TEAMS AND PROCESSES

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING YOUR TEAM

INTRODUCTION

This document documents three sets of processes to help you be a high-performing team this semester. Refer to them routinely when you are reflecting on and discussing your individual and team performance

1. GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WELL AS A TEAM

The success of your group project will depend largely on how you all manage the group process. Research into group work shows the following characteristics of effective and less effective groups:

1.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF GROUPS THAT WORK EFFECTIVELY:

- Equal contributions
- Full discussion of issues
- Member support

High quality result and a high level of member satisfaction

1.2 COMMON PROBLEMS THAT PREVENT GROUPS WORKING EFFECTIVELY:

- Problems with logistics
- Problems with allocation of tasks
- Coordination of member contributions
- Lack of commitment of some group members

Quality of group product lower than individual product; & high level of stress and dissatisfaction

1.4 STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING GROUP DYNAMICS

In group work you need to consider three important issues:

Setting up the group

Positive organisational systems such as making team agreements and having open discussion in the first meeting of your group can help the development of a good dynamic.

Dealing with differences

In universities today, most groups are going to include people from different cultural backgrounds. Again, open discussion and tolerance are key factors for success here.

Dealing with negative behaviour

Below is a table with a list of behaviours that could negatively affect group dynamics and some positive strategies to help overcome the behaviour.

BEHAVIOUR	CHARACTERISTICS	POSITIVE STRATEGIES
AGGRESSIVE	dominates the group does not value the contributions of others	Talk privately with group leader Give the person a silent role e.g. recorder Record group session and play back to illustrate dominance
BLOCKING	negative towards other contributions does not contribute her/himself	Discuss early before it gets serious Find out why Make a comment in the group Ask for suggestions as well as criticisms Circulate records after meetings
CONTROLLING	withholds key information from the group in order to control it	Stage task so you all see an early draft Dedicate a meeting to sharing resources
FREE LOADING	avoids work, and doesn't follow through often doesn't attend meetings	Discuss group policy in first meeting Stage the contributions Work in pairs Find out why Exclude from group (LAST RESORT - DISCUSS WITH STAFF)
DISCOUNTING	devalues the contributions of other members; can be verbal or non-verbal (e.g. negative body language)	Group members verbally reinforce the value of each other's contributions Consult with other group members

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF SOME TYPES OF TEAM MEMBERS

Read the information in the table and reflect on what might characterise a team member. You do not need to hand this in; use it to guide how you choose to contribute to the team, or how you view the positives and negative contributions of other for the duration of the project. It may also be a useful framework for discussion within the team as you progress.

TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS	POSSIBLE NEGATIVE ASPECTS
INNOVATOR	Produces ideas, imaginative, unorthodox, radical, uninhibited	May need careful handling.
INVESTIGATOR	Finds things out, always knows someone who..., brings information back to the group, enthusiastic, gregarious.	Can be lazy and complacent.
CHAIR/LEADER	Self-confident, commands respect, good speaker, thinks positively, good at guiding group.	Can be domineering, bossy.
SHAPER	Energetic, drives everyone along, needs to succeed, makes things happen.	Can be disruptive and argumentative if things don't go their way.
EVALUATOR	Careful, makes intelligent judgments, tests out ideas, evaluates proposals, helps group avoid mistakes.	Can become aloof, pessimistic, over-critical.
TEAM WORKER	Sympathetic, understanding, sensitive, strong concern for social interaction, leads from behind. Places group above personal concerns.	Can be indecisive.
ORGANISER	Methodical, hardworking, reliable, orthodox, turns ideas into plans which are feasible and gets down to tasks.	Can be inflexible and uninspiring.
FINISHER	Painstaking, conscientious. Follows through and works hard to finish things properly. Meets deadlines and pays attention to detail.	Can be over-anxious and perfectionist.

3. CHECKING THE HEALTH OF YOUR TEAM

Use this to help with clarifying your perceptions of your own and the groups' efforts. You can use it for discussion if you wish.

Each member should complete this checklist. You will need time to reflect to make this a worthwhile exercise.

On a scale of 1 to 5 (see below), rate how well the tasks in the left hand column are being performed. Use the following scale as a guide:

1- Very Poorly;   2- Poorly;   3- Adequately;   4- Well;   5- Very Well

1. Answer each question regarding your own performance in the group.
2. Answer each question regarding the rest of the group.

How well are you/they...	1. Me	2. Grp	Comments
Effectively clarifying your task or objective at each stage?			
Checking on progress?			
Clarifying and recording what your group decides?			
Clarifying who is going to do what?			
Keeping to agreed procedures?			
Listening to each other?			
Dominating / allowing some members to dominate?			
Withdrawing / allowing some members to withdraw?			
Compromising individual's wants for the sake of the team?			
Recognising the feelings of other members?			
Contributing equally to team progress?			
Ensuring that each member can make a meaningful contribution to team progress?			

This checklist is based on one by Sharon Fraser in Scoufis (2000), as modified by Brooks et al. (2002).

One skill I demonstrated was _

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One area I would like to develop further is_____

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