Group Reflection

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## Overview/General

Our group was unique in size and personalities going from 3 people to 5 people. This presented an initial challenge as we had to integrate and get to know new members and re distribute our workload. Our chosen Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC) was an agile approach however, in execution our approach was more plan driven such as waterfall and was pointed out in our weekly stand ups. We learned that while we understood the theory of an agile approach, in practice, it was much harder and more nuanced to implement showing our lack of experience with SDLCs. We needed to take a step back and look at our chosen approach again to fully understand it as best we could so we could deal with any new difficulties and observations made week to week on our progress both on the project and as a group. During our misunderstanding and incorrect implementation of agile it was pointed out that we were working on our own with extraordinarily little to no communication. At this point we had a heart-to-heart conversation during our stand up which led us to open up to each other about personal issues affecting our productivity and honesty regarding our skill levels and what we could realistically deliver. It was a difficult conversation but a fruitful one, we took on a realistic workload, helped each other with various aspects of the project discovering we all had something to learn from each other both academically and personally, allowing us to identify gaps in our learning and where we need to improve.

## What went well?

The difficult stand-up meeting led to our group’s epiphany, the turning point came during and after midterm as we began to bring the project together. We were delivering bite size chunks and putting them together bit by bit. Our workload was allocated depending on our skill levels in small manageable loads. We helped each other and paired up to get areas we found difficult up to scratch, delivered and merged. It was a fantastic learning experience with several members shining in their regard to impart information and teach others. We also communicated when we were not available and open about the reasons. If there was one thing to be pointed out about our group, we would say it was the empathy and understanding for our personal situations and how it took a weight off our shoulders. Working as part of a team on a project does not need to be a stressful experience and overall, it wasn’t as in the end we surprised ourselves with what we have delivered. What we have learned from each other is as invaluable as what we have learned on SDLC, Test Driven Development, Java, JUnit, SQL databases and how it all comes together to form a working product.

## What Went wrong?

The biggest issue was we were a team of individual’s as opposed to team players which stunted progress and we didn’t realise it initially and not engaging with the process fully or correctly ie code written before tests. Next, throughout the course of the project our estimations on everything after we completed the requirements were far too optimistic. This was due to our skill levels, inexperience, and initial lack of communication. After the midterm, the estimations improved but were still out, but not by a country mile. Lack of communication before our midterm epiphany affected the overall outcome due to half the time having gone by before we got a handle on it. It was hard having our shortcomings pointed out, but it was necessary. It often takes an outsider looking in to see what’s going on as we were blinded initially by our own estimations of how well we were doing. One final aspect that did not go well is our reviewing of each other’s code as it tended to be a quick glance as opposed to a thorough read through. Inevitably errors in the code and code output bled through with each iteration, adding to our workload with error fixing, where it would not have with a more thorough and thoughtful review process.

## Moving Forward

As we move on from the project into exams and then into placement, our experience with the project and each other will help us in the interview process and workplace. The biggest lesson learnt is open communication, as opposed to quietly working away then struggling silently when an issue in code or life crops up and not voicing it. Honesty regarding skills is the next lesson. Moving forward knowing our shortcomings and where we need to improve, we have improved confidence to seek out the help to improve whether from academic staff or our fellow classmates and our colleagues, mentors, we will have in placement. We know now that seeking help, seeking to improve, is not a terrible thing and being open about it, the reasons why, is something that is welcomed and not looked down on. In delivering our work to date, we have learned we can deliver something of decent quality if not perfect and overcome the challenges that arise when working on such a project. In turn we have also overcome personal challenges and the nuances of working in a team, we will slot in well with future groups with what we have learned as well with have we have grown individually. This project has been the most beneficial to date in our college journey in terms of what we have gained from it, communication, honesty, teamwork and perseverance through what a project or life can send our way.