

GROUPWORK IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE

Dr. Michael F. Ryan

Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development



TUS

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre, An tIarthar Láir
Technological University of the Shannon:
Midlands Midwest

Groupwork in Higher Education: A Practitioner Guide

The TUS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, 'Putting Learning First' (2022-2026) includes 'pedagogies of engagement through active and applied learning' as one of its key pillars to support a learning community of intellectual and social partnership. The integration of groupwork and team-based pedagogies is a key component of this pillar.

"Pedagogies of engagement are enabled in TUS: through a variety of interactions: Student to Content, Student to Student, Student to Staff, Student to Industry, Student to Community and Student to Research. They occur along a continuum from individual-based activities to group-based episodes of collaborative engagement, and range from small-scale encounters (pair and share, student presentations) to more extended and sustained active learning strategies such as: Team Based Learning (TBL), Problem Based Learning (PBL), Extended Case-Study Method, and Enquiry Based Learning (EBL)". (TUS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy: Putting Learning First, p.16).

At a wider educational policy level, group and team-based learning are considered an essential domain of what are known as transversal skills. Transversal skills and competences (TSCs) are learned and proven abilities which are commonly seen as necessary or valuable for effective action in virtually any kind of work, learning or life activity. (See link to ESCO 2021) [ESCO – European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations – EPEA](#).

This resource is therefore designed to support those TUS staff and Higher Education practitioners more generally, to successfully integrate group-based approaches as part of their pedagogical toolbox.



Introduction

This practitioner guide is designed to offer an overall framework for successfully developing and facilitating group work processes. It guides the novice practitioner through each stage of the process. It signposts associated challenges and provides suggestions for helpful responses. It also includes a range of resources and tools that can be modified and adapted to each practitioner context, where different disciplinary needs may require different approaches.

Groupwork is a complex process and unpredictable variables inevitably emerge. This guide is intended to assist the effectiveness of groupwork processes and outcomes, while also acknowledging the need for adaptability and learning in the specific context as it unfolds.

Sections 1 to 8 cover all the practical aspects of organising group work projects. Section 9 contains very useful tools, templates and resources to support the group work process.

Facilitating successful group projects and processes requires patience, a commitment to being: organised, adaptable and responsive to situations as they unfold. The rewards are extensive. Participants learn how to engage with others, problem solve, work to deadlines, negotiate shared responsibility, manage conflict and experience the satisfaction of achieving a shared outcome. In the process, participants therefore learn a great deal about themselves.

This resource will hopefully improve the quality of the groupwork process, the student experience and support your organisation of group work projects and processes.

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1. Groupwork as a Pedagogy of Engagement and Graduate Attribute at TUS-MMW



Pedagogies of Engagement is one of seven key pillars embedded in our approach to teaching and learning at TUS-MMW (See Figure 1 above). Collaboration and Teamwork (including multidisciplinary teams) has also been prioritised as a key graduate attribute for TUS-MMW graduates. Groupwork and groupwork processes form an integral part of 'pedagogies of engagement,' where students become vigorously engaged in exploring, assimilating and constructing knowledge. Groupwork has at its heart an Active learning dynamic where diverse models of learning motivate students to take responsibility for their own learning. It also enhances knowledge retention and development because of the deeper levels of engagement associated with knowledge construction through active learning (Eison 2010; Cavanagh 2011; Healey et al 2013; Freeman et al; 2014 and Homes 2018).

Engaging pedagogies including groupwork can be enabled through a variety of interactions: Student to Content; Student to Student; Student to Teacher; Student to Industry; and Student to Research. Engaging Pedagogies occur along a continuum from individual-based activities to group-based episodes of collaborative engagement. It includes a pedagogical continuum, ranging from small-scale encounters (pair and share, student presentations) to more extended and sustained group learning strategies including: Project Group Learning (PGL) Problem Based Learning (PBL), Challenge Based Learning (CBL), Extended Case-Study Method, and other strategies sometimes collectively known as Enquiry Based learning. These pedagogies promote the development of advanced cognition, higher order thinking, values' development, intrinsic motivation, autonomy, personal mastery, self-responsibility, and psychomotor skills associated with specific disciplinary needs.

Above extract adapted from our draft strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment at TUS MMW.

2. Advantages of Group Work

Groups typically have greater resources and more information available than individuals because of the variety of backgrounds, experiences, competencies and personality types available to a group.

- Groups stimulate creativity and innovation in the process of problem solving
- Participants in groups remember group discussions better. Group learning fosters learning, comprehension and retention. Students working in small groups have a tendency to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same material is presented in other instructional formats
- Integrating group work helps students feel engaged and they subsequently learn more. Group work helps students develop teamwork skills and enhances intercultural understanding
- Decisions that students are involved in making yield greater satisfaction. Research suggests that students who are engaged in group problem solving are more committed to the solution
- Students gain a better understanding of themselves through the group work process. Students become aware of how others perceive them and therefore self-awareness is enhanced. Feedback received from others helps participants better evaluate their interpersonal behaviour
- Groupwork is highly valued by employers. Working effectively with others and well-developed interpersonal skills, are continually listed by employers among the top five desirable graduate attributes

