



SSAS Tabular

Sample manual - first two chapters



TABLE OF CONTENTS (1 of 6)

1	OVERVIEW OF SSAS TABULAR	Page
1.1	What Tabular Models Do	8
	<i>Database Level</i>	8
	<i>Model Level</i>	9
	<i>View Level</i>	9
1.2	Deployed Tabular Models	10
1.3	Compatibility Levels	11
	<i>Viewing the Compatibility Level of your Model</i>	11

2	CREATING PROJECTS IN VISUAL STUDIO	Page
2.1	Ensuring Analysis Services is Running	12
2.2	Running Visual Studio	13
	<i>Running Visual Studio</i>	13
	<i>Changing Start-up Options</i>	13
	<i>Changing Analysis Services Settings</i>	14
	<i>Installing the SSAS Extension</i>	15
2.3	Projects and Solutions	16
	<i>Creating a New Project</i>	16
	<i>Files and Folders Created</i>	17
	<i>Having Multiple Projects in a Solution</i>	17
2.4	Visual Studio Windows	18
	<i>Moving and Auto-Hiding Windows</i>	18
	<i>The Three Main Windows to Show</i>	18

3	GETTING STARTED	Page
3.1	Working with Models	19
	<i>Renaming Models</i>	19
3.2	Adding Data	20
3.3	Workspace Databases	21
	<i>Using a Workspace Database</i>	21
	<i>Using an Integrated Workspace</i>	22
3.4	Deploying your Database	23
	<i>Checking the Production Server Used</i>	23
	<i>Deploying a Model</i>	24
	<i>Viewing Deployment Progress</i>	24
	<i>Viewing the Deployed Database</i>	25
3.5	Viewing your Model's Data	26
	<i>Analysing a Model in Excel</i>	26
	<i>Browsing a Model in SSMS</i>	27
	<i>Creating a Pivot Table Based on a Model</i>	28
3.6	Generating Measures	29
	<i>Using Generated Measures</i>	29

4	IMPORTING DATA	Page
4.1	Our Example Database	30
4.2	Loading Data	31
	<i>Step 1 – Choosing to Import Data</i>	31
	<i>Step 2 – Choosing your Data Format</i>	32
	<i>Step 3 – Choosing the Data Source</i>	32
	<i>Step 4 – Passing Security</i>	32
	<i>Step 5 – Encryption Support Warning</i>	33
	<i>Step 6 – Choose your Tables</i>	33
4.3	Existing Connections	34
4.4	Importing from Excel	35
4.5	Importing CSV or Text Files	36

5	CREATING DATA MODELS	Page
5.1	Data and Diagram View	37
5.2	Relationships	38
	<i>Viewing Relationships</i>	38
	<i>Editing Relationships</i>	39
	<i>Deleting Relationships</i>	39
	<i>Creating Relationships</i>	40
	<i>Managing Relationships</i>	40
5.3	Hiding Columns and Tables	41
	<i>The Need to Hide Columns/Tables</i>	41
	<i>Hiding Tables</i>	41
	<i>Hiding Columns</i>	42
	<i>Choosing not to Display Hidden Columns and Tables</i>	42
5.4	Renaming Tables and Columns	43
	<i>Renaming Columns</i>	43
	<i>Renaming Tables</i>	43
5.5	Changing what you've Imported for a Table	44
	<i>Deleting Columns from a Model</i>	44
	<i>Adding Columns to a Model, or Changing Filtering</i>	44

TABLE OF CONTENTS (2 of 6)

6	TRANSFORMING DATA	Page
6.1	Transforming Data during Loading	45
6.2	Changing Data after Loading	46
6.3	Working with Queries	47
	<i>The Power Query Editor</i>	47
	<i>Default Query Steps</i>	47
	<i>Viewing Data at Different Steps</i>	48
	<i>Editing a Query Step</i>	48
	<i>Deleting a Query Step</i>	49
	<i>Adding a New Step</i>	49
	<i>Applying Query Changes</i>	49
	<i>The Advanced Editor</i>	50
6.4	Transforming Data	51
	<i>Changing Data Types</i>	51
	<i>Renaming Columns</i>	51
	<i>Removing Columns</i>	51
	<i>Removing or Keeping Rows</i>	52
	<i>Sorting and Filtering Rows</i>	52
	<i>Splitting Columns</i>	53
	<i>Replacing Values</i>	53
6.5	Creating New Columns	54
	<i>Creating a Formula</i>	54
	<i>Creating a Column by Example</i>	55
6.6	Conditional Columns	56

7	EXCEL PIVOT TABLES	Page
7.1	Creating a Data Model	57
7.2	Creating a Pivot Table	57
7.3	Drill Down	59
7.4	Working with Pivot Tables	60
	<i>Renaming Fields</i>	60
	<i>Refreshing Changes to the Model</i>	60
	<i>Changing Number Formatting</i>	61
	<i>Moving Rows and Columns</i>	62
	<i>Sorting Pivot Tables</i>	62
7.5	Filtering	63
7.6	Slicers	64
	<i>Creating Slicers</i>	64
	<i>Removing Slicers (or their Filters)</i>	64
	<i>Changing the Number of Slicer Columns</i>	65
	<i>Changing the Style of a Slicer</i>	65
7.7	Controlling Multiple Pivot Tables with Slicers	66
	<i>First Rename your Pivot Table</i>	66
	<i>Getting a Slicer to Control Multiple Pivot Tables</i>	67
	<i>An Alternative Method – Telling a Pivot Table which Slicers Control it</i>	67
7.8	Formatting Pivot Tables	68
7.9	Choosing what to Display	69
	<i>Hiding Field Captions</i>	69
	<i>Inserting Blank Rows</i>	69
	<i>Subtotals and Totals</i>	70
	<i>Changing Report Layout</i>	70
	<i>Repeating Item Labels</i>	70

