FIT1049: IT professional practice

Practice questions for the topics from Week 2 to Week 6

MONASH University

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How to use this document

In this document you will find all the (FLUX) quizzes and questions discussed in the Weeks 2-6 lectures. For the quizzes, I have provided the ‘correct answers’ and some additional comments, though you will have to understand that some of the questions are deliberately nuanced and/or ambiguous, and how ‘correct’ they are would depend on the way you look at them. As noted in the lectures, this was to promote discussion in lecture (while some were accidentally so, promoting even more discussion...), and you will thus have to understand that this document alone will not convey to you the entirety of what was covered in the lectures.

As for the nuanced/ambiguous nature of these questions, though, you can be assured however that we will not follow such a style in the actual exam, and all the actual exam questions will have clear ‘correct’ answers.

Also to note is that the actual exam for this unit will usually not include any multiple choice questions, but the way the questions are designed would be very similar to the ways these quizzes are constructed. For example, for a question like the one below, it is possible that you will get a short answer question instead, for which you will however provide a short written response, just like the option provided (and highlighted).

So by reviewing these question, you will learn not only how to approach these questions, but also how you can word your response in such a way to address the question clearly.

Question 3: The basics of communications

The communication models tend to assume the presence of the 'audience' as the receiver of the communication one initiates. Could a piece of communication be effective even if this 'audience' include multiple cohorts of people?

1. No – professional communications should be developed in a precisely targeted manner, and if there are multiple audiences for the given communication, it is a poorly designed one.
2. Yes – there are occasions where one initiates a communication that would be interpreted by different audiences, and this is part of the craft of professional communications.
3. Yes – the communication may well reach different audiences, but as long as it works effectively with the majority of them, the communication could be considered 'effective'.

The other type of questions you will find in this document are like the one below, which we discussed more generally in lecture. You will find some hints for you to consider how you can approach these questions, and it would be a good idea to practice writing how you can respond to these question clearly and convincingly.

I also added some 'sample answers' where appropriate, but please note that these are 'samples'; there are different ways to respond to each question as well.

Hope you find this document useful in reviewing the contents covered in the lectures to date. We will provide another version towards the end of the semester for the Weeks 8-11 lectures.

Question 6: The basics of communications

Assume that you are looking for a casual position in the IT field, and your tutor suggested writing to his/her friend, Mr Bob Washingmachine, who works as a HR manager at Monash IT Consulting, an IT company. Write an e-mail message to him in the space provided below as appropriate.

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Week 2: The basics of professional communications

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Question 1: Roles of the IT professionals

Which one of them would be a typical IT role in an organisation?

1. Presenting business intelligence data to the management in an effective and engaging manner;
2. Providing IT support to staff and others when technical issues arise; or
3. Identifying both existing and potential organisational and business issues and address them using IT.

Question 2: Communication models

Which of the following would describe a potential limitation of the communication models mentioned in the reading?

1. They tend to focus on transmission of information, which is not the entirety of communications.
2. They tend to be too abstract to capture the complexity of communications that take place in practice.
3. They tend to reflect more the discipline in which each model was developed (e.g. Lasswell's in political science, Shannon-Weaver's in informatics), and they are not compatible with each other.

Question 3: The basics of communications

The communication models tend to assume the presence of the ‘audience’ as the receiver of the communication one initiates. Could a piece of communication be effective even if this ‘audience’ include multiple cohorts of people?

1. No – professional communications should be developed in a precisely targeted manner, and if there are multiple audiences for the given communication, it is a poorly designed one.
2. Yes – there are occasions where one initiates a communication that would be interpreted by different audiences, and this is part of the craft of professional communications.
3. Yes – the communication may well reach different audiences, but as long as it works effectively with the majority of them, the communication could be considered ‘effective’.

Question 4: The basics of communications

A certain level of formality is required in many situations of professional communications. Which of the following is NOT a reason for this?

1. Because such formality creates the sense of importance.
2. Because such formality is what makes communications ‘professional’ distinct form everyday communications.
3. Because it can provides a certain structure and context that establish a common ground for those involved in the communications.

Question 5: The basics of communications

What is ‘glocalisation’? And what kind of skills does it demand IT professionals to acquire?

Question 6: The basics of communications

Assume that you are looking for a casual position in the IT field, and your tutor suggested writing to his/her friend, Mr Bob Washingmachine, who works as a HR manager at Monash IT Consulting, an IT company. Write an e-mail message to him in the space provided below as appropriate.

Question 7*: The basics of communications

"The medium is the message." What does this mean, and how does this relate to IT professional practice (or professional practice in general)?

** Please note that this is an additional question that was not discussed in lecture. I throw this in anyway, since this is not a bad question for you to consider.*

Answers and comments for the quizzes

1) The correct answer is **3**. The answers 1 and 2 are tasks, rather than a role, and any IT professionals need to be aware of the distinction to better assume the organisational role while effectively conducting the tasks.
2) The correct answer is **1**. The answers 2 and 3 merely describes the nature of ‘models’ being models. Also note that the ‘models’ are descriptive in their nature, not prescriptive.
3) The correct answer is **2**. The answer 1 is a prescriptive application of a model, and hence unrealistic. The answer 3 merely describes a possible consequence of communications. The answer 2 is the best of all the options here to describe the process of crafting professional communications.
4) The correct answer is **2**. This is other way around. It is not the formality that makes things professional; rather, it is a certain professional situation that demands formality to be installed. *Please note that the answer 1 has been reworded to make the point clearer to come across, which is, in essence, about the aspect of communication as a form of performance.*

Sample question 5: What is ‘glocalisation’? And what kind of skills does it demand IT professionals to acquire?

<u>Hints and comments</u>: Globalisation tends to result in what *seems* to be the uniformity in the global culture, as seen in the prevalence of, for example, McDonald’s and Starbucks. Such *seemingly* global cultures however often manifest in such a localized form, and it is important for IT professionals (or any professionals working internationally) to be able to understand and manage such balance between what can be assumed as the quasi-universal norms and otherwise, through effective intercultural communications.

