FIT1049: IT professional practice

Week 6: Teamwork as professional skills

Three weeks in three points… (Weeks 4-6)

As you move from presentations, meetings and teamwork…

1. You lose the relative degree of control over your communications.
2. You have to deal with an increasing number of variables, degree of spontaneity, and unknowns.
3. You also have less to ground upon your expectations.

Things to cover today…

At the end of this lecture, you will broadly understand:

1. How to positively contribute to teamwork in an organisational context by assuming an appropriate role within, and
2. How to identify the different styles of teams in IT, and their strengths and limitations.

Week 6 ePub revision: Recall and apply…

Please head to **https://flux.qa** and sign in with your Monash account (you should then stay logged in for the semester).

Hit the plus button in the top right and type in code **8JQJ4J** to join the FIT1049 group. The code is case sensitive.

*Please note that this is a Monash system, and your responses to questions are not anonymous.

Join
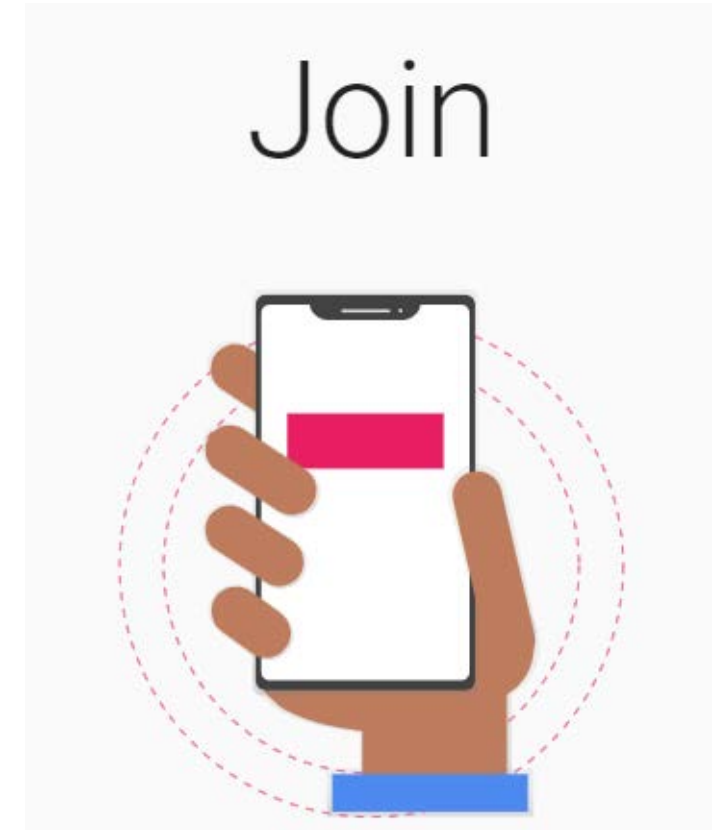
Question 1: Definition of a team

Which one of the following scenarios makes a team?