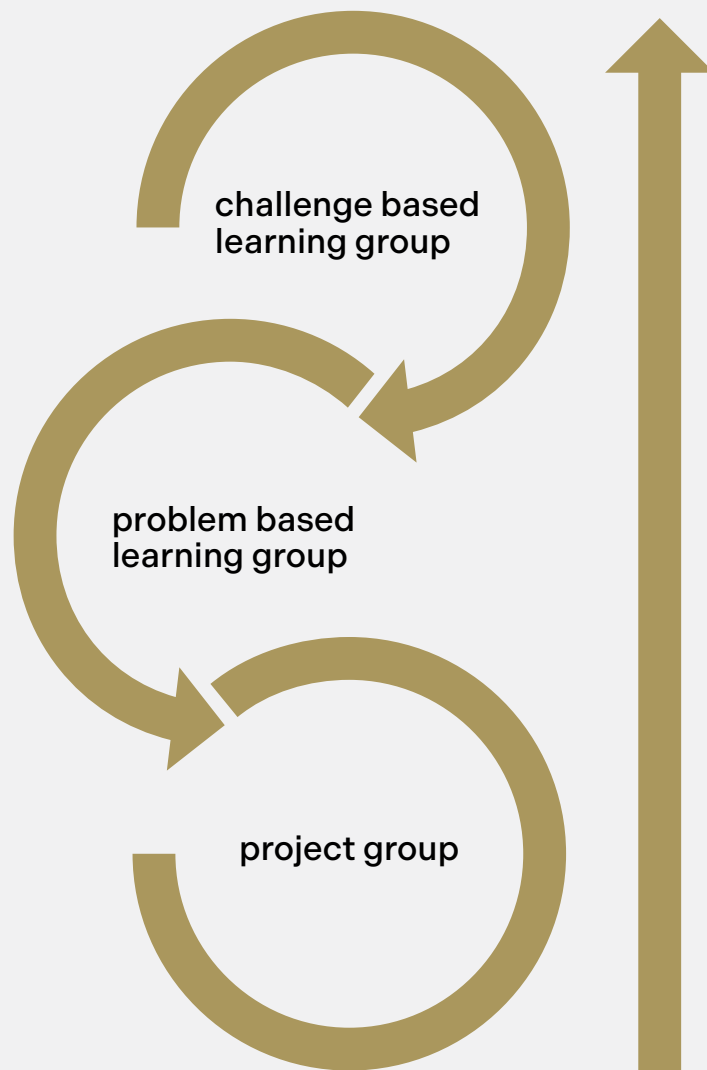
3. Types of Groups

Informal Cooperative Learning Groups

In informal cooperative learning, small, temporary, ad-hoc groups of two to four students work together for brief periods (typically one or two class periods), to answer questions or respond to prompts posed by the tutor. These groups play a significant role in developing foundation group work skills and are part of a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. This type of group work is typically not part of a formal assessment process but builds capacity for more formal groupwork and is particularly important with early years undergraduate students. There is a vast array of informal group based active learning activities that can be used to successfully build student capacity and skills for more extended and formal groupwork episodes.

Formal Cooperative Learning Groups

In formal cooperative learning, students work together for longer periods of time to complete a joint task or assignment. Sometimes these formal learning groups are established as part of a project-based learning group, a problem-based learning group or a challenge-based learning group. Collectively these approaches are sometimes known as Enquiry Based Learning (EBL). As students move from project-based learning towards problem or challenge-based learning, there is usually a greater emphasis on student-led, self-directed learning. Tutors can adapt and integrate each of these approaches, depending on the learning outcomes desired and the overall learning context.



Project Learning Group (PLG)	Problem Based Learning (PBL)	Challenge Based Learning (CBL)
<p>A specific project task is presented to students. Students build their knowledge in carrying out the assigned project. It might be a scenario or case study based on a specific component of the module. The tutor provides scaffolding for the students; including resources, check-ins and an induction to group work processes. The project will usually have a theory-practice dynamic and will be completed over a relatively short period of time.</p>	<p>Students acquire new information and test out some models or frameworks through self-directed learning using designed problems. The problem can be fictional or real for which a solution is not essential. The tutor acts as facilitator, providing guidance for the students, links to relevant theory, resources and customised induction for PBL. At the end of the process the groups will present their solutions to each other for peer review. The learning is inherent in the investigation and peer review.</p>	<p>Students work with tutors and experts in their communities, on real-world challenges, in order to develop a deeper knowledge of the subjects being studied. It is the challenge itself that generates new knowledge and the necessary tools or resources. Typically, students will apply several domains of knowledge from their discipline to understand and explore the challenge. The outcome is that an action step is taken to resolve the real-life challenge. The tutor is a co-researcher with the students.</p>
<p>Recommended for undergraduate students (years 1 & 2)</p>	<p>Recommended for undergraduate students (years 3 & 4)</p>	<p>Recommended for final year undergraduate students & post graduate students</p>
<p>Formal assessment requiring a group report or presentation (possibly accompanied by an individual learning report from each member).</p>	<p>Formal assessment requiring a group report and presentation outlining the proposed solution to the problem and accompanied by an individual learning report for each member).</p>	<p>Formal assessment (group report and presentation to relevant stakeholders) outlining the proposed solution to the challenge posed and the action step being taken to resolve it.</p>
<p><i>Low-stakes assessment (max -30% of total for the module)</i></p>	<p><i>Medium-stakes assessment (40% of total for module with a minimum of 20% of the 40% allocated to an individual learning report)</i></p>	<p><i>High stakes assessment (50-60% of total for module)</i></p>

Team Based Learning

In Team Based Learning (TBL), students work together in diverse, lecturer-selected teams throughout a whole module. A module is organised into a number of units within which a TBL cycle is facilitated over the course of 1 to 3 weeks. In each TBL cycle there are two key phases: Readiness-Assurance and Application. These phases work together to encourage students to be ready to tackle problems requiring critical thinking skills, and also to increase motivation to engage with problem solving while working in a team.

Readiness-Assurance requires students to independently undertake some pre-class work before completing an individual Multiple-Choice Quiz (MCQ) based on that content at the start of class. This same quiz is then repeated with the students working in their team. Completion of the quiz as a team promotes peer learning as students clarify concepts with one another, and the lecturer can provide targeted clarification on the areas that may be causing confusion for students.

