

VIA University College

Project Title - Process Report
Semester Project 3
Group 3

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Character Count: 9518

Word Count: 1474

Software Technology Engineering

3rd Semester

December 15, 2025

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1 Introduction

The project of a Learning Platform was initiated with the goal of creating an accessible and user-friendly online environment for learners. This project focused on developing a distributed system in a team environment, leveraging various distinct technologies and methodologies to ensure effective collaboration and successful delivery.

2 Group Work

Many of our group processes stemmed as a continuation from our previous project experience. Some of the core values that drove our collaboration included open communication, mutual respect, fairness and democratic decision-making.

We based the group contract (TODO: REFERENCE) for the project on our previous contract with slight changes, for example to the point system. However, we did not have to make any major changes as our previous contract had already established a strong foundation for teamwork. This group contract outlined our core values, purpose, expectations, conflict resolution strategies, and accountability measures in the team. In the true agile and democratic spirit, we ensured to have mechanisms in place to be able to revisit the contract and modify it appropriately as the project evolved.

An important feature of the project's process was the role of a Product Owner (PO). The PO was responsible for managing the user stories, prioritizing the backlog, and ensuring that the team was aligned with the project goals. This role was crucial in maintaining a clear vision and direction for the project. Contrary to our previous experience, this role was set to be more settled and less rotating among team members. This was done to ensure consistency and a clear point of contact for the team regarding project requirements and priorities. The role of the PO was assigned democratically at the start of the project, and the team (TODO: COMPLETE LATER)

3 Project Initiation

The initial ideas we worked with included a Health Assistant, Bank System, and the Learning Platform. These were chosen as relevant candidates from a brainstorming session based on their potential impact and feasibility. After discussing the vision and scope of each idea, we held a democratic vote to select the final project. The Learning Platform was chosen due to its clarity of purpose and alignment with our skills and interests.

The alignment on the actual vision was more complicated than the initial idea selection. We had to ensure that everyone in the team agreed on the project's goals, target audience, and key features. This involved several discussions and compromises to reach a consensus that satisfied everyone.

One of the problems we faced during the initiation phase was deciding on the actual scope of the project. We were all juggling between thinking about it as an actual ambitious product versus a simpler prototype suitable for the course requirements. This problem was resolved by agreeing on scalable and flexible solutions that allow for both simple approaches and potential complex upgrades.

Another challenge was approaching the problem in a data-driven manner. Considering our mostly European backgrounds, we had to ensure that the project's aims were relevant and applicable on a global scale by researching, and not relying solely on our personal experiences and assumptions. This also included exploring various perspectives and shifting some of the focus on minorities and underrepresented groups in education. This aligned with our mission to improve the education, rather than just having business goals focusing on making profit off of profitable majorities.

4 Project Execution

The way of working in the project was a radical shift from our previous experiences. We adopted various aspects of Agile methodologies that fit our desired workflow. This included sprints, regular meetings, pair programming, Kanban but also our own adaptations to these practices.

Our main workflow was initially communicated and written down in the (TODO: REFERENCE). This document served to outline our processes and roles but also aligned us on semantics and definitions of key concepts. Even though this document served as our aim and theoretical perfection we could aim for, perfect adherence was not always possible and advantageous.

One of crucial aspects of our work was embracing asynchronicity, which might contradict with our vision of pair programming but was seen collectively as the means to achieving better productivity and work-life balance. Asynchronicity was also implemented on a level of subgroups - fx. different feature groups would collaborate within the group in real time while asynchronously reviewing and agreeing with the rest of the team on other issues.

4.1 Before Project Period

Because of daily school and work commitments, we mostly worked asynchronously in this period. Our sprints were one week long, starting and ending on Wednesdays. Each sprint would start around lunchtime as we wanted to have time to end the previous sprint collaboratively. Each sprint would start with a planning meeting where we would discuss the goals and tasks for the sprint. At the end of each sprint, we would review all features and tasks, and discuss any blockers or challenges faced during the sprint.

4.2 Project Period

Our work during the project period looked as follows:

4.2.1 Week perspective

We met every working day, weekends voluntary individually.

4.2.2 Day perspective

We preferred to work remotely as this reduced commuting time, allowed for more flexible working hours, but also prepared us for future remote work.

Each day started at 8:20 with a daily standup meeting where we discussed for each: - What was done - What will be done - Any blockers

After the standup, we would plan the day's work, which we considered one sprint in this dense period. Based on our framework, the purpose and focus of a sprint is to merely label and agree on which aspects of the Kanban board we focus on during the sprint. Contrary to Scrum, not all focus was put on putting tasks from TODO to DONE, but rather on deciding how far to push each task (allowing reviews to be done in a different sprint and similar).

Depending on the approach of each sprint, we would either be in a group call or split into channels for pair programming. With more iterations, we realized that collective calls were more effective as they allowed for quicker communication and synchronization on key issues; often problems would reappear for multiple people and having everyone listen to the solution saved time in the future.

Each day the calls lasted until around 16:30 with breaks for lunch and short breaks in between. Depending on everyone's situation, some days the work would continue later into the evening/night for those who preferred that.

4.2.3 Feature perspective

Working on a feature was usually for 1-3 people subgroups. The feature was started by discussing the definition of done, breaking down the tasks, and creating a branch for it. Each feature was practically a vertical slice of the product and the work was also often split into vertical slices (in order to reduce interpersonal dependencies). The aim of each feature team was to deliver a working feature compatible with main (which was evolving in parallel) by the end of the feature work. Each feature would have to be reviewed by someone least biased before merging to main.

Working with the team usually involved calling, sketching ideas, and drawing UML diagrams, while researching domain context and processing data from users. On a practical level, we used Visual Studio Code with Live Share for pair programming, GitHub for version control, Figma/FigJam for brainstorming and unrestricted diagramming, PlantUML inside VSCode for quick UML sketches, and Discord for screen sharing and communication.

5 Personal Reflections

5.1 Guillermo Sánchez Martínez

(TODO: Write a reflection for yourself)

5.2 Piotr Junosz

(TODO: Write a reflection for yourself)

5.3 Alexandru Savin

(TODO: Write a reflection for yourself)

5.4 Halil Ibrahim Aygun

(TODO: Write a reflection for yourself)

5.5 Eduard Fekete

(TODO: Write a reflection for yourself)

6 Reflect on Supervision

In the project team, we were often aligned on ideas and approaches, which made critical analysis and reflections on our work more challenging. The role of supervision thus became a crucial element of our project process. The supervisors often challenged our assumptions and decisions, ensuring that the project was kept improving based on proper processes and data, rather than just group consensus and momentum.

Each of our supervisor meetings had a clear agenda - acquiring external feedback and clarifying doubts. We did not focus on mere presenting of our progress but rather on seeking constructive criticism and guidance. This approach allowed us to identify potential pitfalls and areas for improvement that we might have overlooked without the supervisors.

Another aspect of the supervision was filling the technical gaps in our knowledge and project requirements. The supervisors always helped with long-term planning which could not have been done by the team alone due to the limited knowledge towards the beginning of the project.

(TODO: COMPLETE LATER, maybe something about frequency of meetings, communication outside meetings, etc.)

7 Conclusion

8 References