



UNIT-5

Working on Projects

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Explore planning essentials for an interior design project
- ✓ Explore different stages of a project.

Unit 5

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Planning Essentials

To ensure how best the interior design of a room allows it to function, first you will have to go back to the basics. This involves deciding on how a space can be divided into different zones; what should be done about the wiring, walls, ceilings, floors, lighting and windows; what can be improved and how. The result of this analysis will form the framework on which you can add whatever mood or style you can choose. A good design is as much about practicality, comfort and detail as about mood and style. However beautiful the window treatments, however original the colour schemes, however splendid the furnishings, no one will appreciate if the overall room is not comfortable to live in and does not function as it should.

Information Gathering

Before deciding upon any scheme, a designer requires a complete understanding thorough understanding of the client's mind and needs. Any competent designer who is asked to improve a home scheme or to plan one from the scratch would start by finding out their client's tastes and the factors that can make them feel more comfortable, how they live their lives, how they would like to live their lives in an ideal world and how much they are prepared to spend. One can start with the availability of budget and can then work backwards from there, in the light of money available for the project. Once the designer is clear about the availability of budget he can ask his client the questions to know exactly what the client's needs are.

These questions may vary according to whether the work involves re-doing a room or a whole house or apartment, or completely starting from scratch. The questions cover the four main aspects of the work:

- Function
- Practicalities
- Aesthetics
- Budget

Function

- How long have you planed to live in this home?
- Are there or there likely to be children in the household? If there are children right now how many are they and what their ages are?(this affects the room planning)
- Are there any pets in the house? If so what kind?(this affect the finishes and surfaces used)
- Are there any elderly relatives living with you, or likely to be?(if so you will need to think about good light of stairs, corridors and hall ways, non-slip bathroom floors etc)
- How many people stay at home for the whole day? (this may affect the colours and lighting)

- What are the respective needs of each member of the household? Are these needs likely to change?
- Where does the family feel more comfortable eating?
- Who uses the living room most?
- How many people do you usually entertain at once?
- How often do you entertain? And why?
- In which room do you entertain the most?
- If your children have friends in, where do they entertain them?
- Do you feel that the overall space in the house is adequate?
- What is the minimum number of rooms you think you need?
- Is the room in the need of total redecoration? Could your present facilities be improved?
- Where do you and your partner like to sit most and on what? Do you need different chair backs and seat heights? Where do you like to work when paying bills and writing letters etc?
- What kind of bed and mattress do you both prefer?
- Is bedroom lighting as good as it could be?

Practicalities

- How up to date is the wiring? If you need to add any new electric sockets? Does your wiring comply with safety requirements? Is it adequate for your present and future needs?
- What is the state of woodwork, floors, ceilings and walls?
- Are there enough electric sockets at the right place?
- Would it be any improvement to install long windows and French doors somewhere?
- Are any existing air conditioning units unsightly, and if so can they be improved?
- Do you need to fix burglar or smoke alarms?
- Does the existing hardware- such as door handles, taps, light switching etc. needs replacing or re-brassing?
- Are there nice floor boards under the existing flooring? Do they need repairing or replacing? Would you like to have a different kind of floor?

If an answer to any of these questions would mean major works- such as re wiring or re- plumbing; re-flooring or repairing a damaged wall- this obviously must be done before re- decorating and should be considered in the overall budget.

Aesthetics

- Is your taste in decorating is traditional, modern, romantic, minimalist or something else? Does it depend on the style of the room or house?
- Do you and your partners have similar tastes or different ones? Have you agreed to each have your own way in different rooms? Or do you have to compromise?
- Do you know what colour schemes do you want? Are you open to suggestions?
- What styles do you admire?
- Which styles would you prefer for any particular room?

- Is it possible to include the existing furniture, if any?
- Are there any colours or styles you and your partner dislike?

Budget

- What is the maximum you can spend on your project?
- Are you truly comfortable with this budget?
- Have you researched current prices for merchandise and services?
- What must be spent? Where you can save?
- Can you make sensible compromises on items that could be recycled to less important rooms if better things can be afforded in the furniture?
- If you could list the ten luxuries that would make your home look more attractive what would be they?

