

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK TOOLKIT

ASSESSMENT DESIGN

ASSESSING GROUP WORK

If an individual student knows that the mark they get will be largely the consequence of the levels of effort and achievement of other students, there is little incentive to put in much or any work themselves and little disincentive to allocate available study hours to other courses with individual assessment where personal effort is more likely to produce personal benefits in terms of improving marks. (Gibbs, 2009, p.5)

This guidance is linked to Principle 10 in the CU Assessment Strategy and is underpinned by the CU Assessment Policy.

INTRODUCTION

Working as a group may be very beneficial for students as it enables them to experience what it will be like when they are in employment and have to work as part of a team of people. Group work can provide students with a range of learning opportunities. It encourages them to respect other people's viewpoint, and learn from one another. Problem-based learning frequently involves elements of group work and researchers such as Dochy et al. (2003) shows that it enhances student learning.

However, group work can be difficult to implement, in particular, students often voice their concerns over fairness when assessed by group work. At Coventry, the assessment strategy states that there should be “an opportunity for an individual mark as a contribution of every assessment” (CU assessment strategy principle 10). There are many different ways to allocate individual marks for group work, but before we explore those different options, it is important to consider some of the following questions:

- What are you trying to assess? Is it the product, process or both?
- To support the questions above, what are the learning outcomes that you want your students to achieve at the end of the course?
- What are the criteria and could you develop them in partnership with your students?
- Who will be assessing the work, will students play a role or would it be solely tutor assessed?
- The construction of the group, e.g. group size (Gibbs (2009) suggests 4-6 seems to be the ideal), and whether you mix the group by ability or other criteria.

HOW DO WE PUT THIS INTO PRACTICE?

Whether it is the **group product** or **group process** that you want to assess, there are many options to assess the group work and allocate and recognise individual contributions. Below are some examples:

- Ask each student to write and submit an individual report (often a reflective piece) based on the group's work on the task/project. The group product is often formative (does not carry a grade), and the individual report becomes the summative assessment. This is often considered to be a fair approach as the group process might have been ineffectual, but students could still obtain a good mark for their own reflection.
- Ask each student to complete an allocated task that contributes to the final group product and gets the mark for that specific task. This could work well if the group work can be easily broken down into tasks equal or similar in size and complexity.
- A combination of group average and individual mark where the group mark is awarded to each member with a mechanism for adjusting for individual contributions. E.g. students' self or peer allocation based on evidence such as log books, meeting minutes, etc.
- Consider the use of technologies to help identify individual effort, such as the use of Wikis where an individual's contribution is automatically recorded and provide an audit trail. Colleagues (Kear, Donelan and Williams 2014) from the Open University provides a good example here: <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1753/2998>
- Ask students to individually evaluate their own contribution using predetermined criteria and award themselves a mark. Lecturers/tutors moderate the marks awarded. This could work well if students develop the criteria together with tutors in advance where they have more ownership and understanding of the criteria.

REFERENCES

Dochy, F., Segers, M., Van den Bossche, P. & Gijbels, D. 2003. Effects of Problem-Based Learning: A Meta-Analysis From the Angle of Assessment. *Learning and Instruction*, 13, 5, pp. 533-568.

Gibbs, G (2009) The assessment of group work: lessons from the literature, available online from: <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/groupwork-assessment/>

Kear, K., Donelan, H. and Williams, J., 2014. Using wikis for online group projects: Student and tutor perspectives. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 15(4).

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

The Centre for the Study of Higher Education in Australia created a guide summarising the advantages and disadvantages of different marking options for group work. The full document can be found here:

http://melbourne-cshe.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1770717/Group.pdf

OR

Get in touch with the Academic Development Team or visit our website for other guidance and resources: <https://acdev.coventry.domains/>