1. People queuing for a bus at the bus stop;
2. The same people queuing for a bus helping each other to save someone who just collapsed at the bus stop while waiting for the ambulance to arrive; or
3. A group of first aid officers working for the bus company being sent to the bus stop to manage the situation.
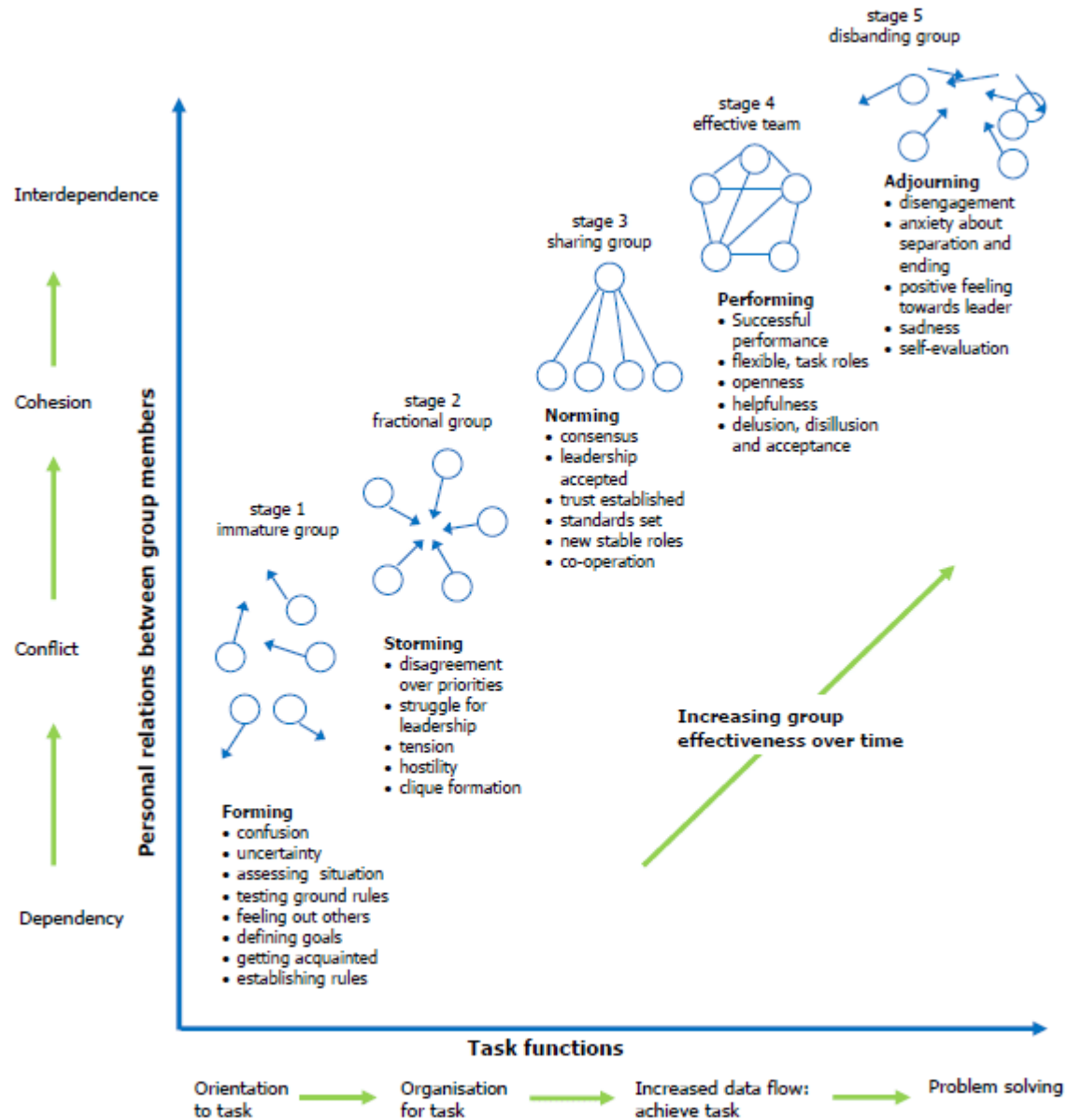
Four (4) key ingredients of a team

1. Structure
2. Purpose
3. Roles
4. Context

Question 2: Formation of a team

You and your colleagues (3 of them) are working as a team to review your company's website for its refresh. You are the only web designer, while others are from different sections of the company, i.e. marketing, sales and finance. It is a third meeting, 2 weeks into what is supposed to be a 2 months project, and you are starting to realise that everyone in the team has different expectations about how the review should take place. What's going on?

1. The team is in the forming stage, and it is only normal that different perspectives collide as the team forms itself;

2. The team is in the storming stage, and there needs to be some leadership to bring the team to the performing stage; or

