Facilitating Student Collaboration in Groups and Teams

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Preparing Students for Effective Collaboration

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Contents

Welcome to Group Work 101! This resource aims to provide faculty with strategies to organize group work in a way that promotes strong collaboration and full participation of all students in their team process and in the creation of their team's product. You may wish to review the full resource, or jump into the parts that are most relevant to your learning now – this resource is designed to provide you with this flexibility.

Learning Objectives

By engaging with the materials in this resource, you will be able to:

- Define how group work connects to the learning objectives of your course/program
- Distinguish between product and process focus in group work
- Compare strategies for forming teams
- Incorporate explicit teaching on team/group processes into your courses
- Facilitate the process of effective team formation and collaborative work
- Support team formation in online environments
- Choose technology to support group work
- Facilitate team development in culturally diverse teams
- Use strategies to minimize the possibility of social loafing
- Explore strategies for evaluating team projects

Click on the *next* arrow to move on to the first chapter.

IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE GROUP PROJECTS

1.

For reflection

- How does group work support learning?
- Which of your course objectives require students to work in groups/teams successfully

Many courses include learning outcomes that relate to students' skills working collaboratively with others in team settings. Often, this is because our students require these skills to be successful in professional settings. Some examples of learning outcomes that include a group or team component include:

English 1100: Plan, analyze, revise, and edit writing in response to instructor and/or peer feedback.

Foundations in Design 1100: Collaborate effectively in team-centered activities.

Biology 1110: Cooperate with group members to complete tasks in a shared learning environment.

Trades: Shared responsibilities for workplace learning.

When we think about our goals for a group project, making the connection between the project and the course learning outcomes it serves is a helpful first step in considering how we design the project task and facilitate student learning. As you think about the goals of a group project in your course, consider:

(1) Is the project's primary purpose to fulfill content learning objectives, or

(2) Is the project's primary purpose to fulfill objectives related to group work skills, or

(3) Does the project include a combination of product and process goals?

When designing projects, we want to connect assessment to the learning objectives of the project. If developing group work skills is an intended outcome, we want to shape the project design and assessment to reflect this. We also want students to clearly understand the purpose of working in teams.

Strategies to Help Students Understand the Objectives of Group Work

Here are some examples of content you might share with students to help them understand the purpose of group work.

1. Many workplace environments require strong teamwork skills. The Conference Board of Canada lists a number of teamwork skills as key to employability. These include the ability to recognize and respect diversity, the ability to share your expertise, and the ability to manage conflict when working in a team (Conference Board of Canada, n.d.).

2. Cooperative teams can be used to develop constructive and supportive relationships that prepare you to work in a multicultural or global context. Intercultural skills are highly valuable in the global business world. KPU's diverse student population provides an excellent learning place for developing these skills, but you must proactively work to develop relationships with classmates whose experiences differ from your own (*Adapted from* A. Macpherson, 2017).

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Conference Board of Canada. (n.d.). *Employability skills*. Centre for Skills and Post-Secondary Education. https://www.conferenceboard.ca/edu/employability-skills.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1

2.

When you assign a group project, how do you decide how to form teams?

- Allow students to choose their own teams?
- Pre-assign teams randomly?
- Pre-assign teams based on skills, student attributes, or other criteria?
- What do you think are the pros and cons or your usual strategy?

The video below compares strategies for developing student teams for group projects. If you prefer reading to watching videos, you will find a transcript below the video. When you are finished reviewing this content, click the *next* arrow to move on to the next chapter.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/groupwork/?p=21#oembed-1

Video Transcript[1]: Can the way you assign students to teams in group projects change the outcome of the students' work together?

In this video, you will explore the pros and cons of different strategies for forming teams when assigning group projects.

There are three main strategies that instructors use when forming teams for group projects.

1. Allowing students to choose their own teams.
2. Randomly assigning students to teams, AND
3. Assigning students to teams strategically

Which of these strategies is most effective?

Several studies have found that allowing students to choose their own teams can be more effective than putting students into instructor-selected groups. This is because students often already have relationships with one another, and are likely to fulfill their commitments to the group. Students selected groups also have a lower incidence of conflict.

But there's a but...

Most of these studies compare student selected groups with random groups. What about the third

1. Page, Christina. (2019, March 26) Strategies for Forming Teams. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/bcvJ-_Qtzzs

option – assigning students to teams strategically? In 2018, Lora Harding conducted a study where she surveyed students at the beginning of the course. She asked them about their motivation level on the project, as well as their schedules and available time. Students were grouped with other students with similar levels of motivation and schedules. She found that this improved student performance and decreased social loafing. Why might this be?

Sometimes, students who are juggling multiple commitments might legitimately struggle to make group meetings, through no ill-will of their own. By grouping them with other students with similar needs, they are less likely to face conflict over time commitment to the project.

This strategy also recognizes the differences in student motivation. Some students may view the course as central to their study or career goals, and be highly motivated to put a great deal of work into the project. By grouping these students with similarly motivated others, they are less likely to be frustrated with what they perceive as the lesser contributions of others. The scenario where this student does the work for others is less likely to occur. There may also be similar benefits to grouping students by ability or skill sets.

