Chapter 5 – System Modeling

System modeling

- System modeling is the process of developing abstract models of a system, with each model presenting a different view or perspective of that system.
- System modeling has now come to mean representing a system using some kind of graphical notation, which is now almost always based on notations in the Unified Modeling Language (UML).
- System modelling helps the analyst to understand the functionality of the system and models are used to communicate with customers.

System perspectives

- An external perspective, where you model the context or environment of the system.
- An interaction perspective, where you model the interactions between a system and its environment, or between the components of a system.
- A structural perspective, where you model the organization of a system or the structure of the data that is processed by the system.
- A behavioral perspective, where you model the dynamic behavior of the system and how it responds to events.

UML diagram types

- Activity diagrams, which show the activities involved in a process or in data processing.
- Use case diagrams, which show the interactions between a system and its environment.
- Sequence diagrams, which show interactions between actors and the system and between system components.
- Class diagrams, which show the object classes in the system and the associations between these classes.

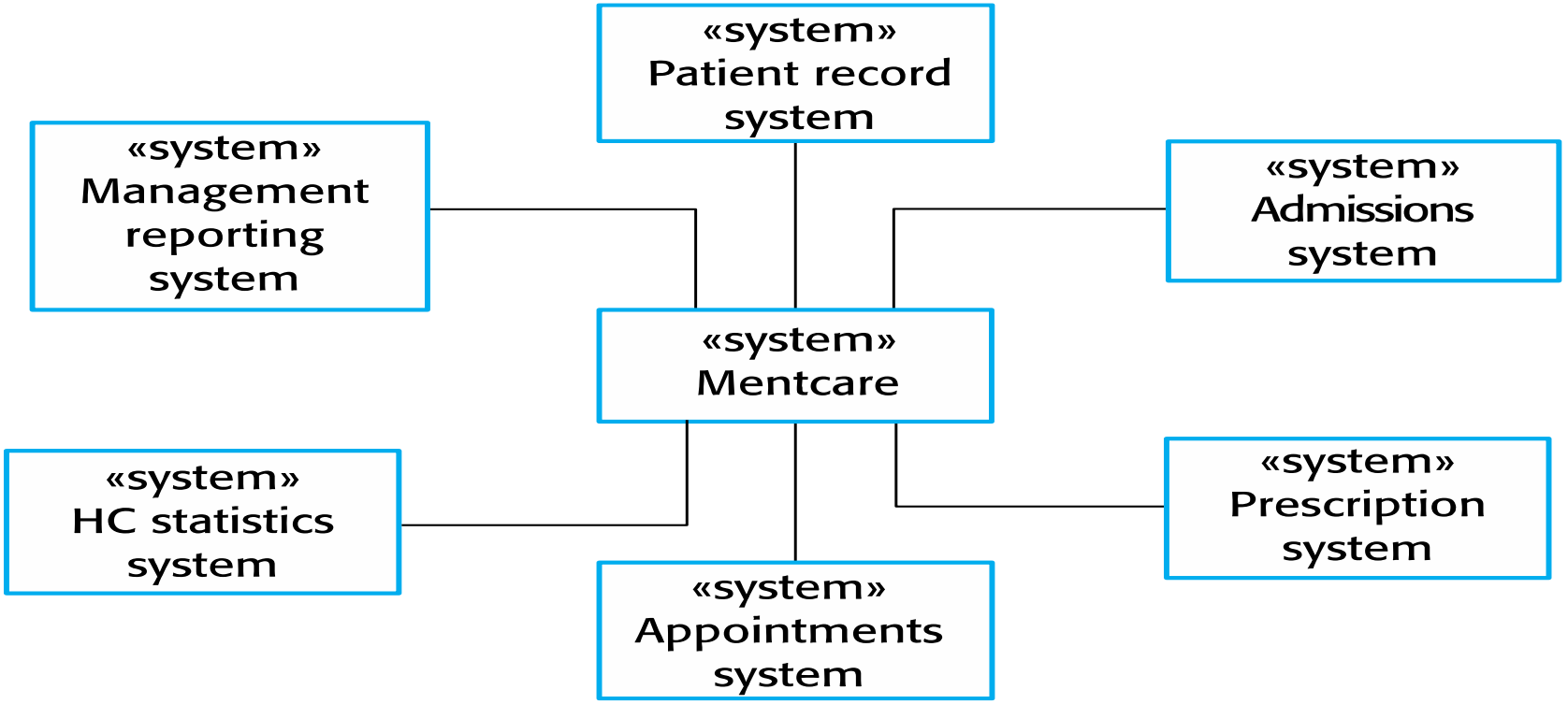
Context models

- Context models are used to illustrate the operational context of a system - they show what lies outside the system boundaries.
- Social and organisational concerns may affect the decision on where to position system boundaries.
- Architectural models show the system and its relationship with other systems.

System boundaries

- System boundaries are established to define what is inside and what is outside the system.
  - They show other systems that are used or depend on the system being developed.
- The position of the system boundary has a profound effect on the system requirements.
- Defining a system boundary is a political judgment
  - There may be pressures to develop system boundaries that increase / decrease the influence or workload of different parts of an organization.