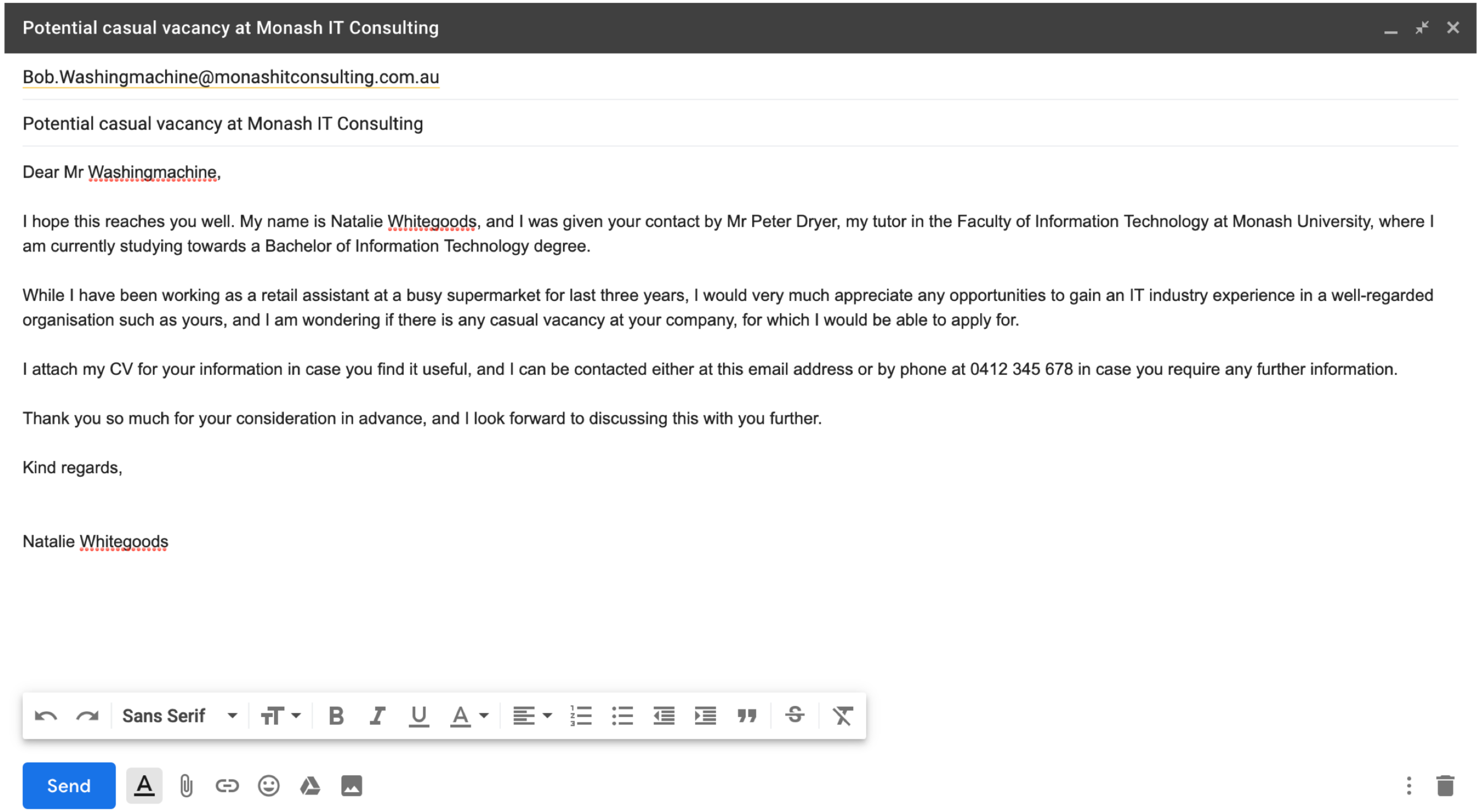
Sample answer to the question 5:

The concept of ‘glocalisation’ creates the need for IT professionals to be aware of both what is seemingly ‘global’ protocols of professional communications as well as how they are implemented more ‘locally’ to suit their customs and practices. This would require IT professionals to acquire strong communication skills as well as cultural awareness in order to ensure the effectiveness of their business activities, and they should also be aware of how best to ensure their communications have the desired effect for these audiences.

Sample question 6: Assume that you are looking for a casual position in the IT field, and your tutor suggested writing to his/her friend, Mr Bob Washingmachine, who works as a HR manager at Monash IT Consulting, an IT company. Write an e-mail message to him in the space provided below as appropriate.

<u>Hints and comments</u>: This is very much similar to what you did in the Week 2 tutorial where you wrote a cover letter in response to an advertisement. In this instance, however, you will have to also consider the facts: 1) you do not know yet if there is indeed a vacancy, 2) you have to explain to Bob a bit of background that your tutor suggested you to write to him, and 3) this is an email, not a formal business letter.

Sample answer to the question 6: See below…



Potential casual vacancy at Monash IT Consulting

Bob.Washingmachine@monashitconsulting.com.au

Potential casual vacancy at Monash IT Consulting

Dear Mr Washingmachine,

I hope this reaches you well. My name is Natalie Whitegoods, and I was given your contact by Mr Peter Dryer, my tutor in the Faculty of Information Technology at Monash University, where I am currently studying towards a Bachelor of Information Technology degree.

While I have been working as a retail assistant at a busy supermarket for last three years, I would very much appreciate any opportunities to gain an IT industry experience in a well-regarded organisation such as yours, and I am wondering if there is any casual vacancy at your company, for which I would be able to apply for.

I attach my CV for your information in case you find it useful, and I can be contacted either at this email address or by phone at 0412 345 678 in case you require any further information.

Thank you so much for your consideration in advance, and I look forward to discussing this with you further.

Kind regards,

Natalie Whitegoods

Sample question 7: "The medium is the message." What does this mean, and how does this relate to IT professional practice (or professional practice in general)?

Hints and comments: The statement generally can be translated like this: The medium in which the message is embedded starts having its own quality as a message itself. So one of the issues with 'fake news' is that despite its often dubious contents, it presents in the guise of 'news' which already starts making the audience under the impression that this is a legitimate piece of information. What can we learn from this in the context of professional practice? Think in terms of the balance between contents (i.e. what we communicate) and means (i.e. how we communicate), as per discussion from Week 2.

Sample answer to the question 7:

In the context of professional practice, “the medium is the message” acts as a reminder that we should be conscious of which medium we use to communicate with various audiences and the meaning that this chosen medium imbues our communication with. In professional practice, this demands the sender to consider the effectiveness of both the content of the communications as well as the means of communication, and for the receiver, one has to be critical in assessing given information that is delivered in a seemingly reliable medium as a means of ocmmunication.

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Week 3: Information gathering, processing and analysis

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Question 1: The ‘intelligence cycle’

Which of the following is part of ‘planning and direction’?

1. Consulting the stakeholders to refine the scope of research in order to establish a shared understanding of what needs to be researched;
2. Communicating the outcomes and implications of the research in order to increase the profile of the research being conducted; or
3. Implementing any overt or implicit actions based on the outcomes of the research.

Question 2: Research process

You have sets of data generated as a result of Business Intelligence analysis, and you are starting to see some trends in the recent financial activities in your company. Which stage of the research process are you at?

1. Planning and direction;
2. Collection and processing;
3. Analysis; or
4. Production and dissemination.

Question 3: Sources of information 1

Can an information source be both a primary and secondary source at the same time?

1. No – these classifications are objective and absolute, and a source must be either primary or secondary;
2. Yes – these classifications are objective and absolute, but a source can include some parts that are primary, and some parts secondary; or
3. Yes – these classifications are subjective and relative, and a source can be both a primary and secondary depending on how the information source is used in the context.

Question 4: Sources of information 2

You are asked by your manager to conduct a research on the current development in an area in IT unfamiliar to you. Which one of the following options would be most effective?