8	POWER BI REPORTS	Page
8.1	Overview of Power BI and SSAS	71
8.2	Importing SSAS Data	72
8.3	Linking to an SSAS Model	73

TABLE OF CONTENTS (3 of 6)

9	CALCULATED COLUMNS	Page
9.1	What are Calculated Columns?	74
	<i>Differences between Calculated Columns and Excel Formulae</i>	74
9.2	Creating Calculated Columns	75
	<i>An Alternative Method, using the Keyboard</i>	75
9.3	Testing Conditions using IF	76
9.4	Editing DAX Formulae	76
	<i>Multi-Line Formulae</i>	77
	<i>Using the Tab Key</i>	77
	<i>Comments</i>	78
	<i>The DAX Editor</i>	78
	<i>Adding Functions</i>	79
9.5	Working with Calculated Columns	79
	<i>Moving Calculated Columns</i>	80
	<i>Sorting by Calculated Columns</i>	80
9.6	Using RELATED to Link Tables	81
9.7	The BLANK Function	82
	<i>Blank Arithmetic</i>	83
	<i>Using Variables to Improve Formulae</i>	83
9.8	Aggregator Columns and SWITCH	84
	<i>The SWITCH Function</i>	84
9.9	Error-Trapping	85

10	MEASURES	Page
10.1	Calculated Columns vs. Measures	86
	<i>Difference 1 - Calculated Columns are Row-Based</i>	86
	<i>Difference 2 - Measures are Aggregated</i>	86
	<i>Difference 3 - Pivot Table Placement</i>	87
10.2	Creating Measures	88
	<i>Step 1 – Choosing a Host Table</i>	88
	<i>Step 2 – Choosing a Cell</i>	88
	<i>Step 3 – Creating the Measure</i>	89
	<i>Step 4 – Naming your Measure</i>	90
	<i>Step 5 - Changing the Default Formatting</i>	90
	<i>Step 6 - Applying Filters to Test your Measure</i>	91
	<i>Step 7 - Testing your Measure in Excel</i>	91
10.3	Using a Separate Measure Table	92
	<i>Creating a Separate Table</i>	92
	<i>Adding Measures</i>	92
10.4	Filter Context	93

11	MEASURE SYNTAX	Page
11.1	Basic Syntax Rules	94
	<i>Data Types</i>	94
	<i>Symbols you can Use</i>	94
11.2	Aggregation Functions	95
	<i>Aggregating a Column</i>	95
	<i>Aggregating an Expression (X-Suffix Functions)</i>	96
11.3	Calculating Ratios	97
	<i>Counting Rows using the COUNTROWS Function</i>	97
	<i>Creating Ratios: the Fields Needed</i>	97
	<i>The Final Pivot Table</i>	98
	<i>Summing Ratios wouldn't Work</i>	98

12	THE CALCULATE FUNCTION	Page
12.1	Syntax of the CALCULATE Function	99
12.2	Removing Filters Using ALL	100
	<i>Removing a Single Filter</i>	100
	<i>Removing Multiple Filters</i>	100
	<i>Removing All Filters Bar One</i>	101
12.3	Replacing Individual Filters	102
	<i>Replacing a Single Filter</i>	102
	<i>Replacing More than One Filter</i>	102
12.4	Using VALUES to Edit a Constraint	102
	<i>On its own, VALUES is pointless</i>	103
	<i>Amending the Filter Context Filter</i>	103

13	THE FILTER FUNCTION	Page
13.1	Syntax of the FILTER Function	104
13.2	Filtering to Show Subsets of Data	105
13.3	Removing Filters using ALL	106
	<i>Removing and Partially Reinstating Filters</i>	106

14	THE EARLIER FUNCTION	Page
14.1	Overview of the EARLIER Function	107
	<i>Our Three Worked Examples</i>	107
	<i>What the EARLIER Function Does</i>	107
14.2	Case Study: Running Totals	108
14.3	Case Study: Ranking using EARLIER	109
14.4	Case Study: Group Averages	110

TABLE OF CONTENTS (4 of 6)

15	BANDING	Page
15.1	What is Banding?	111
	<i>Creating and Loading a Banding Table</i>	111
15.2	Creating a Banding Formula	112
15.3	Sorting the Bands	113

16	RANKING	Page
16.1	The RANKX Function	114
	<i>Syntax of the Rank Function</i>	114
	<i>Entering RANKX in a Calculated Column</i>	114
16.2	Using RANKX in Measures	114
	<i>Step 1 – Creating the Measure to Rank</i>	115
	<i>Step 2 – using ALL</i>	115
16.3	Changing the Sort Order	116

17	CALENDARS	Page
17.1	The Need for a Separate Date Table	117
	<i>The Excel Approach – Date Functions</i>	117
	<i>The Tabular Approach – Create a Separate Table</i>	117
17.2	Creating your Dates Table	117
	<i>Creating a Calendar Table in Excel</i>	118
	<i>Creating a Calendar Table in SQL Server</i>	119
17.3	Creating Relationships	119
	<i>Creating Relationships</i>	120
	<i>Using Integer Date Keys</i>	120
17.4	Announcing your Date Table to the World	121
17.5	Using Calendars in Pivot Tables	122
	<i>Sorting Months (and Other Fields)</i>	122
17.6	Managing Date Granularity	123
17.7	Timelines	124
17.8	Creating New Aggregator Columns	125
	<i>Incorporating a Bank Holiday Table</i>	125
	<i>Creating a Calculated Column for Working Days</i>	126

18	MULTIPLE CALENDAR TABLES	Page
18.1	The Problem, and Two Solutions	127
	<i>Repeat the Table or the Relationship?</i>	127
18.2	Solution One: Duplicate the Calendar Table	128
	<i>Importing and Linking to the Calendar Tables</i>	128
	<i>Creating the Pivot Table</i>	129
18.3	Solution Two: Duplicate the Relationship	130
	<i>Creating the Duplicate Relationships</i>	130
	<i>The CALCULATETABLE Function</i>	131
	<i>The USERRELATIONSHIP Function</i>	131
	<i>Our Measures</i>	132

