

# WHAT ARE P6EXTERNAL DATES?

## 1 Introduction

P6 has dates that are called **External Dates**. Do you know that they are a constraint, they may significantly change your program and may be created without you knowing?

**External Dates** can be career shortening if you do not know how they are created, how to find them, delete them or turn them off!

## 2 Understanding External Dates

In summary:

- **External Dates** are created where there are inter-project relationships in a source database that you are importing a P6 project from.
- When you import the project into your database that had **External Relationships** in the source database then these relationships are not imported then **External Dates** are created that represent the missing relationships and calculate like constraints.
- You must always search for **External Dates** when you import a project from an unknown source.
- Check this in the **Tools, Schedule..., Options** form and check **Ignore relationships to and from other projects** to disable **External Dates**, but I do not recommend this option.
- **External Dates** may be located by displaying the columns **External Early Start** (which works as an Early Start Constraint) and the **External Late Finish** (that works like a Late Finish Constraint) or look for Start and Finish dates that have an “\*”.
- These dates can be very confusing if one is not aware that they have been created or how they operate.
- The negative float in the picture below is created by these dates after an activity’s duration was increased by 34 days:



External Early Start	External Late Finish	Total Float	Qtr 1, 2010		Qtr 2, 2010		
			Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
12-Mar-10 16		-34					
		-34					
	28-May-10 08	-34					

This paper will go through the Import and Export and Check In and Check Out processes and includes External Dates.

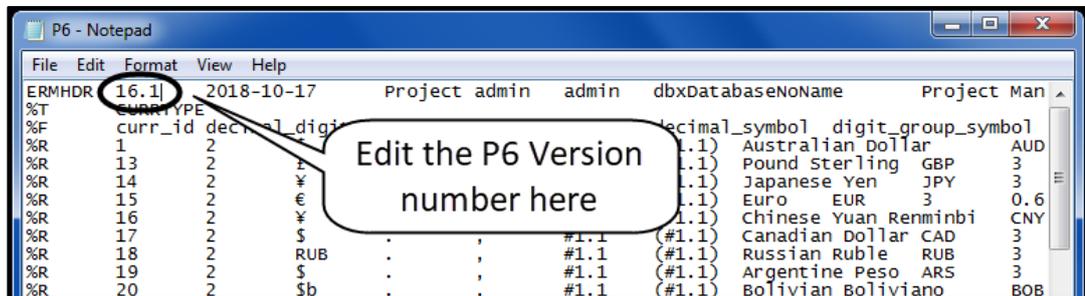
### 3 P6 Project Import and Export

Project data may be imported and exported from and to the following formats:

- **XER**, which is a Primavera proprietary format, used to exchange projects between Primavera Version 6.0 databases regardless of the database type in which it was created. No Baseline projects may be exported or imported with this tool and these have to be exported separately. Earlier versions of **XER** files may be imported into later version databases. A layout (formatting) is not part of an XER file. Baselines are not exported with an XER. The web tool does not import or export XER file.



If you try to import a later version of an XER file with an earlier version of P6 you may receive a message stating that the file may not be imported. To resolve this issue open the XER file with **Notepad** and edit the version number to the version of your version of P:



- **Primavera Contractor XER**. This is the format produced by Primavera Contractor.
- **Project (\*.XML)**. This is the file format that Microsoft Project now recommends for export and import from other products like Primavera. Version 8.3 included some enhancements to this function which are outlined in the What's New chapter.
- **MPX (\*.mpx)**. This is a text format data file created by Microsoft Project 98 and earlier versions. MPX is a format that may be imported and exported by many other project scheduling software packages.
- **Primavera Project Planner P3 and SureTrak** files saved in **P3** format. A SureTrak project should be saved in Concentric (P3) format before importing. Importing P3 files requires P3 to be installed on the same computer as P6 and later Windows operating systems do not support the loading of P3, effectively making this function inoperable on some operating systems. With Primavera Version 6.0 the importation of P3 files has been improved:
  - One or more individual sub-projects may now be imported, and
  - The import EPS locations specified, which may be different for each sub-project
- **Primavera PM – (XML)** is a new format introduced with Primavera Version 6.0 which is industry standard and enables the import and export of project data. This tool is continually being developed and different versions of P6 have different functions. It allows the import and export of a single projects with their Baselines and Layouts, both of which are not available with XML files. A Template is used to manage data which may exist in the database and the project to be imported so the user may decide to use the existing database data, import the new project data, update the existing project data or not import the data.

The XML import/export functionality has been improved in Version 8.3.

