



GROUP WORK AND ITS ASSESSMENT

Most work situations require people to be able to work in groups/teams. There has been recognition of the importance of this generic skill in UCD's Education Strategy 2015-2020.

The process of working in a group is an aspect that many Schools wish to assess, in addition to the course content discussed/covered in the group work. The issue of assessment in groups is, therefore, often twofold:

- The assessment of participation in the group, i.e. the group process. and
- The assessment of the content covered by the activity, i.e. the product of the group.

Groups can come in very different sizes, shapes and forms, e.g. on-line groups, small groups within a large group, seminars, tutorials, task groups, problem-based learning groups, etc. Therefore they may require very different methods of assessment. It is imperative that when using group work that students are prepared for this during the module, for example, knowledge on how to handle group dynamics, setting group ground-rules, etc. (Oakley et al, 2003; Jacques & Salmon, 2007). In particular, students can be new to on-line groups and these need careful structure and consideration.

The Type of Assessment: Process and/or product of groups

In deciding to assess groups, there are three important questions to ask yourself:

- Whether the product and/or process of the group work is the main emphasis?
- Whether it should be a group mark and/or individual mark based on group work?
- Whether it is primarily tutor or student-marked (peer/self) or both?

CSHE, Assessing Group work, 2002

The Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development suggest seven different ways to assess students in groups, from both the product and process aspect. However, it is key that the approach used is carefully considered based on the students' level, stage and prior experience with group work:

- All students get the same mark for group project, e.g. 23 out of 30.
- All students get separate tasks within a group project, which are assessed separately.
- All students get the same mark, e.g. 23 out of 30. These are then aggregated, e.g. 69 for a group of three students. They can negotiate individual marks, so long as these add up to 69, i.e. $a=28$, $b=19$, $c=22$.
- All students get the same mark for the product of the group and then peers assess contributions to process out of an additional ten marks, e.g. $a=23+9$, $b=23+4$, $c=23+7$.

- All students get the same mark for original task and then get different marks for an additional task.
- All get the same group mark for the product, then get individual marks for performance in a group viva.
- All get the same mark for the original task, but differentiation is achieved in an exam task based on the group work, where those who worked hard at the first task would be better placed to answer well in the exam.

Figure 1 gives an overview of these different approaches to assessing and/or giving feedback on group work, highlights the assessor, and gives some examples of the common methods (projects, presentations).