The context of the Mentcare system



Process perspective

- Context models simply show the other systems in the environment, not how the system being developed is used in that environment.
- Process models reveal how the system being developed is used in broader business processes.
- UML activity diagrams may be used to define business process models.

Interaction models

- Modeling user interaction is important as it helps to identify user requirements.
- Modeling system-to-system interaction highlights the communication problems that may arise.
- Modeling component interaction helps us understand if a proposed system structure is likely to deliver the required system performance and dependability.
- Use case diagrams and sequence diagrams may be used for interaction modeling.

Use case modeling

- Use cases were developed originally to support requirements elicitation and now incorporated into the UML.
- Each use case represents a discrete task that involves external interaction with a system.
- Actors in a use case may be people or other systems.
- Represented diagrammatically to provide an overview of the use case and in a more detailed textual form.

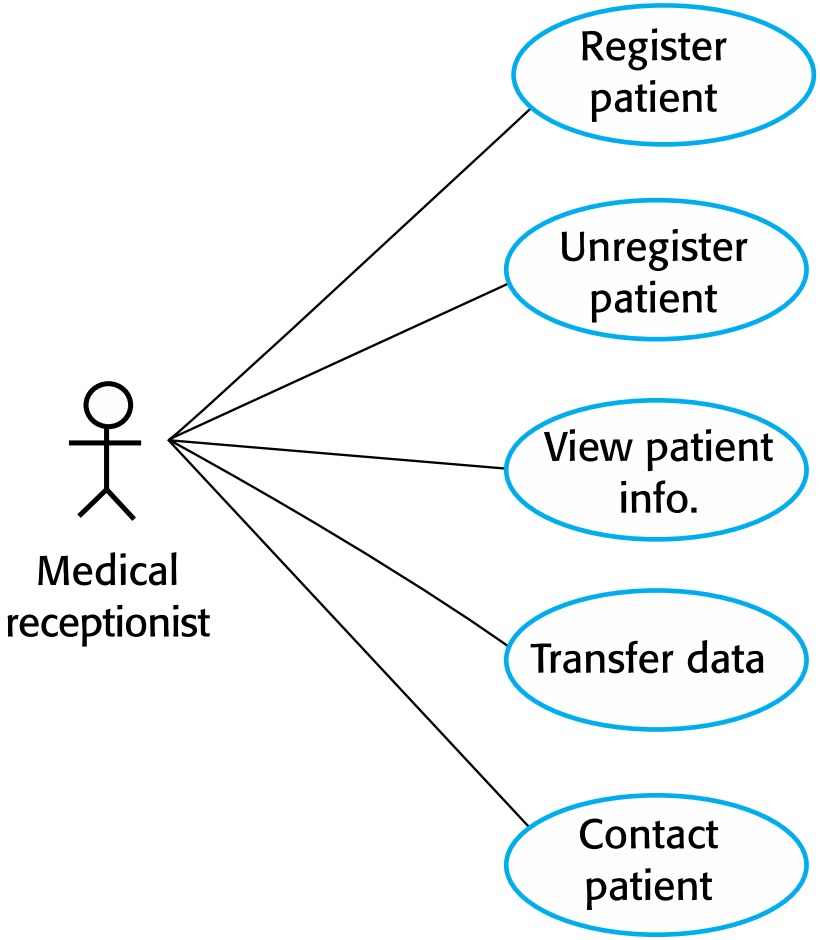
Transfer-data use case

✧ A use case in the Mentcare system

Tabular description of the ‘Transfer data’ use-case

MHC-PMS: Transfer data	
Actors	Medical receptionist, patient records system (PRS)
Description	A receptionist may transfer data from the Mentcase system to a general patient record database that is maintained by a health authority. The information transferred may either be updated personal information (address, phone number, etc.) or a summary of the patient’s diagnosis and treatment.
Data	Patient’s personal information, treatment summary
Stimulus	User command issued by medical receptionist
Response	Confirmation that PRS has been updated
Comments	The receptionist must have appropriate security permissions to access the patient information and the PRS.

