

CHECKING GROUP PROGRESS

Learning Activity

Description	Course title: Learning activity: Checking group progress
Task type	Tutorial activity
Timing	At mid-point through the group project 1 hr
Level	(Dependent on course)
Class size	(Dependent on course)
Learning outcomes	<p>At the end of this activity students should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Value and identify the achievements of the group to date and outline the factors that have contributed to their progress. 2. Describe any problems that have arisen in the group, the methods the group has used to address those problems, and evaluate the effectiveness of those methods. 3. Utilise skills in conflict resolution and negotiation to achieve a win-win solution to conflict.
Method / Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In their groups, students use flip chart paper to identify the achievements of the group up to this point in time (mid-way through the project) and to list beside each achievement the factors that contributed to this success. 2. A representative of each group shares with the larger group their achievements and the factors contributing to their success. 3. Groups use flip chart paper to list problems they have encountered and the solutions they devised to address them. They then share them with the larger group without identifying individual students from the group. 4. Drawing on the results of the previous discussion, each group comes up with an approach to conflict resolution which aims to be mutually beneficial to both or all parties to the conflict. It may be '4 steps to conflict resolution' or 'How to resolve conflict for a win-win result'. The groups describe their

	<p>approach on flip chart paper and blu-tack it to the wall. When completed, all students walk around reading different groups' ideas.</p> <p>5. Conclude the activity by summing up the findings of the groups: what was done well, what needs improvement, how to resolve conflict in groups.</p>
Rationale	<p>One of the challenges of group work is that of resolving conflict and addressing problems as they arise in the group. According to Bruce Tuckman's model of group dynamics, in the second stage of the group process - 'storming' - problems and conflicts often emerge. (See Tuckman, Bruce W & Jensen, Mary Ann C. 'Stages of Small-Group Development Revisited'. <i>Group and Organization Studies</i>, 1977, Vol.2(4), p.419-26.).</p> <p>This learning activity aims to address those problems and provide the opportunity for the group to move forward to the 'performing' stage when the group has resolved issues and is working effectively on their project.</p> <p>This activity also develops negotiation skills as students navigate relationships within the team in pursuit of a productive outcome. Negotiation, along with team building, is a significant employability skill developed in group work (Litchfield, A., Frawley, J & Nettleton, S., 'Contextualising and integrating into the curriculum the learning and teaching of work-ready professional graduate attributes'. <i>Higher Education Research & Development</i>, 29:5, 519-534, DOI:10.1080/07294360.2010.502220).</p>
Potential issues	<p>Students may be reluctant to address the real issues facing the group and may take a superficial stance towards the task of identifying problems. A list of questions could be prepared to give to students for Step 3 to encourage them to go more deeply into the problems they have faced.</p>
Handouts/ resources for students	<p>To prepare the students for this activity, instruct students to access the conflict resolution section of the Learning Lab tutorial for students on 'Group Work' before the class.</p>