Working in Groups

Description of this Guide
In this guide we shall consider generally how groups are formed and the different type of groups you may be faced with at university. We spend more time looking at the group project and how to develop an effective team. The other sections look at the different forms of study groups that you may encounter at university. All group work extends your inter-personal skills and this guide will help you identify what these skills are.

Learning Outcomes
1. Recognise how groups form and function.
2. Relate your knowledge of groups to team projects and other study groups.
3. Identify the inter-personal skills developed through group work.
4. Evaluate your developing inter-personal skills.

Contents
1.0 About groups and teams
   1.1 How do groups function as teams?
   1.2 How do individuals become team players?
   1.3 The importance of ground rules
2.0 Project teams
   2.1 Get to know yourself and the individuals that make up your team
      2.1.1 Establish your team’s profile
   2.2 Develop a team spirit
   2.3 Understand the task and develop a plan
   2.4 Maintain the team
      2.4.1 Things that worry you about team work
3.0 Study groups
   3.1 In class
   3.2 Peer learning groups
      3.2.1 Helping a friend – coaching
   3.2.2 Private study groups
   3.2.3 Peer assisted learning
   3.3 Avoid plagiarising from each other (collusion)
4.0 Reflect on your developing skills

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Working in Groups

One of our major sources of well-being is our relationship with our family, friends, colleagues and tutors. Within each of these relationships we have different expectations and different roles. Knowing how to work effectively within these different groupings is therefore an important inter-personal skill we need to develop and continue developing throughout our lives. Working with groups of people at university can be quite varied and understanding how we and others function in these groups can save us a lot of hassle later.

In this guide you will look at some of the general principles of groups, aspects of the group project team, informal study groups and how you can identify the inter-personal skills you are developing.

1. About Groups and Teams
   - How do groups function?
   - How do individuals become teams players?
   - How to establish ground rules

2. Project Teams
   - Get to know yourself and the individuals that make up your team
   - Develop a team spirit
   - Understand the task and develop a plan
   - Maintain the team

3. Study Groups
   - In class
   - Peer learning groups
   - Avoid plagiarising from each other

4. Reflect on your developing skills
1.0 About Groups and Teams

The terms ‘groups’ and ‘teams’ are generally used interchangeably. However, there are differences, and a team can be regarded as a group of people who come together for a defined task. It may mean that they then disband once the task is complete. For the purposes of this guide therefore, we see groups as the more generic term and teams as task specific. In order for teams to work well, they need to understand how people work in groups.

1.1 How do Groups Function as Teams?

Groups are very often formed just for a particular task and may not have worked together before, so you might feel a little awkward with each other. Since you will probably be working within a time limit, it is important therefore to understand a little about how groups function in order to be an effective functioning team as soon as possible. John Adair (1986) developed a classic model of how teams function.

Depending on the type of group it is, you may want to concentrate on personal development (leadership development, outward bound activities etc) where taking care of individual needs are paramount. In most university courses however, you will probably come together for some academic project – so you will need to concentrate on achieving the task. In order to do that effectively you will need to bear in mind how you develop...
the group and take care of individuals within that group. You will need to identify team roles that allow all these aspects of group work to happen (Section 2.1 deals with this).

Each of the three areas identified by Adair needs to be addressed if your team is to work effectively and harmoniously. Just imagine these scenarios:

**Scenario 1**

You are working with a great group - they are all your friends. You often meet at the pub as it gives a good informal atmosphere and you can enjoy the work. It is good because no-one in the group nags or bosses anyone else around. You have done some reading around for this project and written a few things down and you hope that it will be useful. You assume everyone else is doing that too, after all, they all turn up and seem engaged.

Assume it is now 2 weeks before your final deadline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jot down some ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How might such a team appear during the project presentation if they don't change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the dangers for individuals working in a group like this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take stock - what does the group need to do NOW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you have learned about group work from such a group?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scenario 2**

You are working with a group of people - they are all your friends. However, a couple of them have become really bossy and they tell everyone else what to do, constantly adjusting and fiddling with things and even controlling what you are doing. They have told you to do something you have got no expertise or interest in. There is very little team spirit, and you just seem like a group of individuals having to do this stuff. You never expected these friends of yours to be like this. You'll be glad when it is all over.
Assume it is now 2 weeks before your deadline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jot down some ideas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How might such a team appear during the project presentation if they don’t change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the dangers for individuals working in a group like this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will you all be feeling right now? Who will do those last minute tasks if you all feel fed up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take stock - what does the group need to do NOW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you have learned about group work from such a group?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scenario 3**

You are working with some people you know and some you don’t know. Things are going well, you have even developed ground rules, appointed a group coordinator and have regular meetings. However, as time goes on problems arise as two group members aren’t ‘pulling their weight’ – one has even stopped coming to meetings and hasn’t produced anything yet. The group is getting annoyed as they see all their hard work being compromised by the those who aren’t contributing effectively.