1. *Secondary/tertiary research*: e.g. Look at *Wikipedia* entries to grasp the research topics and identify keywords, and then proceed with more specific research;
2. *Literature search/survey*: e.g. Survey the existing literature to gain an understanding of the extent of existing research conducted on the research topics; or
3. *Assessment of relevant primary sources*: e.g. Pick a small number of research conducted on a similar topic, and refer to their references to gain further understanding of the field of research.

Question 5: Attributes of information

In May 2018, a newspaper article reported that *Company A* developed a new technology that addresses certain vulnerabilities of one of the existing encryption techniques. The technology however is now outdated since a number of emerging security risks were reported. Which aspect of the newspaper article does this new development compromise?

1. Currency – the article is no longer current since the technology is already outdated;
2. Accuracy – the article is no longer accurate, since the vulnerabilities are no longer addressed by the technology; or
3. None of the above.

Question 6: Managing the information

In the professional practice, managing any research related information in a consistent manner is imperative for:

1. The individual conducting research to maintain a clear oversight over the information he/she gathered;
2. The organisation to be accountable for its activities conducted by individual employees; or
3. The profession to maintain its integrity.

Answers and comments for the quizzes

1) The answer is **1**. The answers 2 and 3 are more to do with production and dissemination, which are the topic for Week 4.
2) The answer is **2**. Here one is starting to see some trends, but yet to draw any interpretations, which would then belong to the 'analysis' phase. The point is that one is often asked to deliver some research in workplace, but understanding which level of tasks you are asked to conduct is important. The manager may have asked the student only to analyse the data, and there will be a bit of confusion if the student start throwing in his/her own interpretations when he/she is actually not asked to do.
3) The answer is **3**. It is important for you to be aware of the relative nature of this classification. An example of something being primary and secondary at the same time, is a newspaper article from 10 years ago, where is can be a secondary source as a new article, but also a primary source if one is to use this source to study how the journalist wrote the article.

Answers and comments for the quizzes (cont’d)

4) The answer is **1**. The approaches listed here can be used progressively from 1 to 3, depending on the researcher's level of prior knowledge. Many go straight to the option 2 without grasping an overall picture of what is going on in the area. *Wikipedia* is referred to here as an example of a tertiary source. Do note that *Wikipedia* is neither an authoritative nor fully credible source, though it can potentially be a useful starting point. One needs to understand the nature of the source whenever and whatever the source one uses…
5) The answer is 3. The currency of the ‘information’ may be compromised, but this does not necessarily compromise the article itself; it still holds its value as an accurate source that reflects the then-current view on the state of affair back in May 2018.
6) All are valid, but if one needs to choose, the answer is **2**. The options 1 and 3 are ‘best practice’, not ‘imperative’ as such. Management of research data and relevant information usually is something to do with compliance; remember that you will have to surrender anything, from memo pads to their devices, if the court of law requests, and we all have to be accountable for whatever we produce as part of our professional practice (including research).

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Week 4: Narrative construction and dissemination

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Question 1: Complexity of information

While Internet search results yield a wealth of information based on the keywords entered, such results tend to lack the original contexts of each of the information. What does this mean? And why is this potentially problematic?

Question 2: The ‘intelligence cycle’

The ‘intelligence cycle’ includes as its part ‘(narrative) production’. What does this entail in the context of research in the professional practice?

Question 3: Purpose of dissemination

You are an IT consultant being deployed to a company to implement an account management system for their Finance Team. The manager there asked you that she would like you to hold a demo of the new system for staff members, since the new system is very different from the one used before. You can assume that the staff are generally happy with the introduction of the new system. Which of the following would most likely be suited for the purpose?

1. A demo of how the new system works, highlighting the difference between the old and new systems;
2. A demo how the new system works, highlighting the benefits of the new system for users (i.e. staff); or
3. A demo of what the new system does, highlighting the business benefits of the new system over the old system.

Question 4: Format of the presentation

Consider the same scenario. You were then told that about 100 staff members from different branches across the state will be attending this demo in a large seminar room with one projector, and you only have 30 minutes out of an hour allocated (because they wanted to serve a morning tea). Which of the following would be the least risky arrangement for your visuals to have this demo session?

1. To have all the screen-grabs pre-recorded and embedded as part of the PowerPoint slides;
2. To have a live-demo using the actual system online, and switch back-and-forth between the slides and the system; or
3. To have the attendees to bring their own device, and ask them to work on their device while your slides only have instructions to follow.

Question 5: Mode of dissemination

Consider the same scenario. If you want this session to be actually effective, what would you suggest to the manager who first suggested this training session?

1. To negotiate to have a longer session (e.g. 1 full hour), and provide some reference sheets as a take-away;
2. To provide staff with some resources, and let them use the system first, which is then followed by a 1-hour Q&A session to answer any questions arising form the actual experience of using the system; or
3. To have multiple sessions with smaller groups, and hold them as hands-on workshops in a computer laboratory.

Question 6: Proxemics

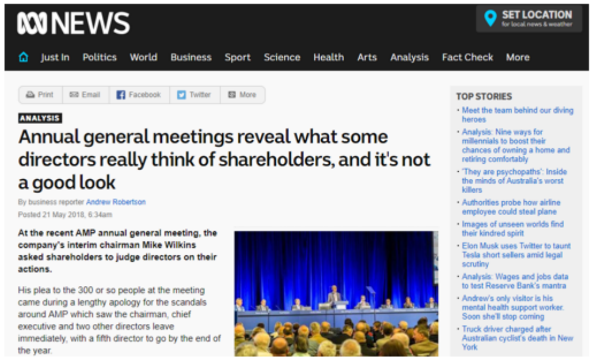
Consider the same scenario. You did end up presenting in a large seminar room after all, with 100+ people eating cakes while listening to you. You have your screen in the center, a large lectern on the right hand side, with the provision of a clicker. Which of the following would best describe a likely effectively approach to non-verbal communications?

1. You stand between the screen and the audience to make your delivery engaging;
2. You stand near the lectern, however keeping your entire body and hand-movements visible; or
3. You stand behind the lectern to minimize any distraction caused by your movement, since the audience is supposed to be looking at the visuals on the screen.

Question 7: Visual aids

The following slide was used to illustrate that deliberate refusal of receiving questions can be used as a communication strategy to limit potentially uncontrollable spontaneity. If you are to reformat this into a hierarchical style of visual presentation (e.g. the Minto style), how would you do? Draw a sketch of the new slide, and explain why.

"It's traditional at the end of the meeting that directors chat with shareholders over a sandwich and a cup of tea. … With the prospect that they may be asked a few curly questions, the minute the meeting was over, [CEO] and his fellow directors snuck out a back door." (ABC, 2018)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ANALYSIS

Annual general meetings reveal what some directors really think of shareholders, and it's not a good look

By business reporter Andrew Robertson

Posted 21 May 2018, 6:34am

At the recent AMP annual general meeting, the company's interim chairman Mike Wilkins asked shareholders to judge directors on their actions.

His plea to the 300 or so people at the meeting came during a lengthy apology for the scandals around AMP which saw the chairman, chief executive and two other directors leave immediately, with a fifth director to go by the end of the year.