19	DATE FUNCTIONS	Page
19.1	Contents	133
19.2	Period to Date	134
	<i>Using DATESYTD (and how Date Functions Work)</i>	134
	<i>TOTALYTD, TOTALQTD and TOTALMTD</i>	135
	<i>Changing the Financial Year End</i>	135
19.3	Comparing with Previous Periods	136
	<i>The SAMEPERIODLASTYEAR Function</i>	136
	<i>Using DATEADD to Compare with any Previous Period</i>	136
19.4	Parallel Periods	137
19.5	Moving Averages	138
	<i>Definition of a Moving Average</i>	138
	<i>Moving Average using DATESINPERIOD and LASTDATE</i>	139
	<i>Moving Average using DATESBETWEEN, NEXTDATE and LASTDATE</i>	139
19.6	Semi-Additive Measures	140
	<i>Useful Semi-Additive Functions</i>	140
	<i>Using the FIRSDATE and LASTDATE Functions</i>	140
	<i>Using FIRSTNONBLANK and LASTNONBLANK</i>	141
	<i>Detecting Relationships in FIRSTNONBLANK / LASTNONBLANK</i>	141

TABLE OF CONTENTS (5 of 6)

20	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)	Page
20.1	About KPIs	142
	<i>Three Parts of a KPI</i>	142
20.2	Creating a KPI	143
	<i>Step 1 – Create the Measures Needed</i>	143
	<i>Step 2 – Starting to Create the KPI</i>	143
	<i>Step 3 – Customising your KPI</i>	144
	<i>Step 4 – Displaying the KPI in Excel</i>	145
20.3	Absolute Targets	146

21	HIERARCHIES	Page
21.1	Using Hierarchies	147
	<i>Advantages and Disadvantages of Hierarchies</i>	147
21.2	Creating Hierarchies	148
	<i>Step 1 – Getting the Correct Fields in a Single Table</i>	148
	<i>Step 2 – Creating the Hierarchy</i>	148
	<i>Step 3 – Including Fields in your Hierarchy</i>	149
	<i>Step 4 – Using a Hierarchy</i>	149

22	PROTOTYPING IN POWERPIVOT	Page
22.1	Enabling PowerPivot	150
22.2	Using PowerPivot	151
22.3	Summary of Differences between PowerPivot and SSAS Tabular	152
	<i>Difference 1: Pivot Table Field List</i>	152
	<i>Difference 2: Implicit Measures</i>	153
	<i>Difference 3: Creating Measures in the Client</i>	154
	<i>Difference 4: Linked Excel Tables</i>	154
22.4	Uploading PowerPivot Models into Tabular	155
	<i>Importing a PowerPivot Model</i>	156

23	PERSPECTIVES	Page
23.1	What are Perspectives?	157
23.2	Creating Perspectives	158
23.3	Using Perspectives	159
	<i>Switching Perspectives in a Model</i>	159
	<i>Choosing a Perspective when Analysing Data in Excel</i>	159
	<i>Choosing Perspectives for Data Connections</i>	160
	<i>Changing the Perspective for an Existing Pivot Table</i>	160

24	SECURITY	Page
24.1	Overview of Security	161
	<i>Types of Role in SSAS Tabular</i>	161
	<i>Levels of Database Access</i>	161
24.2	Server Administrators	162
24.3	Managing Roles	163
	<i>Managing Roles in Visual Studio</i>	163
	<i>Managing Roles in Management Studio</i>	164
24.4	Controlling Data Access (Row Filters)	165
	<i>Row Filters in Visual Studio</i>	165
	<i>Row Filters in SSMS</i>	166
24.5	Two Ways to Test Row Filters	167
	<i>Testing using Excel</i>	167
	<i>Testing using Connection Strings</i>	167
24.6	Creating a Permissions Table	168
24.7	Dynamic Security	169
	<i>Two DAX Functions Needed</i>	169
	<i>Using CustomData for Dynamic Security</i>	169
	<i>Incorporating a Test for the User Name</i>	170

25	DAX STUDIO	Page
25.1	Using DAX Studio	171
	<i>Installing DAX Studio</i>	171
	<i>Connecting to your Model</i>	171
	<i>Refreshing your Model</i>	171
25.2	Five Uses of DAX Studio	172
	<i>Use 1 - Getting at DAX Functions</i>	172
	<i>Use 2 – Writing DAX Queries</i>	172
	<i>Use 3 – Better Formatting</i>	173
	<i>Use 4 – Saving DAX</i>	173
	<i>Use 5 – Getting at Internal Data</i>	173

TABLE OF CONTENTS (6 of 6)

26	DAX QUERIES	Page
26.1	Overview of DAX Queries	174
	<i>DAX and MDX</i>	174
	<i>Creating a DAX Query in SQL Server Management Studio</i>	174
26.2	SQL versus DAX Querying	175
26.3	Listing Tables (EVALUATE)	176
	<i>Listing All Rows</i>	176
	<i>Ordering Rows</i>	176
	<i>Starting at a Particular Row</i>	176
	<i>Returning N Rows Only</i>	177
	<i>Sampling Rows</i>	177
26.4	Summarising	178
	<i>Summarisation Syntax</i>	178
	<i>Examples of Summarisation</i>	179
	<i>Using ROLLUP to get All Combinations</i>	179
26.5	Filtering in DAX Queries	180
	<i>Example: Summarising Sales for Birds Only</i>	180
	<i>Example: Summarising Centre Size for Selected Towns</i>	180
26.6	Adding Columns	181
	<i>Example: Counting Rows</i>	181
	<i>Example: Transaction Statistics by Town</i>	182
	<i>Defining Measures First</i>	182
26.7	Combining Table Results	183
	<i>GENERATE and GENERATEALL</i>	183
26.8	Other Useful Functions	184
	<i>Using ROW to Display One Row of Data</i>	184
	<i>Using CONTAINS to Check if a Field Value Exists</i>	184

