

Assessment matrix for [name of project]

PROJECT DETAILS

Project/Programme Name	
Project/Programme Sponsor	
Project/Programme Manager	
Start Date	
Completion Date	

DOCUMENT DETAILS

Version	Status (Draft or Approved)	Date	Author/Editor	Details of Change

The Project Assessment tool

The Project Assessment tool is used to assess the complexity within a project, and to give it a weighting so that it can be defined as minor, medium or major.

It is a four step process, described in full below.

Resources will also have an impact on priorities, either in terms of operating within the budget for the Investment Plan or on incompatible demands on key university staff. This is a complex process and may best be achieved through a facilitated workshop.

1. How to use the Project Assessment tool

Step 1: Does it meet the base criteria?

- 1.1 First, you should decide whether the proposed piece of work fits the base criteria for a project. A project, simply put, is a piece of work to produce a **specific, one-off product** of some kind that is not part of routine work.

Assembling a car on a production line is not a project because although the output (a car) is a **product** and it is **specific**, it is not **one-off**. However building a kit car in your garage is a project because it fulfils all three criteria. Using a university example, the annual cycle of recruitment and enrolment is a lot of hard work, but it isn't a project because it is not one-off. However building the new Business School was a project as we'll only ever build one such building¹.

Step 2: Project Impact (page 4)

- 1.2 For each of the three criteria listed in column 1, decide where the project fits – for example if the expected Financial ROI (return on investment) is between three to four years you would score 2 against this criterion.
- 1.3 Add up all the scores according to the column in which each selection sits – the result should fall between the possible minimum of 0 (everything scoring 0 points) and maximum of 15 (everything scoring 5 points).

Step 3: Decide on level of complexity (page 5)

- 1.4 Consider the overall complexity of the project. You follow a similar process to that outlined in steps 1.2 – 1.3 but using the complexity grid on page 5 instead.
- 1.5 The grid on page 5 does not explicitly include a zero score column, but zero scores are still possible – e.g. if delivery timescale is less than a month you would score zero against Delivery Timescale.
- 1.6 Add up all the scores according to the column in which each selection sits – the result should fall between the possible minimum of 0 (everything scoring 0 points) and maximum of 24 (everything scoring 4 points).

Step 4: Decide on project type (page 6)

- 1.7 Enter the outcomes from steps 2 and 3 on the grid on page 6. Depending on which zone your project falls into, you can now determine whether it is Not a Project, Minor, Medium or Major.
- 1.8 All **Major** projects should be linked to the relevant strategic Investment Plan and treated as corporate projects, even if they are being managed within a single service or faculty – this is because they will inevitably have links and impacts beyond the boundaries of a single service and/or faculty. IT-related projects will be overseen by the IT Strategy Steering Group (ISSG).
- 1.9 **Medium** projects will often be of the “tactical” type, and if accepted by the relevant governance body (the ISSG in the case of IT-related projects), can be managed independently of that body (via an appropriate project board) within the relevant service or faculty. However, some Medium

projects will have importance or impact beyond their immediate “home”, and the governance body should consider whether to include specific Medium projects in the relevant Investment Plan (in particular, those scoring within two or three points of the upper boundary).

- 1.10 **Minor** projects will almost always be “tactical”, and can be managed independently of corporate governance within the relevant service or faculty via an appropriate project board. If there is funding and resource for a Minor IT project within the parent service or faculty, in general the project will not need ISSG approval to proceed – however all such projects should be made known to the BI Team or the IT Project Office both for incorporation into the projects database and so that the ISSG can take these projects into account when assessing dependencies and resources for further, future proposals.
- 1.11 **Not a Project** simply means that although it fulfils the “project” criteria in step 1, it is not complex or impactful enough to need to be managed as a formal projectⁱ, though of course you can still use a light-touch project management approach.
- 1.12 Once you have completed the matrix you may delete the two pages of instructions (pages 2 and 3) in order to present your assessment as part of the Project Brief.

2. Guidance on use of the Assessment Matrix criteria:

- **Strategic contribution** – systems that have to be delivered in order to deliver agreed University strategic objectives. For an impact score of 3 or 4 points it must be possible to demonstrate within the Business Case that the project has a direct impact upon the achievement of the priorities (i.e. it isn’t simply linked to them; the strategic priorities are to some extent dependent upon the project in order to be achieved).
- **ROI and timescale** – at the initial stages of project planning it is usually difficult to provide accurate estimates of ROI and timescale. Thus if a project’s estimate is close to an upper boundary, it will be safer to score it in the higher level since projects usually end up costing more (i.e. having a lesser ROI) and taking longer than originally anticipated.
- **Organisational effectiveness** – factors to consider are the degree to which existing business processes will improve and whether major restructuring may be required. Do not consider cost savings here as this is built into the ROI criterion and you must avoid double counting.
- **Operational change** – this is closely allied to Organisational effectiveness, but whereas the former looks at impact in terms of positive improvement, Operational change looks at the issue of how much change is happening (the greater the degree of change, the more difficult it will be to achieve). For example if you have scored 3 against Organisational effectiveness (Improves work of whole department) it’s extremely unlikely that you will score less than 3 on Operational change.