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- Andrew's only visitor is his mental health support worker. Soon she'll stop coming
- Truck driver charged after Australian cyclist's death in New York

(ABC, 2018)

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Question 8: Evaluating the outcomes of dissemination

Consider the scenario we used earlier (i.e. the demo of the new account management system).

What are the aspects you would consider as a way to evaluate the outcomes of dissemination?

Sample question 1: While Internet search results yield a wealth of information based on the keywords entered, such results tend to lack the original contexts of each of the information. What does this mean? And why is this potentially problematic?

Hints and comments: Have a think about how the Internet search results are presented. Does it make it easier or harder for you to identify the attributes of the information (e.g. currency, authority)? Does it reveal the types of information (e.g. primary, secondary)? What kind of challenges would you have if you were to find specific information relevant to your own purpose?

Sample answer to the question 1:

The Internet search results are ordered according to an undisclosed algorithm, and while the list of results may look to be on topic, there is no contextual information given for the reader to make sense of the order within the information provided. This makes it difficult to sort reliable information from others, and this is further complicated by the fact that reliable or quality information often does not necessarily surface on the search results.

Sample question 2: The ‘intelligence cycle’ includes as its part ‘(narrative) production’. What does this entail in the context of research in the professional practice?

Hints and comments: One lesson we learn from the ‘intelligence cycle’ is that collecting, processing and analysing information is only part of the ‘research’ we conduct in professional practice, and disseminating and actioning on the outcomes of the research hold equally significant values to produce positive outcomes. The ‘(narrative) production’ is situated somewhere in between, involving the construction of narratives based on the outcomes of your collection, processing and analysis for further dissemination and actioning. Well, this is more like an answer than a hint, but here you go, you have it.

Sample answer to the question 2:

In the ‘intelligence cycle’, gathering and analysing information are only part of the broader process, and disseminating and actioning on the outcomes of the research are given equally significant values to produce positive outcomes. The ‘(narrative) production’ takes place before dissemination, involving the purposeful construction of narratives based on the outcomes of your collection, processing and analysis.

Answers and comments for the quizzes

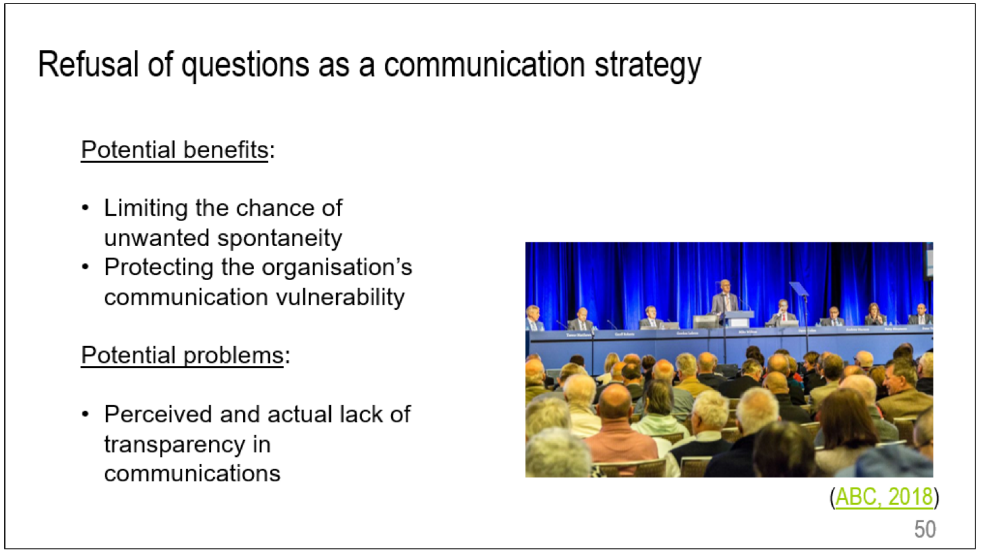
3) The answer is **1**, while the options 2 and 3 are somewhat irrelevant (even though they may well work depending on how you frame it, as discussed in the lecture). One reason for the option1 would be that the staff are generally understanding of the change, so no further persuasion is necessary, and it is important to adhere to the brief given by the manager in this instance.
4) The answer is **1**, though this may not be the most effective! Live-demo and BYD approaches can be effective, but can be quite disorganized (especially with 100 people), and in 30 minutes (which would include 5 min intro and so on), it's not always practical. As result, the option 1 would be the least risky, though one needs to be aware of the limitation of this approach.
5) All the answers are sort of correct, and I have seen them done one way or another with varied outcomes. Yet, if you really need to make sure all the employees have good understanding of how to use the system, you'd go for the option **3** or similar. Note that no single format of presentations suits everything, and you really need to interrogate the suitability of the suggested format against the purpose of the presentations.
6) The answer is **2**. The option 1 is probably not appropriate since the focus of the presentation is not the presenter but what is on the slide. This can be used if it was a presentation about the presenter him/herself though. The option 3 might have some truth in it, but non-verbal communications still play an important role to accentuate the face-to-face delivery. There are certain ways to present when presenting on a webinar (or else) where there is no provision of non-verbal communications, but given in the scenario offers the presenter the benefits of non-verbal communication, why not using them?

Sample question 7: The following slide (see the earlier slide) was used to illustrate that deliberate refusal of receiving questions can be used as a communication strategy to limit potentially uncontrollable spontaneity. If you are to reformat this into a hierarchical style of visual presentation (e.g. the Minto style), how would you do? Draw a sketch of the new slide, and explain why.

Hints and comments: The most prominent feature of the Minto style is the idea of hierarchy (or a pyramid, they would call). One needs to formulate a brief sentence that captures the main message, and include some textual information and image to support the main message. In the actual exam, we will not necessarily specify the Minto style as such, but you still need to understand the idea of hierarchy within a slide. PowerPoint presentations usually exploit this idea of hierarchy within, and across the slides, and this needs to be translated into the cohesion and independence within each slide, as well as across the slides as a set.

Sample answer to the question 7:

In creating this slide I have adopted a hierarchical structure on three levels. First, I have given the slide a title to inform my audience as to the subject matter at hand. On the next level I have provided two subtitles to categories the three bullet points which summarise more granular information about the topic. The image I have selected has been chosen to visually support my verbal explanation on this slide, which is about an instance where this strategy was actually used.



Sample question 8: Consider the scenario we used earlier (i.e. the demo of the new account management system). What are the aspects you would consider as a way to evaluate the outcomes of dissemination?

<u>Hints and comments</u>: This is a question about how to gauge the effects of your dissemination both short-term and long-term. Part of the immediate effects may be evaluated by how the audience responded to the presentation, but this would be complemented by the responses from the management (who asked you to present in the first place), as well as the success (or failure) of the implementation as a whole to which this presentation was supposed to contribute. The moral of the story is that to evaluate dissemination, it is not just about how successful a piece of specific communication was, but also about how it effected in an overall process that follows.