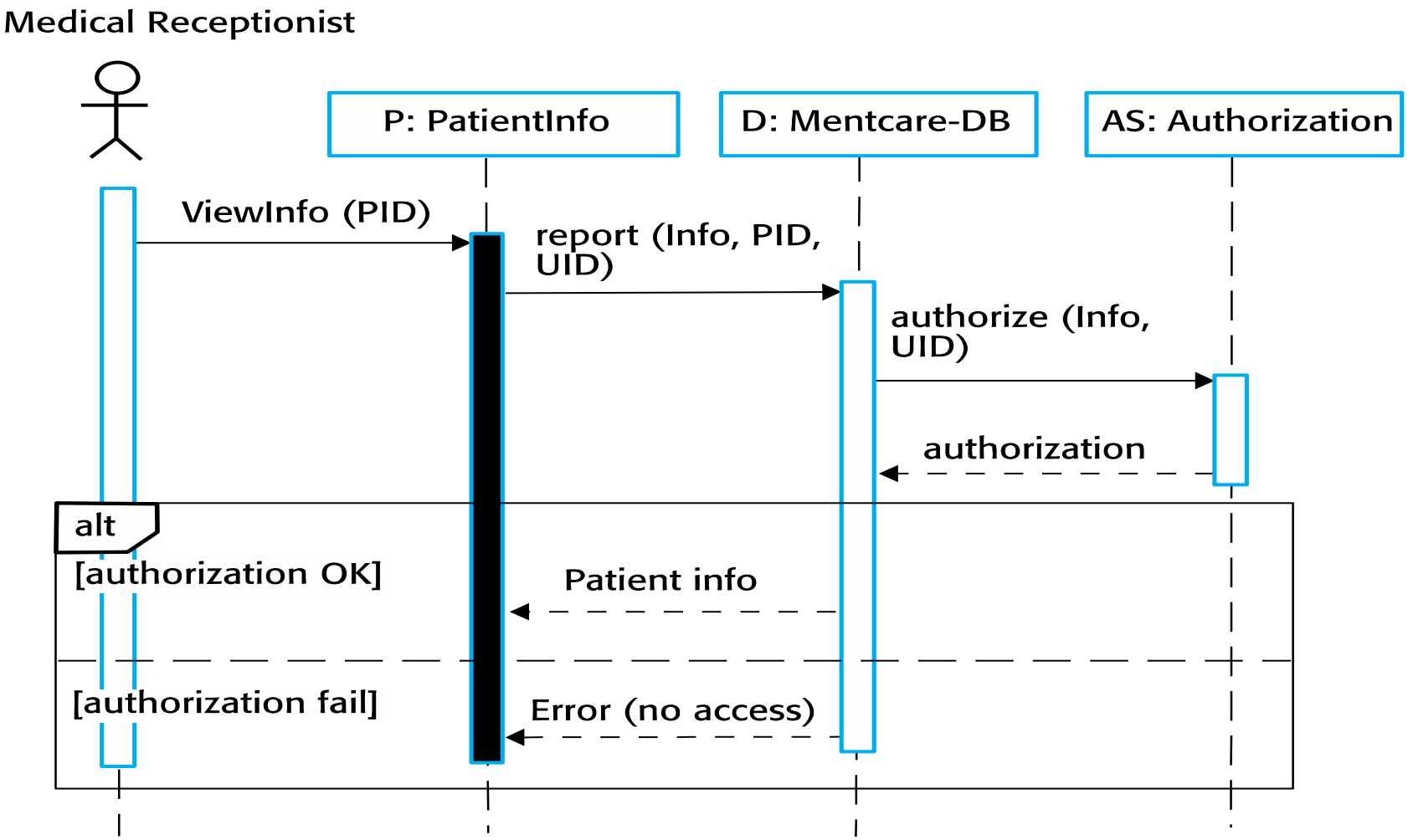
Use cases in the Mentcare system involving the role 'Medical Receptionist'

