RESEARCH PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Learning Objectives

The goal of this module is to:
Explore issues of accountability related to internal and external collaboration with the research team and industry partners.

Upon successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

• Understand the elements of effective professional communication with members of the research team, industry stakeholders and other professionals

• Inventory desirable qualities of effective personal and team communication

• Identify examples of poor communication

• Discuss diversity issues in research

• Describe the components of team building, motivation and delegation

• Analyze elements of teamwork and team effectiveness

• Manage self within the team context and industry stakeholder relationships
Working Professionally with Clients

Professionalism” is an ambiguous term used to describe a wide range of attitudes, skills, values and behaviours. In business, if a client refers to someone as being “professional”, we know that he/she is pleased with that person, but what exactly does he mean? Basically, we can agree that the term goes far beyond technical qualifications and academic attainment.

The right attitudes and behaviours must also be in place…and in fact are largely the main dimension that distinguishes ordinary client relationships from “special” ones.

So what are these attitudes and behaviours?
What do you think of when you hear or use the term “Acting or Communicating Professionally”?
Working Professionally with Clients

In a survey conducted among various consulting firms in the U.S. and Canada, the results showed a so-called “Top 10 Must Do List” that looks like this:

1. Become involved and do more than is required in your assigned role.
2. Accept responsibility.
3. Do whatever it takes (legally, of course) to get the job done.
4. Become an integral part of "the team".
5. Be attentive and observant.
6. Always be honest and sincere.
7. Be loyal to your clients.
8. Listen closely to the client’s wishes and needs.
9. Take pride in your work, and show a commitment to quality.
10. Always show initiative.
Effective Professional Communication

What is communication?

Communication is a process of transferring information from one source to another. Components of Communication are:

- Sender
- Receiver
- Message (good news, bad news, neutral, persuasive)
- Channel (method used to send the information)
- Noise (interference in the communication)
- Feedback loop
Senders and Receivers

The “sender” lives in his or her own personal reality and has certain intent behind his or her message. Meanwhile the “receiver” lives in his or her own reality which may differ considerably from the “sender’s”. Therefore, the “receiver” must perceive what it is the “sender” is trying to communicate. Sometimes what is perceived by the “receiver” is not the intended message by the “sender”.
The Message: Strategies

Good News - provide the news, details, and action requested or to be provided

Bad News – the “positive sandwich” – open and close with positive language; provide reasons before the bad news

Neutral – same strategy as good news

Persuasive – attention opening; reasons/benefits; action request; persuasive close
The Channel

Channels can be selected or imposed – if possible, select the most appropriate channel for the message, the situation, and the receiver. Examples are (in descending order of active involvement):

- In person/face-to-face
- Video or audio conferencing
- Phone – individual call
- E-mail; voice-mail
- Formal written correspondence
- Other?
Noise

Noise is interference with the successful management of the communication. It can occur at any point in the communication process:

- **Sender or receiver** – internal (give examples)
- **Message** – poor language use, grammar, tone, emphasis, poor communication strategy, etc.
- **Channel** – poor choice of channel; external noise
Communication Models

There are a variety of communication models available that you can review at:

http://ucspace.canberra.edu.au/display/7125/Communication+models
Test your own comfort level when communicating with others. Some people are most comfortable when communicating with one other individual while others feel comfortable talking in large groups. The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) is an assessment tool that will help you determine in which environment you feel most comfortable communicating – group discussion, meetings, interpersonal conversations, or public speaking. Knowing where your strengths and limitations are will assist you in formulating a plan for continuing growth in the area of communication.

You can then calculate your overall communication apprehension score which reveals how comfortable or uncomfortable you are when communicating in public by following the link below.

Diversity in the Workplace

As a student researcher, you will be working with culturally diverse individuals and teams.
Diversity in the Workplace

What is Workplace Diversity?

Workplace diversity refers to the extent to which an organization is culturally, gender and generationally diverse.

Diversity includes the range of ways in which people experience a unique group identity, which includes gender, race, ethnicity and age.

An organization’s culture tends to determine the extent to which it is diverse. While diversity in the workplace brings about many benefits to an organization, it can also lead to many challenges.

List some potential diversity challenges in your research project.
Team building, Motivation and Delegation

As a student researcher, it is important to note that the success of your research project (as well as success in many other pursuits) requires skill in functioning effectively as part of a team.