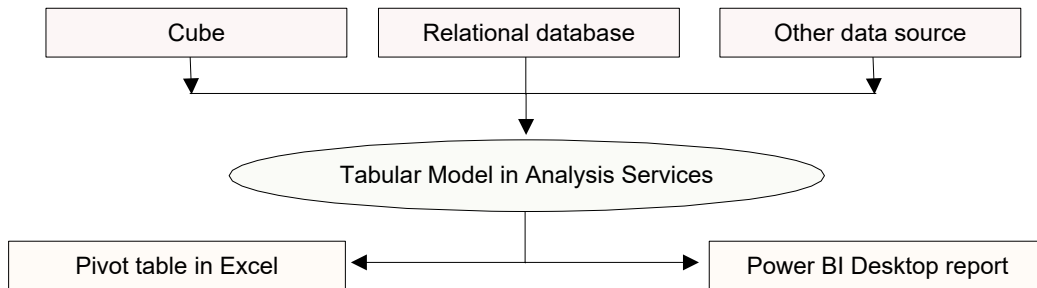
27	PROCESSING	Page
27.1	Column Storage	185
	<i>Row versus Column Storage</i>	185
	<i>Data Compression</i>	185
27.2	Ways to Speed up Processing	186
	<i>Sort Tables First</i>	186
	<i>Omit High-Cardinality Columns where Possible</i>	186
	<i>Avoid Calculated Columns</i>	187
	<i>Avoid Expensive Queries</i>	188
	<i>Use Server Timings</i>	188
	<i>Don't Store DateTime Columns</i>	189
	<i>Consider Splitting Id Columns</i>	189
27.3	Processing Concepts	190
	<i>What Processing Involves (Data/Metadata)</i>	190
	<i>Two Stages of Processing</i>	190
	<i>Types of Processing</i>	191
	<i>The Most Efficient Strategy</i>	191
27.4	Processing in Visual Studio	192
	<i>Processing an Individual Table</i>	192
	<i>Processing All Tables for a Given Connection</i>	192
	<i>Processing an Entire Model</i>	193
	<i>Changing Processing Options for Deployment</i>	193
27.5	Processing in SSMS	194
	<i>Processing an Entire Database</i>	194
	<i>Processing Tables</i>	194

28	PARTITIONS	Page
28.1	Partitions	195
28.2	Partitions in Visual Studio	196
	<i>Creating Partitions in Visual Studio</i>	196
	<i>Processing Partitions in Visual Studio</i>	197
28.3	Partitions in SSMS	198
	<i>Processing Partitions in SSMS</i>	199

CHAPTER 1 - OVERVIEW OF SSAS TABULAR

1.1 What Tabular Models Do

The diagram below shows how tabular models combine data from tables, cubes and other data sources, to present a single easy-to-read data source for business users:



Examples for each of the 3 levels of this diagram are shown under separate headings below.

Database Level

Here's the structure of the **Construct-a-Creature** database used throughout this courseware:

Each purchase takes place in a particular shopping centre (for example, the **Trafford Centre**) which belongs to a town (**Manchester**) and region (**North-West**), as well as having a centre type (such as **Retail Park** or **Shopping Park**).

Each purchase is for a particular product (for example, one of the products sold is **Fenella the Frog**). This belongs to a family (**Amphibians**) and has a habitat (**Fresh Water**) which is part of a larger environment (**Water**).

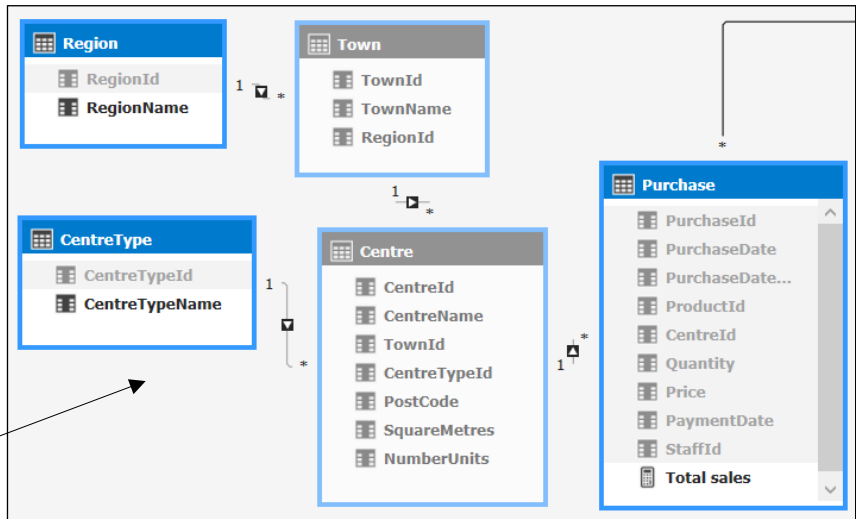
```

    erDiagram
      Region ||--}| Town : "1 to many"
      Town ||--}| CentreType : "1 to many"
      CentreType ||--}| Centre : "1 to many"
      Centre ||--}| Purchase : "1 to many"
      Product ||--}| Purchase : "1 to many"
      Environment ||--}| Habitat : "1 to many"
      Family ||--}| Habitat : "1 to many"
  
```

The **Purchase** table records one row for each time a customer buys one or more items of a particular product in a given shopping centre.

Model Level

Here's what a model based upon this database might look like:



Only certain tables and fields have been included in the model.