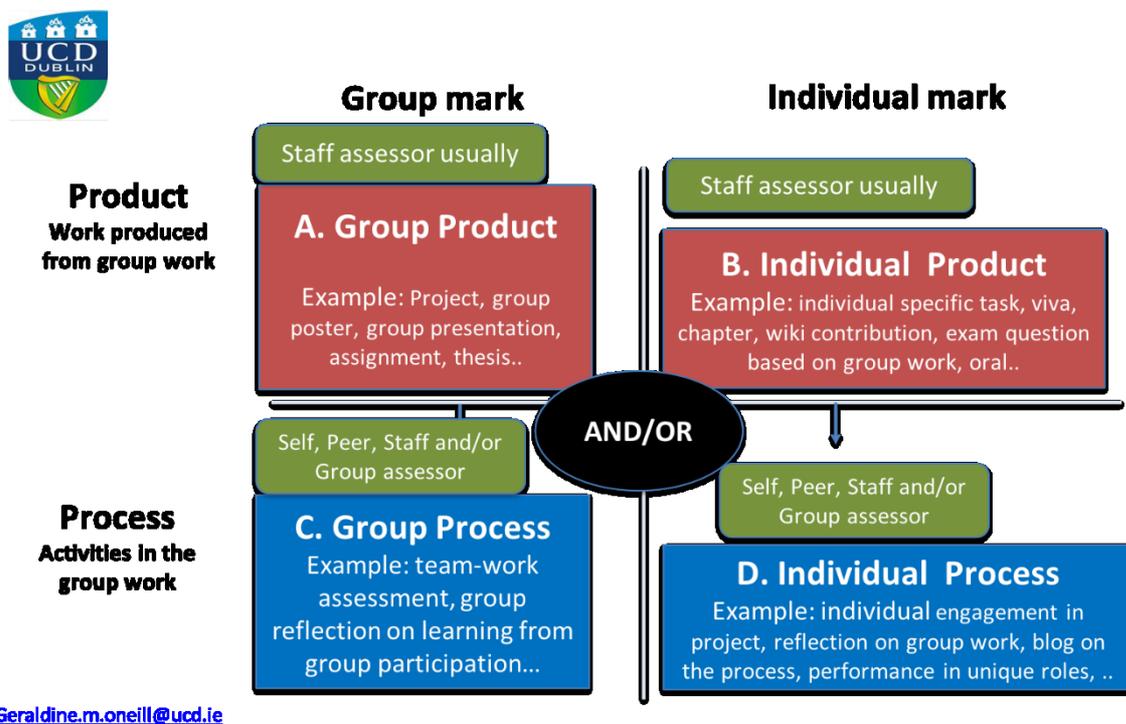


Figure 1: Overview of Assessment of Group work: Process and Product

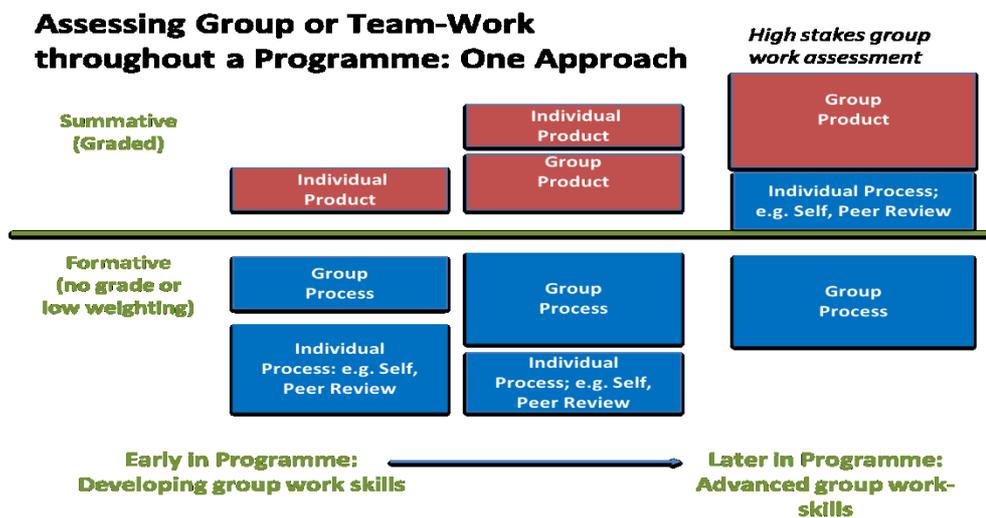
Considering a Programme (Subject/Major) approach to group work

Group work is challenging and requires students to develop a specific set of skills as they progress through the programme (The Principle of *Integrated Programme Assessment and Feedback Approach*, see UCD T&L's *Programme Assessment & Feedback Strategies* webpage).

If you are using group work, have you, and or programme team, considered how you have developed the students skills to do this throughout your programme? It is also useful to consider the development of students group work skills across the institution, see an example form Dundalk IT (National Forum, 2017)

For example, giving first year students a high stakes group-mark for the assignment/project (the Group Product) is a challenging for them, if they have not developed the individual or group process skills (i.e. working as a team, contributing to the work-load..). As students need to build on these skills incrementally, it can be effective and efficient to develop their skills over the programme.

Consider the following example: In year 1, students could experience some group-work but could be marked (Summative Assessment) on an individual assignment based on this (Individual Product). They could receive some feedback (Formative Assessment) on how to handle group dynamics and how to monitor their own and the groups progress (un-assessed or low stakes/weighted self and/or peer review, Individual Process). (See some resources to support students in Appendices 1, 2, and 3). In subsequent modules throughout the programme, they should then be more able for a graded (Summative) group/team project with a group mark (Group Product) and indeed a grade (Summative) for their individual contribution to the group work (Individual Process) or on how the group worked as a team (Group Process) (see image)



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Figure 2: One suggestion for a developmental approach to group work assessment

The on-line environment

The on-line environment allows opportunities for student to discuss, collaborate and work together in different ways. Table 1 highlights some of the different types of on-line groups.