2 weeks to go – what would you do from the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find out if person X has a genuine reason for not doing the work</td>
<td>He/she may be ill, have family problems or are just finding life pressures difficult at present. Depending on the answer, as a group you could give that person support or you may need to encourage him/her to seek help. Your reason?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore person X and do his/her work yourselves</td>
<td>It is the only way to complete the project. The tutor is only giving one mark for the completed project, so we have to. This is not ideal and it will only cause resentment. Your reason?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assuming there are no mitigating circumstances then contact person X and say you need them to do their share – refer to ground rules and what they have to do to complete the project. Do this in writing – email or letter – from the whole group – ensure a date for reply/action – retain a copy.

Person X realises the group is serious. Keep a record of your communication – you may need to say what you will do if you get no/little response. Your reason?

Report person X to your tutor if you get no response) explaining which part of the project person X is responsible for.

This should be a last resort, but may be necessary in extreme cases. If you do this, you should tell person X and give him/her a chance to put things right. It should all be transparent and ‘business like’. Your reason?

Some of your ideas...

NOW think what an ideal group would be for you and the next time you are in a team project, think how you achieve it.

1.2 How do individuals become team players?

When we come together as individuals to form a team we either come not knowing anyone and feeling rather anxious, or we know some, but come with a baggage of information about them from previous encounters that could affect team performance. So, as each new team is formed in order to complete a task, all individuals within the team need to be conscious of how teams generally develop, and how individuals become less defensive or reserved and begin to move through a series of stages towards a well functioning team.

Teams generally go through 4 stages:

1. **Forming** (orientation)
   You are all enthusiastic and have positive expectations, yet you are a bit anxious about what is happening and wonder if you can fulfil your role and get on with the others. This should be an energetic period, focusing on what you have to do.

2. **Storming** (dissatisfaction/conflict)
   Team members become dissatisfied as they adjust to how the team operates. You may find a discrepancy between your expectations and the reality. This is coupled with the fact that you are probably having to learn new things and feel unsure of your ability. This might become worse if you think others are settling in better than you. At this stage you might see arguments and sub-groups forming. This stage needs to be carefully managed.
3. **Norming (resolution/cooperation)**
   You and others are beginning to settle down and the team should have resolved some of its differences and made adjustments. At this point you will feel more valued, there will be a clearer and more methodical way of working that you have all agreed to. Respect, harmony and trust are developing, giving you all a sense of self esteem.

4. **Performing (productivity)**
   You and your team members feel confident, work well together, can openly say what you think, you like being a member of the team and you can see the task being achieved by joint effort.

In order for you and your team to develop through these stages you need to put ground rules in place at the ‘forming’ stage. This will give you a mechanism to deal with some of the difficulties you will face in the ‘storming’ phase. Remember, as a team you may find yourself circling the ‘storming’- ‘norming’ phases a few times – but do try to move on!

### 1.3 The importance of ground rules

- Ground rules are vital if you want to establish an effective working group. Ground rules will be the basis for a strong working relationship based on: trust, honesty and an awareness of the expectations of each other. Social groups also have ground rules, but these tend to have developed over time and are very often unspoken rules. However, if a group member violates these ‘rules’ they are often made to feel acutely aware of it. In a team, where individuals come together with people they don’t know, and have to start working as a team, making ground rules explicit is very important. When any member of the group feels things are going wrong, he/she could refer to the ground rules to remind everyone of their agreement. Be honest with the group and say what is important for you when working with them.

As a team develop about 4 or 5 **ground rules** – some examples are:

1. take responsibility for your own learning, actions and reactions
2. speak for yourself
3. be honest and open

**List 3 more that are or would be important to you when working with a group?**

4. 

5. 