View Level

You could use this model to create (for example) a pivot table:

Total sales	Factory Outlet	Retail Park	Shopping Centre	Shopping Park	Grand Total
East Anglia		2,202	14,758		16,960
East Midlands		3,068	27,008	3,857	33,933
London		2,640	64,882	533	68,055
North		5,166	28,024		33,190
North West	2,449	20,499	62,182	5,187	90,316
South East	5,625	7,902	115,776	1,074	130,376
South West	561	4,865	19,915	5,552	30,893
West Midlands		9,569	51,998	1,131	62,698
Yorkshire & Humberside	2,616	15,337	42,738	1,446	62,138
Grand Total	11,250	71,248	427,280	18,780	528,558

A pivot table based on this model, showing total sales by region and by centre type.

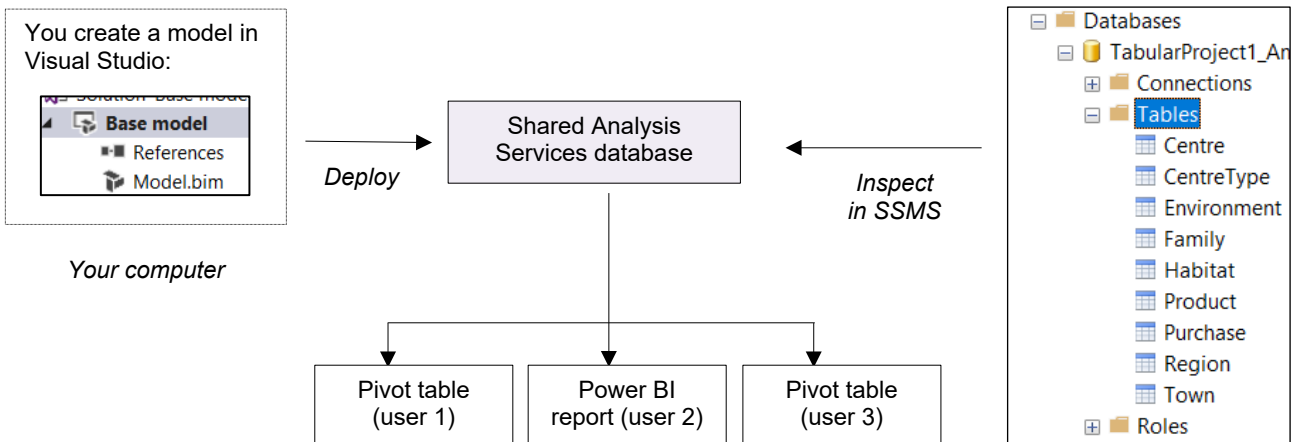
The pivot table field list. Notice that all of the other fields and tables have been hidden from client view, so you see a nice clean field list.

Wise Owl's Hint

SQL Server Analysis Services (SSAS) comes in two flavours: tabular models (the subject of this courseware) and the legacy multi-dimensional models (still supported by Microsoft, but unchanged for at least the last 10 years). The future lies with tabular models, and this is the version of SSAS installed by default.

1.2 Deployed Tabular Models

Typically you will create a tabular model on your local machine, then *deploy* it to the Analysis Services database on your production server:



Thus you can look at a model in three different ways:

When	Software	Who can see	Example
<i>While building</i>	Visual Studio	Just you	
<i>When deployed</i>	SQL Server Management Studio	IT department	
<i>In a client view</i>	Excel, Power BI, etc	Business users	

1.3 Compatibility Levels

Any SSAS tabular model has a *compatibility level*. At the time of writing, here are the possible compatibility levels that you may see:

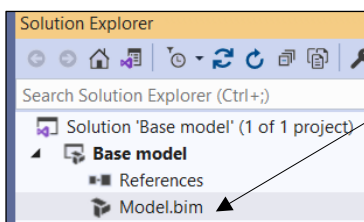
Level	Used by	New features
1100	SQL Server 2012	The first version of SQL Server to include tabular models. These are deprecated from SQL Server 2017 on.
1103	SQL Server 2012 SP1 / SQL Server 2014	
1200	SQL Server 2016	A better DAX editor, DAX variables and some useful new DAX functions; parallel processing of partitions; less restrictions on the use of DirectQuery; support for R.
1400	SQL Server 2017	The incorporation of Power Query to transform data before loading it; customisation of Excel drill-down; hiding blank members from hierarchies. a new DAX editor; small DAX improvements.
1500	SQL Server 2019	Calculation groups of measures, many-to-many relationships.



At the time of writing SQL Server 2022 is in preview, but it doesn't include any significant updates to SSAS Tabular. This courseware assumes that you have at least compatibility level 1400, and hence are using Power Query to load your data (as for Power BI).

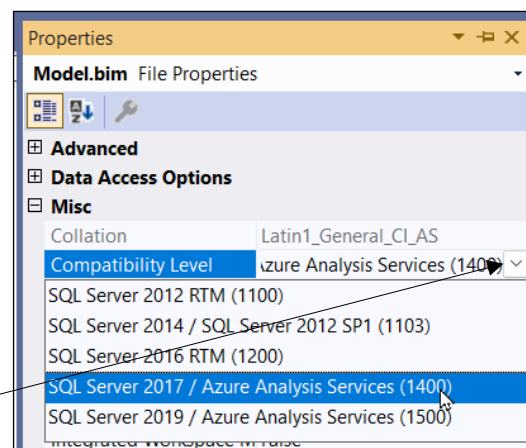
Viewing the Compatibility Level of your Model

Here's how to find out which compatibility level your model uses:



a) Click on your model **.bim** file with the right-mouse button, and choose to change its properties.

b) You can see the model's compatibility level here.

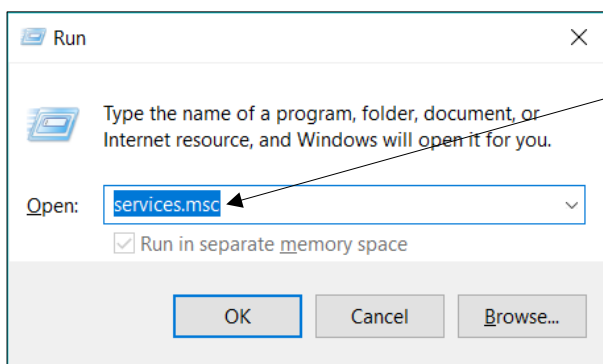


CHAPTER 2 - CREATING PROJECTS IN VISUAL STUDIO

This chapter shows how to create a new project to contain your model in Visual Studio. The first thing you should do is check that you have an instance of Analysis Services running.