Sketching up Ideas

Once the basic concept has been established, it requires further development and refinement. For the very pre-liminary ideas there is no substitute for sketching. While not every interior designer is necessarily a fine artist, a sketch, however crude it might be, will help to visualize how a design idea might look within a space and whether it is worth working up further. These sketches might take the form of freehand perspectives or rough layouts, which can then be worked up on tracking paper, or thin layout paper, over the original survey drawing.

Floor Plans

Floor plans or sketch plans are invaluable for working out any changes, and for deciding on the positions of new electric sockets, lighting and furniture. To draw a floor plan or sketch plan first make a preliminary plan for the room. Next measure the lengths of walls, projections and recesses and mark these on your drawing where appropriate. To double check that you have got the exact measurements, add together the individual lengths of features and see if they are equal to the total length of the wall. To complete the survey take notes of the following measurements:

- Ceiling's height;
- Height, width and swing of doors;
- Height width and position of the windows;
- Services (gas point, radiators, plumbing, light switches etc.)
- Architectural features (dado, niche, arch, floor-level change, sloping etc.);
- Room orientation (whether it faces north, south, east or west);
- Existing finishes (material, type, colour and condition).

Now it is time to start the drawing. This needs to be to scale- that is, an exact replica of the room's shape but in miniature. The easiest way to do this is to use a finely squared graph paper. The conversion ratio

of your large scale measurements into this small –scale drawing will depend upon the gauge of the squared paper.

Using a well sharpened pencil start drawing, a useful size has large squares of 2cm and small ones of 2mm. for instance you calculate that one small square equals to 10cm/4in. based on this your drawing will be one fifth of the actual size of the room or 1:50. According to this if your measurement is 40cm/16in; you will draw a line four small squares long, and so on.

Erase any door openings, marking their clearance with an arc drawn to scale, then mark in fixtures or odd corners, windows, radiators, electric sockets, television points, phone jacks and air conditioners etc. write the room title and a note of the scale you have used.

Decorating Schedule

Decorating schedule is another important aid, which serves as a reminder of exactly what is to be done. Decorating schedules can be prepared at the same time as sample board and can be kept with the sample boards for daily reference. Write down the rooms name at the top and write down the following heading down the side of the paper, leaving enough space between them for clear descriptions:

- Walls
- Floors
- Ceilings
- Woodwork
- Window treatments
- Lighting
- And so on

Assembling a Scheme

So far we have discussed various elements that go into making up a scheme, now we will consider how these are assembled into a pleasing whole. Infact most of us practise putting together schemes nearly every day of our lives. We get up.....and we get dressed, we choose a style that is appropriate for the activities we intend to carry out, we select materials that are suitable and choose colours that flatter us. We decide whether to go for a harmonious outfit or one of contrasts, we determine in what proportions each colour will appear and we may even choose to include a patterned scarf or tie to bring the assemble together. Finally, we pick out appropriate accessories to complement our outfit. Formulating a design scheme for a home is very much the same process.

It should be remembered that no room in a house should be seen in isolation but viewed from an adjacent area and the whole home should have a sense of cohesion, it is important that each room scheme works well in its neighbours. That does not mean that the schemes must be same but they should have some linking factor. For instance, a dominant colour in one room might be used as an

accent colour in the next. In a smaller property laying the same carpet throughout often produces a harmonious result.

A professional designer takes few short cuts, preferring instead to do thorough research before finalizing a scheme. Skilled at visualizing though designers might be, they still need to see how all the components of a scheme inter-react, and the best way to do this is to make a sample board for each room on which they are working.

