in Europe.

If you're older than 16 and like the idea of working in the project profession, you can join APM as a Student member – for free. It's a great way to build your project knowledge, and network with project professionals. It doesn't matter what subjects you're studying or whether you plan to take an apprenticeship or go to university.

www.apm.org.uk/student

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GOOD LUCK!