2.1 Ensuring Analysis Services is Running

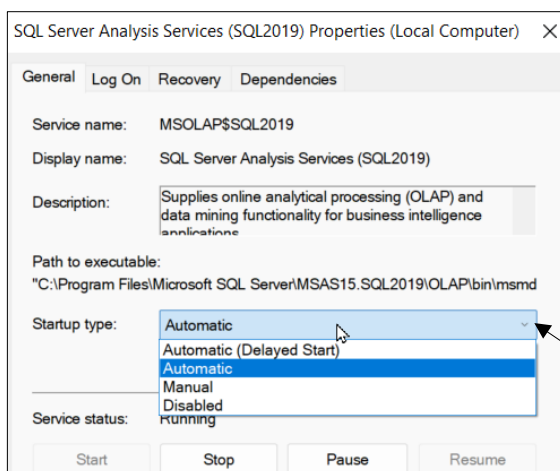
You won't be able to create an Analysis Services (SSAS) database unless the SSAS service is running! To check this:



a) Press **Win** + **R** to bring up the command dialog box, and type in **services.msc** (there are many other ways to list the services running on your computer!).

b) Check that you have a running service for SQL Server Analysis Services (Tabular Model).

Name	Status	Description	Startup Type	Log On As
SQL Server Agent (SQL2019)		Executes jobs, monitors SQL Server, fires alerts, a...	Manu	NT Service\SQLAgent\$SQL2019
SQL Server Analysis Services (SQL2019)	Running	Supplies online analytical processing (OLAP) and ...	Automatic	NT Service\MSOLAP\$SQL2019
SQL Server Analysis Services CEIP (SQL2019)	Running	CEIP service for Sql Server Analysis Services	Automatic	NT Service\SSASTELEMETRY\$SQL...
SQL Server Browser	Running	Provides SQL Server connection information to cl...	Automatic	Local Service
SQL Server CEIP service (SQL2019)	Running	CEIP service for Sql server	Automatic	NT Service\SQLTELEMETRY\$SQL2...



c) If the service isn't running automatically when you load Windows, it may be an idea to double-click on its entry in the list of services, then on the **General** tab change the default **Startup type** of Analysis Services to **Automatic**.



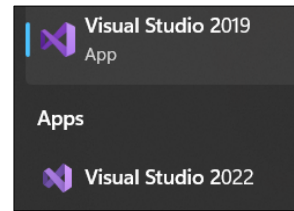
If you get a message about **ImpersonationMode not being supported for processing operations** when you run SSAS, make sure that you have the SQL Server Browser service running too.

2.2 Running Visual Studio

Running Visual Studio

To create a tabular model you'll need to run Visual Studio. It doesn't matter too much which version you use (this courseware uses Visual Studio 2019).

At the time of writing, the two most recent versions of Visual Studio.



Changing Start-up Options

Here's how to tell Visual Studio to load the last thing you were working with when you shut it down (to this owl's mind, the most useful option):

a) From the menu select **T**ools → **O**ptions, then select **S**tartup on the **E**nvironment tab in the **O**ptions dialog box.

b) Choose this option from the startup list.

 A screenshot of the Visual Studio Options dialog box. The 'Environment' tab is selected, and the 'Startup' option is highlighted in the left-hand list. On the right side, under 'On startup, open:', a dropdown menu is open, showing four options: 'Start window', 'Start window', 'Most recent solution', and 'Empty environment'. The 'Most recent solution' option is selected. Arrows from the text boxes point to the 'Startup' option in the list and the 'Most recent solution' option in the dropdown.

Changing Analysis Services Settings

SSAS Tabular uses two different databases:

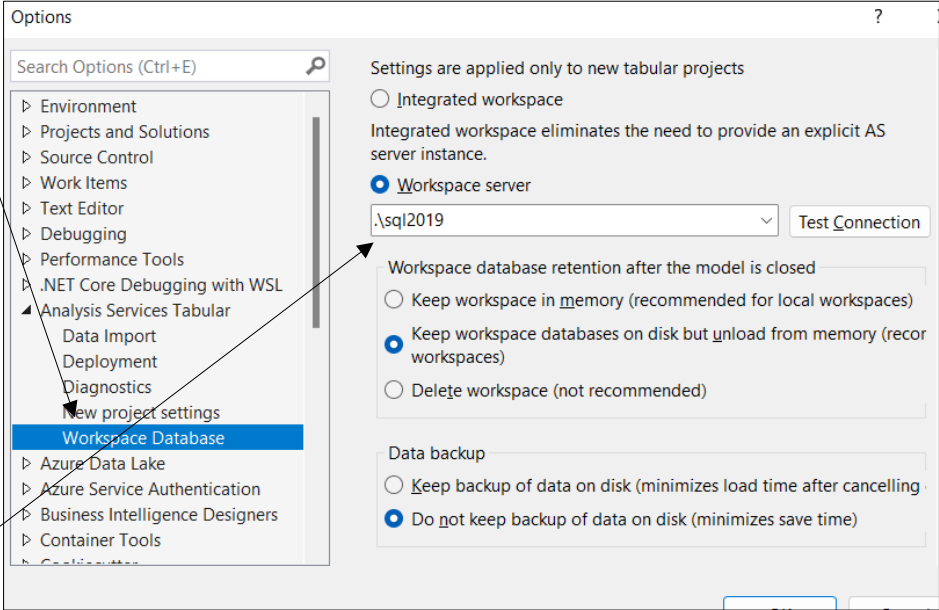
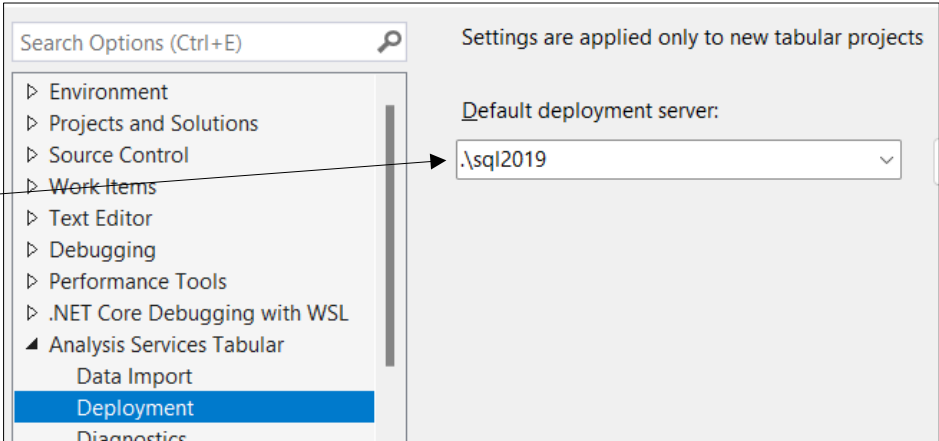
Database	Notes
Workspace	The local copy of changes you're making in Visual Studio (usually held on your local machine).
Deployment	Essentially a copy of the workspace database, but copied to the production server so other people can see and use your model.