The XML import/export functionality has been improved in Version 15.1 allowing the import and export of Baseline projects. Previously Baseline projects had to be Restored, before they could be exported.

P6 Version 19 introduced the ability to:

- In Standalone and PPM databases to update baselines when importing Primavera XML file.
- To export projects in Primavera XML format in a compressed ZIP file.
- Scheduling and Leveling Options may be imported and exported.
- Scheduling and leveling options are included and when importing the user may select to import with the Update Existing or Keep Existing import settings for the scheduling and leveling options or Keep Existing import settings for the scheduling and leveling options.



A P6 and MSP XML file will look the same as both will have the format \*.XML. You should consider putting P6 or MSP in the file name so you know which files are P6 XM files and which are MSP XML files.

- **UN/CEFACT XML** format. P6 Version 8.3 supports UN/CEFACT XML format. This format is mandated by many US Government agencies.



**Project (\*.mpp)**. This is the default file format that Microsoft Project uses to create and save files is not supported by later version of P6.



When projects are imported or exported to other scheduling packages they will often calculate differently due to the different methods of calculation of each package. Do not expect to import from Microsoft Project or any other software and expect to see the same dates when scheduling. There are some articles on [www.primavera.com.au](http://www.primavera.com.au) and [www.eh.com.au](http://www.eh.com.au) that explain the issues.

Importing a file from another Primavera database may give different results depending on the database and user preferences in each database and these should be carefully checked.

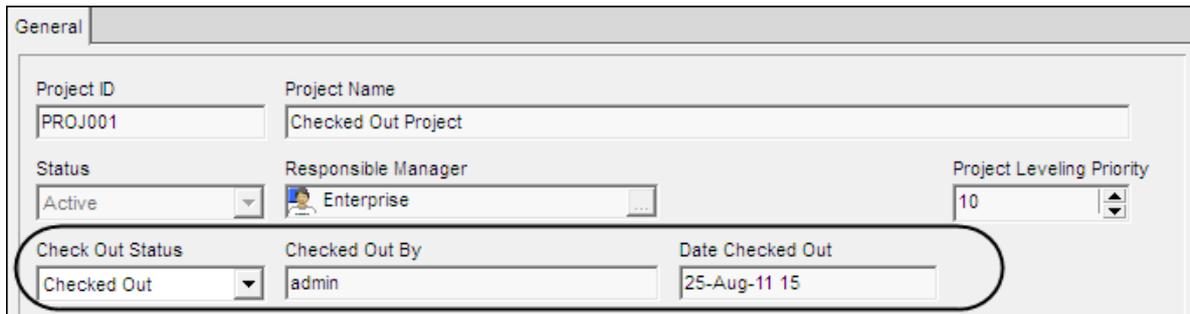
Importing a project into a working P6 database must be carefully planned to ensure that existing projects are not impacted by the imported data and the options available on the import wizard are fully understood. Updating or overwriting existing data may affect existing schedules.

A sacrificial database may be the best option for reviewing schedule submitted by subcontractors so as to not corrupt you own working database.

## 4 Check In and Check Out

Check In and Check Out function is similar to the P3 and SureTrak function of the same name, which enables a project to be copied from a database, worked on in a remote location such as a client's database, and then be checked in to the original database at a later date and the original schedule updated with the changes.

- Select from the **Project Window, General tab, File, Check Out...** to check out a project:



The screenshot shows the 'General' tab of a project window. The 'Project ID' is 'PROJ001' and the 'Project Name' is 'Checked Out Project'. The 'Status' is 'Active'. The 'Responsible Manager' is 'Enterprise'. The 'Project Leveling Priority' is '10'. The 'Check Out Status' is 'Checked Out', 'Checked Out By' is 'admin', and 'Date Checked Out' is '25-Aug-11 15'. A red circle highlights the 'Check Out Status' dropdown menu.

- The project XER file may then be sent to another person or organization, imported into another database and edited.
- P6 Version 19 introduced the ability **Check In** and **Check Out** projects to XML.
- On import to another database, **External Dates** are created where there are inter-project relationships in the source database.