What other factors might instructors want to consider? Smaller groups, for example, groups of 2-3 students, are often more effective than larger groups. In addition, students sometimes share that they prefer instructor assigned groups, as they

remove the pressure of working with friends who might not be a good fit for the project, and the fear of being left without a group.

So, what's the takeaway? Even though student-selected groups are better than random groups, there are some strong benefits to strategic instructor selected groups. What criteria would you use to group students together for group projects in your course.

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Harding, L. M. (2018). Students of a feather "flocked" together: A group assignment method for reducing free-riding and improving group and individual learning outcomes. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *40*(2), 117–127. https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475317708588

3.

- What problems do students bring to you when they are working on group projects?
- What instruction do you give students to help prevent these issues?

Incorporate Teaching on Team Processes into Your Course

"What we know… successful teamwork happens when instructors actively provide instruction on the skills and processes for working collaboratively" (Channon et al., 2017). What might teaching on team processes include?

- An initial instructional session on teams and teamwork

- Initial activities to help teams develop their roles and working procedures (team charters and team contracts)

- Scaffolded assignment guidelines that include the process steps to be achieved, and how teams can work together towards creating the product

- Peer and self-assessment mechanisms to guide the process

This chapter introduces the first part of the process, which includes theory and concepts about team life that may be valuable to teach to students in the first part of their orientation to team projects.

Content for Initial Teamwork Sessions

Much of what we consider to be good team process is implicit; we assume that students know how to work in a team, but rarely teach them about the elements of well-functioning, interdependent teams. Content for class sessions or assigned reading on teams might include:

1. Elements of a cooperative team
2. Stages of team life (e.g. Tuckman's stages of team development)
3. Communication skills for teams

Elements of a Cooperative Team

What is a team? A Team is two or more people, working together, on a Common Goal (or goals) (A. Macpherson). Groups become teams when a goal is in place, and the team attends to both interpersonal and task-related functions.

Johnson et al., (1991) identified five key elements that characterize successful cooperative teams.

1. Positive interdependence: The group understands that they will "sink or swim" together, depending on each other to achieve a common goal. A team with positive interdependence focuses on establishing strong group performance, creates common goals, and shares resources

and expertise that contribute to reaching that goal.

2. Individual accountability: Each team member takes on responsibility for meeting their part of the team's goal. Each team member produces work that meets the agreed upon quality and quantity standards that the group has set.
3. Promotive interaction (face to face or online): Team members help and support each others' efforts to learn. This can occur during face to face meetings, or in virtual settings as agreed upon by the team.
4. Interpersonal communication skills: Successful teams put into practice the skills they have learned about leadership, building trust, active listening, respecting diversity, communication, and problem solving.
5. Group processing: At the end of a work period, the group evaluates its own performance. Questions to ask include: (1) What did each group member to to support the success of the team? (2) What could each group member do to make the group work better?

Stages of Team Life

Small groups have to start somewhere. Even established groups go through changes as members come and go, as tasks are started and completed, and as relationships change. In this section, we will learn about the stages of group development, which are forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). As with most models of communication phenomena, although we order the stages and discuss them separately, they are not always experienced in a linear fashion. Additionally, some groups don't experience all five stages, may experience stages multiple times, or may experience more than one stage at a time.

Forming

During the forming stage, group members begin to reduce uncertainty associated with new relationships and/or new tasks through initial interactions that lay the foundation for later group dynamics. Groups return to the forming stage as group members come and go over the life span of a group. Although there may not be as much uncertainty when one or two new people join a group as there is when a group first forms, groups spend some time in the forming stage every time group membership changes.

Given that interpersonal bonds are likely not yet formed and people are unfamiliar with the purpose of the group or task at hand, there are high levels of uncertainty in the group. Early stages of role negotiation begin and members begin to determine goals for the group and establish rules and norms. Group cohesion also begins to form during this stage. Group cohesion refers to the commitment of members to the purpose of the group and the degree of attraction among individuals within the group (Hargie, 2011). The cohesion that begins in this stage sets the group on a trajectory influenced by group members' feelings about one another and their purpose or task. Groups with voluntary membership may exhibit high levels of optimism about what the group can accomplish. Although the optimism can be motivating, unrealistic expectations can lead to disappointment, making it important for group members to balance optimism with realism. Groups with assigned or mandatory membership may include members that carry some degree of resentment toward the group itself or the goals of the group. These members can start the group off on a negative trajectory that will lessen or make difficult group cohesiveness. Groups can still be successful if these members are balanced out by others who are more committed to and positive in regards to the purpose of the group.

Many factors influence how the forming stage of group

development plays out. The personalities of the individuals in the group, the skills that members bring, the resources available to the group, the group's size, and the group's charge all contribute to the creation of the early tone of and climate within a group (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). For example, more dominant personalities may take early leadership roles in the group that can affect subsequent decisions. Group members' diverse skill sets and access to resources can also influence the early stages of role differentiation. In terms of size, the bonding that begins in the forming stage becomes difficult when the number of people within the group prevents every person from having a one-on-one connection with every other member of the group. Also, in larger groups, more dominant members tend to assert themselves as leaders and build smaller coalitions within the group, which can start the group on a trajectory toward more conflict during the upcoming storming stage (Ellis & Fisher, 1994).