6.
2.0  Project Teams

You may say that you don’t need to know about how teams and groups work because you know most of the people you intend working with, and you may have purposely selected each other. However, don’t assume anything, you still have to work at being a team (see the scenarios above). Don’t forget, you may have a team where some of you already know each other while others are new. This will make the ‘newbies’ feel vulnerable – remember the individuals’ needs in teams.

A checklist of things you need to do:

1. Get to know yourself and the individuals that make up your team - set ground rules.
2. Develop a team spirit - take time to be a team.
3. Understand the task and develop a plan - analyse the task and get organised.
4. Maintain the team - reflect on your own contribution and how the team is working as you go through the forming-storming-norming-performing stages – you will need to use the ground rules here (see Section 1.2 above).

2.1  Get to know yourself and the individuals that make up your team

Set ground rules (see Section 1.3 above).

From the Adair model above we can see that a team needs to take care of the task, the group dynamics and its individuals. Since a team is made up of individuals with their own characteristics, each person will contribute to the team in different ways and develop different roles within the team.

Look at the diagram below – on the whole what kind of person do you think you are. In the spaces provided place a:

1 – very me
2 – sometimes me
3 – rarely me
2.1.1 ESTABLISH YOUR TEAM’S PROFILE
Read this section if you are currently working on a group project.

Now look at the team roles below. From your selection above of the kind of person you think you are, which role would suit you

1 - ‘ideal role for me’
2 - ‘an OK role for me’
3 - ‘this is not a role for me’

**Coordinator/Leader**
Creates common purpose | provides communication and vision | clarifies objectives | makes sure everybody is involved, committed and motivated | coordinates the efforts of the team | ensures that decisions are made and the team makes progress.

You may have preferred the ‘action’ or the ‘people person’ from above. So is this for you? Discuss with other team members how you see your role and their role in the team. Think how an ‘action person’ or ‘people person’ might develop this role. How do your perceptions compare with other team members?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For me</th>
<th>For team mate 1</th>
<th>For team mate 2</th>
<th>For team mate 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Thinker**
Collects and analyses information | listens to what is being said and watches what is going on | is sometimes quiet before contributing ideas | thinks through the problem | sees solutions, anticipates problems.
You will probably have preferred the ‘thinker’ from above. So is this for you? Discuss with other team members how you see your role and their role in the team. Think how an action person or people person might get on with this kind of person – can you see the problems that might occur for the team? How do your perceptions compare with other team members?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>For team mate 2</th>
<th>For team mate 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Achiever**
Wants to succeed and strives for results | wants to progress towards the goal quickly | becomes impatient with delays | challenges assumptions and proposes improvements | has lots of enthusiasm | questions complacency.

You may have preferred the ‘action person’ or ‘thinker’ from above. So is this for you? Discuss with other team members how you see your role and their role in the team. Think how this role might differ with an ‘action person’ or a ‘thinker’ – can you see the problems that might occur? How do your perceptions compare with other team members?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>For team mate 2</th>
<th>For team mate 3</th>
</tr>
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</table>

**Carer**
Is concerned that everybody is fitting in | contributes humour and builds bridges around the team | works to develop a team spirit | is keen to get everyone to agree | watches out for feelings and attitudes | eases tension and fosters a positive spirit.

You may have preferred the ‘people person’ from above. So is this for you? Discuss with other team members how you see your role and their role in the team. Think how this role might differ with an ‘action person’ or a ‘thinker’ – can you see the problems that might occur? How do your perceptions compare with other team members?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>For team mate 2</th>
<th>For team mate 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Doer**
Always wants to be active | is prepared to get involved to help others | wants to see progress and adherence to plans | gets bored with too much discussion | hates time wasting | works hard to finish the task.
You may have preferred the “action person”, ‘thinker’ or ‘people person’ from above. So is this for you? Discuss with other team members how you see your role and their role in the team. Think how this role might differ with different types of people in this role – can you see the differences that might occur?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For me</th>
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<th>For team mate 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now compare your perceptions and see what the profile is for your team. Are you able to cover all roles? Will some of you have to adapt?

If you want to look more carefully at the roles that would suit you better see this online questionnaire at the University of Exeter. http://www.ex.ac.uk/employability/askills/team/questroles.htm

When you have established the person profile of the team, allocate tasks that work to the strengths of individuals. It may not be such a good idea to have a person checking the fine detail if they are an action person or expect someone to keep the team together if they are more of a ‘thinker’. Decide how you can best use those in your team.