Putting together a scheme is in some ways even easier than choosing an outfit to wear. Samples can be great benefit. Here are some tips on handling them:

- Most manufacturers are willing to give small cuttings of fabrics, wall papers and carpets without charge.
- For a fabric that is pivotal to your scheme and which has a large pattern repeat, a larger sample will better show how the material will look when made up. If one of these bigger samples is not available, then buy 1m for testing purposes.
- Always view samples in the room where they will appear. Wallpapers can be stuck to the wall with masking tape, fabrics pinned to existing window dressings and paint tried out on a board held up to the wall.
- It is important that the samples are seen on the plane on which they will finally appear; for example, carpet flat on the floor, upholstery fabric on a sofa, curtain fabric gathered at a window. Fabric can take on a very different appearance depending on whether it is laid flat, as in a bed cover, or gathered into drapes as at a window.
- Gather more samples than you actually require for a room. This gives an opportunity to see how they work together and to reject the ones that are unsuitable.
- Clear plastic file pages are suitable for collecting samples. Label each for the title of the room for which it has been selected. When all the schemes have been gathered, lay each next to the one which it will adjoin in the house. This will allow you to judge if they link together well.
- When you are building a scheme around existing furnishing, you will need colour samples of these items so that you can see how your new colours will blend with the old.

Making a Sample Board

There has never been a better time for interior design. Numerous ranges of paints, both modern and traditional colours, wallpapers and a diverse collection of good quality, affordable soft furnishing fabric are now available. To find out about the decorating style, the client can be asked some questions.

Question Check list

- What are your favourite colours?
- What furnishing you need to keep?
- How do you want to live in your home?
- How much entertaining do you do?
- How long do you intend to live in your home?

- How much can you spend now, next year and the year after including housekeeping and maintenance?

At the same time there are some things that cannot be changed. When you are looking for ideas for a particular room, bear in mind its aspect; the geographical location; the character of the house.

Just as room plans need to be a true representation of the room in miniature, it is important for sample/concept boards to reflect the right mix and balance of colours and materials in a scheme. These boards help the designer to move on from the methodology of design process towards a creative response and provide useful parameters in which to work. Assembled in the same way as a collage, they tend to comprise magazine cuttings, photographs, and sketches that evoke the style or theme of the intended design. These boards successfully convey the essence of a design which in a way that the more conventional presentation materials may not. They are usually put to gather in the same way as a collage with an assembly of cuttings from brochures, newspapers, magazines, photographs, and sketches that convey the style or theme the designer has in his mind. These boards can also incorporate interesting textural items such as paper, fabric samples or leaves.

When making a sample board, try to position samples according to their location in the room: for instance, carpet at the bottom of the board, wall and curtain sample near the top and furnishing samples near the middle. It is also good to gauge the size of the sample according to the size of the area it will cover in the room: for example your wall covering sample should be much larger than your cushion fabric sample.

Artist's mounting board of A2 size forms an ideal base for your display of samples, though any neutral coloured board of similar size could be substituted. Simply attach the sample squares to the board- double sided tape is the easiest method- and label each one with its purpose, 'curtain fabric', floor coverings and so on. If it helps you to visualize the finished room, include any other items that will form part of the scheme, such as illustrations of light, fittings and furniture. It is also good idea to label each board with its room title, especially, if the whole house has to be decorated.

When the board is complete, you will be surprised to see the finished scheme- the mix of colours, the number of textural contrasts, and array of patterns all working together. Any imbalance in the scheme should show up now. Perhaps your scheme is too dark or too bland. Perhaps it has few shiny surfaces or too many patterns. All these elements will be demonstrated in your sample board and can be corrected at this early inexpensive stage.



Scheme Sheet

As a back up to a concept board, or when there is little time to finish the concept board, there is another system of recording a scheme that professionals use. It is referred to as a scheme sheet but it is in essence a sample board. Unlike a sample board it requires less artistry and can be made up in no time.

The scheme sheet consists of a form, which can be easily drawn up by hand or produced on a personal computer and which slots into a plastic file. This can then be filed in an A-4 size ring binder and transported where ever you like. Simply fill in the title of the room on the top of the page and below add each surface you are going to represent by a sample. In the centre column write any information you consider relevant to describe the finish or material in question. In the last column attach a small sample of the material described. In the case of a patterned material, select a section that shows as many colours as possible.