Students then move on to the Application phase, applying learning from their pre-class preparation along with reasoning skills and other relevant knowledge to problem solve. The TBL approach emphasises the adoption of a '4 S' model (same, simultaneous, significant, specific) to the design of problems. This helps to ensure that the teamwork and the facilitation that follows, is engaging and impactful. Each problem-solving exercise is followed by whole class discussion, whereby a lecturer facilitates inter-team discussion of outputs/decisions. The focus is on unearthing the rationales and reasoning behind solutions, facilitating discussion and debate between teams. While some marks may be assigned to students' quiz scores over the course of a semester, the majority of marks are usually allocated to the students' performance on end of year exams or individual assignments.

A detailed account of TBL and its practice in TUS is available in the [TUS Compendium of Active Learning & Assessment for Student Engagement Volume 2](#)

4. Organising and Planning Group Work

What group work skills and processes do you wish to develop?

Before a group work process is undertaken, it is important for the tutor(s) to articulate their goals for group work, including both the desired academic objectives and the social or communicative skills.

Successful group and teamwork processes typically lead to the development of a range of important skills. These include verbal and non-verbal-communication skills, particularly: active listening, empathy, knowing when and how to intervene in discussions, ensuring that all participant voices are heard (while also ensuring that no one voice dominates) and ensuring that participants are aware of the needs of others. Successful group and teamwork processes, when effectively supported, will also assist in the development of group negotiation skills, group problem solving, group decision making, dealing with difference and conflict management processes.

There are also important group process skills which include: the development of a set of group ground-rules and commitment to them throughout the process. A set of ground rules will address key group member values that foster individual commitment. These might typically include:

- being present and prepared for meetings
- completing research and investigation tasks
- keeping deadlines
- assisting others in their tasks
- providing positive and constructive feedback
- being ready in advance for group or team presentations

Other important groupwork skills relate to successful project management skills including the development of a workplan with timelines and task completion deadlines. A successful work plan will also provide clarity regarding the nature of individual roles and dates and times for group meetings.

What group tasks do you wish to accomplish and why?

If a formal group-when a specific brief is being established, it may be linked to specific learning outcomes for the module or programme. The associated tasks may also relate to the development of desired graduate attributes. It is wise for tutors to make these reasons explicit for themselves and for participating students. This will also help focus on the nature of the group task or tasks. Typical group work tasks involve the investigation of a theory-practice dilemma or real-world problem, sometimes presented in case study format.



The Tutor's Role

Regardless of which Enquiry Based Learning (EBL) approach being adopted, there are several features that can help group work projects:

- The tutor defines the learning objectives for the activity and assigns students to groups.
- The groups are typically heterogeneous, with particular attention paid to the required skills for success.
- Within the groups, students may be assigned specific roles, with the tutor communicating the criteria for success and the type of social skills required.
- Importantly, the tutor continues to play an active role during the group-work process, monitoring the work and providing feedback on group and individual performance.
- Tutors also encourage groups to reflect on their interactions to identify potential improvements for future group work.

5. Group Process Considerations

Group Size

Research findings and practitioner experience suggest that group size of three to four is optimal with some research suggesting that groups of three (triads) are actually the most effective in task completion, problem solving and ensuring positive group process experiences. Groups larger than four, tend to experience greater challenges around communication, cohesion and unequal sharing of work tasks.