You can also complete the Belbin team roles’ questionnaire. You can find this online at: www.geocities.com/monteeric/belbin.pdf

2.2 Develop a team spirit

If you are to work together effectively and enjoy the process, it is important to develop a team spirit. Look at the list, tick where you are as a team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What can you do to become a team...</th>
<th>What can you do to avoid becoming a team...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We've got to know each other</td>
<td>We've not got to know each other, but we do chat a little about other things and feel that is enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have done/intend to do something socially together</td>
<td>We've never met up socially as we have nothing in common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We feel confident enough to disclose some personal information about ourselves</td>
<td>We don't feel confident enough to disclose ourselves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3 Understand the task and develop a plan
As a team, analyse the task you have to do. Make sure you ALL understand what needs to be done, the time frame, the process (how to do it) and the product (what you have to hand in). Don’t forget part of the task set by your tutors may be reflecting on your efforts as a team – so don’t forget to keep notes.

Once you have analysed the task set, ensure all have areas to work on and that you all agree on what needs to be done. Create a plan for these so you can clearly see all the contributions. If you have been asked to reflect on your group processes, this could be part of your evidence. You can always adjust your plan as you develop. Your planner may include:

- title for project
- list of team members
- clear statement of what the goal is, what has to be done and who does what
- deadline for handing in:
  - list of sub tasks (with names)
  - time frame for tasks (your milestones)
  - presentation format (how should the group prepare material)

2.4 Maintain the team
Make sure you have procedures for communicating, checking the work is done, ironing out problems (with tasks or people). Check your timing, ensure you are all working towards the plan. You may want to set up sub groups. Get everyone’s email address and identify good meeting times and places. It is important to be alert to how the team is getting along. You will probably have to do some maintenance work along the way. The following checklist identifies some of the common things that can go wrong in teams. Identify the ones that are
going on in your team/ or have gone wrong in other teams you have worked with. How would you put these things right?

Tick what might be going wrong in your team and think how to remedy it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What might be going wrong</th>
<th>Tick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not clarifying what your task or objective is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not checking on progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not checking on time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not clarifying or recording what has been decided</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not clarifying who is going to do what</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not clarifying what has to be done by when</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not establishing procedures for handling meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not keeping to agreed procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not listening to each other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing individuals to dominate and others to withdraw</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not compromising individuals wants for the sake of the team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not recognising the feelings of members of the team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not contributing equally to the progress of the team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4.1 Things that worry you about team work

Below are a series of statements that students often make about group work. From this guide, and your own experience, you can now answer these yourself. It may good to discuss these when you are in the ‘forming’ stage of your team to air them right from the start – couple this with your ground rules.
### Annoying things

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annoying things</th>
<th>Putting them right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are always free-riders in a team and their marks are boosted by those who do the work</td>
<td>See scenario 3 in section 1.1 above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teams slow me down and that irritates me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have difficulty with this subject and I’m afraid I’ll keep the others back</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes team members won’t complete their tasks (at all, or on time!)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes teams don’t divide the work up fairly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes you get students who just don’t care about their grades, but I do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These statements have been inspired by the University of Delaware at:
This is an excellent site and you may want to visit it to see what their view is of these issues.

### 3.0 Study Groups

It may appear to you, and very often to others in Higher Education that learning is a solitary process that happens between you, your tutor and the books you read. There will be solitary parts to learning where you really need to work through key concepts. However, very often the PROCESS of learning and developing a deeper understanding of your subject happens when you discuss it with others. Bruffee (1999), for example, argues that effective learning is closely connected with what is called ‘acculturation’; that is, the extent to which you become familiar with, and part of, the whole culture of learning and thinking, reading and writing, speaking and listening, that you’ve stepped into when studying at university.

Your subject will have its own vocabulary, expressions, areas of debate and its own approaches to learning and teaching. As you become familiar with your particular academic culture, you will also adopt its ways of thinking and produce work that is recognised by that part of the academic community to which you belong. To do this effectively, you need to work with others and in addition to the team project there are many other routes to collaborative learning.
### 3.1 In class

The learning and teaching environment set up by your tutors can also be an ideal place for group interactions. Take advantage of this and become engaged as much as possible. This will help you use the language of your discipline, explore and evaluate its key issues and develop a deeper understanding. Check the scenarios below and if you select ‘don’t do this’ ask yourself why and how this impacts on your learning at university.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactive activities with fellow students and tutors</th>
<th>Do this</th>
<th>Don’t do this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminars &amp; tutorials</td>
<td>I am usually prepared for classes so I am able to participate. I come with ideas and I am prepared to actively participate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory/field work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Being active in class and participating means you are taking responsibility for your own learning – see *Being an Independent Learner Guide*, Section 1.1 for more information on this.

