

Assessing Group Work

Guidance Note for Partner Institutions

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Assessing Group Work

This guidance note focuses on the use of group work within summative assessment and sets out issues that it would be helpful for partner institutions to consider when deciding to use group work. The use of group work as part of the learning process or in formative assessment (where the outcomes do not contribute to a module mark) may raise different considerations.

Forms of Group Work

There are various activities which may be described as Group Work, these include

- (a) small group exercises within scheduled teaching sessions;
- (b) allocations of a research project or assessment task to a group of students where the group activity informs individual submissions;
- (c) allocation of a research project or assessment task to a group of students where the group will be assessed as a whole.

Why Use Group Work in Assessment?

- (a) to meet module/course aims and learning objectives where an ability to work with others and an understanding of how such processes work are stated;
- (b) to promote and develop key employability skills (such as working in a team, negotiating and collaborating with a diverse range of people);
- (c) to facilitate deeper learning. Asking students to relate knowledge, theory and practice in group situations can encourage students to apply their learning and defend their own understanding;
- (d) to enable students to participate in producing work which is beyond the capabilities of a single student;
- (e) to give students experience of negotiations and group decision making;
- (f) promote the confidence of quieter students as they find a role within the group;
- (g) offers a varied assessment mode, which provides an opportunity for students who have a talent for group work, but who may not excel elsewhere in their studies, to demonstrate achievement.

Issues to Consider:

There is a key principle that dominates an approach to group work as a form of summative assessment, namely a student passing an assessment must have demonstrated personal achievement of the associated learning outcomes.

The following issues should be considered and clearly set out and communicated prior to the assessment task:

- (a) description of how students will be grouped:
 - self-selection or groups allocated;
 - availability and location of group members;
 - age, gender and experience mix of groups;

- ability to change groups

(b) the activities the group should undertake:

- equitable and rotatable tasks;
- roles and responsibilities within the group;
- preparation for engaging in group work;
- preparation for assessment

(c) means by which group activities are to be tracked and reported

(d) how grades will be awarded:

- consequences of non-engagement;
- whether the ability to work in a group is being marked;
- group contribution and individual contribution assessment clear;
- consideration to the mode of assessment(e) how students will be reassessed (as a group or individually)

(f) mechanisms for taking account of authorised student absence and other extenuating circumstances:

- alternative assessment options

(g) inclusivity. All students must be able to take full part in the group activity and no student should be disadvantaged by assessment through group work

(h) how will feedback on the assessment task be given?

Collusion and Group Work

The University defines collusion as unauthorised co-operation between at least two people, with the intent to deceive. Collaborative assessment undertaken in accordance with published requirements does not fall under the heading of collusion. Clarity is therefore essential when setting group work based assessments to ensure that students understand which aspects of the task require working together and represent joint effort and which aspects (if any) must represent individual effort. Particular thought must be given to these issues in groups where students are from diverse learning backgrounds. Guidance may be helpful in respect of the ways in which individual contributions and ideas are acknowledged and recognised. It is likely that greater care will be required where students work together informally and provide each other with formative feedback on draft individual assessments.