When a group receives an external charge, meaning that the goal or purpose of the group is decided by people outside the group, there may be less uncertainty related to the task dimensions of the group. Additionally, decisions about what roles people will play, including group leaders and other decisions about the workings of the group, may come from the outside, which reduces some of the uncertainty inherent in the forming stage. Relational uncertainty can also be diminished when group members have preexisting relationships or familiarity with each other. Although the decreased uncertainty may be beneficial at this stage, too much imposed structure from the outside can create resentment or a feeling of powerlessness among group members. Therefore, a manageable amount of uncertainty is actually a good thing for group cohesion and productivity.

Storming

During the storming stage of group development, conflict emerges as people begin to perform their various roles, have

their ideas heard, and negotiate where they fit in the group's structure. The uncertainty present in the forming stage begins to give way as people begin to occupy specific roles and the purpose, rules, and norms of a group become clearer. Conflict develops when some group members aren't satisfied with the role that they or others are playing or the decisions regarding the purpose or procedures of the group. For example, if a leader begins to emerge or is assigned during the forming stage, some members may feel that the leader is imposing his or her will on other members of the group. Leaders should expect some degree of resentment from others who wanted to be the leader, have interpersonal conflicts with the leader, or just have general issues with being led.

Although the word *storming* and the concept of conflict have negative connotations, conflict can be positive and productive. Just like storms can replenish water supplies and make crops grow, storming can lead to group growth. While conflict is inevitable and should be experienced by every group, a group that gets stuck at the storming stage will likely not have much success in completing its task or achieving its purpose. Influences from outside the group can also affect the conflict in the storming stage. Interpersonal conflicts that predate the formation of the group may distract the group from the more productive idea- or task-oriented conflict that can be healthy for the group and increase the quality of ideas, decision making, and output.

Norming

During the norming stage of group development, the practices and expectations of the group are solidified, which leads to more stability, productivity, and cohesion within the group. Group norms are behaviours that become routine but are not explicitly taught or stated. In short, group norms help set the tone for what group members ought to do and how they ought to behave (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Many implicit norms are derived from social norms that people follow in their

everyday life. Norms within the group about politeness, lateness, and communication patterns are typically similar to those in other contexts. Sometimes a norm needs to be challenged because it is not working for the group, which could lead a group back to the storming stage. Other times, group members challenge norms for no good reason, which can lead to punishment for the group member or create conflict within the group.

At this stage, there is a growing consensus among group members as to the roles that each person will play, the way group interactions will typically play out, and the direction of the group. Leaders that began to emerge have typically gained the support of other group members, and group identity begins to solidify. The group may now be recognizable by those on the outside, as slogans, branding, or patterns of interaction become associated with the group. This stage of group development is key for the smooth operation of the group. Norms bring a sense of predictability and stability that can allow a group to move on to the performing stage of group development. Norms can also bring with them conformity pressures that can be positive or negative. In general, people go along with a certain amount of pressure to conform out of a drive to avoid being abnormal that is a natural part of our social interaction (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Too much pressure, however, can lead people to feel isolated and can create a negative group climate.

Explicit rules may also guide group interaction. Rules are explicitly stated guidelines for members and may refer to things like expected performance levels or output, attitudes, or dress codes. Rules may be communicated through verbal instructions, employee handbooks, membership policies, or codes of conduct (Hargie, 2011). Groups can even use established procedures to manage the flow of conversations and decision-making procedures. Group members can contest

or subvert group rules just as they can norms. Violations of group rules, however, typically result in more explicit punishments than do violations of norms.

Performing

During the performing stage of group development, group members work relatively smoothly toward the completion of a task or achievement of a purpose. Although interactions in the performing stage are task focused, the relational aspects of group interaction provide an underlying support for the group members. Socialization outside of official group time can serve as a needed relief from the group's task. During task-related interactions, group members ideally begin to develop a synergy that results from the pooling of skills, ideas, experiences, and resources. Synergy is positive in that it can lead group members to exceed their expectations and perform better than they could individually. Glitches in the group's performance can lead the group back to previous stages of group development. Changes in membership, member roles, or norms can necessitate a revisiting of aspects of the forming, storming, or norming stages. One way to continue to build group cohesion during the performing stage is to set short-term attainable group goals. Accomplishing something, even if it's small, can boost group morale, which in turn boosts cohesion and productivity.