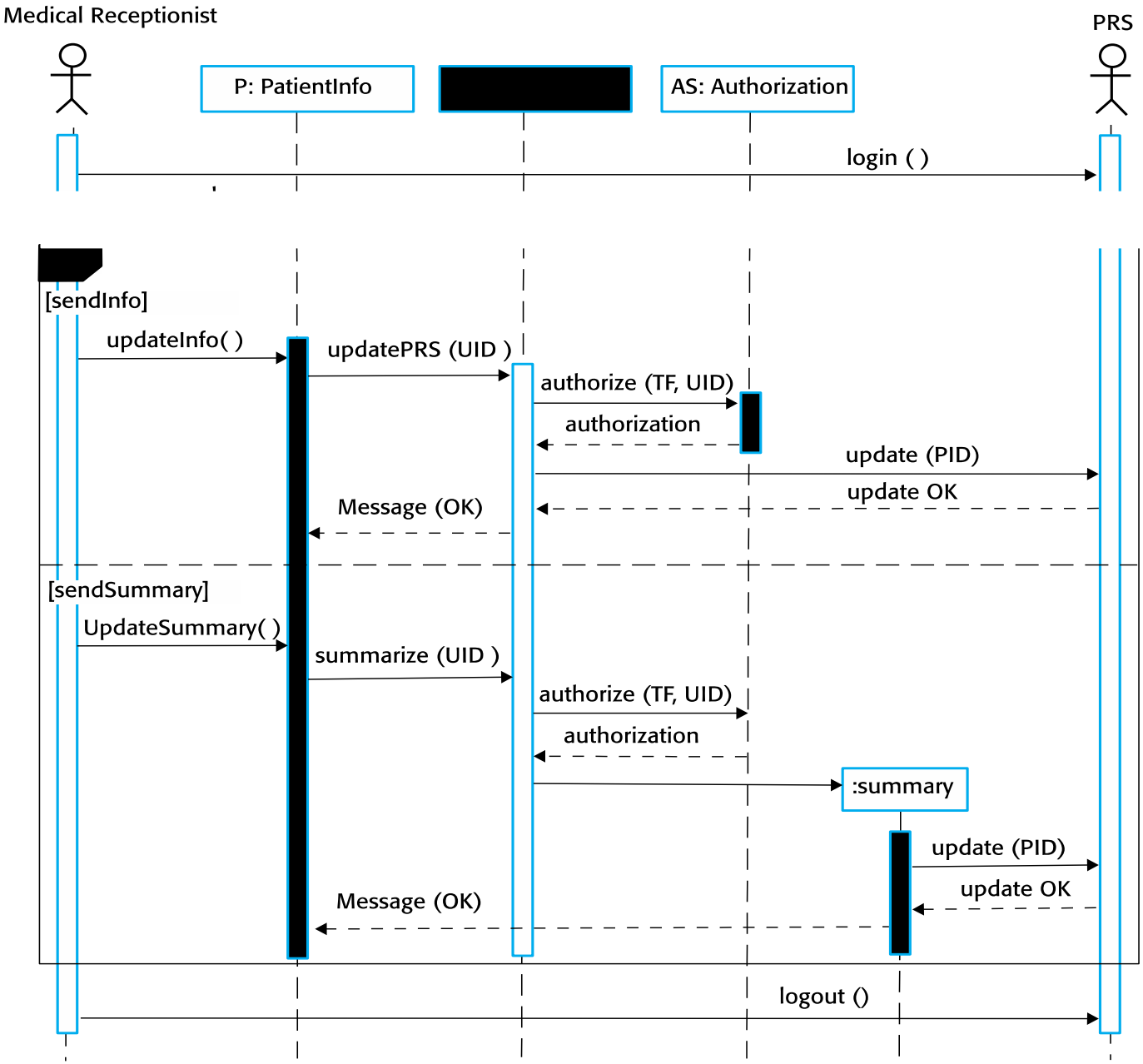


Sequence diagrams

- Sequence diagrams are part of the UML and are used to model the interactions between the actors and the objects within a system.
- A sequence diagram shows the sequence of interactions that take place during a particular use case or use case instance.
- The objects and actors involved are listed along the top of the diagram, with a dotted line drawn vertically from these.
- Interactions between objects are indicated by annotated arrows.

