Modelling Tool Use on Courses

Can exercises be done on paper rather than with a modelling tool?

Yes they can, but, modelling is more than just a few diagrams. Students are taught on the course to create a multi-dimensional integrated model. The structure of the model and the way it is developed is important. Anything more than a simple use case model becomes large and complex very quickly and it is important that students learn to work within the context of the overall model. This would be missed if you elected to do a paper-based course. You will certainly need to use a proper tool eventually if you are serious about modelling. Maintenance becomes entirely impractical without one. Tool issues associated with model development, traceability and maintenance are taught as part of the course and it is important that students experience them.

What tool do you recommend that we use for the course?

We recommend the use of Enterprise Architect from Sparx Systems for a number of reasons:

- We know that it does everything that is taught on the course. This is not true of all tools.
- There is a fully functional 30 day evaluation version available for download so there is no need to buy it just for the training.
- It is easy to learn and use.
- It is inexpensive if you decide eventually to purchase it.
- Exercise files are available in this format so exercises can begin from the previous solution.

Surely learning to use a particular tool takes time away from learning the language syntax?

Because Enterprise Architect is so easy to learn and use the time spent explaining how to perform the exercise is mainly about the detail of the modelling to be done rather than how to do it with any particular tool. Students need to get used to using a proper modelling tool, rather than just a drawing package, in order to understand the structure of the model and how to create and maintain it. This would be missed if the exercises were paper-based.

Do we have to buy a tool before the course?

No. Enterprise Architect has a fully functional 30 day evaluation version you can download and use for the course. Even if you eventually choose to buy a different tool it is important to use a tool for the exercises in order to learn how to create and manage a complex model. Using a tool on the course will help you to understand what is required of the tool that you eventually purchase and so to formulate evaluation criteria.

Can we use the tool we have already chosen on the course?

Yes. You will need to provide a copy of the tool for the instructor to use. The main limitation will be that it may not be possible to provide electronic copies of the exercise solutions before the course begins. The instructor will endeavour to provide electronic exercise solutions in your chosen format by the end of the course.

What preparations should we make before the start of the course?

Please ensure that the software and exercise files are loaded onto the course machines prior to the start of the course. If these are training machines then they are likely to be locked down such that it is impossible to load the software and course solutions. IT support should be informed well in advance so that these problems can be sorted out, otherwise severe delays can occur. Download the software and exercise files here. Laptops are fine provided students use a mouse. Pads and sticks are difficult to use for graphical work. If machines are networked then this is useful but not essential. You will not need access to a printer.

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