Whether you are a team leader, member or facilitator, you need to understand the ways that you can become part of a “well-oiled machine”, and get the most out of your team by taking advantage of each other’s strengths. Team building involves skills that must be learned and developed.
Team building, Motivation and Delegation

Understanding team dynamics:

- Learning team member roles and responsibilities
- Good communication for team effectiveness
- Self management within the team context
- Styles of decision-making / problem-solving / achieving consensus
- Working through problems
Motivation

Motivating team members to perform cohesively requires work and finesse. One way to capitalize on team members’ skills and to motivate is to assign team roles. Sometimes this is done formally, but often people find themselves playing a certain role on a team quite naturally. The key is to figure out the most appropriate contribution you can make on a team, and to be able to recognize the various roles that others may play.

There is no set standard for roles that are required for a team project. The project and the individuals performing the project will determine the roles required. The

By instinct, team members select the role suited to their personality.
Delegation (also called deputation) is the assignment of authority and responsibility to another person (normally from a manager to a subordinate) to carry out specific activities. However, the person who delegated the work remains accountable for the outcome of the delegated work. Delegation empowers a subordinate to make decisions; i.e., it is a shift of decision-making authority from one organizational level to a lower one. Delegation, if properly done, is not abdication.

The opposite of effective delegation is micromanagement, where a manager provides too much input, direction, and review of delegated work. In your role as a student researcher, you may be assigned tasks by your supervisor or industry partner, and/or you may be in the position of delegating tasks to others. Knowing what you are empowered to do will allow you to meet deliverables and deadlines.
Teams have various roles that are fulfilled by team members. Each of these roles may or may not be filled by all team members.
Peter Levin’s Team Roles

Organizer: Keeps meetings focused and in order, does his or her best to get through the agenda.

Encourager: Brings good humoured appreciation to proceedings; able to defuse tensions and revive flagging morale.

Facilitator: Ensures that the quieter members of the group are heard and everyone’s contribution acknowledged.

Recorder: Keeps a note of decisions (especially decisions as to who will do what before the next meeting); ensures that everyone is aware of them.

Timekeeper: Keeps track of the time throughout a meeting.
Peter Levin’s Team Roles

**Progress Chaser:** Keeps an eye on the calendar and ensures that everyone is aware of the “state of play”.

**Coordinator:** Sees the “big picture” (strategic overview), with an eye for gaps and overlaps, and presents this to the team.

**Lookout:** Visualizes future scenarios, is alert to issues that may be looming over the horizon, keeps everyone informed.
Teamwork and Team Effectiveness

Teams

Because teams are natural learning centers, creating opportunities for personal growth and providing energy and stimulation through interaction with others, individual team members will have the opportunity to achieve and surpass their educational goals. The four aspects of “learning teams” that assist members to meet real-world goals are referred to as “SOAR”:

- **S** – support for each other
- **O** – options (for problem solving)
- **A** – acceptance (of team differences)
- **R** – response (to each other’s needs)
Skills Required to be a Team Player

There are two kinds of skills that individuals in a team possess. These are:

1. Intellectual Teamwork Skills
2. Emotional Teamwork Skills
Intellectual Skills

Intellectual skills involve the ability:

- To appreciate a situation (observe, investigate, theorize)
- To think in an issue-oriented way and formulate objectives
- To plan and manage a project
- To gather and manage knowledge and expertise
- To deploy other forms of learning alongside studying
- To identify issues and get to the heart of them
- To make objectives and constraints explicit
- To plan and manage programs of work

According to Peter Levin (2004), intellectual skills involve thinking rather than emotions, intuition or instinct. They help in analyzing the overall task, breaking it into individual component tasks and formulating a plan for carrying them out.
Emotional Team Skills

Emotional team skills involve the ability:

- To communicate with others
- To communicate one’s opinion respectfully
- To negotiate constructively and creatively
- To negotiate commitments that are realistic
- To keep the social infrastructure of the team in good repair
- To exercise leadership, keep team focused and mobilize consent for decisive action
- To sense crucial needs of the team and respond

Unlike intellectual team skills, emotional team skills are acquired and refined through ‘experiences’. They cannot be learned in a traditional way; they are experiential in nature and thus require exposure and practice. These skills fall in the category of soft skills.