Adjourning

The adjourning stage of group development occurs when a group dissolves because it has completed its purpose or goal, membership is declining and support for the group no longer

exists, or it is dissolved because of some other internal or external cause. Some groups may live on indefinitely and not experience the adjourning stage. Other groups may experience so much conflict in the storming stage that they skip norming and performing and dissolve before they can complete their task. For groups with high social cohesion, adjourning may be a difficult emotional experience. However, group members may continue interpersonal relationships that formed even after the group dissolves. In reality, many bonds, even those that were very close, end up fading after the group disbands. This doesn't mean the relationship wasn't genuine; interpersonal relationships often form because of proximity and shared task interaction. Once that force is gone, it becomes difficult to maintain friendships, and many fade away. For groups that had negative experiences, the adjourning stage may be welcomed.To make the most out of the adjourning stage, it is important that there be some guided and purposeful reflection. Many groups celebrate their accomplishments with a party or ceremony. Even groups that had negative experiences or failed to achieve their purpose can still learn something through reflection in the adjourning stage that may be beneficial for future group interactions. Often, group members leave a group experience with new or more developed skills that can be usefully applied in future group or individual contexts. Even groups that are relational rather than task focused can increase members' interpersonal, listening, or empathetic skills or increase cultural knowledge and introduce new perspectives.

Communication Skills for Teams

Effective communication skills practiced within a team environment are the prime attributes of an effective team.

While the methods may differ from team to team, the outcomes should include the following.

1. Members acknowledge all contributions made with a serious intent.
2. Members check to make sure they know what a speaker means before they agree or disagree with his or her contribution.
3. Each member speaks only for themselves and lets others speak for themselves.
4. Members view all contributions as belonging to the group, to use or not as the group decides.
5. All members participate, but may do so in different and complementary ways.
6. Whenever the group senses it is having trouble getting work done, it tries to find the reason.
7. The group recognizes that what it does is what it has chosen to do. No group can avoid making decisions; it cannot choose whether to decide, only how to decide. Thus, an effective group makes decisions openly rather than by default.
8. The group brings conflict into the open and deals with it.
9. The group looks upon behaviour that hinders its work as happening because the group allows or even wants it; it is not just as the result of a *problem member*.

> Which of this content would you introduce to students? How might you introduce it? In the next section, you will explore other in-class activities to support students as they develop team skills.

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Resources to support instruction on team processes

- [Getting the Best out of Group Projects Learning Aid](#)
- [Tuckman's Team Development Model Learning Aid](#)
- [Conflict Management Learning Aid](#)

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The *Communication Skills for Teams* section of this chapter is adapted from work by Alice Macpherson.

4.

Another key component to support effective teamwork is providing scaffolded exercises that lead students through the steps of effective team formation and ongoing team processes. This includes:

1. Exercises that help teams get to know one another in the context of a diverse team.
2. Exercises that lead students through the process of developing a team charter or other document to guide their work together.

It is often helpful to allocate class time for completing these activities to provide a supported beginning to the team process. In online courses, consider creating forums for each team as a mechanism for beginning communication.

Exercises to Support Relationship Development in Teams

Exercise 1: Getting to Know One Another

In order to form a team, you must first establish who your teammates are. In this exercise you will use a "go-around" process where everyone on the team answers each question. Start with the first question, and allow everyone a chance to answer. When everyone has on the team has spoken, move on to the next question.

Practice:

Introduce yourself to those in your group using the "go around process" (everyone has a turn to answer the question, one by one, before moving to the next question).

a. What is your name? What do you prefer to be called?
b. Where are you from?
c. Tell me about one of your grandmothers.
d. What is one thing you are passionate about?

Note: Why use the question *"tell me about one of your grandmothers"?* The question *"tell me about one of your grandmothers* offers group members a chance to share about their cultural background and values in a way that is relatively non-threatening. It is recommended especially when forming culturally diverse teams (Holmes, 2017).

Exercise 2: Discover Strengths and Competencies

In order to determine team roles and tasks, it is helpful to discover the strengths and skills of your teammates. Remember – you will want to balance working in your own areas of strength, with challenging yourself to develop additional skills through the project.

Team member	Strengths that will support this project

Exercises to Establish Team Norms, Goals, and Processes

Exercise 3: Establish Team Norms

As a team, you will want to develop a "culture" that describes the way that your team chooses to work together. Though these norms may be different from the individual preferences of group members, in this stage of team building you will work to agree on a set of rules that will determine how you will interact and work together. Consider the following questions:

1. Attendance: How many absences from meetings are acceptable? If you are late, how will you notify team members?
2. Socialization: How much time at each meeting will be spent getting to know one another? Will this be at the beginning or end of meetings? How will you transition from your social interactions into your work time?
3. Team roles: How will work be divided among the team? What deadlines will be established for project tasks?
4. Communication: How will team members communicate with one another (e-mail, text)? How quickly is a response expected? How will team members distribute project work and resources to one another?

Exercise 4: Identify Team Goals

What are SMART goals?

Specific: Your goal will clearly define what you are going to accomplish. You will ask and answer the **What** and **Why** of your goal.

Measurable: You will identify criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. This will be the definition of **How** you will attain your goal.

- How will you know when the result that you want has been achieved?
- How will you verify your achievement/performance of this goal?

Attainable: Is it possible for you to achieve your desired goal? Can you see a path to your accomplishment? You are the **Who** in this goal setting process. It is your positive attitude that will allow you to draw on your current strengths and develop new ones as you meet your goal.