Sequence diagram for View patient information



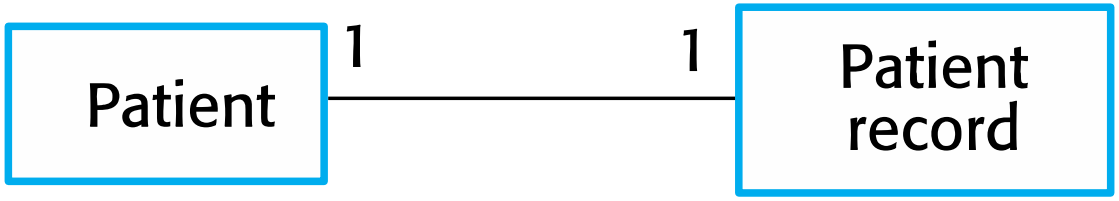


Sequence diagram for Transfer Data

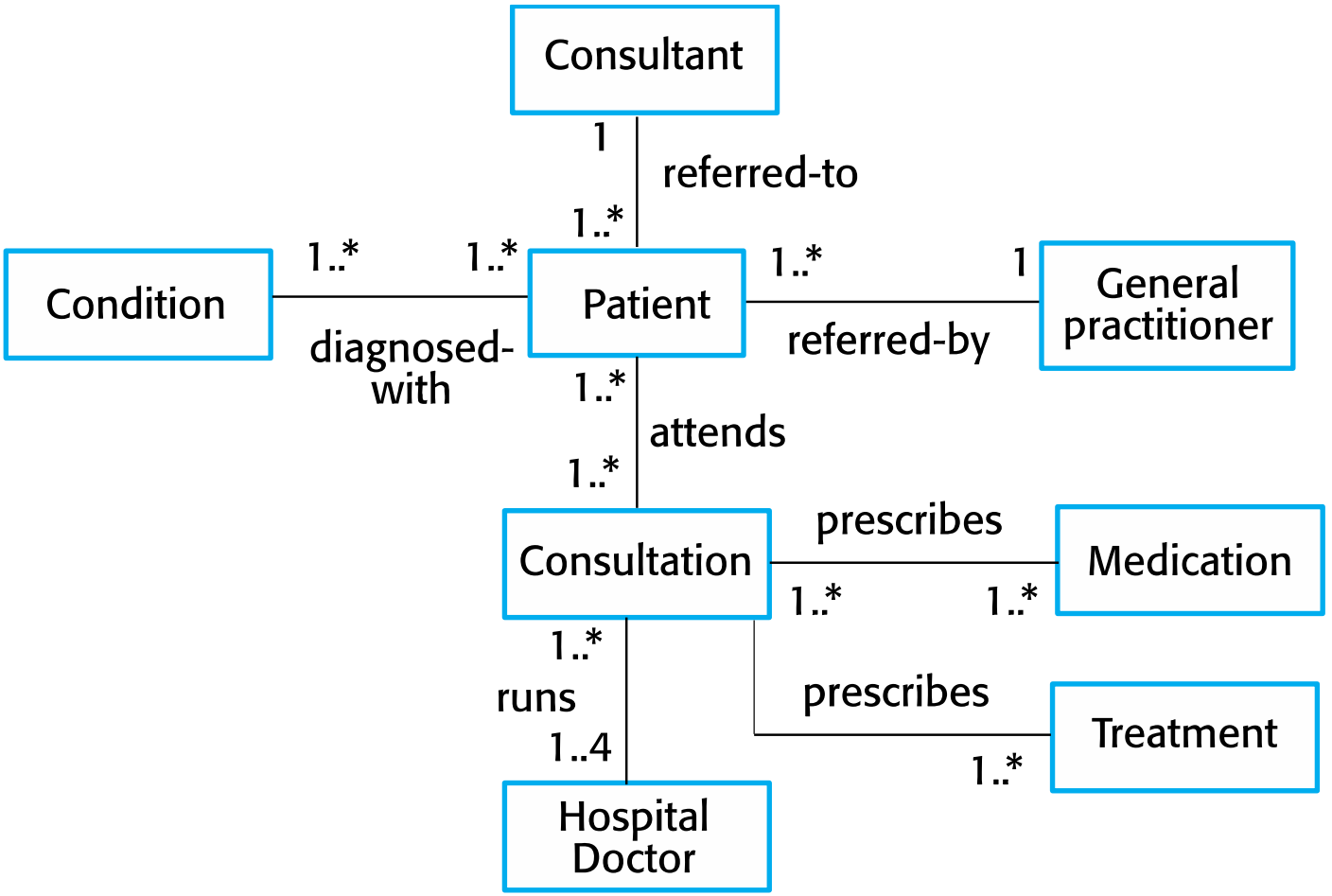
Class diagrams

- Class diagrams are used when developing an object-oriented system model to show the classes in a system and the associations between these classes.
- An object class can be thought of as a general definition of one kind of system object.
- An association is a link between classes that indicates that there is some relationship between these classes.
- When you are developing models during the early stages of the software engineering process, objects represent something in the real world, such as a patient, a prescription, doctor, etc.

