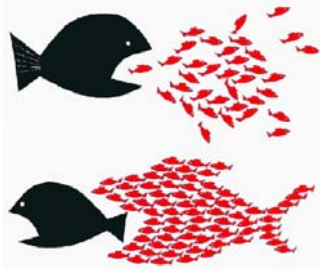


Working in Groups



Workshop Outline – Working in Groups

- Starting to work in a Team
- Planning a group assignment
- Managing the group
- Writing up and presenting the assignment
- Reporting on group work

The value of group work

- Graduate attribute: working in teams
- Vital skill in industry and professions
- communication skills and personal growth

Form a group

- Organise yourselves into groups of 4 to 5 students
- Conduct an 'ice-breaker' in order to get to know each other and prepare for working together
- Group members participate in an identification exercise and share some important personal information

Identification exercise

- A lot about you is revealed by the contents of your wallet, purse or bag
- Find one item (or a few) that shows something about you. Talk about the object and what it means to /reveals about you.
- The rest of the group can ask questions

Adapted from Forbess-Greene (1983), UTS BELL Program

Discuss in your group ...

- What makes a good team?
- What are the advantages of teamwork?
- What is your experience of being in a 'group' and in a 'team'?

Starting to Work in a Group

- To get you thinking and talking about group work, here's a task for your newly formed group:
- Decide on an identity for your group, design and create a:
 - Team name
 - Logo, and
 - Slogan

While you're working and afterwards ...

- Get to know group members – their strengths, preferred ways of working and preferred roles
- Establish an agreed set of guidelines for working together
- Appoint a group leader to record group decisions

Task roles and process roles

- In your group reflect on the following roles and discuss:
 - What you think each role description means?
 - Which groups members performed each task in the short exercise you completed;
 - Is it a role they are used to?
 - how comfortable did they feel doing it?:

- Starts the group working
- Suggests directions
- Offers information and opinions
- Seeks information and opinions
- Summarises
- Coordinates
- Diagnoses
- Energises
- Tests
- evaluations

Which process roles did you take (or do you often take)?

- Listens actively
- Encourages
- Compromises and harmonises
- Relieves tension
- Helps with communication
- Monitors the climate
- Observes the methods by which the group is working
- Checks progress
- Builds trust
- Solves interpersonal problems

Starting in a group ...

- Discuss the task to arrive at a shared understanding
- Summarise this shared understanding of your project
- Brainstorm to quickly create ideas, plans and tasks

Establish group rules

Here are some examples of rules. Select which ones could be useful to your group:

- Each speaker will be clear, specific and concise – no 5 minute speeches
- If you're going to be late, let the group know
- Speaking and listening are equally valued
- Enjoy the process

More rules

- We don't have to get it right at first, we just have to get it right
- Everyone has to be the most tolerant person in the group
- The group must agree before someone is identified as not participating/contributing. The person is warned. If no change, the next step is ...
- Share problems and questions with each other immediately so they don't magnify

Starting in a group ...

- Decide on specific tasks and allocate them to individuals or sub-groups.
- Set timelines and future meeting times as necessary
- Periodically review what has happened and use information as a basis for developing more effective group processes

Planning the group assignment

Defining the task

- What is the purpose of the assignment?
- What are you supposed to produce?
- What criteria will be used to assess it?
- What are the main components of the task?

Defining the task

- What are the deadlines?
- Are there guidelines?
- Are there hidden agendas?
- Are you supposed to do it on your own?
- How will it be assessed?

Draw up a checklist for the task

From the process of defining the task

the group can draw up a checklist of what needs to be done

in order to achieve the group's goals

establishing the group – defining team roles

- Whenever the group meets a summary of your discussion and decisions needs to be recorded

- The important details are about tasks –

 - what has to be done
 - Who will do it
 - By when

Checking and reporting on progress – trouble shooting

- Look at the team progress checklist

- Ask what's going wrong

- Identify any two behaviours that your group members have encountered in previous group work

- Discuss with in your group possible solutions to these problems

Group Phases

- Groups naturally go through phases as they develop

- Creative conflict is essential to success

- According to Tuckman (Connery & Vohs, n.d.) there are 4 common phases that groups go through:

The stages

1. Forming –initial stage, structures, status relations, norms procedures take shape

2. Storming – conflicts discovered and foregrounded. Creative stage

3. Norming – conflicts resolved; group's approach to communication established

4. Performing – roles, norms established and collective energy directed to tasks

Group Reflection Exercise

- David Kolb's learning cycle:
 1. experiencing – immersing yourself in the task
 2. reflection – what did you notice?
 3. conceptualization – what does it mean?
 4. Planning – what will happen next? What do you want to change?

References

- 'Collaborative Group Work', The learning Commons, univ. Guelph. Available at: <http://www.learningcommons.uoguelph.ca/byformat/onlineresources/onlinef/astfacts>
- Connery, B & Vohs, J. Group work and collaborative writing', U Davis. Available at: <http://honors.ecdavis.edu/vohs/index.html>
- 'Working in Groups', EDU, ASB, UNSW.
- 'Working in Teams', Learning guide. Univ. South Australia.
- 'Group Work web tutorial', UTS Bell Program, UTS.

EDU workshops in Academic skills – Session

Topic – Skill area	Date/time [ASB bldg, West lobby G08]
Lectures and Note taking	Week 1, Thursday 12 Mar. 12.00–1.00pm
Making the Most of Tutorials	Week 2, Friday 20 Mar. 12.00-1.00pm
Presentations at University	Week 9, Thursday 14 May 4.00-5.00pm
Introduction to WebVista:	Week 3, Tuesday 24 Mar. 12.00-1.00pm
Time Management	Week 4, Thursday 3 Apr.12.00-1.00pm
Managing your reading	Week 5, Monday 6 Apr.12.00-1.00pm
Writing at University	Week 8, Thursday 7 May 12.00-1.00pm
Introduction to referencing and academic argument	Week 6, Monday 20 Apr. 12.00-1.00pm
Group work	Week 7, Friday 1 May, 12.00-1.00pm