### 3.2 Peer learning groups

Apart from these teaching scenarios, you may also want to meet up with fellow students as a study group. You can do this in several ways: (a) helping a friend, (b) a private study group, or (c) being part of a peer assisted learning scheme. Let us look at how these learning groups can help your studies and develop your interpersonal skills.

#### 3.2.1. HELPING A FRIEND: COACHING

When you help a friend you are either a supporter, advisor and/or a motivator, or all three. These are skills you are developing and they form the basis of ‘coaching’, which is becoming an interesting tool for personal development. If you surf the Web, you will find many places that now offer coaching training for executives. So, why not develop your own approach to coaching!

Basically as a coaching pair you decide what the focus of your coaching will be, e.g. help me improve the structure of my essays, discuss a difficult concept, help me interpret my tutors comments on an assignment, keep me motivated, just be a friend etc. One of the key premises of a coaching pair however is personal development and to do that you will need to agree on how you give each other feedback. It is important therefore to understand the principles of giving and receiving feedback. Take a look at the *Being an Independent Learner Guide*, section 3.3 on using feedback to aid your learning – maybe you can adapt it when working with others. If you haven’t done so already, now would be a good time to look at the section on feedback.
Regard feedback as a ‘gift’ and try not to be defensive or coy when it is given. Listen to what your friend says and possibly take notes so you can refer to them. With your friend, it may be worth going through the feedback points, developing an action plan of how you could improve some aspect of your work (when appropriate). If you don’t agree with some aspects of feedback, just say why not. You don’t have to accept all the feedback you are given, but do remain open to what you hear.

Some of the principles of giving good feedback are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Reason why</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be descriptive rather than evaluative</td>
<td>If you just state what you see, it prevents the receiver from being defensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be specific rather than general</td>
<td>A rather vague comment is very difficult to use. If you take a concrete example of an issue it is much easier to deal with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be honest, but sensitive</td>
<td>You are not there to give feedback to show how much you know – always think of the needs of the receiver. If it is too insensitive, it can be destructive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be constructive</td>
<td>This means dealing with issues that the receiver can do something about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let receiver elicit some feedback</td>
<td>Ask the receiver what they would like feedback on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be timely</td>
<td>For feedback to be of use, it has to come at the right time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback must be clear</td>
<td>It may be good for the receiver to note down and possibly rephrase it in their own way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are at all engaged in peer assessment, then understanding how to give good feedback will be a very valuable tool. It will also help you understand the feedback given to you by your tutor.

Now reflect on how an activity like this can improve your grades, allow you to enjoy learning and develop your interpersonal skills – use the space below.
3.2.2 PRIVATE STUDY GROUPS
When you study together in a group you are honing your collaborative rather than your competitive skills. You can use these groups to discuss what is needed in an assignment, as a preparation for exams, rehearsal for oral presentations and of course getting to grips with difficult topics. Hearing what others say, and what you say yourself, builds your confidence in being an active player (or independent learner) in your academic community.

3.2.3 PEER ASSISTED LEARNING
This may sound very similar to the group learning above, except this is usually set up by your tutors and will involve some training if you are going to be a peer mentor. This is still quite new, and only a few tutors have set up such schemes. But, if you are interested after reading this, you may want to suggest getting such a scheme for your studies. So what is it?

Peer assisted learning schemes cover a variety of arrangements. However, one fairly common one involves second year students helping first year students. Second year students would have just gone through what first year students are now going, or about to go, through and they are there to support small groups of first year students. These ‘older’ students (or ‘near peers’) will be trained as ‘mentors’ or ‘facilitators’. This means that they will know how to create a supportive learning environment that allows the group to explore certain aspects of the curriculum they are finding difficult. These ‘mentors’ volunteer to do this and give up about 2 hours of their time each week (over designated weeks) to help. It is important to realise that peer mentors are not there to teach, but to offer support for others in gaining an understanding of the subject.