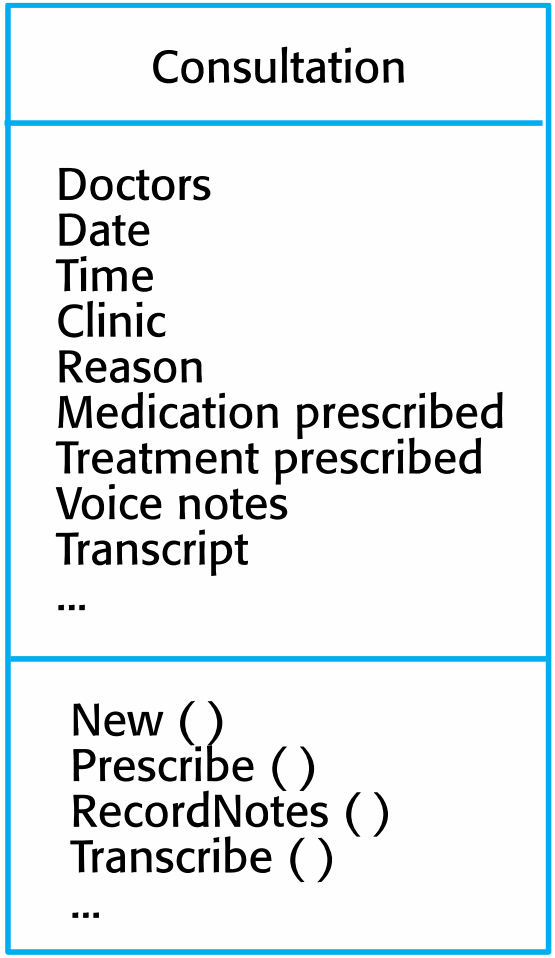
UML classes and association



Classes and associations in the MHC-PMS



The Consultation class



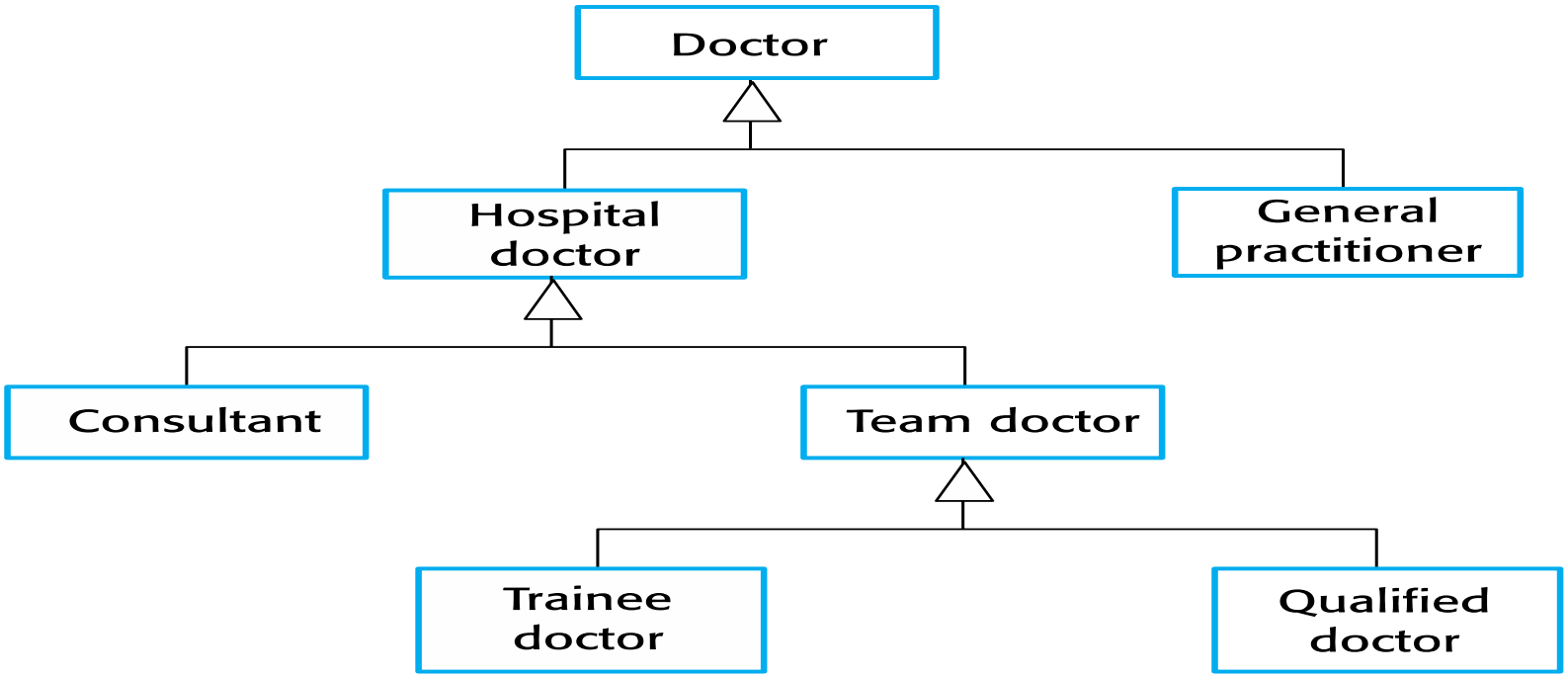
Generalization

- Generalization is an everyday technique that we use to manage complexity.
- Rather than learn the detailed characteristics of every entity that we experience, we place these entities in more general classes (animals, cars, houses, etc.) and learn the characteristics of these classes.
- This allows us to infer that different members of these classes have some common characteristics e.g. squirrels and rats are rodents.

