

FORMING AND CONSOLIDATING GROUPS

Learning Activity

Description	Course title: Learning activity: Forming and consolidating groups
Task type	Tutorial activity
Timing	1 hr 15 mins – 1hr 30 minutes
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. Describe the roles and responsibilities of group members. 2. Outline the group's decisions regarding how they will address problems and conflicts arising in the group. 3. Access on the Learning Lab templates for a group charter, agendas for meetings, and other information regarding relevant aspects of the group process. 4. Provide a schedule of group meetings.
Method / Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the importance of group collaboration and the benefits of group work. Give the students a handout describing the assessment for the group process: the reflection on group collaboration and the peer and self-evaluation. Allow time for the students to read the handout and ask questions about the assessment (10 mins). 2. Assign students to groups through random selection (give students a number or colour and instruct them to form groups consisting of that colour or number) (5 mins). 3. Instruct students to introduce themselves, say what their name means and why they were given that name (or some other ice-breaker). Students then share their experiences of working in a group, and exchange contact details (10 mins). 4. Provide students with a handout (attached) consisting of a list of discussion points and instructions. Instruct them to make clear notes of the group decisions regarding problems and the

	<p>solutions the group agrees to (30 mins).</p> <p>5. Students report the results of their group discussion (10 mins).</p> <p>6. Introduce students to RMIT Learning Lab/Assessment Tasks/Group Work tutorial. Go through the sections of the tutorial, including the sample agenda for the first meeting and the blank agenda to be used for future meetings, and the group charter template (10 mins).</p>
Rationale	<p>This activity supports the pedagogy relating to the significance of the group process for the development of professional communication, collaborative and organisational skills, and problem solving – all essential employability skills. As many students do not already have the skills to form a functional group, it also provides the opportunity to consolidate group identity and cohesion. This occurs through the creation of processes and procedures, and roles and responsibilities, providing a basic structure for further development of the group.</p>
Potential issues	<p>Students may be unfamiliar with group work, particularly if they are international students. The introductory activity of sharing personal stories should facilitate group cohesion and support the development of a group identity. As with any group, some members may not participate. This is something that should be explicitly addressed through the discussion of possible problems and ways the group decides to support members who may initially be less vocal than others.</p>
Handouts/ resources for students	<p>Provide on Blackboard a link to the Group Work tutorial on the RMIT Learning Lab.</p> <p>Copy and distribute Handout, Points for Discussion (in Appendix)</p> <p>Copy and distribute Assessment Task: Reflection on Group Collaboration, Assessment Rubrics, and Peer and Self Evaluation Form with instructions.</p>

Appendix 1 - Handout: Points for Discussion

Discuss the following points. Invite each person in the group to contribute. Ask for someone to volunteer as the note-taker for points 3 & 4. The note-taker should keep this sheet and retain it for future reference by the group.

1. What do you think are the benefits of group work? Why would you be doing it as part of your degree?
2. What are the good experiences you have had in group work? How would you recreate these positive experiences?
3. What are problems you have encountered in group work? As a group, decide how you want to address these problems. List the problems and the actions you will take as a group if these problems occur in your group.

Problem	Actions the group will take to solve problem

4. This point involves group members nominating people and/or volunteering for roles within the group and listing the responsibilities of each role.

Roles:

- Leader
- Note-taker
- Reflector (speaks out if there are problems in the group, identifies problems that the group needs to address)
- Time-keeper (Ensures meetings keep to the agenda and ensures that the group is on task regarding the timeline for the assignment).
- Other role/s: Each group member should have a designated role and responsibilities.

Name	Role	Responsibilities

Appendix 2: Group Charter: member's responsibilities (Sample)

All members agree to:

1. respect group members, demonstrate sensitivity and encourage learning
2. be fully committed to the group task and your individual agreed responsibilities
3. work according to the agreed timeframe (attached)
4. give and receive feedback about your work and participate in group discussions
5. attend all meetings unless unavoidably prevented
6. ensure that all group members contribute equally to the task by addressing problems with tasks as they arise
7. agree to collectively read and edit the final group report or essay
8. provide contact details and respond to group communications as required
9. agree to resolve conflict according to the group's agreed process as soon as it arises. (See over page for guiding principles for resolving conflict.)
10. Group process for dealing with conflict ¹

Problem:

Group action to solve problem

Problem:

Group action to solve problem

Problem:

Group action to solve problem

Signed:

1. Role:

2. Role:

3. Role:

1

Your group will need to try to resolve any disagreements within your team. This requires the group developing strategies for working together to support each other and resolving any conflict. Complaining to your lecturer is not your first option.

Team members must refer to the Challenges and Conflict sections of the Group work tutorial on the Learning Lab before completing the section on group actions to resolve conflict.

Group process for dealing with conflict

- Engage in open discussions so that the whole team understands what the problem is.
- Ensure that all sides of the argument are heard.
- Take a problem solving approach. Focus on the problem rather than the person. This will take any emotion out of the discussion. It is a good idea to start with the positives or area of agreement and then move forward to issues or difficulties.
- Document any action or agreements made. This may be important if the problem cannot be resolved and you need to see your lecturer.

Adapted from RMIT, 2011, *Working in Teams*, Group tool, RMIT, viewed 6 March 2014
<http://emedia.rmit.edu.au/workingintteams/>