Sample answer to the question 8:

The aspects to consider would include the immediate perceptions of the different stakeholders (e.g. the audience, the management) after the presentation, and also how this presentation contributed to the medium- to long-term process of the overall implementation of the new system.

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Week 5: Situational management and intra/inter-personal communications

Question 1: Definition of a meeting

Which of the following is not strictly a ‘meeting’ as such?

1. Two colleagues bumping into each other at a bus stop, and started to discuss a project they have been working on, eventually making a decision of some sort;
2. Two colleagues having a chat about how to put together a progress report of the project over lunch, as they agreed prior to make sure this report gets written on time; or
3. You are invited to an interview after submitting a written application for a software developer role.

Question 2: Purpose of a meeting

You were asked to provide a report on your project prior to a meeting with the senior management of the organisation. The report was tabled as part of the lengthy agenda, and while you prepared so much before the meeting to be elaborate on the details of the project, the report was only ‘noted’ at the meeting, and no discussion was held. What’s going on?

1. The report was so not well done, people just thought it wasn’t worth discussing;
2. The report delivered exactly what the management needed to know, so no further discussion was necessary; or
3. People were too busy and did not have time to read the report, so it was just noted. They might follow this up with you later.

Question 3: Membership of a meeting

You are to hold a kick off meeting for a new project that was initiated at the instruction of your team's manager though there are still a few points that are not clear about the specifics of this project. There is also another manager from a different section, whose help you might need later on. Some of your colleagues think your team can have his meeting without these managers' attendance. What would you do?

1. Your colleagues are right, and you should just go ahead. Your kick off meeting can clarify what needs to be followed up with these managers, which would also save time for these managers too;
2. You should just check with these managers if they wish to attend this meeting. They might just trust you and let you go ahead anyway; or
3. You should have these managers attend the meeting.

Question 4: Roles in a meeting

You and your equal colleagues (i.e. 8 of you altogether) with different expertise are meeting for the first time in person to discuss the initiative you have been working on for some time. You met with them virtually or in person separately here and there, but this is the first time you all get together. The meeting won't be a formal one, but do you still need a chair in this meeting?

1. Yes – every team needs a strong leader who leads and act as an authority within the team. You should nominate someone (or you) for this role;
2. Yes – having a Chair would institute some level of structure in the meeting. You should definitely have a Chair; or
3. No - having a Chair or any formal role would limit the dynamism and spontaneity of the meeting where all the members are equal colleagues.

Question 5: Proxemics for a meeting

It is 16:30 on Tuesday, and you are on a platform when your junior colleague rang you to have a chat with you as a senior colleague about the progress of the project which has some confidential contents with some sensitivities around how this colleague communicates with the client organisation. You know that both you and this colleague will be at work tomorrow in the morning; what would you do?

1. You go to a quiet corner on the platform, and keep having a chat with this colleague;
2. You point to the fact that both you and your colleague will be at work in the morning, and suggest discussing this then; or
3. You explain that you are at a public area, and ask the colleague the nature of the call further.

Question 6: Formality of a meeting

Why are some meetings held in such a formal manner? Choose the answer that is least applicable.

1. The formality creates the sense of an occasion;
2. The formality introduces a well defined process to the group’s decision making, making what happens at the meeting accountable;
3. The formality creates a visible structure in which the distributions of power amongst the attendees are defined and executed in a transparent manner; or
4. All of the above.

Question 7*

I made an error in numbering the questions in the lecture… There is no Question 7, so please proceed to the next question.

Question 8: Nature of a meeting

A relatively unstructured meeting with low power concentration can lead to certain risks. Describe one of the risks, and give an example of a strategy to prevent this risk.

Question 9: Mode of a meeting

One of the ‘rituals’ conducted as part of the agile methodology is to have ‘stand up’ meetings. What makes this an effective means of communication amongst a relatively small team? Which one of the following is not part of the reasons?

1. A short timeframe forces the participants to be conscious of the time they spend, and focus on whatever is being discussed for efficient resolution;
2. A routinised format of the meetings shared by the group removes the unnecessary formalities and technicalities of running meetings;
3. A set of jargons and rituals generally reinforce the group’s bonding.

Question 10: Notice of meeting

You and your colleagues (3 of them) are to have a meeting to discuss a project that has been parked for four months. You all know each other fairly well professionally, and communicate with each other frequently even though you haven’t really talked about the project. Do you need to prepare anything specifically for this meeting?

1. No – you all know each other well, so once you got together, you’ll work out what you need to do quickly;
2. Yes – you still need some structure to the meeting, so a formal agenda with a complete list of things that need to be discussed would be desirable; or
3. Yes – you do need some structure to the meeting, but an email with dot-points of what need to be decided at the meeting would be sufficient.

Question 11: Requirements of a meeting

Which of the following would not prevent one to still hold/continue a (formal) meeting?

1. Lack of agenda of the meeting;
2. Lack of quorum;
3. A member deliberately ignoring the allocated time to run out of time allocated for the entire meeting;
4. A member singing loudly; or
5. Members preventing other members from entering the venue.

Question 12: Chair’s role

Which of the following is not part of the Chair’s responsibility?

1. Adjoining the meeting as required if there are matters that need to be clarified outside the meeting;
2. Mediating the members who are verbally abusing each other because of their differing points of view; or
3. Making an executive decision on the matter the votes for which were split even.

Question 13: Procedure of a meeting

When would you use a ‘point of order’? Select the most likely scenario below.

1. A motion was moved without having sufficient discussion;
2. A motion was voted without having it seconded by a member other than the mover; or
3. The Chair is drunk.

Question 14: Minutes taking

There was a very heated argument between Bob and Natalie during the meeting. Which of the following would the most appropriate entry to the final minutes?

1. “During the meeting, both Bob and Natalie got quite emotional. Bob said to Natalie that her argument was rather corrupt, while Natalie was retorting harshly to Bob. In the end, Jane intervened, and we decided to discuss this again at the next meeting.”
2. “During the meeting, a heated discussion took place between the members, Bob and Natalie. It was suggested that the members will come back to this topic at the next meeting for further discussion.”
3. “The matter was discussed by the members, however without resolution. It was suggested that the matter be adjoined till a next meeting, at which the members agreed to have further discussion.”

Question 15: Minutes taking

What's wrong with the following minutes from a meeting?

Item 3.2: Amendment to the membership of Departmental Meetings

As a result of discussion, a motion to vote for the following resolution was proposed by Ms Alex Lim. Motion passed unanimously.

<u>Resolution</u>: Future departmental meetings will be attended by at least two representatives from the senior management of the Department.

Question 16: Follow up

You just have had an informal meeting with your colleagues and manager. Chaired by the manager, there were lots of good discussion, but as the time ran out, the group did not agree explicitly on the actions to follow. Now what would you do?

1. You send an email to the manager to see if she wishes you to send around some minutes of the meeting based on your notes;
2. You send everyone in the group the notes you took as ‘minutes’; or
3. You share with the group a summary of your notes, and ask to see if your understanding of the actions to follow is consistent with others.

