

**TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY**  
**CPSC 483: COMPUTER SYSTEM DESIGN**  
**SPRING 2007**

**GRADING CRITERIA for the WRITTEN PROPOSAL**

The written proposal is a critical document in the design process. The proposal identifies a need, establishes the goal of the work, identifies solutions, and defines a plan of action to achieve the specific objectives. The success of your project will largely depend on the thoroughness of your proposal.

Your written proposal should be organized according to the outline below. The specific contents of each item in the outline are defined in pages 2 and 3 of this document.

**1. Introduction (30 points)**

- a. Problem background (10 points)
- b. Needs statement (5 points)
- c. Goal and objectives (15 points)

**2. Method of Solution (70 points )**

- a. Literature and technical survey (15 points)
- b. Design constraints and feasibility (5 points)
- c. Evaluation of alternative solutions (10 points)
- d. Statement of work (25 points)
  - i. Proposed design
  - ii. Approach for design validation
  - iii. Economic analysis and budget
  - iv. Schedule of tasks, Pert and Gantt charts
- e. Project management and team work (5 points)
- f. Societal, safety and environmental analysis (5 points)
- g. Appendices (5 points)
  - i. CV/qualifications of team members
  - ii. Product datasheets
  - iii. Bibliography

## TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Problem background:** Describe the general scope of your project, and the specific problem that your project is addressing. Go from general (e.g., search and rescue robotics) to specific (e.g., GPS navigation). In most of the senior design projects, the problem background is an area of research or an application domain within computer engineering.

**Needs statement:** After you have described the problem background, it is time to define a specific need that your project will address. Articulate the need as an expression of dissatisfaction with the current situation.

**Goal and objectives:** The *goal* is a brief, general, and ideal response to the needs statement. The need describes the current, unsatisfactory situation; the goal describes the future condition to which we aspire. The goal statement is so ideal that it would be difficult to decide when it was achieved. It rather establishes a general direction for the design mission. In contrast, the *objectives* (there will likely be more than one) are quantifiable expectations of performance. The objectives should also include a description of the conditions under which a design must perform. Specifying the operating conditions will allow you to evaluate the performance of different design options under comparable conditions.

**Literature and technical survey.** Describe prior research and development efforts that are specifically related to your problem, your needs statement, and your goals and objectives. This is not meant to be a comprehensive survey of an engineering discipline, but a concise overview of the most significant results that are tightly related to your project.

**Design constraints and feasibility.** Describe the constraints (e.g., technical, physical, economical, temporal) that you have to work with. In many cases, your needs statement will have already identified some of the constraints that your design will have to meet. Assess the extent to which your project objectives can be accomplished.

**Evaluation of alternative solutions.** This is a critical aspect of your project. For any goal there are likely many alternative solutions. In most cases, the alternative solutions will emerge from your literature and technical survey. What you have to do here is analyze the pros and cons of each of these solutions (and hopefully additional solutions you come up with), and justify your decision to opt for a particular solution.

**Proposed design.** Once you have identified a solution that addresses the needs of the project, it is time to present the specifics of your design. This includes, but is not limited to, techniques (e.g., algorithms, devices), parts (e.g., hardware, software), and the “glue logic” that will make the *system* work. Your proposed design should build support for the *feasibility* of your project.

**Approach for design validation.** This is a very simple but important aspect of your project. How will you test that your system does what it was designed to do? Does it solve the stated need? The validation tests should be consistent with the conditions under which your design must perform, as stated in the project objectives.

**Itemized budget.** Detailed budget of all costs expected to be incurred during the project (e.g., parts, fabrication services).

**Schedule of tasks, Pert and Gantt charts.** Break down the project into clearly identified sub-tasks, analyze dependencies among them, identify critical paths, and design a feasible schedule for accomplishing these tasks.

**Project management and team work.** Briefly list the qualifications of the team members and decide who will be the lead person for each of the different areas in the project (e.g., embedded

software, sensors, signal processing, communications, etc.) Describe the mechanisms that will be used to manage the project as a team, such as brainstorming sessions, keeping track of progress on every task, etc.

**Economic analysis.** Some economic issues were already considered during the analysis of constraints and the itemized budget. Here you provide a further economic analysis, were your system to become a commercial product:

- Economical viability: potential marketability of the system, expected volume production costs (as opposed to prototyping costs)
- Sustainability: Are system parts available from more than one vendor? What maintenance and support will the product require?
- Manufacturability: What is the effect of component tolerances on system performance?, worst-case analysis, expected production yield, testability and compliance to regulations (e.g., FCC)

**Societal, safety and environmental analysis.** What is the potential impact of your project to society, both beneficial (e.g., quality of life), and detrimental (e.g., loss of privacy)? What are the safety precautions that you have to take when working on the project (e.g., personal injuries, damage to the equipment/facilities)? What is the potential environmental impact of your project (e.g., contamination) and how will you minimize it?