3. The team is indeed in the performing stage, and that is why you start seeing other people's expectations more clearly.
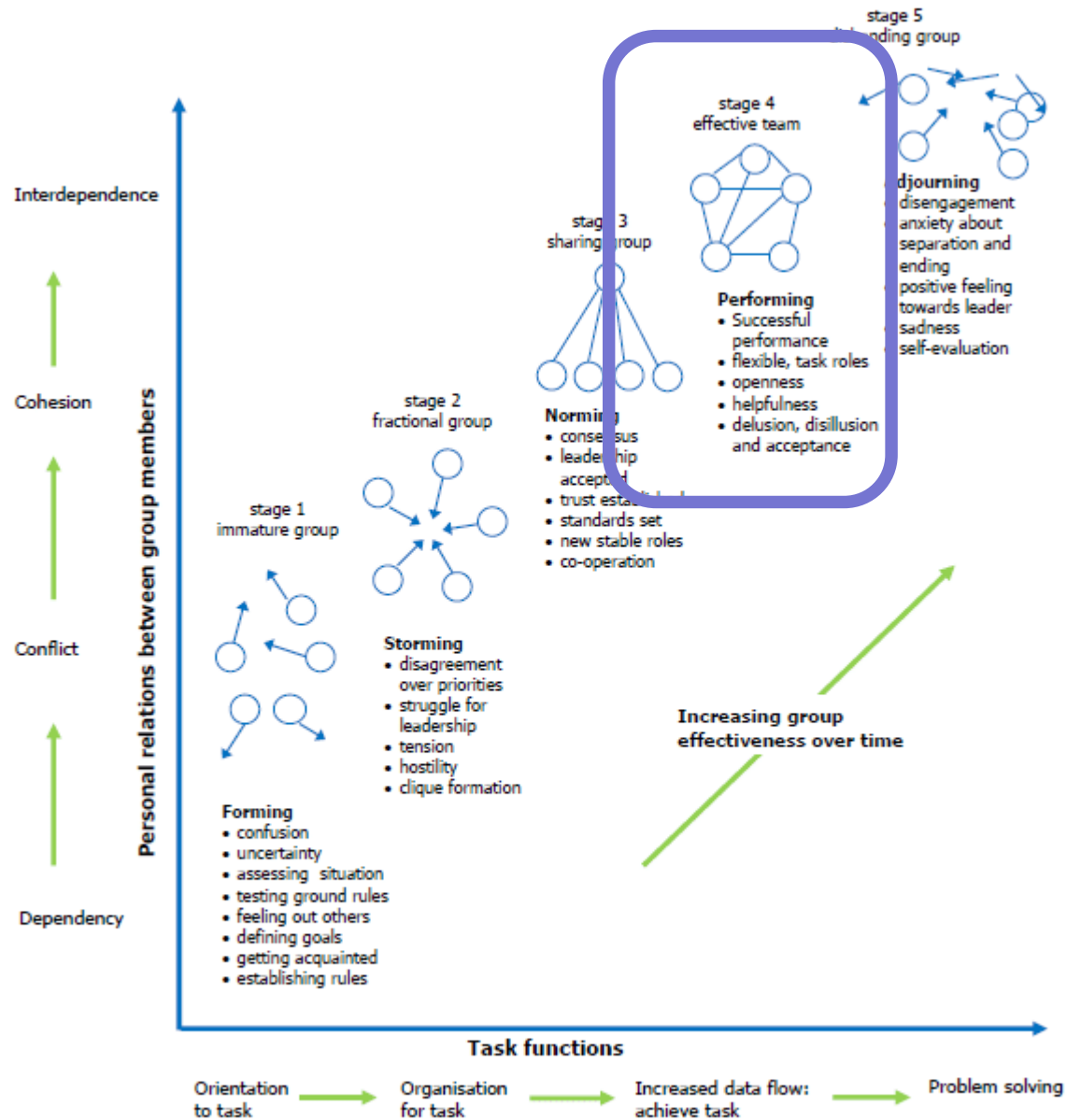
stage 5
disbanding group

stage 4
effective team

stage 3
sharing group

stage 2
fractional group

stage 1
immature group

Interdependence

Cohesion

Conflict

Dependency

Personal relations between group members

Adjourning
- disengagement
- anxiety about separation and ending
- positive feeling towards leader
- sadness
- self-evaluation

Performing
- Successful performance
- flexible, task roles
- openness
- helpfulness
- delusion, disillusion and acceptance

Norming
- consensus
- leadership accepted
- trust established
- standards set
- new stable roles
- co-operation

Storming
- disagreement over priorities
- struggle for leadership
- tension
- hostility
- clique formation

Forming
- confusion
- uncertainty
- assessing situation
- testing ground rules
- feeling out others
- defining goals
- getting acquainted
- establishing rules

Increasing group effectiveness over time

Task functions

Orientation to task → Organisation for task → Increased data flow: achieve task → Problem solving

(Cullen & Calitz, 2015)

8

Question 3: Composition of the team

You are joining the company's sales team for 3 months to implement a new business system. The team understand that your work won't result in restructuring of the team (i.e. no one will be made redundant), but there seems to be some tension between one of the team members (who has been working there longest, for 15 years) and the manager (who has only worked there for 6 months) about how this implementation should take place. There are 8 other team members within the team, who have been rather quiet and seem to follow the aforementioned team member with the experience. Which one of the following is the least likely risk in this situation?