As a peer mentor you gain training in leadership with respect to mentoring and facilitation. These are valuable skills and through such a scheme the peer mentor has some additional vital evidence towards their personal bank of inter-personal skills. Check with your tutors if you are interested in setting up something like this.

Avoid plagiarising from each other (collusion).

When working together or with a friend on an assignment, there is always the danger of ending up with the same piece of work and you may be accused of ‘colluding’ or plagiarising each other’s work. This is easily detected by your tutor and you will get marked down for it. So how can you work together and hand in different pieces of work? Handing in work that closely resembles a friend’s or is in greater part taken from a friend’s work can constitute collusion. If you are involved in group work check with your School if they have any policy on collusion for assessed work.

**Together**
- Discuss what you need to do for the assignment (task analysis).
  - If a team project, you will sub divide the tasks for team members
- Pool knowledge you know that is relevant to the task (brainstorming)
  - If a team project, you may have sub-groups doing this
- Share resources
  - If a team project, all your work will eventually be part of a whole – but ideally the team should be able to identify individual contributions should this be necessary. Check with your tutor.
- Help each other on parts you find difficult
If a team project, this will be important as there will probably be an overall team mark as well as individual marks. However, if individual pieces of work have to be handed in as part of the project, clarify that ‘working together’ on these tasks does not constitute collusion in this case.

**Independently**

- Do your own research (make notes, keep record of where your notes come from so you can cite and reference later).
- Interpret the assignment in your own way.
  - If a team project, the team needs to identify the how the sub tasks relate to the whole, but all contributions to sub tasks should be free from any kind of plagiarism.
- Write up the work yourself and hand it in.
  - If you are working with a friend, do brainstorm and clarify issues, but ensure that you write up the work yourself and don’t collude with each other on the final product.
  - If a team project, all work should go back to the team where it will be assembled to produce a final project product that is then handed in. Do check with your tutor how he/she wishes the product to be handed in.

If you are worried about and/or require more information on referencing and ways of avoiding plagiarism see the *Referencing Your Work* Guide, especially Section 3.3.

### 4.0 Reflect on Your Developing Skills

A Quality in Higher Education (QHE) report (1993) reported on a survey from employers who ranked the qualities sought after in graduates; the top ten being: effective communication, team work, problem solving ability, analytic skills, flexibility and adaptability, self confidence and management, decision making skills, independent judgement, numeracy, logical argument. So it is important to reflect on these skills that you are developing at university and record how you are developing them – be that in your own notebook, on a system produced by your tutors e.g. ‘personal development planning document’ or a ‘progress file’ – there are lots of different names for such documents, see the *Being an Independent Learner* Guide, especially Section 3.2.

For now, reflect on the skills you can develop/ are developing by doing team project work. Tick the skills you are fairly confident you are developing and others that need a little more work.

Use a scale of 1 – 4 where 1 = not confident and needs developing and 4 = confident of my ability regarding this skill.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of confidence</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> I can retain a clear idea of the team’s goal.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> I work to keep my activities aligned with the team’s goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> I know and understand my role within the team and check out any areas of ambiguity that could lead to misunderstandings.</td>
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</table>
4. I understand that planning is an essential part of team activity and actively do this.

5. I can prioritise my tasks and don’t get distracted.

6. I can communicate with fellow team members honestly.

7. I can deal with inter-personal issues as they arise in the team.

8. I understand that conflicts are a normal part of working together and deal with them openly.

9. I can accept my role in a team – sometimes as leader and sometimes as a group player.

10. I remain open to ideas during problem solving.

11. I see mistakes as a learning opportunity and learn from the feedback I am given.

12. I respect others in the team and support them.

13. I deliver what I have agreed to do, on time and to the best of my ability.

For those skills that need developing, consider how you can do this. If you have a personal recording system or a personal development planner, then use that to record how you are developing these skills.

REFERENCES


This is an excellent site and you may want to visit it to see what their view is of these issues. (last accessed July 2002)

University of Exeter, UK Online Questionnaire to identify Team Roles [http://www.ex.ac.uk/employability/askills/team/questroles.htm](http://www.ex.ac.uk/employability/askills/team/questroles.htm)
This is an excellent site for you to find out a little bit more about yourself and the best team role for you. Your whole team should do this. (last accessed July 2002)