Staying Connected: A Toolkit for Effective Groupwork

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Group work

Supporting & assessing

Scheduling, communication, participation

Transition to online group work

Evidencing engaging and effective group work (Graham and Pringle Barnes, 2019)

Open access: https://moodle.gla.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=6451
Staying Connected: a Toolkit for Effective Groupwork

1. Work in partnership with students to evaluate current group work practices and resources (Cameron & Pringle-Barnes, 2019)
2. Co-create recommendations on what is working and gaps in provision
3. Collaborate effectively in an online and blended environment

Student led development of resources that support the:

- **Process:** e.g., reflection, communication, problem solving.
- **Product:** contributions to assessed group work
- **Delivery** to students and staff across subject disciplines
Methodology

1: Data Collection & Focus groups
   • Student led focus groups
   • Existing feedback

2: Analysis and Recommendations
   • Highlight gaps in provision & inform development of new resources
     Literature review on group work in HE
   • Consultation with student reps

3: Development
   • Co-create group work resources informed by themes in Phase 2.

4: Evaluation
   • Host on Moodle and pilot on 1-2 courses.
### Analysis & Recommendations

#### Organising Tasks, Roles & Goals
- Process rather than product (Reid & Garson, 2016)
- “A previously agreed agenda to keep the meeting to the point”
- “Having set goals to work on”
- “It won’t work if you try to impose role or if there are different group expectations; for example, someone who is comfortable being a B student with someone who is an A student.”

#### Participation & Reflective process
- Fear of unequal contributions (Chang & Brickman, 2018)
- “I worry sometimes people see the leader as bossy/nagging as opposed to leading”
- “I worked with someone who worked completely differently to me. And that made everything so hard”
- “We need to learn how to give and receive feedback to others and to ourselves.”

#### Communication & Collaboration
- Diversity in groupwork (Mittelmeir, 2018)
- “So many group chats, so many WhatsApp groups, so many Teams. And when chatting, people can seem a little harsher than they actually are”
- “Submitting work in groups can be a bit of a culture shock when you are used to working alone.”
- “Reinforce that we can talk to them (staff) about group work”
Principles of Resource Development

- Flexible & Practical
- Clear & Specific
- Signpost Support
- Peer Feedback
- Engaging & Relatable
Staying Connected: Group Work Resources

- Mind Map: How to use the resource
- Getting Started: Group Organisation
- Communication & Collaboration
- Reflecting on Group work
- Resources for staff
- About This Project
- Testimonials, advice, and more
1. Getting started

Two Key Aspects Covered:
1) Highlighting the “why” of group work
2) Group work organisation

Five Things You Need to Know About Group Work
- Working together on tasks
- Team Roles
- Leadership

Group Work - From a Staff Perspective
Getting started
- How to plan and structure a meeting

Getting Started Infographic

Infographic developed by Ellie Buglass, Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0), contact at 2313622b@student.gla.ac.uk for more information.

Templates for Online Group Work
2. Communication & Collaboration

Key Aspects Covered
- Personal Skills
- Group skill

Addressing issues in group work Part 1 - Effective Communication
Addressing issues in group work Part 2 - Cross-cultural miscommunications
- Inclusivity
- Reaching consensus
- Understanding Unconscious Bias
- Bringing it all together
- Collaborative writing
- Giving effective feedback to peers sway resource
- Peer feedback in your degree
- Giving effective feedback video resource
- Guidance on giving peers feedback on their work - a practical example from the School of Psychology.
- Seeking support - from staff, from peers, and University support

Addressing issues in group work Part 2 - Cross-cultural miscommunications

This way addresses the need to develop strategies covering a wide range of skills differences in communication challenges and cultural differences.

I. Understanding

Group work sometimes requires you to submit a single written assignment for the whole group. So how can you get the most out of writing collaboratively?

A. There are lots of benefits to writing as a group. It's a good way of ensuring clarity and readability in your writing and you have the chance to provide and receive feedback on your work before you submit the assignment.
B. A)
C. A)
D. A)

II. Facing Challenges

a) Differences...

b) Challenges from days...

c) Challenges from teammates

d) Getting to know your teammates
3-4. Reflection and Online tools

Reflecting on an experience using Google's reflection cycle (see the link here for an example of reflecting on a group work experience and the addressing issues in group work survey for prompts and examples).

Online tools for effective group work:

Office 365, Google Drive, Teamviewer, Microsoft Teams, Slack, Trello.

5. Conclusions—summarise what you have learned from this experience and highlight what changes to your actions could have helped improve it. Consider any language barriers or communication skills. Experience. For example, knowledge of cultural or

4. Analyse why things went well or badly and what knowledge (either your own or others) can help you understand the experience, and how did they impact the experience?

3. Evaluate what worked and didn’t work in the situation. Try to focus on positive and negative aspects, even if it was mainly one or the other.
5. Resources for staff

Resources for staff

Hidden from students
In this video, students advise on how to effectively collaborate within groups, addressing challenges around meetings (face to face or online), as well as providing examples of using technology for collaboration.

- Guidance for staff on implementing peer feedback in group work - a practical example from Psychology.
- Resource for staff to support students in assertiveness
- Getting the most from online discussions

How does this work?

Step 1: Set up a Feedback activity in Moodle. You can find the text here to communicate the activity's purpose and instruction.

Step 2: Open the activity for students to complete with enough time for analysis ahead of grade and feedback return, perhaps this can be open while marking taking place.

Getting the most from online discussions: Ideas for staff

Option 1 - Online discussions: Personal reflection (individual activity)
- Tutors set up a Moodle forum (whole class or in groups), ask students to post comments and monitor/reflect on responses

Option 2 - Online discussions: Agreeing key principles (group activity)
- Tutors ask students to agree 3-5 key principles for effective discussions. This activity could be done in class (using breakout rooms) or outside class either synchronously (students use Teams, Zoom or other platforms for online discussion) or asynchronously (students use the chat platform of their choice).
6. Testimonials, Advice, and more

- Group Work - A staff perspective
- Getting To Know Your Teammates - A Student Testimonial
- Inter-Cultural Miscommunication - A Student Testimonial
- Challenges from the Different Approaches to Group Work - A Student Testimonial
- The Challenges from Different Decision-making Styles in Group Work - A Student Testimonial
- Different Attitudes Towards Conflict and Disclosure - Advice from students to students
- Feedback Expectation - Advice we wish we were given

This video was developed by students to students as part of a school of psychology project exploring student's expectation on feedback.

- Inclusivity and Group work - Student Testimonial
- Seeking Support from Staff - Advice from Staff
A small number of students were given the opportunity to use and evaluate the resources.

A mix of qualitative and quantitative evaluation was provided.
Qualitative Evaluation

“I also liked the breadth and depth of the communication and collaboration resources.”

“The cultural section ... stopped me from taking things too personally.”

“Advertise them more so that students do make use of them.”

“From reflection I have learnt what works well and what doesn't, allowing me to bring it forward to a new group project.”

“We used the video on team roles to effectively delegate different aspects of group work at the start of the course.”

“Maybe integrate the Canva/picture resources into the design of the Moodle to make it more accessible.”
Quantitative Evaluation

Mean responses to feedback questions

- Reflection
- General group work
- Effective communication
- Organisation
- Role/task distribution

Mean score
“With some course development time, it would be great to incorporate these quality resources into parts of the courses I teach.”

“Adding a link to the discussion forum at the end of each section ... would help the students to contribute to the discussion more.”
Next Steps

- Work with staff to integrate resources into their teaching
- Work with students in signposting the resource
- Develop the resource to improve navigation and increase accessibility
- Continue to evaluate and improve