SWE 205 - Introduction to Software Engineering

Lecture 10 - Requirements Engineering Processes

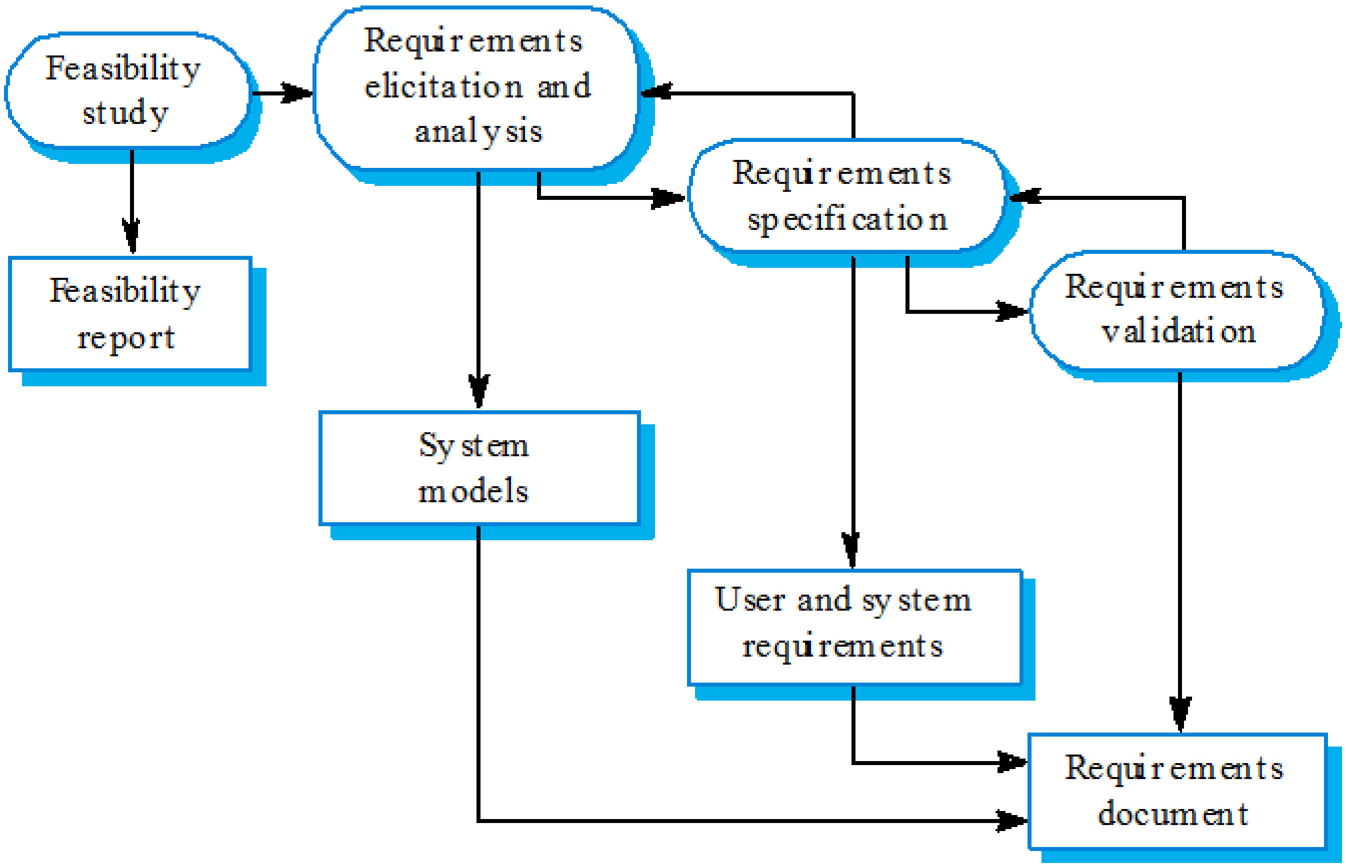
Lecture Objectives

- To introduce techniques for requirements elicitation and analysis

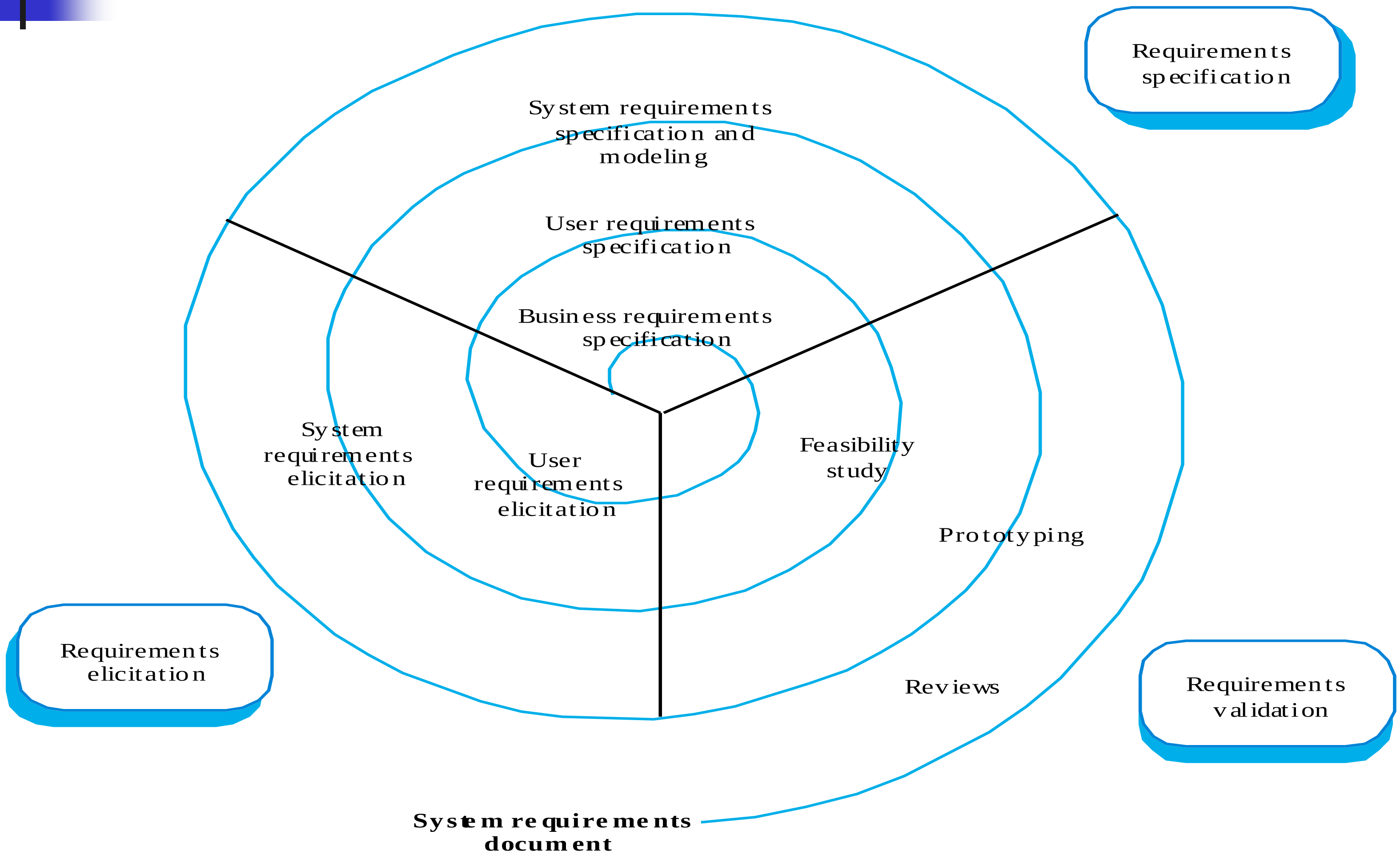
Requirements engineering processes

- The processes used for RE vary widely depending on the application domain, the people involved and the organisation developing the requirements.
- However, there are a number of generic activities common to all processes
  - Requirements elicitation;
  - Requirements analysis;
  - Requirements validation;
  - Requirements management.

The requirements engineering process



Requirements engineering



Feasibility studies

- A feasibility study decides whether or not the proposed system is worthwhile.
- A short focused study that checks
  - If the system contributes to organisational objectives;
  - If the system can be engineered using current technology and within budget;
  - If the system can be integrated with other systems that are used.

Feasibility study implementation

- Based on information assessment (what is required), information collection and report writing.
- Questions for people in the organisation
  - What if the system wasn't implemented?
  - What are current process problems?
  - How will the proposed system help?
  - What will be the integration problems?
  - Is new technology needed? What skills?
  - What facilities must be supported by the proposed system?

Elicitation and analysis

- Sometimes called requirements elicitation or requirements discovery.
- Involves technical staff working with customers to find out about the application domain, the services that the system should provide and the system's operational constraints.
- May involve end-users, managers, engineers involved in maintenance, domain experts, trade unions, etc. These are called *stakeholders.*

Problems of requirements analysis

- Stakeholders don’t know what they really want.
- Stakeholders express requirements in their own terms.
- Different stakeholders may have conflicting requirements.
- Organisational and political factors may influence the system requirements.
- The requirements change during the analysis process. New stakeholders may emerge and the business environment change.