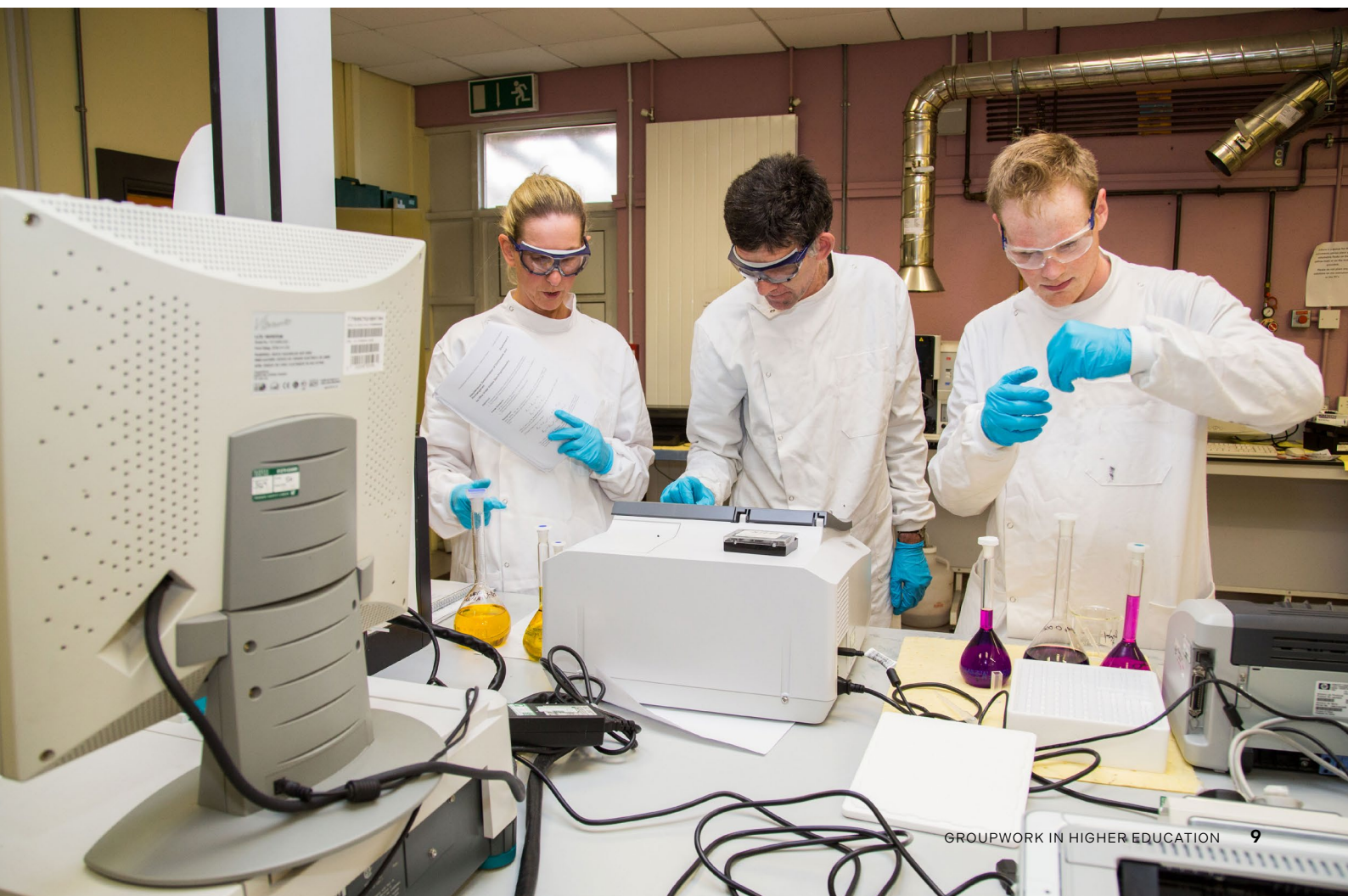
Group Selection

If the group is an informal ad-hoc one, without a formal assessment task, then self-selection may be appropriate. If however, the group is a more formal one with a significant assessment task, then it is recommended that the tutor selects the team with regard to particular skills or abilities relevant to the group tasks. Other considerations (depending on the tutor's knowledge of the group) may include: gender balance, age profile (mature student cohort and school leaver) academic ability, report writing skills, ICT skills and other competencies or aptitudes, relevant to the discipline.

Induction for Group Work

An induction programme should include:

- Communication of the rationale for group work and specifically the rationale for this particular group work project
- Dissemination of a clear project brief with objectives, timelines, expectations and clear guidelines on assessment requirements and deliverables
- Group Ground rules – and some guidelines on what these might include: development of agreed ways of working, team values (punctuality, commitment, cooperation, honest communication, good listening, work ethic, fun) meeting times, methods for decision making, individual roles, meeting processes and roles including: the appointment of chair & notetaker. (See resource 9a - Sample Group Contract and Groundrules)
- Information on supporting tools, resources & templates
- Resolving potential group issues & trouble shooting
- Arrangements for in-class time allocation
- Monitoring and evaluation of the group process



6. Supporting the Group Learning Process

Many students may not have previously worked in a group and may lack the skills to work with others. Tutors cannot assume that students know how to work together, to structure time, delegate tasks, coordinate work effectively, manage conflict, write a collaborative report or prepare a group presentation.

Tutors can help in the following ways:

- Provide a clear project brief with opportunities for students to clarify and discuss it. Students should know the purpose of the project, the learning objective, and the skills that need to be developed through group work.
- Successful group work is easier if the students know how the assignment relates to the course content and what the final product or outcome looks like.
- The tutor should reinforce listening skills and foster constructive methods to give and receive feedback. These skills can be discussed in class and modelled during class activities.
- It is recommended that tutors initially use various small in-class group activities to help develop group cohesion and develop familiarity with groupwork processes.
- Help the students manage conflict and disagreements (Some guidance is provided in section 7 below and its associated resources in section 9). The facilitator should avoid breaking up or reforming the groups. When a group is not working well together, the students need to learn how to communicate effectively and establish goals for successful group outcomes. The individual report on learning can then address why issues arose and what efforts (if any) were taken to resolve the issue.
- Provide clear guidelines on the process of sharing responsibility in the preparation of written reports and presentations and/or the completion of assessment tasks.
- If there are international students participating in the group project, it may be helpful to speak to some cultural issues around: inclusion, diversity and associated issues of: communication, listening skills, empathy and eagerness to learn from the richness of diverse perspectives.

Some Technological Tools to support Groupwork:

Discussion Forums

These are very useful learning options in VLE supported learning environments. They can be used as an ongoing discussion thread during a group work process or even more formally as desired by the tutor. Students can be requested to respond to a question posed or an aspect of the group work process. A peer discussion can then follow, whereby participants can respond to each other's post. The tutor can set up the activity so that each participant has to respond to at least one other post. The tutor can then moderate the discussion by posing further questions or comments relevant to the group work project. They might also choose to summarise the key thoughts and integrate them into the next formal learning episode.

Chat Rooms

This function is available in online learning platforms including MS Teams and Zoom. It enables the tutor to assign participants to a chat room (breakout room) for a group discussion. Groups of three to four are optimal as the larger the group, the greater the challenge for participation. Here the tutor can assign a relevant topic and a time limit and then invite a group leader to report back on behalf of each group. This is a type of plenary where peer-learning can be exchanged, absent perspectives noted or further questions identified. Alternatively, in more self-directed learning environments, participants can use chat rooms as an ongoing engagement tool for group communication and trouble-shooting to generate solutions to a given problem or dilemma.

Wikis

A wiki is a website created collaboratively by multiple users or a group of learners. It could also be considered as a collaborative content management system created and revised by a participant group, so that it is current and active. It is based on the idea that within any group-based learning network, a great deal of knowledge exists among members. Sharing this knowledge and information can therefore create a very successful sense of group identity and also improve disciplinary knowledge.