Answers and comments for the quizzes

1) The answer is **1**. What makes a meeting a 'meeting' are primarily the presence of a structure and the agreed goal(s). The options 2 and 3 ticks both, even though one is a lunch meeting and another being a job interview. The first option is just a chat, which incidentally ended up with a decision as a by-product.
2) The answer is **2**. It is important to understand the nature and the context of the meeting, whether it is for discussion, or just for reporting. Sometimes the focus is on decision making, while in others, the focus is more on discussion (or something else).
3) The answer is **3**, and you might want to persuade these people to attend the meeting even if they might initially think unnecessary. The option 1 may well give the team a wrong premise/assumption, and/or waste time by going back and forth between the team and the managers. The option 2 may seem reasonable, but given there is not context formed amongst the team and the stakeholders, the latter's attendance is desired.
4) The answer is **2**. Given the number of attendees and their different types of expertise, it is likely that the focus of the meeting would be hard to maintain. The Chair here is functional, not necessarily 'leading' as such (i.e. the option 1), and you can still chair a meeting without compromising the spontaneity (i.e. the option 3).

Answers and comments for the quizzes (cont’d)

5) The answer is **3**. Choosing the right moment as well as environment is important. Here the confidential nature of the discussion requires one to consider this is something they can discuss in public. It would be good to establish that you are not in a position to discuss anything confidential on the phone, and ask the colleague if the matter is urgent or not. If not, wait till tomorrow, and discuss in person, especially in light of the sensitivities.
6) The answer is **1**, though there is some truth in it. There is not much to add aside form what I discussed in class.

Sample question 7: As said, I made an error numbering the questions, so there was no Question 7…

Sample question 8: A relatively unstructured meeting with low power concentration can lead to certain risks. Describe one of the risks, and give an example of a strategy to prevent this risk.

<u>Hints and comments</u>: Imagine what kind of a group this would look like. Low power concentration means that the group's structure is relatively flat, e.g. a group of equal colleagues, and an 'unstructured meeting' means that it may lack formal or explicit protocols, processes or goals within.

So what would happen then? Have a think how this meeting can go wrong, and how you can prevent it.

Sample answer to the question 8:

One of the risks in having a relatively unstructured meeting with a low power concentration is that the focus of the discussion at the meeting can be obscured and not able to produce tangible outcomes, as people may bring up irrelevant or non-urgent topics for discussion, and/or there would be no one to facilitate discussions. One strategy to counter this risk would be to install some formal processes, such as the use of an agenda and nomination of a chair.

Answers and comments for the quizzes (cont'd)

9) The answer is **3**. There are some who argue the option 3 has a point, but from the communication point of view, it is not that relevant. It's more to do with teamwork, which we'll cover next week.
10) The answer is **3**. When the team know each other well, discussion can get easily obscured by other matters of interest. It is important for the team to first decide what needs to be decided at the meeting.
11) The answer is **4**. You can remove this person and carry on. All the others make the proceeding of the meeting impossible, and people from time to time used these as a way to sabotage some resolutions.
12) The answer is **2**, though the Chair may intervene personally. The point is that if you are an attendee, don't wait for the Chair to intervene when someone is behaving inappropriately! The option 1 is the Chair's call, and the option 3, may be, depending on the Constitution or T&R.

Answers and comments for the quizzes (cont'd)

13) The answer is **2**. In case of the option 1, you only need to move a motion to amend, or argue against in reply. The option 3 is not a matter of procedure, while the option 2 would make it possible for members to raise a point of order to refer back to the T/R to see if the process was followed. If not, the decision would be invalid, of course.
14) The answer is **3**. You do not need the 'who said what' type of information, unless this was specifically requested. You generally avoid evaluative words, and focus on factual information on what was discussed and decided.
15) It was not a multiple-choice question, but I just include the answer here. **It needs a seconder.** The problem with the minutes from this meeting is that they state that a motion was proposed by one person. A motion would require a second person from the team to support it (seconder) in order for it to be suggested.
16) The answer is either **3** or **1**. The option3 is a cautious approach to respect the line of management. If the team is quite flat, you might as well for the option 3 though the wording needs to be very carefully made.

FIT1049: IT professional practice

Week 6: Teamwork and professional behaviours

MONASH University

GROUP OF EIGHT AUSTRALIA

Question 1: Definition of a team

Which one of the following scenarios makes a team?

1. People queuing for a bus at the bus stop;
2. The same people queuing for a bus helping each other to save someone who just collapsed at the bus stop while waiting for the ambulance to arrive; or
3. A group of first aid officers working for the bus company being sent to the bus stop to manage the situation.

Question 2: Formation of a team

You and your colleagues (3 of them) are working as a team to review your company's website for its refresh. You are the only web designer, while others are from different sections of the company, i.e. marketing, sales and finance. It is a third meeting, 2 weeks into what is supposed to be a 2 months project, and you are starting to realise that everyone in the team has different expectations about how the review should take place. What's going on?

1. The team is in the forming stage, and it is only normal that different perspectives collide as the team forms itself;
2. The team is in the storming stage, and there needs to be some leadership to bring the team to the performing stage; or
3. The team is indeed in the performing stage, and that is why you start seeing other people's expectations more clearly.

Question 3: Composition of the team

You are joining the company's sales team for 3 months to implement a new business system. The team understand that your work won't result in restructuring of the team (i.e. no one will be made redundant), but there seems to be some tension between one of the team members (who has been working there longest, for 15 years) and the manager (who has only worked there for 6 months) about how this implementation should take place. There are 8 other team members within the team, who have been rather quiet and seem to follow the aforementioned team member with the experience. Which one of the following is the least likely risk in this situation?

1. Diffused leadership;
2. Groupthink; or
3. Prolonged stage of 'storming'.

Question 4: Leadership and management

Which one of the following actions is beyond the parameter of ‘leadership’ as such?

1. You decide to deploy one of the team members to an area where you think would be more suited to his previous expertise and experience;
2. You take part of forming a group of early career professionals in your company without being told to do so; or
3. You conduct a task at the instruction of your manager and maximise the business impacts of the outcomes of the task assigned.

Question 5: Leadership styles

Catherine has always been shy, and has always been a 'quiet one'. She eventually found a way to be assertive in a team by focusing on her technical expertise, and also used very much her ability to see through how different technical expertise fit together for a common goal (e.g. a project). She found herself naturally inclined to a democratic style of leadership where she listens to others and make decisions based on the team's consensus. Now she is deployed for a 2 weeks project with a team where no one contributes actively because they are either too shy or 'busy'. What should she do?

1. Stick to her democratic leadership style while encouraging the team to be more participatory;
2. Change her leadership style to be bureaucratic with some 'formal rules' (e.g. set routines and protocols); or
3. Change her personality to be more autocratic if not charismatic.

Question 6: Assessment of the team #1

You have a team of five (5) with low power concentration and weak leadership within. What would be an effective strategy to lead this team while avoiding ‘groupthink’?

Question 7: Assessment of the team #2

You are joining as Project Manager a well-established team of eight (8) with two influential members within. List two strategies you can use to lead this team effectively.