Process activities

- Requirements discovery
  - Interacting with stakeholders to discover their requirements. Domain requirements are also discovered at this stage.
- Requirements classification and organisation
  - Groups related requirements and organises them into coherent clusters.
  - Prioritising requirements and resolving requirements conflicts.
- Requirements documentation
  - Requirements are documented and input into the next round of the spiral.

Requirements discovery

- The process of gathering information about the proposed and existing systems and distilling the user and system requirements from this information.
- Sources of information include documentation, system stakeholders and the specifications of similar systems.

ATM stakeholders

- Bank customers
- Representatives of other banks
- Bank managers
- Counter staff
- Database administrators
- Security managers
- Marketing department
- Hardware and software maintenance engineers
- Banking regulators

Viewpoints

- Viewpoints are a way of structuring the requirements to represent the perspectives of different stakeholders. Stakeholders may be classified under different viewpoints.
- This multi-perspective analysis is important as there is no single correct way to analyse system requirements.

Types of viewpoint

- Interactor viewpoints
  - People or other systems that interact directly with the system. In an ATM, the customer’s and the account database are interactor VPs.
- Indirect viewpoints
  - Stakeholders who do not use the system themselves but who influence the requirements. In an ATM, management and security staff are indirect viewpoints.
- Domain viewpoints
  - Domain characteristics and constraints that influence the requirements. In an ATM, an example would be standards for inter-bank communications.

Viewpoint identification

- Identify viewpoints using
  - Providers and receivers of system services;
  - Systems that interact directly with the system being specified;
  - Regulations and standards;
  - Sources of business and non-functional requirements.
  - Engineers who have to develop and maintain the system;
  - Marketing and other business viewpoints.

Interviewing

- In formal or informal interviewing, the RE team puts questions to stakeholders about the system that they use and the system to be developed.
- There are two types of interview
  - Closed interviews where a pre-defined set of questions are answered.
  - Open interviews where there is no pre-defined agenda and a range of issues are explored with stakeholders.

Interviews in practice

- Normally a mix of closed and open-ended interviewing.
- Interviews are good for getting an overall understanding of what stakeholders do and how they might interact with the system.
- Interviews are not good for understanding domain requirements
  - Requirements engineers cannot understand specific domain terminology;
  - Some domain knowledge is so familiar that people find it hard to articulate or think that it isn't worth articulating.

Effective interviewers

- Interviewers should be open-minded, willing to listen to stakeholders and should not have pre-conceived ideas about the requirements.
- They should prompt the interviewee with a question or a proposal and should not simply expect them to respond to a question such as ‘what do you want’.

Scenarios

- Scenarios are real-life examples of how a system can be used.
- They should include
  - A description of the starting situation;
  - A description of the normal flow of events;
  - A description of what can go wrong;
  - Information about other concurrent activities;
  - A description of the state when the scenario finishes.

LIBSYS scenario (1)

Initial assumption: The user has logged on to the LIBSYS system and has located the journal containing the copy of the article.

Normal: The user selects the article to be copied. He or she is then prompted by the system to either provide subscriber information for the journal or to indicate how they will pay for the article. Alternative payment methods are by credit card or by quoting an organisational account number.

The user is then asked to fill in a copyright form that maintains details of the transaction and they then submit this to the LIBSYS system.

The copyright form is checked and, if OK, the PDF version of the article is downloaded to the LIBSYS working area on the user's computer and the user is informed that it is available. The user is asked to select a printer and a copy of the article is printed. If the article has been flagged as 'print-only' it is deleted from the user's system once the user has confirmed that printing is complete.

LIBSYS scenario (2)

What can go wrong: The user may fail to fill in the copyright form correctly. In this case, the form should be re-presented to the user for correction. If the resubmitted form is still incorrect then the user's request for the article is rejected.

The payment may be rejected by the system. The user's request for the article is rejected.

The article download may fail. Retry until successful or the user terminates the session.

It may not be possible to print the article. If the article is not flagged as 'print-only' then it is held in the LIBSYS workspace. Otherwise, the article is deleted and the user's account credited with the cost of the article.

Other activities: Simultaneous downloads of other articles.

System state on completion: User is logged on. The downloaded article has been deleted from LIBSYS workspace if it has been flagged as print-only.

Key Points

- The requirements engineering process includes a feasibility study, requirements elicitation and analysis, requirements specification and requirements management.
- Requirements elicitation and analysis is iterative involving domain understanding, requirements collection, classification, structuring, prioritisation and validation.
- Systems have multiple stakeholders with different requirements.