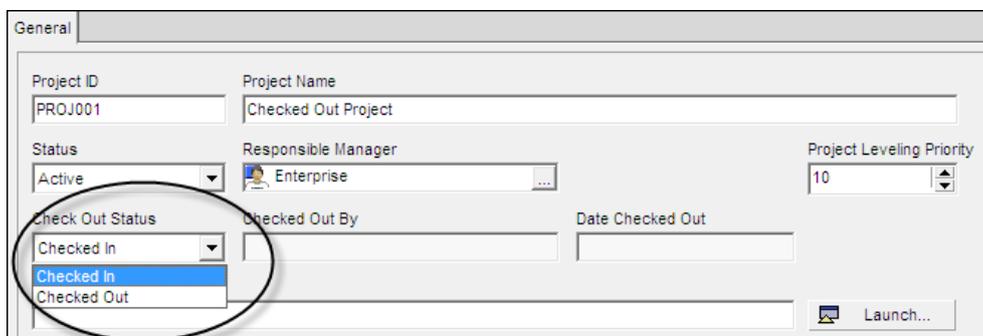


These **External Dates** act like Early Start and Late Finish constraints and will affect the schedule calculation. You should always check for **External Dates** when importing a project. See paragraph 2 for an example of External date.

The file format of a Checked Out file is the same as a project exported in XER format, but checking out a project places a **Read Only** attribute on the project, and then it may be opened but not edited.

To remove the **Read Only** attribute on the project either:

- Select **File, Check In...** to check in a project, or
- Select change the status to **Checked In** in the **Project Window, General tab**:



The screenshot shows the 'General' tab of a project window. The 'Project ID' is 'PROJ001' and the 'Project Name' is 'Checked Out Project'. The 'Status' is 'Active'. The 'Responsible Manager' is 'Enterprise'. The 'Project Leveling Priority' is '10'. The 'Check Out Status' dropdown menu is open, showing 'Checked In' selected. 'Checked Out By' is 'admin' and 'Date Checked Out' is empty. A red circle highlights the 'Check Out Status' dropdown menu.



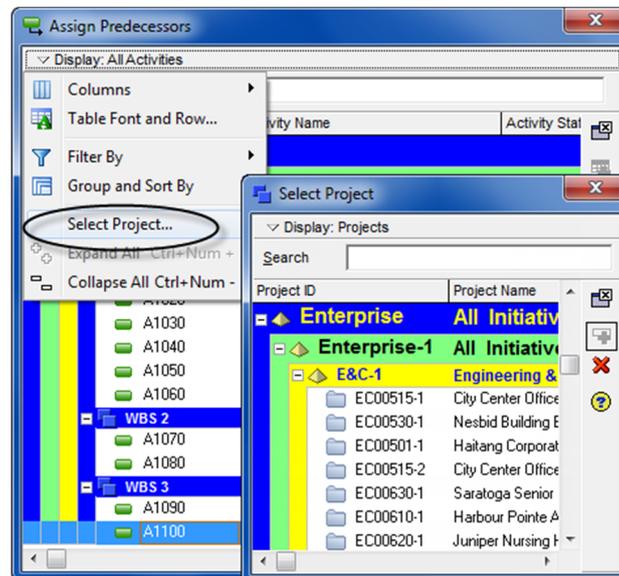
Also ensure you check what has happened to any original external relationships on re-import of a Checked Out project.

- The original inter-project relationships normally get re-linked on import, and
- Then your project may calculate differently when you have Checked In a Checked Out project that now has External Dates and different calculated dates.

## 5 Ignore relationships to and from other projects

Relationships may be created between two projects when:

- Two or more projects are opened together, or
- When assigning a relationship another project is opened and a relationship is created to an activity in another project.



Check the **Ignore relationships to and from other projects** in the **Tools, Schedule..., Options** form to:

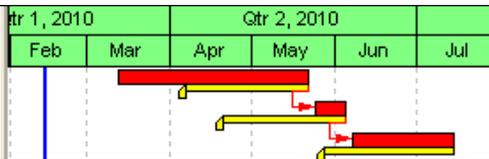
- Ignore relationships with other projects that are currently not open, or
- To ignore **External Dates** that may be created when a P6 project is imported from another database and the imported project has interproject relationships.

This option will also ignore **External Dates**, which are the **External Early Start** and **External Late Finish** dates.

**External Dates** are constraints created when a project is exported from Primavera Contractor and/or another P6 database and imported into P6. They act like Early Start and Late Finish Constraints and are used to represent the relationships that would have originally provided the Early Start and Late Finish dates to the Critical Path calculations of the imported schedule.

These dates can be very confusing if one is not aware that they have been created or how they operate. The negative float in the picture below is created by these dates after an activity's duration was increased by 34 days:

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When you import a project from another database ensure you **ALWAYS** check for External Dates and understand how they operate.

If you export and then import back into the same database, then External dates are not normally created but the relationships are re-established with the original schedule they were linked with.

On the other hand, if the original schedules have been deleted then these External Dates may be created.

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