Question 8: Teamwork and communications

You are working with a team of 30 from a range of functional areas (such as IT, HR, Finance and Consulting) on an in-house project to develop and implement a new HR system. Your company has its presence in thirteen countries across the globe, so it is inevitable that you have to work with some of the team members virtually across different time zones with different languages. In light of the likely risk of conflating the communications amongst the team, which of the following is not a potentially effective strategy?

1. Have a set of highly structured meetings regularly to promote communications across team members;
2. Have a Facebook page for the team so that team members can share the information easily; or
3. Have an organisational structure within the team itself to reinforce the role of each member.

Question 9: Assertiveness skills

There are situations where a ‘threat’ as an assertive verbal technique to persuade the other is potentially effective. Which of the following would be an acceptable form of ‘threat’ in a professional context?

1. “The report was due last week, and we still have not received a copy from you. *If we do not receive it by the end of today, we’ll miss the timing and will have to discuss with the manager*.”
2. “The report was due last week, and we still have not received a copy from you. *If we do not receive it by the end of today, I think I’ll have to speak to the manager*.”
3. “The report was due last week, and we still have not received a copy from you. *If we do not receive it by the end of today, I don’t think I’ll include you in the next project*.”

Question 10: Questions

Let’s continue with the last question’s scenario. You, reluctantly yet nevertheless, agreed that you will wait for your colleague to produce the report by tomorrow. The colleague seems still a bit uncertain about this, and you wish to further probe to make sure that this will actually happen. What would be a potentially effective question to ask?

1. “Are you REALLY REALLY sure that you can do it? Hope so!”
2. “What do you think are the reasons for this delay so far? I really want to help you, but need to know what I can actually do to help.”
3. “Do you actually think if you could finish this by tomorrow? Things happen, but you really need to tell me if you cannot. We’ll think of something if that’s the case.”

Question 11a: Listening skills

Assume that your manager asked you and your colleague at a very short notice to deliver a set of data that is rather time-consuming to generate. Due to other tasks you and your colleague are undertaking at the same manager's instruction, you two can only do the suggested task by tomorrow, but your manager wants it today.

Your colleague is clearly not comfortable and visibly stressed, and started to tell you how difficult the situation is. How would you respond to this situation?

Question 11b: Listening skills

It’s been already twenty minutes since this colleague’s monologue started to turn into a bit of rant. How would you respond to this situation?

Question 11c: Listening skills

How would you also seek a workable compromise with your colleague and the manager in this instance?

Question 12: Feedback (by definition)

Which of the following could be considered ‘feedback’ to your colleague’s presentation?

1. “That was TERRIBLE! Why did you even do that? I don’t want to upset you, but I tell you anyway because I should really be honest as a colleague.”
2. “That was VERY VERY good! Having said, though, I think you should have done the other way around for this. See? This part is not working properly.”
3. “Well, if you work on this part further, and that would make an overall improvement to the final deliverable, I reckon.”

Question 13a: Feedback

Assume that Alex, your junior colleague, has been untypically late for work for three out of the last 10 days. He also missed a meeting without notice, and this resulted in Alex getting the requirements of his task wrong, wasting 2 days of coding time.

Alex has been at the company for 3 years, and is considered a brilliant programmer by his colleagues. He is usually on time for everything, though he does not socialize much with his colleagues, e.g., eating lunch with the other people in the company.

How would you approach this situation? List two of the actions you might consider taking to make the situation better for all involved in this scenario.

Question 13b: Feedback

You finally got a chance to speak to Alex, and he clearly did not see this coming, especially from you. He is visibly annoyed, and started to respond to you in an aggressive manner. What would you do?

Question 13c: Feedback

In the same evening, you came home all so exhausted. You feel rather unresolved about Alex, and all this sort of hurts too. What would you do?

Question 14: Issues in teamwork

You are managing a project as Project Manager, and noticed that one of the team members, Simon, has been not able to meet the past two deadlines, resulting in a delay of the team's progress as a whole. Simon does not report to you outside the project, and he is more junior than you in the organisation. What would be the first step for you to address this specific team issue?

1. You discretely speak to Jane, who is Simon's line manager, and ask her to speak to Simon about the issue;
2. You speak to the sponsor of the project to discuss the delay, and raise this with other team members however without specifically referring to Simon; or
3. You discretely speak to Simon to see if you could help.

Question 15: Escalation

Consider the same scenario. Over the last two weeks or so, another team member, who has not been happy with his role in the team, has been rather blunt, if not aggressive, towards you. You do not know why he adapts such a mannerism, but this afternoon this staff member was so aggressive, you had to remind him that his behaviours were threatening and inappropriate. What would your next step be?

1. Contact HR and your line manager to report the incident;
2. Arrange a meeting with this staff member to discuss his behaviours; or
3. Give the staff member another chance since this was the first time you felt threatened.

Question 16: Conflict resolution

One day you arrived at your office, and your close and equal team members, Kim and Peter, were having an argument over the ways the project should proceed. No one else was in the office, and both were rather emotional but not abusive to each other, though their tone of voice does make you feel uncomfortable. The argument sort of ended as you entered the room, but later Kim told you that such an argument happens fairly regularly, and that he feels he is being bullied. What would you do first?

1. Speak to Peter on Kim's behalf in the presence of both Kim and Peter;
2. Discretely speak to your team's manager about the situation; or
3. Encourage Kim to speak to the manager.

Question 17: Unacceptable behaviours

Sam is a Business Analyst at a large consulting firm, recently being deployed to a client organisation that is a bank. One day Sam mistakenly forgot to submit a report on behalf of the team; he and his team completed it, but he forgot to send it to the clients by the deadline. The clients were not able to present the report to their stakeholders, and are now demanding some explanations from Sam's team and organisation for the damage this mistake incurred by failing to present this report on time. Which one of the following is professionally unacceptable behaviours?

1. The clients pointing out to Sam in the presence of his team how much damage the mistake incurred to their organisation.
2. Sam's manager demanding further explanations from Sam on how this happened and what Sam would do in response.
3. Sam's team sending an email to Sam's manager detailing the mistake Sam made.

Answers and comments for the quizzes

1) The answer is **3**. The option 1 is just a group; an incidental collection of individuals. The option 2 is a group with some cohesion with a common goal, but it lacks a context, unlike the option 3. Note that a team needs to be recognized not only by the members, but also by others as a distinct group.
2) The answer is **2**. If the members are still not sure about their expectations at the end of the first quarter of the project, something is wrong here. A wrong judgement on where the team are at can lead to a project failure, and theories can be used as a practical tool to diagnose any issues in teamwork.
3) The answer is **3**. This is another common situation, but unlike the previous question, you are introduced to an already existing team as a new member. The vulnerability of a well-established team is that it does not necessarily have the 'storming phase' and tends to follow the *status quo* long after the initial people who set up the *status quo* left. In this instance, the option 1 is a real risk, and also the attitude of the rest of the team can well lead to the groupthink (i.e. the option 2).