1. Diffused leadership;
2. Group think; or
3. Prolonged stage of 'storming'.

Interdependence

Cohesion

Conflict

Dependency

Personal relations between group members

stage 1
immature group

Forming
- confusion
- uncertainty
- assessing situation
- testing ground rules
- feeling out others
- defining goals
- getting acquainted
- establishing rules

stage 2
fractional group

Storming
- disagreement over priorities
- struggle for leadership
- tension
- hostility
- clique formation

stage 3
sharing group

Norming
- consensus
- leadership accepted
- trust established
- standards set
- new stable roles
- co-operation

stage 4
effective team

Performing
- Successful performance
- flexible, task roles
- openness
- helpfulness
- delusion, disillusion and acceptance

stage 5
ending group

Adjourning
- disengagement
- anxiety about separation and ending
- positive feeling towards leader
- sadness
- self-evaluation

Increasing group effectiveness over time

Task functions

Orientation to task → Organisation for task → Increased data flow: achieve task → Problem solving

(Cullen & Calitz, 2015)

10

Question 4: Leadership and management

Which one of the following actions is beyond the parameter of 'leadership' as such?

1. You decide to deploy one of the team members to an area where you think would be more suited to his previous expertise and experience;

2. You take part of forming a group of early career professionals in your company without being told to do so; or

3. You conduct a task at the instruction of your manager and maximise the business impacts of the outcomes of the task assigned.

Question 5: Leadership styles

Catherine has always been shy, and has always been a 'quiet one'. She eventually found a way to be assertive in a team by focusing on her technical expertise, and also used very much her ability to see through how different technical expertise fit together for a common goal (e.g. a project). She found herself naturally inclined to a democratic style of leadership where she listens to others and make decisions based on the team's consensus. Now she is deployed for a 2 weeks project with a team where no one contributes actively because they are either too shy or 'busy'. What should she do?

1. Stick to her democratic leadership style while encouraging the team to be more participatory;
2. Change her leadership style to be bureaucratic with some 'formal rules' (e.g. set routines and protocols); or
3. Change her personality to be more autocratic if not charismatic.

Question 6: Teamwork and communications

You are working with a team of 30 from a range of functional areas (such as IT, HR, Finance and Consulting) on an in-house project to develop and implement a new HR system. Your company has its presence in thirteen countries across the globe, so it is inevitable that you have to work with some of the team members virtually across different time zones with different languages. In light of the likely risk of conflating the communications amongst the team, which of the following is not a potentially effective strategy?

1. Have a set of highly structured meetings regularly to promote communications across team members;

2. Have a Facebook page for the team so that team members can share the information easily; or

3. Have an organisational structure within the team itself to reinforce the role of each member.

Question 7: Issues in teamwork

You are managing a project as Project Manager, and noticed that one of the team members, Simon, has been not able to meet the past two deadlines, resulting in a delay of the team's progress as a whole. Simon does not report to you outside the project, and he is more junior than you in the organisation. What would be the first step for you to address this specific team issue?

1. You discretely speak to Jane, who is Simon's line manager, and ask her to speak to Simon about the issue;

2. You speak to the sponsor of the project to discuss the delay, and raise this with other team members however without specifically referring to Simon; or

3. You discretely speak to Simon to see if you could help.

Question 8: Conflict resolution

One day you arrived at your office, and your close and equal team members, Kim and Peter, were having an argument over the ways the project should proceed. No one else was in the office, and both were rather emotional but not abusive to each other, though their tone of voice does make you feel uncomfortable. The argument sort of ended as you entered the room, but later Kim told you that such an argument happens fairly regularly, and that he feels he is being bullied. What would you do first?

1. Speak to Peter on Kim's behalf in the presence of both Kim and Peter;
2. Discretely speak to your team's manager about the situation; or
3. Encourage Kim to speak to the manager.

Question 9: Escalation

You are managing a project as Project Manager. Over the last two weeks or so, one of the team members, who has not been happy with his role in the team, has been rather blunt, if not aggressive, towards you. You do not know why he adapts such a mannerism, but this afternoon this staff member was so aggressive, you had to remind him that his behaviours were threatening and inappropriate. What would your next step be?