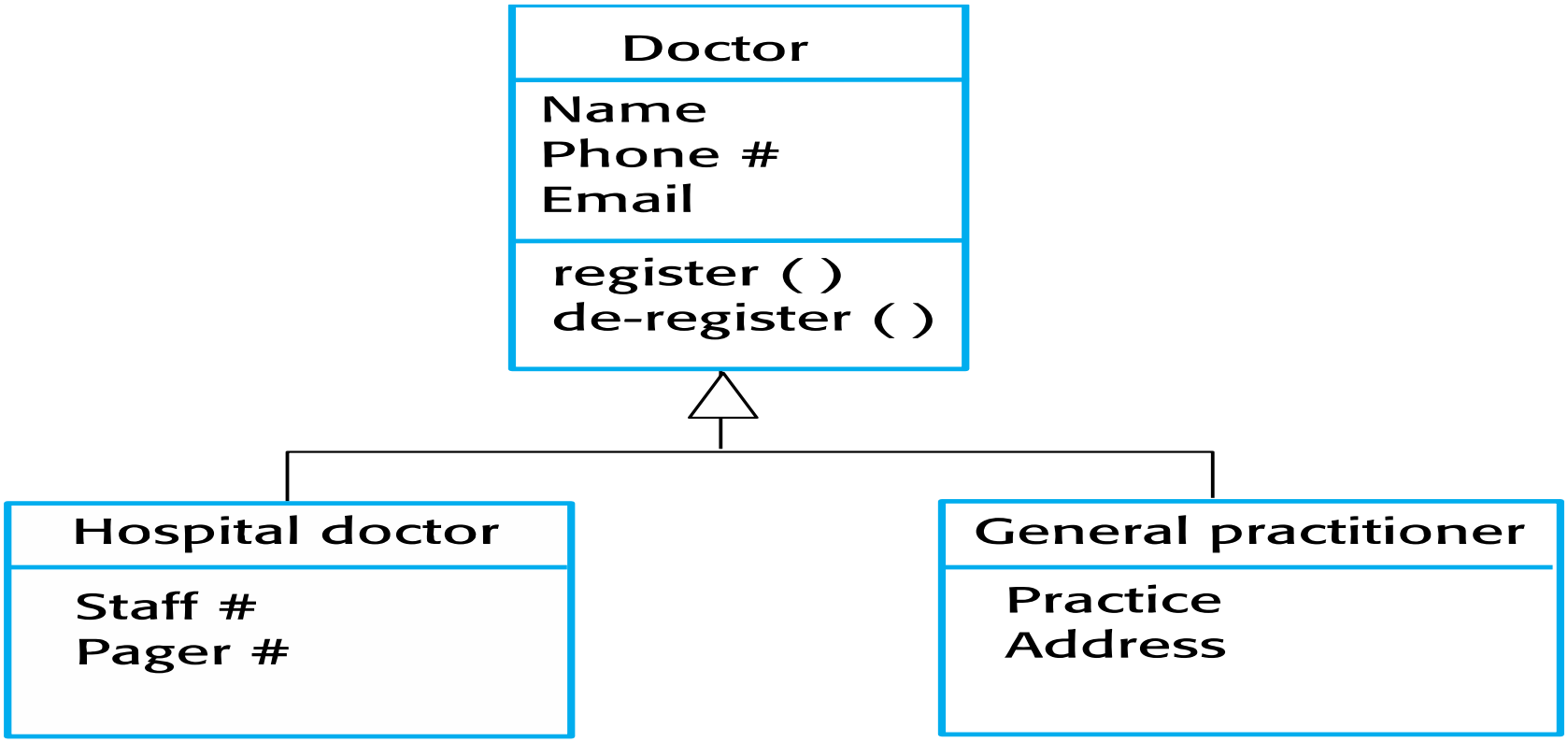
Generalization

- In modeling systems, it is often useful to examine the classes in a system to see if there is scope for generalization. If changes are proposed, then you do not have to look at all classes in the system to see if they are affected by the change.
- In object-oriented languages, such as Java, generalization is implemented using the class inheritance mechanisms built into the language.
- In a generalization, the attributes and operations associated with higher-level classes are also associated with the lower-level classes.
- The lower-level classes are subclasses inherit the attributes and operations from their super classes. These lower-level classes then add more specific attributes and operations.

A generalization hierarchy



A generalization hierarchy with added detail

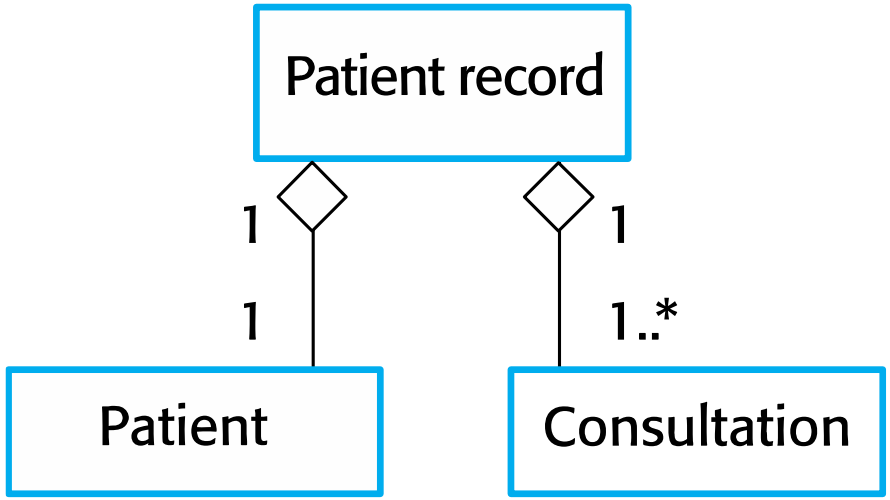


Object class aggregation models

- An aggregation model shows how classes that are collections are composed of other classes.

- Aggregation models are similar to the part-of relationship in semantic data models.

