Guide to group assignments

Purpose of group assignments

Professional Skill Development

- **Teamwork**: Group work fosters the ability to work effectively within a team, highlighting the importance of mutual support, shared goals, and collective effort.
- **Leadership**: Group work provides opportunities for leadership development, including how to guide a team, make decisions, and motivate members.
- **Communication**: Group work enhances communication skills, including articulating ideas clearly, listening actively, and providing constructive feedback.
- **Conflict Resolution**: Students learn to navigate disagreements and conflicts, developing strategies for compromise and consensus-building.
- **Project Management**: Students gain experience in managing projects, including planning, execution, monitoring, and control, skills highly valued in any professional setting.
- **Adaptability**: It prepares students for the dynamic and collaborative nature of modern workplaces, where adaptability and teamwork are crucial for success.

Purpose of group assignments

Application of Theoretical Knowledge

- **Practical Skills**: Apply theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios, bridging the gap between academic learning and practical application.
- **Critical Thinking**: Challenge students to critically evaluate information, arguments, and strategies, enhancing their analytical skills.

Enhanced Learning Outcomes

- **Idea Exchange**: Group work promotes the exchange of ideas, enabling students to approach problems from various angles and discover innovative solutions.
- **Peer Learning**: Group work facilitates peer-to-peer learning, where students can learn from each other's strengths, knowledge, and skills
- **Deeper Understanding**: By working together, students can achieve a deeper understanding of the subject matter through discussion, explanation, and collaboration.
- **Cultural Awareness**: Working with peers from diverse backgrounds encourages the appreciation of different cultural perspectives, enriching the learning experience.
- **Resilience**: Facing and overcoming challenges in group work builds resilience, teaching students perseverance and the ability to thrive in the face of obstacles.

Process

1. Group formation

- **Process:** random assignment via Canvas.

2. Planning and Organization

- **Initial Meeting**: Set a first to meeting to introduce one another, to gain a shared understanding of the assignment, and to agree to roles and responsibilities.
    a. **Communication**: Set up regular check-ins and selecting communication tools (e.g., Slack, email, WhatsApp) for consistent, clear communication.
    b. **Conflict Resolution**: Discuss strategies for resolving conflicts, emphasizing the importance of maintaining professionalism and focusing on objectives.
    c. **Collaboration Tools**: Use collaboration tools (e.g., Google Docs, Trello) for real-time editing and progress tracking.
    d. **Work Breakdown and assignment**: Divide the assignment into smaller, manageable tasks, assigning roles based on each member's strengths.
    e. **Scheduling**: Use tools for scheduling and time management (e.g., Gantt charts, shared calendars) to ensure deadlines are met.

Project execution

- **Progress Tracking**: On a regular basis, each group member should discuss progress against the plan, using milestones and deliverables as checkpoints. Select (on a fixed or rotating basis) one group member to chair/facilitate the meeting including agenda development, and one to record the discussion and capture specific decisions and action points with member assignment. Ensure that meetings encourage constructive discussion particularly on issues that elicit disagreement among members, and that there is an adequate mechanism of (peaceful) resolution.
- **Adapting to Changes**: Be flexible and adaptable and adjust plans as needed due to unforeseen circumstances or feedback.
- **Quality Control**: Use constructive peer review within the group to ensure the quality of work meets or exceeds the assignment's standards.
- **Living documentation**: integrate the results of the work into a high level overview (e.g. powerpoint slides format) of goals, progress, and future work, and incorporate specifics into the group report as completed.

Finalizing and Submission

- **Integration of Work**: Detail how to effectively integrate individual contributions into a cohesive final product.
- **Review and Refine**: Recommend a thorough final review by all members for feedback.
- **Contributions**: Clearly indicate and agree on the roles and responsibilities of each member in the final submission.
- **Submission Guidelines**: Adhere to submission guidelines, including formatting, citation styles, and any specific requirements of the assignment.

Reflection and Feedback

After the submission, we will take some time to discuss what went well and what could be improved for future group assignments.

We encourage you to have a post-submission meeting with your group to discuss how things went - both successes and outstanding challenges. Stay professional.