Enhancement of Student Experience: Principles for student group work

Introduction:

Students working in groups within campus based and on-line courses have the opportunity to develop important Graduate Attributes such as Critical Self-awareness and Personal-literacy, Global Citizenship, Digital and Information Literacies. However, evidence suggests that some designs have unintentional outcomes for the student experience particularly student perceptions of unfairness in the assessment of group work.

At Brookes we are committed to achieving the benefits of group work including peer learning so propose a set of principles that will support the development of good group work design and ideally provide a platform for development of Group Work Polices at Faculty or Programme level

These principles are a result of a review of existing guidelines and resources within Brookes in partnership with key stakeholders: Students and Staff.

Each of these principles will provide links to further information and tutor resources. Separate resources for students will be provided within RADAR.

Principles for student group work

1. Faculties should develop strategies for an integrated and progressive development of group work skills for students studying on existing programmes and in designing and approving new programme areas.

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Ideally students should experience a [variety of forms of group work](http://sydney.edu.au/business/learning/staff/teaching/groupwork/reasons_for_groupwork) to avoid 'group work fatigue' arising from the repetition of similar activities from module to module

**OCSLD web resources:**

[Inclusive small group work](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/hr/eod/guides/group_work.html)

[Small group work](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsld/resources/small-group/)

[Teaching international students](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsld/online/international_students/)

**Examples of strategies from**:

[Oxford Brookes, Faculty of Business (pdf 144KB)](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsld/group_work/business_groupwork_guidelines.pdf)

[University of Hull, Department of Engineering (pdf 202KB)](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsld/group_work/engineering_group_work_policy.pdf)

1. Students should receive training in group work activities at an early stage in their university career, including non-assessed situations.  Further training should be provided where students are required to undertake more advanced and specialised forms of group work activity.

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Training might cover such items as: [handling group dynamics](http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/groupwork/); working in asynchronous groups, intercultural communication;  multicultural group working; embedding equal opportunities good practice in group working; developing group/team communication protocols, presentational skills; implementing peer assessment; strategies for integrating part-time students into groups

**Further reading:**

[Turning student groups into effective teams](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsld/group_work/turnin_student_groups_into_effective_teams.pdf) (pdf 88KB)

1. Each major piece of group work should provide students with clear learning objectives with an inclusive design that assists all students to achieve the objectives.

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The design may include an introductory session where the tutor(s) sets out: the principles for group selection and ways of assessing work; agreement on how groups will be monitored (by tutors, by peers, or both); agreement on [coping strategies (linked to PDF 2.21MB)](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsld/group_work/making_groups_work_academic_assertiveness.pdf) for groups experiencing difficulties; description of how assessment links to the learning objectives. For on-line group activities students should be provided with access to appropriate tools and instructions for effective working. Backup procedures should be in place to deal with technology failure.

[OCSLD web resource: Inclusive small group work](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/hr/eod/guides/group_work.html)

1. Tutors need to ensure there is a fair system of assessment which should include an appropriate weighting of assessment for both interactive elements and individual tasks.

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The [assessment design](https://radar.brookes.ac.uk/radar/file/2550091b-a022-01c3-3d39-6863738f5287/2/Obu123_GroupWork.pdf) may be described in learning contracts and include: tutor(s) marking; vivas with tutor(s); peer marking to agreed criteria; tutor intervention for settling disagreements; mechanisms for feedback to groups/individuals.

**Further reading:**

[The assessment of group work: lessons from the literature](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsld/group_work/brookes_groupwork_gibbs_dec09.pdf) (pdf 214KB)

1. Students should be required to evaluate and reflect upon the experience and learning they have gained in group work activity. Students should understand the value of both the process and the product of collaboration.

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At the module level [evaluation and reflection](http://sydney.edu.au/business/learning/students/study_research_writing/groupwork/template_downloads) may be embedded in the assessment process but there could also be longer term review illustrated in student progress files/profiling statements.

1. In partnership with the university, Faculties should support staff development required for the promotion and delivery of group work.

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