1. Contact HR and your line manager to report the incident;
2. Arrange a meeting with this staff member to discuss his behaviours; or
3. Give the staff member another chance since this was the first time you felt threatened.

Teamwork is part of the (professional) reality…

…it's all up to you and how you make most of it.

Answers and comments for the quizzes

1) The answer is **3**. The option 1 is just a group; an incidental collection of individuals. The option 2 is a group with some cohesion with a common goal, but it lacks a context, unlike the option 3. Note that a team needs to be recognized not only by the members, but also by others as a distinct group.

2) The answer is **2**. If the members are still not sure about their expectations at the end of the first quarter of the project, something is wrong here. A wrong judgement on where the team are at can lead to a project failure, and theories can be used as a practical tool to diagnose any issues in teamwork.

3) The answer is **3**. This is another common situation, but unlike the previous question, you are introduced to an already existing team as a new member. The vulnerability of a well-established team is that it does not necessarily have the 'storming phase' and tends to follow the *status quo* long after the initial people who set up the *status quo* left. In this instance, the option 1 is a real risk, and also the attitude of the rest of the team can well lead to the groupthink (i.e. the option 2).

Answers and comments for the quizzes

4) The answer is **1**, which can only be done if you have the management authority. The option 2 is a leadership move, but needs to have a context, such as approval from the management as well as consideration around its accessibility. Note that the option 3 is also a form of leadership to demonstrate your initiative for positive outcomes.

5) The answer would be **2**. Bureaucratic leadership will at least give the members something to follow, and in a timeframe like 2 weeks, it may be the most appropriate to get the results. The option 1 can be an option if you have time. In some contexts, yes – you have to change the culture of the team to get things moving, but I doubt if you can do this in a 2 weeks stint. The option 3 is not necessarily the most practical option.

6) The answer is **2**. Both the options 1 and 3 are to tighten communications to make things more focused, while a Facebook page is more about sharing, which is only part of the communications as a whole. Overall, it also has so much more of a risk to make the team communications prone to rumors and irrelevant information, and it is not that useful for decision making, which is what moves the teamwork in a large project context.

Answers and comments for the quizzes

7) The answer is **3**. The option 1 is not recommended; it can damage Simon's trust in you, and may well unnecessarily affect negatively Jane's assessment of Simon as an employee. There may be a need to involve Jane at some stage, but certainly not the first step as such. The option 2 is something you have to do to address the project issue, not the team issue.

8) The answer is **3**. The option 1 may well have adverse effect in the team's culture and dynamics. The option 2 is a sensitive one; after all you were also affected by the situation by feeling uncomfortable, and you can approach form this angle. But if this is about Kim's allegation around Peter's bullying, the first step is to encourage Kim to speak to the manager directly if he feels comfortable. If not, he can contact HR. One way or another, it is best if the affected person makes the claim himself, and it will then become a formal claim to which the oraganisation can formally act upon. We'll cover this later in the semester too.

9) The answer is **1**. Violence should not be tolerated at all, be it physical or psychological. The option 3 is thus not recommended. You may do the option 2, but probably the best option is to follow the option 1 to trigger the organizational process. Again, we'll cover this from legal perspective later in the semester.

So, how will this week's topics be assessed in the exam?

Sample question 1 (based on this week's ePub and lecture): You have a team of five (5) with low power concentration and weak leadership within. What would be an effective strategy to lead this team while avoiding 'groupthink'?

Hints and comments: Have a think about the dynamism of the team in the conditions specified. What would be the likely symptoms of the team, and how would you address them?

So, how will this week's topics be assessed in the exam?

Sample question 2 (based on this week's ePub and lecture): You are joining as Project Manager a well-established team of eight (8) with two influential members within. List two strategies you can use to lead this team effectively.

Hints and comments: Have a think about the discussion we had for the Question 3. You are very much in the same situation; how would you approach this in order to achieve positive outcomes?

Things to do this week…

1. Attend your Tutorial session(s) this week.
2. Conduct your Assignment 1 oral presentation and submit the worksheet.
3. Read the ePub for Week 7 before the lecture next week. You will also see in the Week 7 tab on the Moodle Site a summary of what to come in Week 7.

We'll also discuss Assignment 2 in lecture next week.