Relevant: Realistic goals must represent an objective toward which you are willing to work and which are relevant to you.

You need to identify **Where** this goal will take you. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. Just be sure that each of your goals represents substantial progress.

Time Bound: You need to create a sense of personal urgency by setting times for each step along the way. Knowing **When** you have to accomplish a task keeps to on track and accountable. What needs to be done by when? Be timely!

Discuss your goals for the project. What do you hope to achieve? Create goals that are:

S.M.A.R.T: Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.

Goal 1	
Goal 2	

Exercise 5: Form a Conflict Management Plan

Though few people enjoy conflict, it is wise to plan how you will address conflicts that may arise in your team. Conflict occurs where there are different ideas and points of view. When there is no difference of opinion you need to beware of groupthink! Difference opens up the discussion and a chance to increase creativity and so, conflict can be a proactive rather than a destructive process. *Conflict management* is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of conflict.

This process must be viewed as fair by everyone:

- It must meet legitimate needs.
- It is intended to reach a point of agreement between the participants.
- It strengthens participant's abilities for future cooperative work.

What process will you use when conflict arises?

The following are some suggestions that each group needs to customize.

Identify the issue: The very first step in managing conflict is to agree on the description of the issue or problem. This requires excellent communication.

Communicate: Conflicts are often caused by problems in communication. One person may have misunderstood what the other person has said. Or the other person may not have said what they meant to say. Sometimes when we're angry we don't hear what the other person is saying. Sometimes when there is a conflict, people do not tell each other, which causes even more conflict.

Listen: Keeping eye contact, leaning closer, nodding your head when you understand a particular point, and ignoring distractions that are going on around you are some of the ways to send the right "body talk" messages.

Summarize: When a person is finished expressing a thought, summarize the facts and emotions behind what they have said so that they know you have understood what they've said and how they are feeling.

Clarify: Ask questions to clarify or make clearer different parts of the problem to make sure that you fully understand the other person's perspective.

Speak clearly: When you speak, try to send a clear message, with a specific purpose, and with respect to the listener. Say how you are affected by the situation.

Avoid sidetrackers: Don't interrupt, criticize, laugh at the other person, offer advice, bring up your own experiences, or change the subject.

Brainstorm Once the problem is agreed on, try to come up with as many ideas as possible. During this process, any idea that comes to mind should be expressed and written down. Don't judge whether the ideas are good or bad, or even discuss the ideas. Just try to come up with as many possible solutions as possible.

Find Win-Win options: Look for ideas that could help both sides. Stick to interests and desired outcomes. When we focus on interests instead of positions we find solutions.

Find a fair solution: Then go through the ideas using fair criteria to see which idea might be best. Using fair criteria means to judge each idea with both people's interests in mind. Try to use reason and not emotion to judge an idea, and with respect to each person's difference in perception. A fair solution respects the interests of all sides.

Identify a potential conflict that could happen in a course team:

Identify 3 strategies you might use to manage this conflict:

Create a Team Charter

The exercises above may also be integrated into the process of forming a team charter. A team charter is a document that a group creates together that governs its work together. The charter may include:

- Team expectations, roles and norms.
- Team member roles and responsibilities, listed out specifically for each team member.
- Procedures for group meetings, decision making, and managing conflict.

Resources to support team development

- Team Charter Template ([PDF](#) | [Word](#))
- [Project Planning Template](#)

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Attributions:

Content in the *Identify Goals* section is borrowed from: Kwantlen Polytechnic University Learning Centres (n.d.) Creating Smart Goals. Retrieved from: http://www.kpu.ca/sites/default/files/Learning%20Centres/Time_SetGoals_LA_0.pdf which is used under a [CC-BY-SA 4.0 International license](#).

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5.

Saghafian and O'Neill (2018) discovered that while there are some common themes in team development in face-to-face and online environments, the differences between the two modalities mean that additional team development skills for online learning may need to be specifically addressed.

As with face-to-face team learning, scaffolding teamwork skills remains important in the online environment. Consider embedding the structured activities presented in the previous two chapters. This may take place in an online synchronous session with breakout rooms to facilitate team interaction, or in structured asynchronous activities in online group forums.

In addition, the technical aspects of online teamwork may also require scaffolding and support. Students may feel confused about how to begin teamwork with classmates that they have not met face to face; orienting students to the technologies that can support their work may provide clearer

insights on how they might work in virtual teams. Consider the following questions:

- Do students know how to use the document sharing features within Office 365? Learners may assume that using another technology, such as Google Docs, is the only available method to create shared work. Orienting students to shared Office documents allows them to use institutionally supported tools for their shared work.
- Do students have access to a tool for synchronous meetings (e.g. access to Big Blue Button rooms, access to Teams?
- Are students able to identify the privacy risks connected to the tools they may choose, and to make informed decisions? Jung and Gunawardena (2014) suggest that learners may collaborate more effectively on more familiar platforms that are outside of the learning management system; however, students may require tools to make informed choices about how they share information online.

