

Let's talk about groupwork

David Sterratt

Why set groupwork assignments?

- Implied by the learning outcomes of some courses
- Develops graduate outcomes such as cooperation and teamwork skills (Biggs & Tang, 2011)
- Improve the overall quality of student learning by learning from peers (*Assessing group work*, Australian Universities Learning and Teaching Committee)
- Reduces marker load (Biggs & Tang, 2011)
- Good for the student experience

Why not set groupwork assignments?

- Problems assessing individual contributions:
 - Honours group assignment worth 50%
 - One student makes virtually contribution, but the group gets 80%
 - Should the coasting student pass the course?
 - "Student code" inhibits students from criticising contributions of others
- How are special circumstances are applied?
- Organising submission and returning marks and feedback
- Bad for the student experience
 - Co-ordinating times (Biggs & Tang, 2011)
 - Intercultural issues (e.g. Summers and Volet, 2008)

Questions

- What is the best practice for groupwork?
- Do we need an Informatics Policy on groupwork?

The University Policy on Groupwork

University guidance on groupwork

- Not found any official, but I helpful resource hosted in AHSS
 - http://www.docs.hss.ed.ac.uk/iad/Learning_teaching/Academic_teaching/Resources/Assessing_groups.pdf

Group membership

- Staff assignment
 - If groupwork is part of ILOs
 - + Good for graduate outcomes
 - - More issues with group dynamics?
- Self-selection
 - Possible if groupwork is not part of ILOs.
 - + Fewer issues with group dynamics?
 - + Student experience?
 - *If* students of similar ability mix, better reflection of ILOs?

Supporting groups

- Establishing roles and responsibilities
- Scheduling meetings
- Defining group processes and procedures

Options for group assessment

1. What is to be assessed?
 1. product of the group work
 2. the process of the group work
 3. both (and if the latter, what proportion of each)
2. What criteria will be used to assess the aspect(s) of group work of interest?
 - who will determine this criteria - lecturer, students or both?
3. Who will apply the assessment criteria and determine marks (lecturer, students – peer and/or self-assessment or a combination)
4. How will marks be distributed?
 - shared group mark
 - Individually
 - combination

Groupwork example 1: FDS final project (40% final mark)

- Why are you using groupwork in your course?
 - Marker load
 - Student experience
- How did you set up your groups and why?
 - Self-selecting groups of 2 or 3 with option not to be a group
 - 2s and 3s have to generate more questions to ask of the data, in a longer report
 - Minimise friction and improve student experience
- How did you assess the individual contributions?
 - All students in groups asked "did all members of the group contribute roughly equally?" And write 100 words reflecting on contribution.
 - Investigate groups with disagreements
- How did this work?
 - + Students seem to appreciate being able to work in groups or individually
 - + Groups of 2 & 3 did a bit better on average
 - - Admin!

Groupwork E.g. 2: SDP

- Why are you using groupwork in your course?
- How did you set up your groups and why?
- How did you assess the individual contributions?
- How did this work?