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 Forbes-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?

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

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?
### 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:
  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.

### The stages

1. Forming – initial stage, structures, status relations, norms, procedures take shape.
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### 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/onlinefacts](http://www.learningcommons.uoguelph.ca/byformat/onlineresources/onlinefacts)
- Connery, B & Vohs, J. Group work and collaborative writing’, U Davis. Available at: [http://honors.ecu.davis.edu/vohs/index.html](http://honors.ecu.davis.edu/vohs/index.html)
- Working in Groups’, EDU, ASB, UNSW.
- ‘Group Work web tutorial’, UTS Bell Program, UTS.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic - Skill area</th>
<th>Date/ time</th>
<th>Venue</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lectures and Note taking</td>
<td>Week 1, Thursday 12 Mar. 12.00-1.00pm</td>
<td>[ASB Bldg, West lobby G08]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making the Most of Tutorials</td>
<td>Week 2, Friday 20 Mar. 12.00-1.00pm</td>
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<td>Presentations at University</td>
<td>Week 9, Thursday 14 May 4.00-5.00pm</td>
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<td>Introduction to WebVista</td>
<td>Week 3, Tuesday 24 Mar. 12.00-1.00pm</td>
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<td>Time Management</td>
<td>Week 4, Thursday 3 Apr. 12.00-1.00pm</td>
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<td>Managing your reading</td>
<td>Week 5, Monday 6 Apr. 12.00-1.00pm</td>
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<td>Writing at University</td>
<td>Week 8, Thursday 7 May 12.00-1.00pm</td>
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<td>Introduction to referencing and academic argument</td>
<td>Week 6, Monday 20 Apr. 12.00-1.00pm</td>
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<td>Group work</td>
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