Answers and comments for the quizzes

4) The answer is **1**, which can only be done if you have the management authority. The option 2 is a leadership move, but needs to have a context, such as approval from the management as well as consideration around its accessibility. Note that the option 3 is also a form of leadership to demonstrate your initiative for positive outcomes.
5) The answer would be **2**. Bureaucratic leadership will at least give the members something to follow, and in a timeframe like 2 weeks, it may be the most appropriate to get the results. The option 1 can be an option if you have time. In some contexts, yes – you have to change the culture of the team to get things moving, but I doubt if you can do this in a 2 weeks stint. The option 3 is not necessarily the most practical option.

Sample question 6: You have a team of five (5) with low power concentration and weak leadership within. What would be an effective strategy to lead this team while avoiding ‘groupthink’?

Hints and comments: Have a think about the dynamism of the team in the conditions specified. What would be the likely symptoms of the team, and how would you address them?

Sample answer to the question 6:

One strategy to counter the potential risk of groupthink in this scenario is to articulate clearly the responsibilities of each member, so that each of the members would be accountable for their respective responsibilities. This would make each member's functional role within the team clear, and would compensate the weak leadership.

Sample question 7: You are joining as Project Manager a well-established team of eight (8) with two influential members within. List two strategies you can use to lead this team effectively.

Hints and comments: Have a think about the discussion we had for the Question 3. You are very much in the same situation; how would you approach this in order to achieve positive outcomes?

Sample answer to the question 7:

The two strategies I would take in this situation would be as follows:

1) I would designate clearly to each member their respective functional role within the team with respective responsibilities regardless of the level of influence they have. This would potentially be effective to address the risk of groupthink.

2) It is also likely that there are an existing set of informal rules within the team, some which will need to be challenged by my entry to the team's internal dynamics. I would try understanding these existing rules first, and then implement formal rules as appropriate to develop a set of agreed new 'norms' within the team.

Answers and comments for the quizzes

8) The answer is **2**. Both the options 1 and 3 are to tighten communications to make things more focused, while a Facebook page is more about sharing, which is only part of the communications as a whole. Overall, it also has so much more of a risk to make the team communications prone to rumors and irrelevant information, and it is not that useful for decision making, which is what moves the teamwork in a large project context.
9) The correct answer is **1**. The answer 2 will create a sense of resentment, since you are trying to dob someone in, while the answer 3 is a form of bullying. Note the answer 1 frame the entire situation as a shared one, i.e. 'it is our issue, not just yours'.
10) The correct answer is **3**, though **2** is also acceptable. The answer 1 imposes what you as the questioner wanted to hear, and it won't cut it. The answer 2 may be a next step, with an open question. If you cannot pin down the answer, then move to the answer 3, which forces one to respond with a definite answer, with a closed question.

Sample question 11a-c: Hints and comments

Take into consideration at least the following:

1) What would be the primary outcomes you want to gain from a conversation with (1) your colleague, and (2) your manager?
2) What kinds of interpersonal communication techniques would you employ to make a constructive intervention as you listen to your colleague in this situation, especially when you reach the stage described in the Question 11b?
3) What would be a general strategy when seeking for a workable compromise in the Question 11c? How would you frame the conversation with the manager?

**There is no sample answer for the question 11a-c since these were intended only as a prompt for discussion.*

Answers and comments for the quizzes

12) The correct answer is **3**. The answer 1 is an obvious no; this does not help much. The answer 2 is only an evaluative comment, and it is incomplete as feedback since it does not really tell what one can do next time. The answer 3 is feedback par excellence, since it addresses what one can actually do next time.

Sample question 13a-c: Hints and comments

Take into consideration at least the following:

1) Who would you be approaching as a start? Would you speak to Alex as a colleague? Or would you discuss this with his/your manager?
2) If you are to speak to Alex, how would you approach him? Remember that you are a senior colleague; there is already a power relation there. Would it be appropriate to speak to him informally by inviting him to lunch (which he does not usually have with a colleague)? Or would you schedule a meeting by properly explaining its purpose? Or would that make him even more anxious?
3) What are you going to do when you meet with Alex to discuss the issue? Alex may not be even aware that his behaviours had changed, or may not like to tell you the full story of what's causing his recent behaviours, which you have to respect. How would you frame this conversation to make it a positive and constructive experience for Alex?

Sample question 13a-c: Hints and comments (cont'd)

4) Note that the reasons for Alex's recent behavior may well be triggered by issues at workplace (such as bullying, harassment, office dynamics) and/or something beyond work (such as personal issues). You need to understand if Alex does not to wish to discuss any of these with you, but you can still provide him with information on who else he could obtain more support from.
5) Some of the issues, such as bullying, harassment and family violence, will have to be dealt with immediately in a professional manner.
6) The Question 11c is about intra-personal communication skills, and a general reminder of the importance of mental and physical health in a stressful professional environment. It is not just about others in the workplace; you also need to take care of yourself as well.

Sample question 13a: Sample answer*

The two actions I would take to in response to this situation would be as follows:

1) I would first arrange a meeting with Alex to ask if everything is okay with him. Alex does not generally seem to prefer to socialise with colleagues beyond work, and since his recent errors at work prompted me to have this conversation, I would not hold this conversation somewhere public or informal. I will convey to Alex my concern and willingness to support.

2) Then, if there were any issues of a serious nature that he is experiencing, I would encourage him to speak to his supervisor to get support from the company such as time off, counselling, or whatever may be helpful given the circumstances. I would reassure Alex that I would keep the details of our conversation confidential and leave the next steps up to him.

*There is no sample answer for the question 13b-c since these were intended only as a prompt for discussion.

Answers and comments for the quizzes

14) The answer is **3**. The option 1 is not recommended; it can damage Simon's trust in you, and may well unnecessarily affect negatively Jane's assessment of Simon as an employee. There may be a need to involve Jane at some stage, but certainly not the first step as such. The option 2 is something you have to do to address the project issue, not the team issue.
15) The answer is **3**. The option 1 may well have adverse effect in the team's culture and dynamics. The option 2 is a sensitive one; after all you were also affected by the situation by feeling uncomfortable, and you can approach form this angle. But if this is about Kim's allegation around Peter's bullying, the first step is to encourage Kim to speak to the manager directly if he feels comfortable. If not, he can contact HR. One way or another, it is best if the affected person makes the claim himself, and it will then become a formal claim to which the oraganisation can formally act upon. We'll cover this later in the semester too.
16) The answer is **1**. Threatening behaviours should not be tolerated at all, be it physical or psychological. The option 3 is thus not recommended. You may do the option 2, but probably the best option is to follow the option 1 to trigger the organizational process. Again, we'll cover this from legal perspective later in the semester.
17) All can be 'professionally unacceptable', if they were done in certain ways. The option 1 can be bullying if the clients did it deliberately to accuse and humiliate Sam, for example (the clients have all the rights to demand explanations though). The option 2 can also be bullying if the manager did so in front of the team, for example, and can be a form of intimidation and harassment if it was done in a certain manner even though it is indeed part of the manager's role to provide feedback. The main point is to consider how the message is delivered.