Project impact assessment matrix

Criteria	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Strategic contribution	None	Contributes indirectly to 1 strategic theme	Contributes indirectly to >1 strategic theme	Contributes directly to 1 strategic theme	Contributes directly to >1 strategic theme	Very significant strategic impact
Financial ROI	>5yrs	4-5 yrs	3-4 yrs	2-3 yrs	1-2 yrs	<1 yr
Operational effectiveness	None	Improves work of a small group of staff <6	Improves work of a large team of staff >5	Improves work of whole department	Some improvement across whole University	Significant improvement across whole University

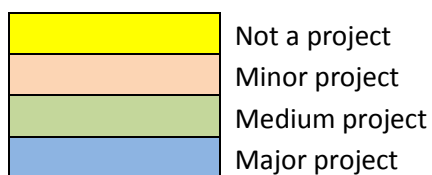
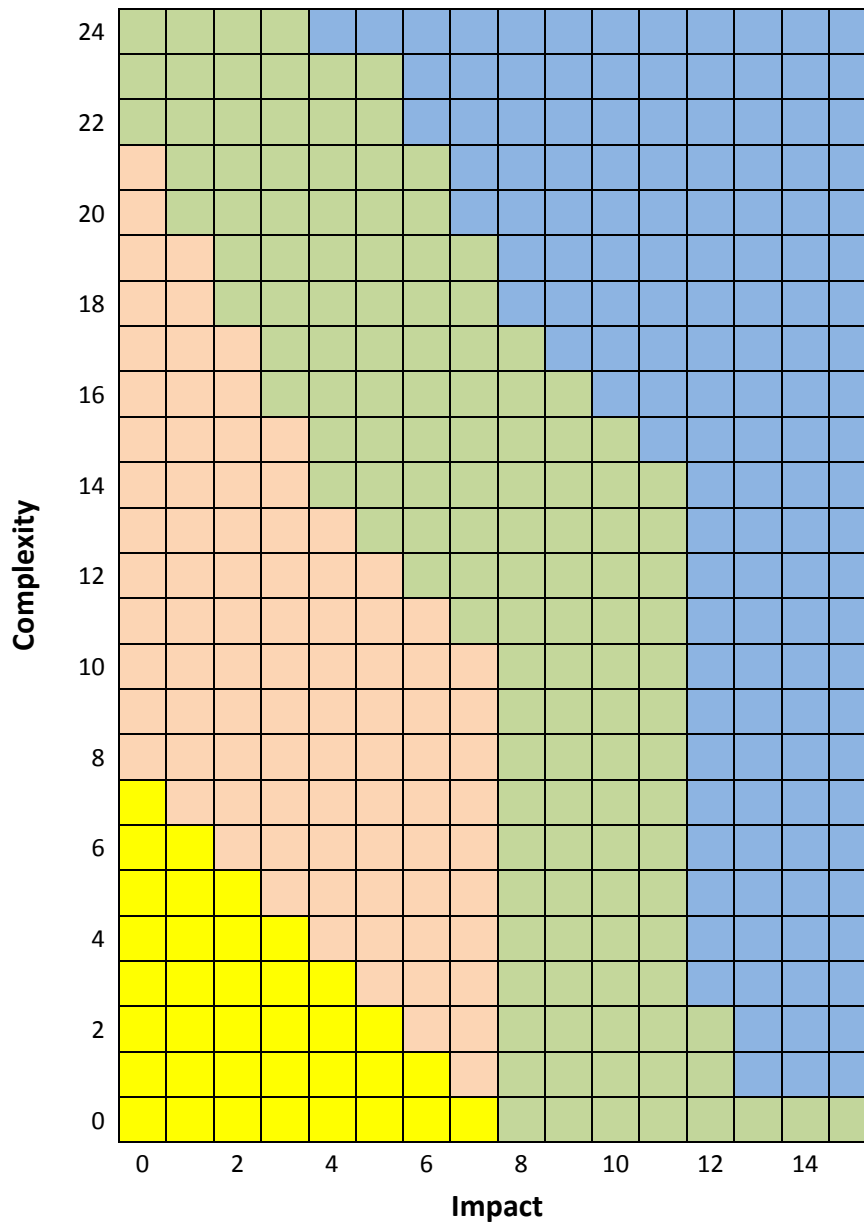
Current Strategic themes:-

- Student Experience (Student Life)
- Learning and Teaching
- Research
- Enterprise and Knowledge Exchange
- Internationalisation
- Environmental Sustainability

Project complexity assessment matrix

Criteria	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4
Delivery Timescale in months - 10%	1-6	6 - 12	12 - 18	>18
Stakeholders 20%	Internal and within single business area	Internal across more than one business area	Mainly external	Internal and external
Operational change 15%	Very minimal	Some new business processes and possible some re-training	Significant re-structure of processes and work areas	Major change eg large scale restructure, outsourcing
Contract complexity 20%	No new contracts required	Single contract with known supplier	Multiple contracts with known suppliers	Contract(s) with new suppliers(s)
In-house expertise 20%	Have done this before many times	Have done this before once or twice	Have done similar before, but not the same	Have not done anything like this before
Dependencies 15%	Very minimal links with other projects	Links with other projects but little impact	Links with other projects upon which this project depends	Other projects depend upon this project

Project Type Matrix



ⁱ Refer to the toolkit document “What is a project v1”: available at <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/bit/project-management-toolkits.php>