The wiki format is ideal for sharing and getting feedback from group members. In educational settings wikis can be used to:

- showcase group projects, design options and resources
- demonstrate outcomes from a group research process
- find group solutions to a problem
- create an active and interactive repository of relevant experiences from which others can learn
- enable feedback for a variety of learning situations

In educational settings, when wikis are being used as a learning strategy, it is helpful when the goal of the wiki is clear and clearly explained to the students designing it. It may also be desirable to moderate the wiki to ensure contributions are relevant, correct and appropriate. The tutor may also provide clear instructions on how to use a wiki and how to contribute. Some guidelines and ground rules on group collaboration may also be appropriate.

Google Docs

This is a very helpful tool for collaborative document sharing, report writing or note taking. It enables teams to edit files at the same time and save all their changes automatically.

Private Channels In MS Teams

A useful feature in MS Teams is the use of Private Channels. Private Channels allow a group of students to work collaboratively from one central online location where the lecturer can view each Private Channel that they setup. Private Channels can be setup within a Class Team. Students can be assigned to different Private Channels where they can share files and work synchronously on documentation related to their groupwork.

The Private Channel has its own chat which is accessible only to the team members. Group members can join the channel and call an online meeting through the private channel. Having all the groupwork in a Private Channel makes it easier for students to share and collate work. They can all see the latest version of the work and work on files at the same time. For the lecturer, using private channels allows them to see the work being completed by the group as well as providing feedback in the private channel to the group members.

PB Works

[Free and professional wiki hosting and file sharing; Education Hub \(pbworks.com\)](https://www.pbworks.com/)

This is a collaborative space that allows students to share information and groupwork internally between the group and/or externally with others. Students can create wiki pages, share files and documents with their group and then share with the lecturer. These wiki pages can be a reflective portfolio, design project page or report page based on the group project. Students can use the pages afterwards as part of their own ePortfolio of work for their project and can incorporate video, audio and graphics onto their pages. Lecturers can notify students through the use of class-based notifications and assign them to project pages/spaces. This application allows students to collaborate and create multimedia based projects and collaborate online through the creation of media rich content.

Padlet

<http://Padlet.com>

Padlet is a free and easy to use tool that enables teachers and students to create an online notice board where participants can add posts which can be text, audio, animated graphic or video based. Padlet boards allow students to map out their projects, insert links and collate information centrally into one shared space. The padlet board can be easily shared via a link or QR Code and the boards can be setup to allow open access for all to contribute to or; restricted access for groupwork. Students can access the boards from their phone or laptop and finished boards can be saved and exported to pdf format. This is a really useful tool for planning and working through the initial stages of a project. The boards can be setup to present data in columns, a mindmap or in a flow diagram, with students contributing to the board synchronously.



7. Dealing With Common Group Work Challenges

Challenges	Suggested Responses
<p>Conformity and Groupthink</p> <p>There may be pressure from the group to conform to the majority opinion. Most people do not like conflict and attempt to avoid it. By readily agreeing to the majority opinion, some individual members may agree to a poor-quality solution just to avoid conflict.</p> <p><i>'Better to walk alone than to walk with a crowd in the wrong direction'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The danger of 'groupthink' should be discussed by group members at the start of the process –and catered for within the ground rules. There should be a clear commitment sought from members to ensure that every voice is heard during the process and for all key decision making • Honesty and authentic views are encouraged as part of high-quality decision-making processes • Use decision making tools e.g. SWOT or 'force field analysis' to provide evidence for decision making
<p>Dominant Members</p> <p>An individual may dominate the discussion. This leads to some members feeling dissatisfied in the group because they feel alienated from the decision-making process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundrules - no one person should dominate and each member must commit to voicing their opinion • Members use 'group observation tools' to evaluate participation (<u>See resource 9b-Group Observation, 3 Tools: Group Climate, Individual Behaviours & Task Completion</u>)
<p>Unequal Work Share</p> <p>Some members may rely too heavily on others to do the work. Some members do not adequately contribute to the process and to completion of the group task</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop group member awareness of the goals and objectives of the group and assign specific tasks or responsibilities to each member • Limit group size (3-4 members is best) • Assign individual tasks • Ensure the assessment process rewards individual effort • Use peer assessment tools for rating team member participation (<u>See resource 9d and associated resource on peer assessment</u>) • Use 'check ins' to review group process
<p>Conflict and Group Dissonance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction should deal with this and propose that conflict can be a positive dynamic once managed properly • Encourage Group members to address conflict when it arises and not to ignore it • Encourage group members to resolve the issue (name the issue, clarify the causes and suggest solutions; remain issues focused - not personality focused) • Encourage the group to use the group process evaluation tool (<u>See resource 9b & 9c</u>) • Do not change group members if possible
<p>Slow Pace of Groupwork process</p> <p>It takes more time to work in a group than to work alone. It takes longer to accomplish tasks when working with others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time spent developing group groundrules at the beginning and revisiting them is time well spent • Time spent analysing problems usually results in better solutions • The induction process should make the learning outcomes explicit regarding participation in group work (see advantages -section 2) • The role of a group coordinator or chair may be worth developing (<u>See resource 9f-Sample checklist for chairing meetings</u>)

8. The Group Assessment & Evaluation Process

Group assessment is complex and challenging with regard to issues of fairness and rewarding different levels of engagement. There are many different approaches and assessment options ranging from: shared group grades, to grades that are averages of individual grades, to strictly individual grades, to a combination of these. Reserving a significant portion of the grade for individual member contribution, or an individual account of the group learning is recommended.

Best practice suggests that weightings allocated to a combined group grade should not exceed 30-35%. (Members should not be able to pass the assessment based on a group mark). The remaining 65-70% might be allocated to an individual group member's report on their own learning, or an assessment of their contribution to the group process and task.