Individuals that possess both intellectual and emotional team skills are more likely to positively impact teamwork and thus team effectiveness.
Characteristics of Effective Teams

All group members work together toward a shared goal. Each member takes responsibility for the success of the team. Members learn to:

- Communicate clearly and directly
- Deal with conflict
- Value differences
- Focus on both content and process
- Stay focused and goal-oriented
- Set and follow ground rules
Characteristics of Effective Teams

Ground Rules:

- Arrive on time and be prepared for task at hand
- Show courtesy and respect
- Avoid negative comments
- Be specific and focused
- Disagree in an agreeable manner
- Give reasons
- Make decisions by consensus if possible
- Agree on actions, interpretations, etc.
Stages of Team Development and Team Effectiveness

In 1965, Bruce Tuckman described the distinct stages that a group can go through as it comes together and starts to operate. This process can be subconscious, although an understanding of the stages can help groups reach effectiveness more quickly and less painfully. The stages described by Tuckman are:

- Forming ~ Stage 1
- Storming ~ Stage 2
- Norming ~ Stage 3
- Performing ~ Stage 4
- Adjourning ~ Stage 5
Forming

In this stage of the team formation, people are becoming oriented to each other. The team needs direction and team members want to be accepted and included.
Stages of Team Development and Team Effectiveness

Storming

Once important issues start to be addressed, some people’s patience will break and minor confrontations could arise. **Individuals will look for structural clarity and rules to prevent the conflict from persisting.**
Stages of Team Development and Team Effectiveness

Norming

The “rules of engagement” have been established and the tasks and responsibilities are clear and agreed upon. Individuals listen to each other, appreciate and support each other, and are prepared to change pre-conceived views.
Stages of Team Development and Team Effectiveness

Performing

Characterized by a state of interdependence, flexibility, unity, acceptance, trust and being inspired by one another. The team has a high degree of comfort and its energy can be directed towards the task at hand.
Stages of Team Development and Team Effectiveness

Adjourning

This stage was added by Tuckman 10 years after describing the first four stages. This stage is about completion and disengagement, both from the tasks and the team members. Some describe this stage as “Deforming and Mourning” ~ recognizing the sense of loss felt by group members. This stage can also occur should the team not be able to norm or perform.
Effective Teamwork

Describe/list successes and challenges you have encountered in teamwork related to your research project.
"You have to earn it" might be a good way to summarize what professionalism is all about. It means deserving the rewards you wish to gain from others by being dedicated to serving their interests as a part of an implied bargain.

"Professionalism" implies that you do not focus only on the present transaction, but also care about the relationship. It means you can be trusted to put your client’s interests first, can be depended upon to do what you say you will do, and not consistently act for short-term personal gain. "Professionals" try to help (as opposed to needing to be right).

A good way to start a professional relationship with an industry partner is to look at the research relationship from the partner’s perspective: goals, challenges, situation, needs, knowledge of the research topic, knowledge of the College or your program, etc.

Conduct a brief analysis of your industry partner for your research project.
Industry Relationships

Based on what the survey respondents said, when dealing with clients you should always remember to:

1. Give the client your respect. Treat clients like people not like a job.

2. Take the time to explain what you’re doing and why.

3. Answer all questions and handle challenges with civility.

4. Don’t leave the client out of the loop and “take over” the project.

5. Give clients options, instead of telling them what they must do.

6. Try to produce creative, original solutions, as opposed to stock, standard ones.

7. Don’t treat the issues as purely “technical”, without consideration for the client’s feelings.

8. Don’t assume or pretend to know more than you do.
Non-Disclosure

In your role as a research assistant/student researcher, you are likely to be asked to sign a non-disclosure/confidentiality agreement before you begin your work on an applied research and development project. You need to familiarize yourself with these terms and documents so that you may understand the extent and nature of your accountability.
What is Intellectual Property?

Intellectual property refers to the legal rights over things that were created by the mind including both artistic and commercial.
What is an MOU?

A memorandum of understanding (MOU or MoU) is a document describing a bilateral or multilateral agreement between parties. It expresses a convergence of will between the parties, indicating an intended common line of action. It most often is used in cases where parties either do not imply a legal commitment or in situations where the parties cannot create a legally enforceable agreement. It is a more formal alternative to a “gentlemen's agreement”.

In some cases, depending on the exact wording, MoUs can have the binding power of a contract; as a matter of law, contracts do not need to be labeled as such to be legally binding. Whether or not a document constitutes a binding contract depends only on the presence or absence of well-defined legal elements in the text proper of the document (the so-called "four corners"). For example, a binding contract typically must contain mutual consideration; a legally enforceable obligation of the parties and its formation must take place free of the so-called real defenses to contract formation (fraud, duress, lack of age or mental capacity, etc.).
The Industry Canada Website has important information and resources on copyrights, patents, trademarks, industrial designs and integrated circuit topographies that you may need to access during the course of your work at the college. Browse through the website to find out more: http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/ic1.nsf/eng/h_00075.html