You can select **Tools** → **Options** in Visual Studio to change the default location of either/both databases as follows:

a) Choose **Workspace Database** under the **Analysis Services Tabular** tab in the **Options** dialog box.

b) Choose an Analysis Server instance running tabular models (although the easiest option may be **Integrated workspace** – see later in this chapter for what this means).

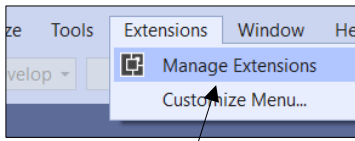
c) Now click on the **Deployment** tab and choose the Analysis Services instance running tabular models to which you want to deploy models that you've created (this will usually be on a different computer to the workspace server).

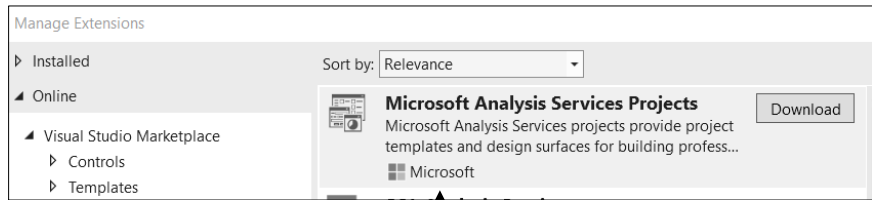

It may also be a good idea to keep the workspace in memory when you close down a model (providing you have enough memory on your computer), as this will make it reload more quickly.

Installing the SSAS Extension

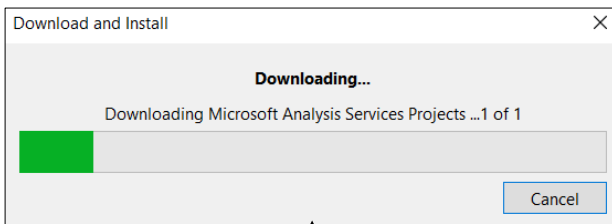
Before you can create an SSAS project in Visual Studio, you first need to install the appropriate extension. Here's how to do this in Visual Studio 2019, for example:



a) Choose this menu option to configure your VS extensions.

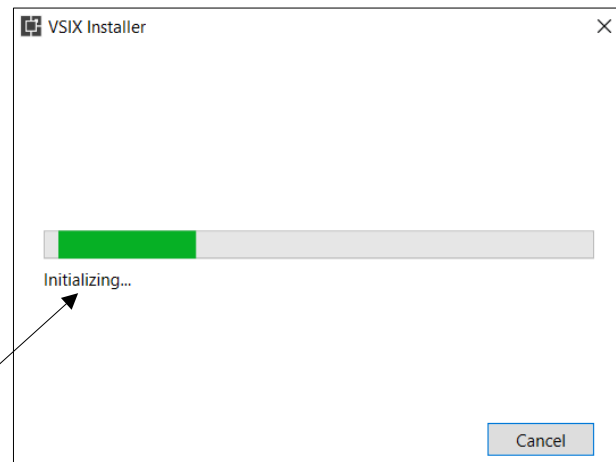


b) Search for and download the Microsoft Analysis Services Projects extension.



c) Visual Studio will download your extension.

d) When the download has finished, exit Visual Studio: the installer will then automatically install your requested extension.

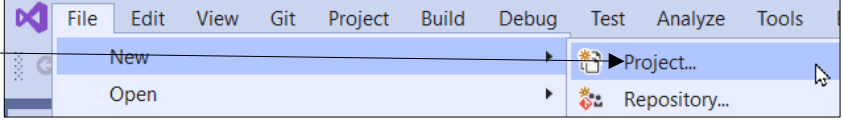


2.3 Projects and Solutions

Creating a New Project

To create a tabular model, you'll need a *project* to put it in. Here's how to create one:

a) Choose this menu option (or press **Shift** + **Ctrl** + **N**) to create a new project.



b) Choose the sort of project that you want to create (SSAS will only appear in this list if you've installed the appropriate VS extension, as shown on the previous page).

Recent project templates

- Analysis Services Tabular Project
- Integration Services Project
- Windows Forms App

c) Give your project a name and choose where to store it.

