**Group Work**

## Why Group Work?

Group work is a crucial part of life both at university and in the working environment. Even if you feel intimidated by this or find the process difficult, it is important that you learn how to work with others.

## Benefits of Group Work

Working in a group enables you to learn from and help one another by drawing on each team member’s strengths, experiences and ideas. Working with others can enable you to find alternative ways of solving problems that you may not have considered on your own. The quality of work can improve when produced in a group. Finally, group work at university helps you to develop the essential team-working skills needed throughout your future career:

* Communication
* Time management
* Problem-solving
* Reflection

## Stages in Group Work

1. **Identify objectives and plan your tasks** – Discuss what you have been asked to do as a team. What task have been set? How will you present the outcome? What do you we need to do to accomplish this? What are the component tasks your group needs to complete to achieve the objectives that have been set?
2. **Establish roles** – discuss the strengths and weaknesses of individual team members. Some will be more suited to certain tasks than others. Who is a strong team leader? Who is most suited to organising group meetings? Who produces good ideas? Who is careful and meticulous? Who is energetic and decisive?
3. **Delegate tasks** – Now you know the members of your group a bit better, decide who is best suited to complete the individual tasks established earlier. Make sure everyone’s workload is fair and evenly distributed. Set deadlines for each task.
4. **Monitor progress** – Your group should meet regularly to discuss progress. Remember, although you may be working on different tasks, each task is part of a whole. When presenting your completed work, it needs to be coherent, not separate elements that do not link. Ongoing discussion and revision of tasks is essential to ensure the work is completed to the best standard.
5. **Evaluation** – Once you have completed a group task, consider how well you and the whole group performed. Did you use and develop your skills? Did you make the most of your group’s strengths? Did you deal with problems effectively? What will you take away from this task to use in future group work experiences?

## Dealing with Problems

Despite the benefits of teamwork, you can experience problems within a group. These could include:

* Poor attendance – if a group member doesn’t attend a meeting, contact them to tell them what they missed, when the next meeting is, and a polite reminder of their tasks.
* Lack of engagement – encourage group members to speak and be positive about their contributions. If a member is not taking the project seriously remind them that this is a group task, and their contribution is important for everyone.
* Negativity – if a group member is being negative, ask them to consider positive points. Try to turn their negative points into constructive suggestions.
* Over-assertiveness – ask more assertive members to chair the meetings; a good chair has to encourage other group members’ viewpoints.

Do not worry if you experience issues when working in a group. The process of dealing with and overcoming these is an important skill in its own right and will prepare you for future teamwork experiences.



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