Stages of a Project

There are four main stages in a project. The first stage includes; the client's brief, the designer's proposal and the client's agreement to this proposal. The second stage involves gathering information on which to base a creative response and includes the presentation of designs to the client. Stage three starts when drawings are worked up in detail and all the pre-project presentation occurs. All this happens once the client has agreed to and signed off the plans. During the fourth stage, the works are carried out, completed and there is a formal hand over to the client. All these four stages of the project along with the methods of charging the fee, should be set out clearly for the client in the initial proposal. A designer would usually charge for the briefing meeting but the client would not be committed to going to further stages until they had agreed to the proposal put forward.

Stage One

The Brief and Design Analysis

The initial meetings with the client not only establish the brief but also help the designer to 'educate' the clients so that they fully understand how the whole process works. If the designer writes a design analysis after the briefing session, it not only acts as the confirmation of the brief but also creates a memory bank. This might seem an unnecessary measure for just one room but since most projects involve several rooms, its value can be clearly understood. The information collected here should help define the brief, give the client confidence and set out the free structure.

The Proposal

The proposal should set out the various stages of the project, the drawings and illustrations, and a breakdown of the project fees and services at each stage. In addition it should include all the terms and conditions of the business. A proposal should offer the client some flexibility and should suit the client's requirements and schedule. There are situations where the client should be prepared to negotiate which could be related to timings, budget or legal and technical difficulties. In these situations the designer should consider phasing the work or looking for different fee structures to suit the project.

Stage Two

Surveying and Measurements

Once the proposal has been approved by the client the second stage starts, where the designer assembles the information which forms the basis for creative process- the survey. A survey should be as comprehensive as possible. A few hours spent on this at the start of a project can save days, spent on site checking details or taking supplementary information later on the project.

Creativity and Concept

After the brief and survey the next most crucial stage for the designer is the creative process. In order to access creativity a designer needs to be totally relaxed and able virtually today dreaming. The creative stage again consists of three stages. The first is to decide on a concept. This requires a completely open mind and the ability to think laterally. For some people exercise and fresh air can help the process; inspiration can come from anything. A concept can be based on the key words picked up at the briefing session with the client. Once the concept has been decided upon, it requires further analysis, detailing and evaluation. Finally, the action can be taken on this, either in the form of informal images or as a more formalized concept board to show to the client at the presentation stage.

Presentation

Before presenting the concept to the client, spending a little time anticipating questions that might come up can also pay dividends. It is important to pitch the presentation correctly, too. The designer must show respect for the audience and should retain the right degree of formality and professionalism for the occasion. Audibility, voice, projection, enthusiasm and pace all contribute to a successful delivery, as does the appropriate body language, posture and the use of eye contact.

Client Agreement

It may not be possible for the designer to get the designs signed off straight away but there are ways of encouraging the client through the decision making process. Sometimes this will require some further work and adaptation, and it is important that the designer takes criticism positively, maintains a flexible outlook during a presentation and is not too fixed in his proposals. He should have alternative suggestions in his mind also, particularly in relation to budget

Stage Three

Implementation

After getting the written agreement from the client for the proposed plans and design the designer would collect information on all the products detailed in the design. Next the working drawings are produced which accompany the specifications and tender documents that are given to prospective builders, suppliers and specialists to provide basis for them to prepare quotations.

Specifications

Specification is the stage that requires a great deal of time. This is a process where all the details in a scheme are pinned down. This process sometimes is as long as the original planning and design. If, for example, a designer specifies a lamp, consideration needs to be given not only to the lamp itself but to the type, size, colour and wattage of the bulb; the size, shape, material and colour of the lamp shade and the colour of the flex.

Tenders and Estimates

When selecting the contractors a designer obviously needs to consider their suitability in relation to the size of the project. On occasions the client will also suggest the contractors to tender. In most cases the contractors will be in a competitive tender situation or it may be a question of reaching agreement through negotiation.