Online learners value the flexibility that the modality offers, but report additional challenges with the logistics of connecting with teammates (Saghafian & O'Neill, 2018). In an online course, additional questions that teams may need to consider as they form and develop team charters include:

1. Do we wish to meet face-to-face? If so, what time is suitable for all group members, taking time zones into account?
2. What technology do we choose to use for our work?
3. If we choose not to meet synchronously (in real time), how will we choose to stay in contact?
4. What are the expected response times for responding to messages?

5. What communication etiquette will we use to prevent misunderstandings (particularly in written communication)?

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6.

> "I do not like my teammates. I want to change teams."
>
> "I cannot work with my team. They did not hand in their part of the paper on time."
>
> "My team members did not contribute at all. I had to do all the work."
>
> "I contributed but they never took me seriously. They just ignored my points of view."
>
> "I wanted to contribute. But they don't let me. They don't give me any parts to do."
>
> "They speak so fast. I have a hard time participating. Whenever I tried to say something, I was cut off."
>
> "They never show me any respect."
>
> "They speak their own language. I am excluded all the time."
>
> "Only if my teammates would know how to do team work the way I know it". (Chao and Purdy, 2017)

Group work in the context of an internationalizing university facilitates the development of intercultural skills for both domestic and international students. The KPU 2023 Academic plan includes a mandate to "foster a culturally and globally aware curriculum, being prepared to meet the needs of an

international workplace, whether in Canada or internationally". This mandate, combined with course and program learning outcomes that include intercultural team skills, adds an additional layer to the team development process.

Culturally diverse teams support creative thinking and the development of strong solutions, as team members can bring a wider range of experiences and perspectives to the task than is possible on a monocultural team (Tadmor et al., 2012). However, culturally diverse teams can also struggle with miscommunication and misundrestandings that hinder a successful team process. Intercultural teams have the potential to be most successful when intercultural skills are explicitly discussed and scaffolded in the course and project design.

Considerations for intercultural teamwork

Consider the relationship of intercultural teamwork with your course learning outcomes, and the ways in which the process skills involved in intercultural teams might be evaluated as a part of the group project. Nederveen Pieterse et al., (2013) found that intercultural teams with stronger learning orientations engaged with each other more effectively, whereas a focus on task performance can undermine intercultural communication in teams. In other words, if students are primarily focused on being graded on the product they submit, they may be less motivated to move through the challenging process of building intercultural team relationships. Consider including a process component in the overall assignment grade, for example, a reflective activity on intercultural skills development within the context of the team project.
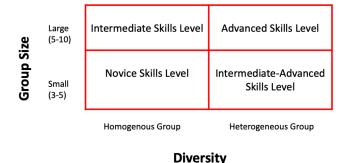
Consider what specific training in intercultural skills might be needed for students. Students may need support in

cultivating an intercultural mindset that includes recognition and respect for differences. An intercultural mindset also includes recognition of one's own biases, and how these impact interactions with others. Students may need support in understanding that the ways in which we communicate, organize time, work with others, and provide feedback may be shaped by prior experiences and culturally-influenced values. In the resources section of this chapter, you will find an example lesson that includes content and learning activities that support students in developing self-reflective, cognitive, and interpersonal skills for working in intercultural teams.

Arkoudis et al. (2013) recommend six practices for facilitating intercultural interaction throughout courses; these practices can support students in developing the skills and relationships that will support their success in group projects.

- Planning for interaction: Plan for learning activities throughout the course that bring students from diverse backgrounds together.
- Creating environments for interaction: Use icebreakers, breakout rooms, and other low-stakes activities to foster intercultural interaction before assigning a larger group project.
- Supporting interaction: Set clear expectations for peer interaction, modelling respect for diverse viewpoints and ways of being.
- Engaging with subject knowledge: Incorporate tasks within the group project that are specifically designed to draw on learners' diverse knowledges.
- Developing reflexive processes: Support reflection and peer feedback processes.
- Fostering communities of learners: Incorporate community building activities throughout the course, for example socially-oriented online forums.

Consider students' present abilities teamwork abilities.
Working in an intercultural team is more complex than
working in a monocultural team. If intercultural team
development is not an outcome of the assignment,
monocultural teams might improve student comfort. Consider
the rubric below from Chao and Pardy (2017) when evaluating
students' broader competency in teamwork and how it might
affect assignment design. This may involve scaffolding team
assignments in a single course, or even across courses, to
facilitate a structured movement from monocultural to more
intentionally culturally diverse teams.

	Homogenous Group	Heterogeneous Group
Large (5-10)	Intermediate Skills Level	Advanced Skills Level
Small (3-5)	Novice Skills Level	Intermediate-Advanced Skills Level

Group Size (vertical axis)

Diversity

***Ensure that the assignment design facilitates authentic
intercultural collaboration***. Many group projects ask students
to submit a single report with a single author voice, which may
lead to a product-oriented focus, and a "divide and conquer"
approach to the assignment. Chao and Pardy (2017)
recommend creating assignments that require analysis from
multiple perspectives, such as the analysis of a case through
the perspective of multiple stakeholders. Another approach is
to require the submission of a portfolio with team members

submitting various integrated components, rather than a report-style assignment.

