

## CLAIMS

- 5 1. A module for use in a software system for distributed control, monitoring and/or management of a process or apparatus, the module comprising:
- (i) communication means for communicating with other software modules;
  - (ii) executable software for use in co-ordinating with other software modules  
10 in the selection of tasks to be allocated to respective software modules;  
and
  - (iii) a data store, or access to a data store, for storing task definitions including time data indicating task execution times,
- 15 said module further comprising scheduling means for storing data selected from at least one of said task definitions, including said time data for the respective task definition or definitions.
2. A module according to claim 1 in which the scheduling means can be used  
20 by the software system for allocating tasks amongst a plurality of modules during control, monitoring and/or management of a process or apparatus.
3. A module according to either one of the preceding claims wherein the scheduling means for one module may store data from more than one task definition, ordering the data so as to determine the order in which, in use of the  
25 system, the module will control or carry out the relevant task.
4. A module according to Claim 3 wherein the scheduling means may store the task data together with an indicator of status selected from at least two alternative statuses such as "tentative" and "firm", said indicator of status  
30 determining a mode in which the scheduler deals with the relevant task data.
5. A module according to Claim 4 wherein the scheduler operates a time-out in relation to task data having one of said indicators of status, after which the data