Working Drawings, Client Estimates and Contracts

For the selection of the main contractors usually the designer goes through all the estimates with the client and then the client makes the final selection because the contract will be between the client and the contractor. From the accepted quotations, the client estimates would then be prepared. A working drawing which is prepared for the contractor is a mini-design process itself, requiring development, planning and design detail.

Permissions and Approvals

At this stage the designer will seek any necessary permissions and approvals from the local authority. Sometimes these can cause major delays and problems in relation to the projects. The planning officer should always be contacted when changes are required to be made in the internal layout of the property or to the exterior.

Stage four

Project Management

A designer can either become a project manager himself or can hand it over to a project manager. Overall project managers are directly responsible for the success of a project. They are fully answerable to the client and should be aware of any risks involved. The project manager has an intimidating list of responsibilities which include; the interior design of the project, the organization of the supply and installation of everything related to that design, instructing the contractors, overseeing the implementation, reporting to the client and looking for the finances. The successful running of a project depends entirely on good communication and team work. All team members should be involved and informed at every stage of the project.

Schedules of Work

The project Manager prepares schedule of works which need to be set within realistic time frame to ensure that the reasonable time is allowed for sequencing, ordering and tendering, manufacturing, installation and drying. The programme would be updated monthly and everyone involved in the project would have a copy. Preparation is a key to success and project managers should never allow a client to rush them into starting before everything has been properly scheduled and prepared. Lack of preparation can result in loss of quality.

Procurement

A procurement schedule is prepared to ensure that materials, finishes, fittings, equipment and furniture are all available for installation. The designer must work hard to establish good working relationships with the suppliers to get the best possible service and help. If for example, something is damaged on delivery, the designer would be confident that the suppliers will provide a replacement quickly.

Completion and Handover

The designer would carry out a thorough and detailed checks on all the works, looking out for any damage to the paint work, lighting, flooring, curtains etc, so that if there are any problems, these should be rectified before finally handing over to the client. Many designers hold back a sum in order to dress the site with flowers, candles, chocolates to entertain the client when he arrives. On the more practical side the completion would be accompanied by final invoice, guarantees, instruction or information booklets containing instructions for the care of wood, stone flooring would be given to the client. This adds to the professionalism of the overall project.

Fees

Hourly or daily rates would be appreciated for the following reasons:

- A client who only requires a limited input from the designer.
- The first stage of the project before the definitive brief is completed.
- Time spent locating art works and other specialist items.
- A client who wants to commission a designer on a set limit of hours agreed.
- If it is only a small project.

Combination of Fee and Mark Up

This is usually applied where projects mainly involve the supply of furnishings, fittings and equipment. This could include a fee for the initial, design concept and then any items supplied would be at a mark up price (percentage on cost). In addition, a project coordination fee can be charged to cover installation of furniture, fittings and equipments especially, if the job was large or complex.

Fixed Fee

This mainly applies to the projects with mainly design content, with or without the supply of goods. This could include:

- A fixed design fee to cover the design up to a work in progress stage.
- A fixed fee to cover the initial design concept.
- A project coordination fee (hourly or percentage of the total cost of the job) during work in progress stage.
- An administration fee.

Retail Charges

Sometimes it may be appropriate to supply everything at retail cost, in which case no other fees are applicable. However the retail charges can be added in consultancy fee. Whatever the method of charging is, the fee should be agreed with the client at an early stage.

Calculating the Fee

When calculating the design fee, designers should consider the time they are likely to spend on each stage of the project as agreed with the client. At this stage the designers should also consider which job is actually worth to them when using any of the above mentioned methods for charging or which is worth on a square footage basis. As a general rule the budget figures are placed against various elements of the job and then calculated around a set percentage of the total budget cost. This percentage can be adjusted according to the project; it will be higher for a small project and lower for a larger one.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Becoming an Interior Designer: A Guide to Careers in Design, (2011), By Christine M. Piotrowski*
- ✓ *Designing Commercial Interiors, (2012), By Christine M. Piotrowski, Elizabeth A. Rogers, IIDA*