Provide a team-building activity that facilitates reflection on values and practices that may be influenced by culture. Encourage team members to share their reflections and note similarities and differences; a next step may be for the team to explicitly outline their desired team culture.

Build mentoring into the team process. Gunawardena et al. (2019) suggest that intercultural learning communities benefit from mentoring at a variety of levels. Mentors that support the team project can come from within the team, and be external to the team. For example:

- As team members share their strengths and skills, they may identify areas in which they can provide peer mentoring to one another internally in the team.
- Team members may require technical mentoring early in the process to use their communications and learning technologies well. Connecting with a peer tutor is one strategy for providing technical mentoring external to the team.
- Team members may also benefit from pedagogical mentoring, or mentoring on their collaborative strategies. This type of mentoring could be instructor-provided, in scheduled office hour meetings, or achieved by connecting teams with group learning strategist sessions early in their project process.

Consider building a reflection session into the course after the group assignment, where students are offered the opportunity to integrate their intercultural learning in the project.

Supporting the Process

Reid and Garson (2017) provide an example of a scaffolded group work process that enhanced student satisfaction with group work, and positively shifted student attitudes towards intercultural collaborations. Their process includes the following steps, which incorporate the principles discussed above.

1. Provide an initial orientation session where students identify the characteristics of successful teams.
2. Ask students to identify key strengths and skills that they can contribute to a team project.
3. Use information about student strengths to strategically form teams (Reid and Garson allowed students to choose one team member, but otherwise strategically formed the groups).
4. Use a class session to provide instruction on intercultural communication and working in diverse teams.
5. Ensure that the assignment grading reflects a focus on process (such as peer evaluation and self reflection).
6. Conclude the assignment by asking students to reflect on their experience working in a diverse team.

Resources to support work in intercultural teams

- Preparing to Work in a Diverse Team Example Lesson (PDF | Word)
- Team Culture Development Exercise (for culturally diverse teams) (PDF | Word)
- Suggestions for Building a Cultural Bridge

(student Learning Aid)

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Attribution Statement: The quotations at the beginning of this chapter, and the *Pedagogical Considerations for Diversity in Team Composition* are both borrowed without changes from Chao, I. T., & Pardy, M. (2017). Your way or my way? Integrating cultural diversity into team-based learning at Royal Roads University. In S. L. Grundy, D. Hamilton, G. Veletsianos, N. Agger-Gupta, P. Márquez, V. Forssman, & M. Legault (Eds.), *Engaging students in life-changing learning: Royal Roads University's learning and teaching model in practice*. Royal Roads University. https://learningandteachingmodel.pressbooks.com/ and used under a CC-BY 4.0 International License.

7.

What is Social Loafing?

Social loafing (or free-riding) is the tendency to put in less work/effort when working in a group project as compared to working alone.

Why does social loafing occur?

Our first thought when we observe social loafing is to assume laziness – the student(s) involved simply want to rest on the work of their teammates. What other causes might there be? Harding (2018) suggests that educators consider other possible causes of social loafing:

- Actual or perceived ability to execute the project tasks.
- Schedule conflicts that limit ability to contribute to meetings or projects.

Reducing social loafing

We have already explored some of the strategies that can reduce social loafing. Providing instruction on the purposes

of group work, and having students develop their initial team processes can create motivation and accountability to work well on the task. Grouping students effectively (e.g. forming smaller groups, using a thoughtful grouping strategy) also supports more effective group participation.

Another strategy for reducing social loafing is evaluating team process through individual and peer accountability. If the collaborative process is already a learning objective the project fulfills, this is even more relevant.

Providing formative assessment

Gunawardena et al. (2019) suggest that formative assessment is a key strategy for supporting successful group work. Both self and peer evaluations are helpful; however, many learners are still developing the metacognitive skills needed to accurately assess their own performance, and may need formative feedback on their evaluations of self and others before completing graded assessments later in the process. Sources of data that can support formative assessment include:

- Recordings of synchronous group meeting sessions.
- Data from asynchronous discussion logs and planning worksheets
- Synchronous creation of a document (e.g. brainstorming, mind-mapping) that indicates individual contributions and group process.

By providing smaller formative self and peer assessments throughout the process, learners are able to more accurately evaluate their own contributions and those of others. Additionally, social loafing, if it occurs, can be addressed earlier in the project process.

Strategies for individual and peer assessment

- Self-evaluations (see resources section for an example)

- Peer-evaluations (see resources section for an example)
- Individual journals
- Task inventory (see resources section for an example)
- Asking teams to divide contribution marks between members according to their contribution (e.g. the team receives 100 marks, to be divided according to the contribution level of each member)
- Team journals
- Team check-ins (with you, for formative assessment)
- Scheduling a brief individual verbal interview with each team member to evaluate their team contributions and experiences

For reflection

- Which of the above approaches might be most useful in your course?
- Are there any disadvantages to these approaches? What might they be?