Table 1: The Difference between On-Line Groups: Wikis, Blogs and On-line Discussion

FEATURES/TEACHING IMPLICATIONS	DISCUSSION BOARD	BLOG	WIKI
Purpose/Focus	Topic driven, class-centered, discourse facilitated	Author-centered	Document or deliverable centered
Tone/Writing Style	Similar to classroom discussion; conversational; Socratic method; formal	Similar to personal journal; reflective or conversational; informal	Similar to group project; likely formal.
Narrative/Entry display	By topic or thread; chronological	Typically reverse chronological; most recent entries appear first	Pages typically appear alphabetically.
Editing Options	Personal post may be edited; no group/collaborative editing	Personal entries may be edited	Collaborative editing
Feedback/comments	Comment/reaction driven	Allowed and encouraged but not necessary	Allowed but focus is more on collaborative editing
Grading Options	Forum posts may be collected and graded per student	Blog entries may be collected per student assessed	Wikis may be assessed; The tool provides a History feature allowing for an analysis of individual contribution
Challenges/Limitations	With many student the conversation may become unwieldy. Response driven format requires continued attention and presence.	Blogs are inherently more user-centered, so other students may not regularly access and comment on others' posts.	Collaborative editing does require user responsibility. Students need more sophisticated skills in using certain features.

Adapted, with permission, from University of Missouri (2011) *Faculty Guide To Teaching and Learning with Technology*.

Students Views of Group Work:

Students have mixed views and experiences of group work (see below)

Students views of group work (Jacques and Salmon, 2007; Oakley et al, 2004)	
Students like groups because	Students dislike groups because
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can personally have an influence• I am able to participate and find out other's ideas• I like the flexibility of a small group• It teaches you to converse• It helps you develop your power of analysing problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A small group can be dominated by one person• When members of the group will not talk<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long silences• Being asked to contribute when you don't want to• Feeling left out , not part of the group• Carrying 'hitchhikers/couch-potatoes/free-riders'

In particular, students complain about 'hitchhikers' and 'couch potatoes'. Oakley et al (2003) present a very useful article on helping academic staff and students to deal with this issue. Their ideas and templates would also be transferrable to on-line group work.

Preparing Students for Group Work and its assessment:

In preparing student for group work for the on-line or face-to-face environment:

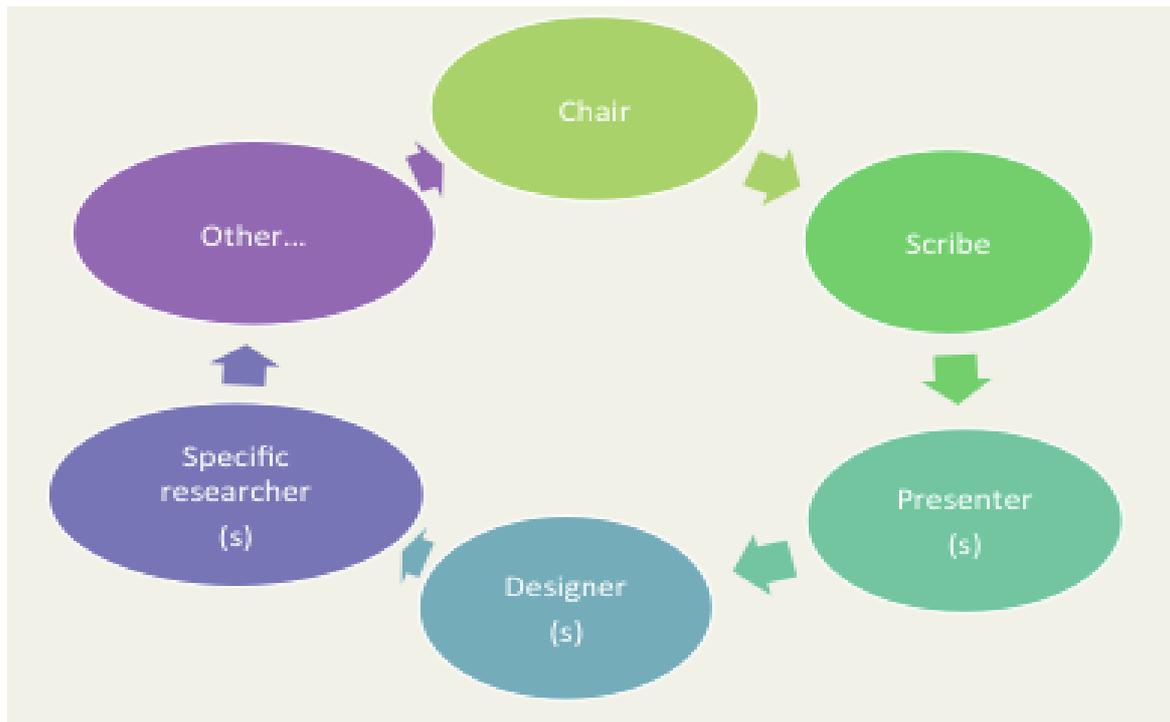
- introduce students to the rationale for group work;
- explore and get them to set and review ground rules for group work. This is often describes as 'netiquette' in the online environment.
- discuss and allocate different roles;
- work out procedure for dealing with group conflict as it arises, etc.