It is also possible to assess a group presentation and reward individual members. The use of peer-assessment is also recommended as a motivating tool for positive participation. (This can be achieved through the use of check lists and peer assessment tools, submitted with each individual's report (See resource 9d -Sample Peer Evaluation Tool). These provide feedback for the module tutor but should not be a significant component of the formal assessment.

Careful consideration should be given to the following:

- Overall assessment weighting for the Group Project as part of a module assessment
- Developing a group assessment rubric
- Individual and group mark (finding an effective balance between the two)
- Group presentation of findings
- Individual or group report /presentation (or both)
- Sharing of learning with other groups
- Self and peer assessment process
- Feedback processes to group and to individual group members
- Ensuring an overall evaluation of the group learning
- Documenting changes for the next iteration of the project

Role of Rubrics

For group work being formally assessed, it is vital that participants know and understand how they will be evaluated. The provision of a structured grading rubric will help here.

A rubric is a scoring tool which lists the criteria by which a project or presentation will be graded. The rubric lists the criteria by which the work is judged. Rubrics convey expectations to the students, help students focus their efforts, improve student achievement, reduce grading time for the instructor and improve the effectiveness of feedback. Rubrics can be helpful for both students and tutors. They outline expectations and enable tutors to assign grades on a more objective basis. Additionally, rubrics also help students to effectively understand and process the assignment.

Rubric Components for Groupwork

If the tutor is interested in assessing the group process and final product, two separate rubrics can be created or also integrated into one. For evaluating the effectiveness of the product, a concrete grading rubric is necessary. The criteria (depending on the project) can be outlined based on: relevant content, structure, organization, accuracy, thoroughness, evidence of research and technical accuracy.

For the group process, the evaluation criteria should represent the learning objectives for the group. A process evaluation might include: attendance and participation in meetings, time management skills, active listening, evidence of cooperative behaviour, professionalism and engagement with the task.

If the group process is going to be evaluated, it is important to give the students an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of their group (See resource 9e peer & group rating inventory). At the end of the process, they should be able to list their contributions, their group member's contributions, and evaluate the process as a whole. They should be able to identify the aspects that worked and the aspects that did not work. The students' group assessment enables the tutor to evaluate the group process and apply the most effective methods to future group projects.

Sample Rubric for Group Project Report & Group Project Presentation

While sample generic rubrics are provided below for Group Reports and Group Presentations, it is most important that these are customised for specific groupwork projects (based on: award standard, desired learning outcomes, associated knowledge, skill and competency development).

(For further guidelines on rubric design -consult resources on the TUS-TEL page for Rubric design)



Supporting Students in Shared Assessment Tasks

Students will frequently express concern regarding the sharing of assessment tasks. Some sound advice and insight has been provided to assist with this ([See Section 7-dealing with common groupwork challenges and section on unequal workshare](#)).

Other helpful approaches here include:

- Clarity in the assessment brief and the associated breakdown of assessment tasks
- Providing time for students to clarify the associated assessment tasks
- Encouraging students to carefully examine the rubric being used and component marks
- Encouraging students to spend time planning for the completion of assessment tasks
- Encouraging students to commit to high quality input
- Encouraging students to provide drafts of their input for peer feedback ahead of key submission dates
- Encouraging students to consider contingency planning and communication protocols should difficulties arise
- Providing opportunities for team 'check ins' during the groupwork process

Sample Rubric for Group Work Report (Can be modified as a rubric for an individual report also)

Group Name _____ Group Members _____ Module _____

Key Criteria	Available Marks	Student Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report Structure & Technical Writing (5x3 marks) • Effective introduction and conclusion • Report structure is clear and logical with clearly delineated sections • Grammar and spelling is correct • Diagrams and illustrations are correctly labelled • A correct reference list & bibliography is provided 	15m	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content & Quality of Report Content (5 x 10) • Demonstrates effective learning about the theme & associated theory practice issues • Key theories and frameworks were applied to address the problem/issue/ challenge • Each of the arguments provided is supported with evidence • Presents the argument in a logical and sequential manner • The recommendations are logical and convincing 	50m	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of Groupwork Process (12, 12 & 11) • Report demonstrates quality engagement by group members • Key Groupwork tools are submitted with report (group ground rules/ meeting records/group evaluation checklists/peer evaluation checklists/ evidence of virtual meetings VLE check ins/wikis/discussion forum activity) • The group presented their findings with clarity and enthusiasm at the plenary session and responded positively to questions posed by tutor and peers 	35m	
<p>Overall Comments</p>		

Date of Assessment: _____ Module Tutor: _____

Sample Rubric for Group Presentation

Team Members _____

Tutor: Total Grade:	Poor	Satis- factory	Good	Excellent	Marks
1. Demonstrates understanding of the topic & a positive response to the project issue/ problem or challenge	1-3	4-6	7-8	9-10	40 (4x10)
Content covered by presentation is relevant					
Content outlines & explains key recommendations					
Content is based on informed research and reading					
Content demonstrates significant understanding					
2. Design & Appeal of Group Presentation	1	2	3	4-5	20
Overall presentation design is effective					
Presentation is interesting and appealing					
There is rapport with peers and audience					
All sources used are acknowledged correctly					
3. Evidence of Teamwork & Effective Communication	1	2	3	4-5	20
Presentation is well organised and coherent					
Each team member contributes to the presentation					
Presentation delivery is smooth with positive verbal and non-verbal communication skills					
Clear evidence of a group synergy					
4. Capacity to Answer Questions	1	2	3	4-5	20
Group members respond effectively to questions					
Answers reflect insight and understanding					
Members use key theoretical frameworks or evidence to support opinion					
Group Members support each other in how answers are developed					

Overall Comments and Recommendations

9. Supporting Tools and Resources

Tools	Description	Page
a	Sample Group Contract & Ground Rules	19
b	Sample Group Observation Tools (Group Climate, Individual Behaviours & Group Task Completion)	20-22
c	Group Process Evaluation Tool	23
d	Sample Qualitative Peer/Self Evaluation	24
e	Sample Peer & Group Evaluation Rubric	25
f	Sample Checklist for Chairing Meetings	26



a) Sample Template for Group Ground Rules

Group Name _____ Date _____

Group Members _____

Clarification of Project Goals:

- What are our team goals for this project?
- What is our shared understanding of the project brief?
- What skills do we want to develop?
- What are the key deliverables?
- What is the final date for completion? Are there other important deadlines?
- Are there details we're not sure about that we need to clarify with our module tutor?