Developing criteria for peer evaluations

Consider the following as you develop peer evaluations for team projects.

1. Develop objective criteria (e.g. attendance and punctuality at group meetings, contributes to group discussions, allowed other group members to contribute to tasks/discussions, completes assigned tasks by agreed-upon dates). Another option is to work with teams to develop their own objective criteria based on their team charter

2. Use peer assessment multiple times throughout the project/semester. This will provide formative feedback that helps students improve, and allows emerging issues to be resolved.

Resources to support self and peer evaluation

- Group Work Reflection Exercise (Kristie Dukewich)
- Group Work Reflection (based on Gibbs, 1994) PDF | Word
- Group Work Individual Inventory (Kristie Dukewich) (PDF | Word)
- Group Work Assessment Rubric (PDF | Word)
- Group Work Self and Peer Assessment (PDF | Word)

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8.

Reflecting back on the objectives of your project, consider whether you want to assess:

- individual or group contributions
- product and/or process. The relative weight given to produce and process will correspond to the learning outcomes you are measuring with the assignment.

Assessing group process/ teamwork skills

UNSW Sydney (2018) outline a list of process skills that may be considered in assessment:

- ability to arrive at consensus
- ability to manage and resolve difficulties
- effectiveness in project management (e.g. timelines and milestones)
- effectiveness in giving and accepting support and advice
- commitment to group processes (e.g. participating, taking

responsibility)

- extent of contribution (e.g. gathering and researching information, preparing written reflections)
- quality of contribution (e.g. applying higher order critical evaluation and problem solving skills).

These can be assessed through team logs, journals, or peer assessment checklists/rubrics.

Options for distributing group work marks

Options for assessing the *product* of group assignments	
Type of mark	**This mark may be based on…**
Shared group mark	This strategy may apply when a group submits a single product (e.g. oral presentation, written report) as the product of their group assignment. With this strategy, the product is graded as a whole, and individual contributions are not assessed. The strategy may encourage collaboration, but disadvantage strong students and allow for social loafing.
Individual mark	Students receive an individual mark based on their contribution to a group project, OR students produce an individual product as the outcome of their group work. This strategy can be motivating to students if they perceive they are being fairly rewarded for their contributions. However, the strategy can discourage collaboration. If the task has a shared product, it can be difficult to distribute work equally to all students in the group.
Combination of group average and individual mark	The group product is marked, but the marks are adjusted based on individual contributions to the project (as assessed by the instructor, or as reflected in team logs, reflective journals, or peer assessments). The group is awarded a single mark, which is then adjusted for each member based on contributions. This approach can be perceived as equitable by students, but may create conflict if peer assessments are not perceived as fair.
Options for assessing the *process* of group assignments	
Individual mark (adjusted from group average)	This strategy assesses the group process as a whole, then adjusting marks to account for individual contributions (rewarding strong contributors, while lowering grades for weak contributions). This strategy requires the use of evidence from direct observation, group logs, and reflective journals on the team process.
Group average mark	This strategy assigns a single mark to the group for their group process, as reflected in observations, group logs, and reflective journals. This strategy can encourage strong collaboration and commitment to a strong group process, but can disadvantage stronger contributors.

Individual mark	Students are assigned a mark based on a separate assignment (e.g. a reflective paper) on the group process, that includes information on their own contribution and that of their team members.

Table adapted from: UNSW Sydney. (2018, December 14). *Assessing by Group Work*. Teaching. https://teaching.unsw.edu.au/assessing-group-work

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9.

Group projects can have a reputation for "going off the rails" because of social loafing or student conflict. These challenges can be reduced by considering both the process of teamwork, and the process of facilitating effective teamwork. Process that lead to effective team projects include:

- Considering the objectives of the team project, and helping students to see the purpose of group work.
- Grouping students strategically.
- Incorporating teaching on teamwork into your course.
- Facilitating group processes (first meetings, team charters, check-ins).
- Specifically addressing the benefits and challenges of working in diverse teams.
- Combatting social loafing with peer and self-assessment activities.
- Using evaluation strategies that promote accountability and reward successful group process.

Resources to support instruction on team processes

- Preparing to Work in a Diverse Team Example Lesson ([PDF](#) | [Word](#))
- [Getting the Best out of Group Projects Learning Aid](#)
- [Tuckman's Team Development Model Learning Aid](#)
- [Conflict Management Learning Aid](#)

Resources to support team development

- Team Charter Template ([PDF](#) | [Word](#))
- Team Culture Development Exercise (for culturally diverse teams) ([PDF](#) | [Word](#))
- [Project Planning Template](#)

Resources to support self and peer evaluation

- [Group Work Reflection Exercise](#) (Kristie Dukewich)
- Group Work Reflection (based on Gibbs, 1994) [PDF](#) | [Word](#)
- Group Work Individual Inventory (Kristie Dukewich) [PDF](#) | [Word](#)
- Group Work Assessment Rubric ([PDF](#) | [Word](#))
- Group Work Self and Peer Assessment ([PDF](#) | [Word](#))

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