Oakley et al (2003) and Jacques & Salmon (2007)

GROUP ROLES

Roles are important for groups because they allow for division of labour and appropriate use of power. They ensure that someone will be designated to take care of vital group functions. (Toseland & Rivas, 2005)

- Groups need people to take different responsibilities
- These can vary dependent on the group project and need to be negotiated within the group
- These may be rotated during the semester, or be different for different types of group work
- The following are some suggestions, but these can be added to, deleted or refined by your group



See Appendix 1 for an example of a role template for students.

ON-LINE PEER MODERATOR DISCUSSION: SOME ROLE EXAMPLES

- All contribute to discussion, but in addition:
- Student Peer Moderator: Starts the discussion and encourages participation and nudges people in their roles.
- Theoretician : queries the evidence, tries to conceptualize (think a bit outside the box)
- Questioner (timekeeper) : asks probing questions and keeps an eye of time and reminds members of looming time limit
- 'Summariser' and 'group assessment submitter' : pulls together the 2/3 line summary of the discussion and submits this to 'tutor' In the appendices.

Assessment Criteria and Assessment Rubrics

It is important to be clear on the expectation of assessment in group work. There are many example of assessment criteria and assessment rubrics on-line. You can also develop your own. I have presented some examples in the appendices for on-line group discussions, assessing group poster presentations.

Some Resources

- A useful website with examples of rubrics for wikis, blogs and other assessments is <http://www.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/rubrics.cfm>
- See a useful Team-Work VALUE Rubric at <https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/teamwork>

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Appendix 1: Example of Roles Template

GROUP:

INITIAL STUDENT ROLES:

(can be changed or finalised at a later date).

Tick one or multiple roles for each team member (that is a fair division of labour)

Student	Chair	Scribe*	Presenter	Designer	Specific Researcher(s)	Other role..... (as decide by students)
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						

Any notes (for example, to be changed after period of time,)

Group Project Work: Student Roles:

In order to achieve the goal of learning and being assessed as a group, it is important that you discuss negotiate and divide out some roles within the group. As you see fit these may change throughout the semester, but all in the group must be clear on their role(s) in the group. The following are some suggested roles (and their potential responsibilities) but these can be fined, added to, or deleted as necessary for your group.

CHAIR:

In the group meetings session: The chair structures the content and sequence of events. Their role is to ensure that steps are adhered to. This is done by commencing with a review of the group ground rules if necessary. In addition, the Chair facilitates the process by:

'Structuring: providing the structure for the meeting, presenting the framework, asking introductory questions, channelling the input, checking relevance, interrupting or asking further questions,

Stimulating: starting and maintaining the pace of the meeting, enabling discussion of contrasting views, of balanced participation.

Asking questions: stimulate input through clear, concrete focussed questions, asked at the right time.

Reformulating: presenting more precisely what a fellow student has just said, clarifying explanations (a way of checking whether the message has been understood correctly) summarising main issues.

Monitoring: ensuring that the scribe writes all that was done, decided and agreed upon in order to facilitate starting in the next session, precise summarising of the formulated learning objectives'. The Chair should conclude the session by a summary of the discussion.