Ground Rules & Group Norms: What do we expect of each other for the following:

- Attendance at meetings & punctuality?
- Are we doing face to face meetings only or face to face and virtual?
- How frequently do we meet?
- What other collaborative tools might be useful (whatsapp group/wiki/team space on VLE)
- How do we ensure every voice is heard in discussions and decision making?
- What communication tool are we using to report on group progress?
- What timeline have we for completion of work tasks?
- How will we ensure an equal distribution of tasks?
- How will we ensure good quality work?
- How will we ensure the project is completed on time?
- How will we deal with difference or conflict?
- What happens if a member becomes unavailable (due to illness etc)?

Group leadership, role clarification & task completion

- To complete this project-how should we best organize ourselves?
- Do we need a coordinator/chairperson who will convene and chair meetings or can we each rotate this role?
- Do we need a note-taker to record outcomes of meetings and summarise those outcomes at the end of each meeting? Is it possible to organize/break down the project into clear parts and agree who is responsible for each of the key tasks?
- Who will be responsible for writing the final report or findings/or preparing the final presentation?

CORE Non-negotiable Ground Rules

What key rules will we all agree on to ensure a positive group project and process?

CONSEQUENCES: How will we address non-performance or unhelpful behaviours of group members regarding key aspects of the project?

As group members -we share these goals and expectations. We agree to these ground rules and ways of working together. We will also review these groundrules at our meetings.

Signed _____

Date _____

Member Name _____

Member Name _____

Member Name _____

Member Name _____

b) Sample Group Observation Tools

Observing Group Climate

Group Climate refers to the tone, atmosphere and feeling which surrounds any group-work process. There are many verbal and non-verbal indicators that convey this climate.

The grid below can be used to observe the group climate. Insert the number in the centre column that best reflects the climate as indicated by relevant word indicators.

1 = negative 10 = very positive

- minus	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	+ plus
Storming		Calm
Anxious		Content
Confused		Clear
Cold		Warm
Frustrated		Satisfied
Lazy		Energetic
Separate		Connected
Apathetic		Involved
Distant		Close
Unsure		Confident
Reluctant		Eager
Unable		Competent
Unproductive		Productive
Guarded		Trusting
Closed		Open
Competitive		Supportive
Conservative		Innovative

Overall Comments on Group Climate during this Group Process

Key Observations

Recommendations For Improvement

Observing Individual Roles

The statement grid below can be used to observe the individual roles. Insert the number in the centre column that best reflects how individuals respond as indicated by each statement.

1 = negative 10 = very positive		
- minus	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	+ plus
Some individuals engage in 'blocking' group progress through unnecessary argument, resistance or unreasonable demands		Most individuals support and encourage each other throughout, and are aware of the needs of others
Some members withdraw from the discussion, daydream, do something else (out of field behaviour) whisper to others, form sub groups etc		Most members remain actively engaged and focused on the process and on the associated tasks
Some members waste time by going off the subject or introducing irrelevant stories/ information (digressing)		Most members remain purposeful and relevant in their contributions. They are also able to bring others back on track with positive assertive communication skills
Some members waste time by returning to issues already agreed and clarified (boomerang behaviour) causing frustration		Most members contribute to the decisions made and once they are made they agree to implement them & only review if it is clear that previous decisions are not having the desired impact
Some members express their opinions using a negative and critical tone		Most members are able to acknowledge the contributions of others but can still disagree in a positive way
Some members behave immaturely and withdraw energy and enthusiasm if their ideas are not accepted		Most members are mature and can accept majority decision -making and go with the flow of the group

Overall Observations and Recommendations

Observing Group Task Completion

Group Task – To what extent does a group define, clarify, organise, delegate and complete tasks in an inclusive and purposeful way.

The statement grid below can be used to observe the group task process. Insert the number in the centre column that best reflects the task completion process as indicated by each statement.

1 = negative 10 = very positive

- minus	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	+ plus
The Group do not agree any protocols/groundrules for how they are going to approach this problem within the timeframe set		The Group do agree protocols/groundrules for how they are going to approach this problem (communication, chairing, leading, decision making etc)
Talk around the problem but don't define or agree what it is		Take time to explore & define the problem
Only some members contribute or may dominate		Each person is given a chance to express their understanding of what the problem is
Jump into action without a sense of clear direction		Have a strategy for how they will proceed - agreed by a majority
Do not use available information or insights		All available information is brought to the discussion
Individuals are unclear regarding how they can contribute		Each person is clear regarding their role
There is no evidence that task delegation is appropriately linked to available knowledge or skills		There is evidence that task delegation is appropriately linked to available knowledge or skills
Only a few members take responsibility for what is happening		Most members assert their influence and become involved in the task completion
Members do not support each other to complete the tasks		Members support and help each other to achieve the tasks
The group takes time at the end of the process to reflect on their learning		The group does not take time to reflect on their learning

Overall Observations and Recommendations for Improvements

c) Sample Group Process Evaluation Tool

Sample Group Process Evaluation Form - Helpful to explore group conflict

Individually, reflect on your group's dynamic and –anonymously– rate it according to each of the following variables (using a scale from 1 to 5). As a group, discuss the results & brainstorm concrete ways to improve your group processes.