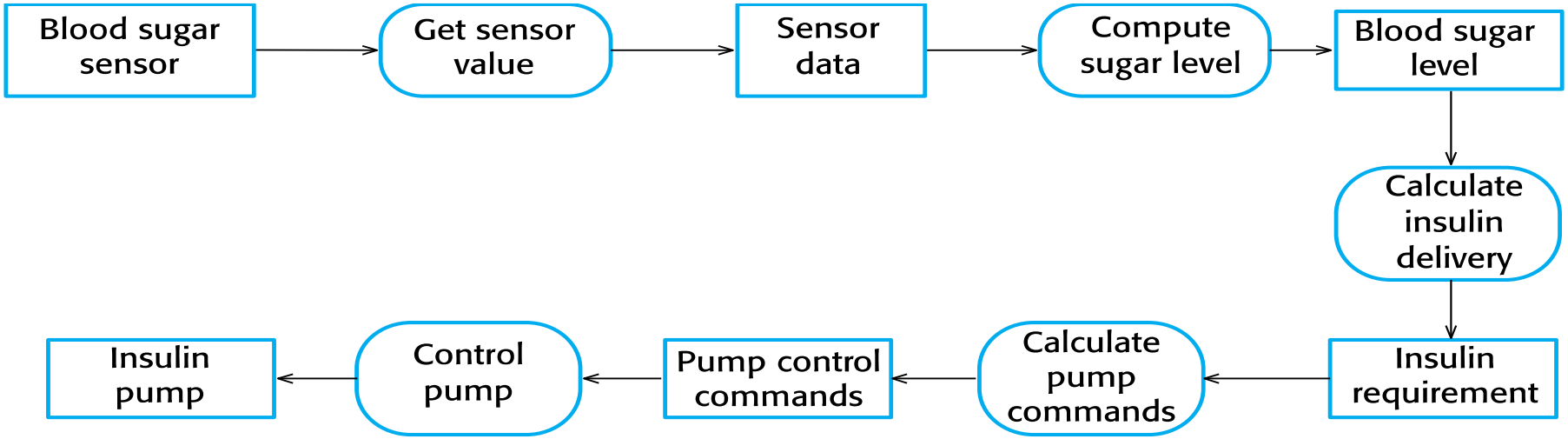
The aggregation association



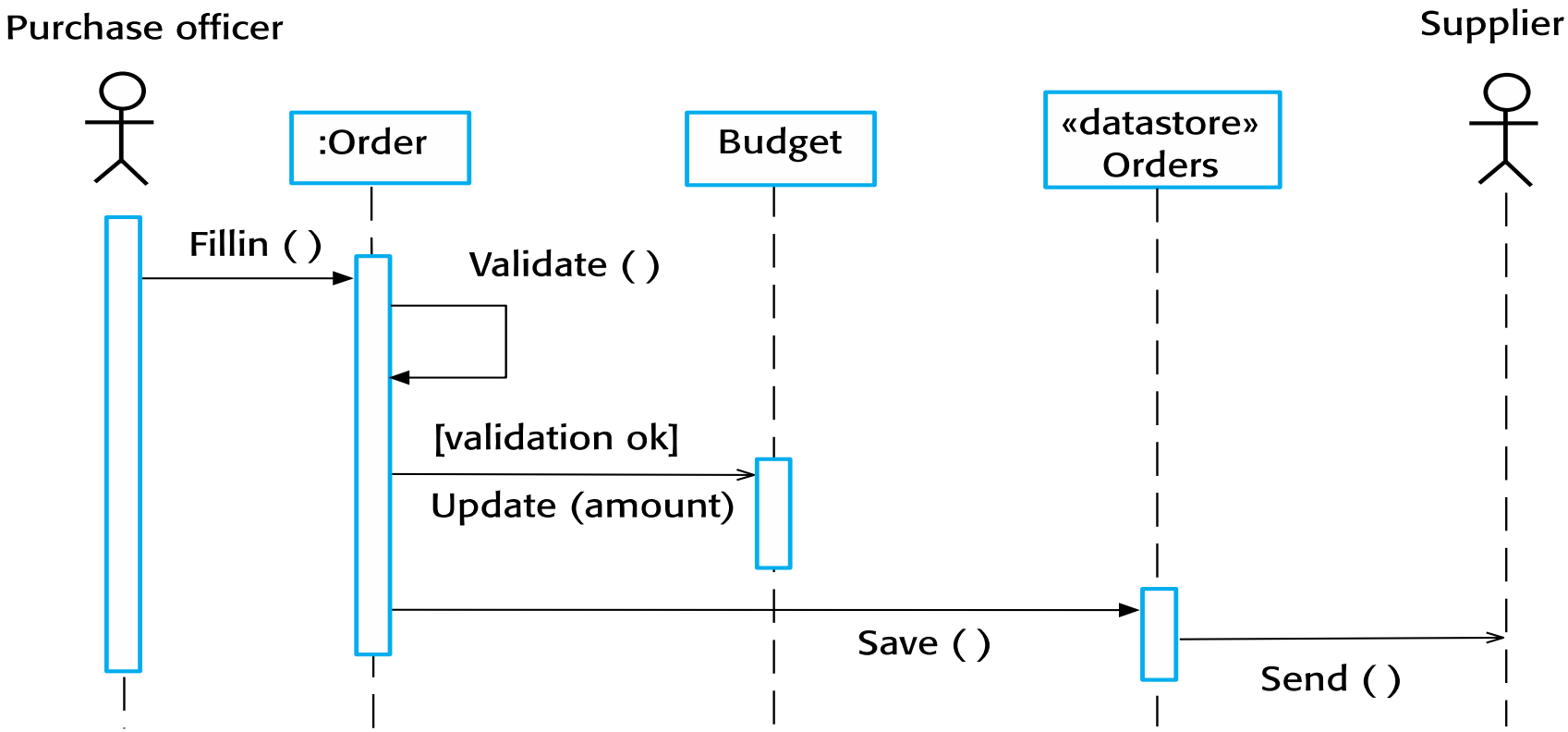
Data-driven modeling

- Many business systems are data-processing systems that are primarily driven by data. They are controlled by the data input to the system, with relatively little external event processing.
- Data-driven models show the sequence of actions involved in processing input data and generating an associated output.
- They are particularly useful during the analysis of requirements as they can be used to show end-to-end processing in a system.

An activity model of the insulin pump's operation



Order processing



Event-driven modeling

- Real-time systems are often event-driven, with minimal data processing. For example, a landline phone switching system responds to events such as ‘receiver off hook’ by generating a dial tone.

- Event-driven modeling shows how a system responds to external and internal events.

- It is based on the assumption that a system has a finite number of states and that events (stimuli) may cause a transition from one state to another.