Configure your new project

Analysis Services Tabular Project

Project name: Create a creature

Location: C:\wiseowl\

Solution name: Create a creature

Place solution and project in the same directory

Framework: .NET Framework 4.7.2

d) See overleaf for a bit more about the difference between projects and solutions. There's little point putting your solution and project in different directories.

e) If you choose to use an integrated workspace, SSAS will internally create a temporary model database – there's no need for you to specify an instance of SSAS Tabular to connect to.

f) Visual Studio will normally suggest the highest compatibility level that your version of SQL Server will support.

Tabular model designer

Select an Analysis Services instance to use while authoring projects.

Integrated workspace
Integrated workspace eliminates the need to provide an explicit AS server instance.

Workspace server

.\sql2019

Test Connection

In order to create a new Tabular model, you must select a compatibility level. The compatibility level must be compatible with the Analysis Services server version you want to deploy to.

Compatibility level: SQL Server 2016 RTM (1200)

[Click here for more information about compatibility level.](#)

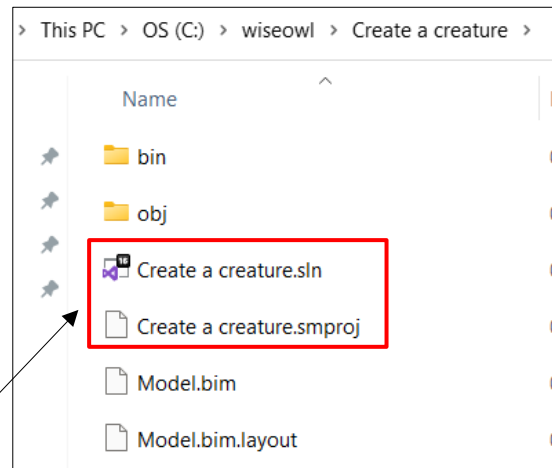
Do not show this message again.

OK Cancel

Files and Folders Created

When you create a project, you get these files:

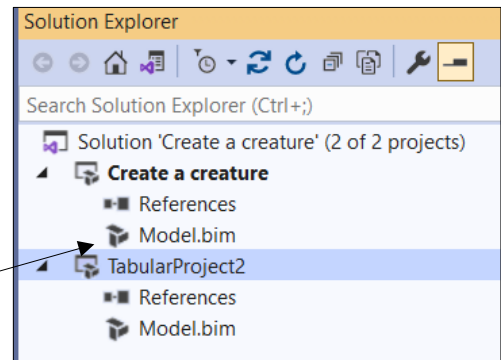
These two files give details of the configuration of your solution and its project. They're both text format XML files, and easily read.



Having Multiple Projects in a Solution

You can use a *solution* to work with more than one project at the same time:

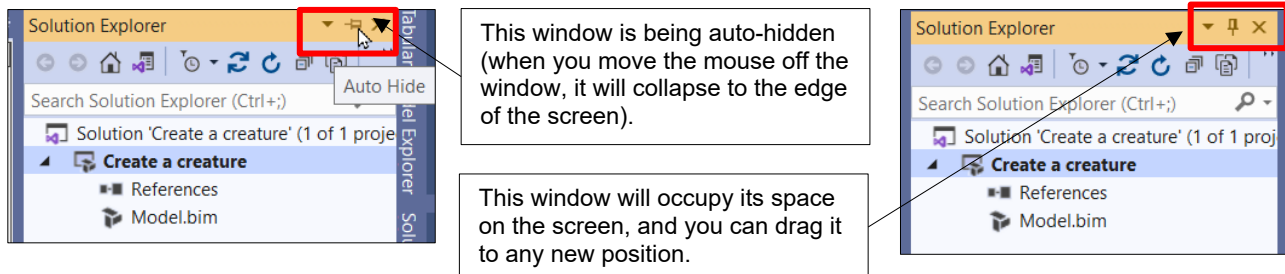
You can right-click on your solution in the Solution Explorer window and choose to add another project to it. Here we've got two projects open, with the default one being **Create a creature**. Having more than one project open at a time like this is rarely useful!



2.4 Visual Studio Windows

Moving and Auto-Hiding Windows

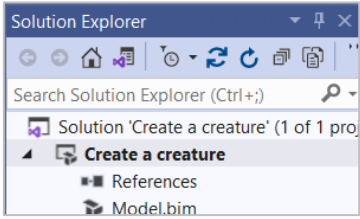
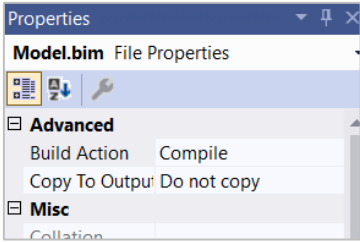
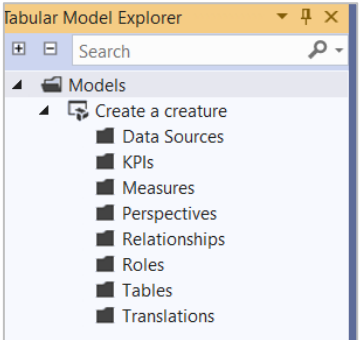
Any of the (many) windows in Visual Studio can be in one of two modes:










































You can click on the map pin symbol to toggle between the two states shown.

The Three Main Windows to Show

You'll probably want always to have these three windows open in Visual Studio:

Window	Keystroke to display	View menu option	Example
<i>Solution Explorer</i>	Alt + Ctrl + L	Solution Explorer	
<i>Properties</i>	F4	Properties Window	
<i>Tabular Model Explorer</i>	This window automatically appears when you edit a model, and is unavailable otherwise.		

What we do!

		Basic training	Advanced training	Systems / consultancy
Office	Microsoft Excel			
	VBA macros			
	Office Scripts			
	Microsoft Access			
Business Intelligence	Power BI			
	Power Apps			
	Power Automate / PAD			
SQL Server	SQL			
	Reporting Services			
	Report Builder			
	Integration Services			
	Analysis Services			
Coding	Visual C# programming			
	VB programming			
	DAX			
	Python			



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