Goals						
Goals are unclear or poorly understood, resulting in little commitment to them.	1	2	3	4	5	Goals are clear, understood, and have the full commitment of team members.
Openness						
Members are guarded or cautious in discussions.	1	2	3	4	5	Members express thoughts, feelings, and ideas freely.
Mutual Trust						
Members are suspicious of one another's motives.	1	2	3	4	5	Members trust one another and do not fear ridicule or negative reactions.
Attitudes Toward Difference						
Members smooth over differences and suppress or avoid conflict.	1	2	3	4	5	Members feel free to voice differences and work through them.
Support						
Members are reluctant to ask for or give help.	1	2	3	4	5	Members are comfortable giving and receiving help.
Participation						
Discussion is generally dominated by a few members.	1	2	3	4	5	All members are involved in discussion.
Decision-Making						
Decisions are made by only a few members.	1	2	3	4	5	All members are involved in decision-making.
Flexibility						
The group is locked into established rules and procedures that members find difficult to change.	1	2	3	4	5	Members readily change procedures in response to new situations.
Use Of Member Resources						
Individuals' abilities, knowledge and experience is not well utilized.	1	2	3	4	5	Each member's abilities, knowledge, and experience are fully utilized.

d) Sample Qualitative Peer/Self Evaluation

In the table below, identify a major strength of each of your group members in relation to the group's goals and processes. Provide one concrete example to substantiate your answer. Include yourself!

Group Member's Name & Role in Group	Strength	Example

In the table below, identify a weakness of each of your group member's in relation to the group's process. Provide concrete examples to substantiate your answers. Include yourself.

Group Member's Name & Role in Group	Weakness	Example

In the space below, identify approaches your group tried that worked well, and explain why they were effective.

In the space below, identify approaches your group tried that did not work well, and explain why they were ineffective.

e) Sample Peer & Group Evaluation Rubric

Using the criteria provided, use this form to evaluate the contributions of each team member to the group effort. These evaluations are completely confidential and will not be shown to your team members. Please respond as honestly and fairly as possible.

1. Allocate a total of 100 percentage points for each member -using the criteria

Your Name: _____

Group Members	Name	Name	Name	Name	Marks Available
Criteria					
Attendance at team meetings (virtual and f2f)					12
Contribution to: ideas generation, research & problem solving					12
Positive Communication Style: listens, affirms, is fair, invites others in, builds consensus, helps resolve conflict, is issues focused, uses humour					20
Helped develop Groundrules & adhered to them					12
Commitment to the group & enthusiasm					12
Completed tasks on time					20
Helped Prepare final report and presentation					12
Total Marks Out of 100					

2. Explain any particularly high or low allocations, providing concrete examples to illustrate your reasoning.

f) Sample Checklist for Chairing Group Meetings

Chairing Meetings – Introductory/Beginners
Meetings Workshop Checklist

	Opened the Meeting	Started The Discussion	Encouraged Participation	Managed the discussion	Managed Time	Summarised & Concluded
	<p>Welcome and stated the purpose of the meeting</p> <p>Recapped on the outcomes of the last meeting -or requested notetaker to read notes/ minutes</p>	<p>Asked questions & sought opinions</p>	<p>Noted non-participants Thanked people for their contributions Invited silent people by name</p>	<p>Kept people focused on the agenda Ensured different participants had their voices heard before decisions were taken</p>	<p>Key items were covered and the most important items were allocated most time</p>	<p>Provided summary of main points raised. Clarified tasks for next meeting (or asked notetaker to summarise) Thanked participants Agreed date for next meeting</p>
Chairs Name						
Use a tick ✓ to indicate effective chairing under each category or x If it is not evident						

10. Final Words

Groupwork is not always a predictable and controllable process. It is therefore important that it is approached with an acknowledgement of the 'potential unknowns' that may arise, while also trusting the process that is planned. An acknowledgement of the need for flexibility and adaptability throughout is essential. The element of the unknown and the need for adaptability, should also be discussed as a 'positive professional development opportunity' with group members, before the process commences. Sometimes the richest learning for group participants will relate to how they respond to challenges as they arise and how they engage in problem solving (just as they will be challenged to do in the real world).

It is hoped that this practitioner guide will provide some helpful guidelines and resources to ensure that group project work is supported by best practice. Tutors and module leaders will also learn significantly from trial and error. If you are a novice practitioner in terms of group work practice, then it is recommended that you take small steps first. If using a group assessment process, develop a small-scale group project that is a low stakes assessment. Try out some of the approaches and tools available here and modify them for your particular context. When a group project or process has been completed, take time to reflect on the outcomes and seek feedback from the participants on how they experienced it. Reflect on this feedback and integrate potential learning into subsequent project planning and design.

Enjoy the learning and the group work learning process.




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Michael F. Ryan



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Team Based Learning Resources

[How to use tech to facilitate small-group work - HumTech - UCLA](#)

See Videos of Team Based Learning in action at:

- [University of Texas - \(1\) Team based Learning at UT - YouTube](#)
- [LKC School of Medicine, Singapore - \(1\) Team-Based Learning at LKC Medicine \(Instructional Video\) - YouTube](#)
- [Duke University - \(1\) Sample of Team-Based Learning - YouTube](#)
- [University of Sydney - \(1\) Team-based learning: The Sydney Method - YouTube](#)

Step by step guides for doing TBL are available at [Learn TBL | Jim Sibley helping you learn more about TBL](#)

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