THE SCRIBE (SECRETARY):

In the session, the scribe writes down the ideas/decisions discussed and communicating these to the group. It is important that the scribe also contributes to the discussion. The scribe is responsible for e-mail/text (or similar as appropriate) communication within the group. The scribe records (and updates if necessary) the ground rules and gives a copy to all in the group.

THE PRESENTER (IF DOING ORAL PRESENTATION):

If a decision is made for one to present, this person will present the material on the day. They should however be supplied with the final, summarised presentation by all in the group. Alternatively all can present, but then a student-timekeeper on the day would be a key role to allocate to someone in order to assure that the time allocation is not exceeded.

DESIGNER:

One or many can be involve in the visual representation of the material on the day (poster/powerpoint)

Specific Researcher Role:

All should be reading and resourcing the topic, however you might consider that some specialised resources (on-line, hard-copy or contacting experts) could be delegated to some particular group members.

OTHER ROLES:

(that students may consider necessary)

Appendix 2.

Example of Rubric for Staff or Student Self-assessment in On-line group Discussion.

Based on a rubric in use at University of Ulster. 2006

This rubric is offered as a guide to the way in which one may assess the quality of participation in online discussions.

Level	Participation in Discussion
4	Provides comments and new information in a regular and equitable manner. Interacts with a variety of participants.
3	Provides comments and some new information in a fairly regular manner. Interacts with a few selected participants.
2	Sporadically provides comments and some new information. Interacts with only one or two participants.
1	Provides minimal comments and information to other participants.
Level	Content of Posting
4	Revealed a solid understanding of the topic as evidenced by thoughtful (researched and cited) responses and questions.
3	Revealed an adequate understanding of the topic as evidenced by posts indicating superficial knowledge.
2	Revealed a restricted understanding of the topic limited to information that could be derived from prior posts.
1	Message was unrelated to discussion.
Level	Critical Thinking Evidenced by Posting
4	Offered a critical analysis of an existing posted idea or introduced a different interpretation to an existing idea (based on research).
3	Agreed or disagreed with existing discussion and provided limited justification / explanation (from research).
2	Agreed or disagreed with existing discussion but provided no justification / explanation (from research).
1	Provided no evidence of agreement or disagreement with existing discussion.

Appendix 3: Example

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR GROUP POSTER AND FOR ORAL PRESENTATION :		
PRESENTATION SKILLS	Score out of 5%	Staff Comments
-Structure and organisation of poster/oral presentation -Visual enhancement to assist in communication -Verbal delivery : clarity and coherence -Other (please note.....)		Positive: To be improved:
DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE	Score out of 10%	Staff Comments
-evidence of appropriate depth and breadth of research onto topic -evidence of groups' comprehension of this topic. -Other (please note.....)		Positive: To be improved:
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF GROUP- WORK AND GROUP PEER FEEDBACK.	Score out of 5%	Staff Comments
-ability of group to respond, based on group evaluation, to: <i>'What ideas would you have for improving the ability of your group, next time round, to be a better team?'</i> (3 %) -ability of your group to give 'constructive' (positive and ideas for improvement) feedback to other student group(s). See 'STUDENT GROUP: PEER FEEDBACK FORM (2 %)		Positive: To be improved:
TOTAL (0-2		

STUDENT GROUP :PEER FEEDBACK FORM

Group ‘Getting’ Feedback:

Group ‘Giving’ Feedback:

Some Principles of Constructive Feedback: (for more details see <http://www.faculty.londondeanery.ac.uk/e-learning/feedback/giving-feedback>)

- Focus on the positive,
- Be sensitive to your message,
- Give ideas for alternatives, where there is an aspect to be improved,
- Focus on behaviours that can be changed,
- Focus feedback to the criteria below.

PRESENTATION SKILLS

Students’ Constructive Feedback:

- Structure and organisation of poster/oral presentation
- Visual enhancement to assist in communication
- Verbal delivery: clarity and coherence
- Other (please note.....
.....)

Positive:

To be improved:

DEVELOPMENT & ADVANCED OF KNOWLEDGE

Students’ Constructive Feedback:

- presented so that we could understand the materials
- Other (please note.....
.....)

Positive:

To be improved:

Summary of constructive feedback

Signed by Student Group Chair: