Peer review

The aim of group coursework is two-fold:

* To enable you to work on a larger project than might be possible for an individual piece of work, learning from the strengths and skills of your peers.
* To help you learn how to work with people you might not normally work with, learning how to negotiate, manage time and workloads and resolve differences. All members of the group must take responsibility for the development of the coursework assignment.

In many careers, working as part of a team is an integral part of the role. Employers value “soft skills” and learning the skills to support successful team working and build successful interpersonal relationships is an important element of your programme of study.

You are encouraged to fully engage with your group in order to achieve the most from the module. To help you do this the School has developed a peer review strategy which is part of the assessment for some of the modules on your degree.

How does Peer Assessment work?

You will be asked to grade your fellow group members and comment on their performance. You should think carefully about the grades you give and the comments you make – ensure they are truthful and constructive as they will be reviewed by lecturers. *The grades that you give to your peers will not affect your own grade, so you should be as honest as possible in your assessment.*

You will assess your peers on the following questions:

1. How well did they participate in your group meetings?

* Excellent attendance and contribution, generating ideas and participating in discussion
* Good attendance and contribution but reluctant to take a full part
* Occasional attendance and contribution but seldom useful
* Did not participate / attend at all

2. How much of a role did they play in carrying out the research and analysis?

* Excellent contribution, including following up unexpected leads
* Good contribution but not showing creative involvement
* Partial contribution: some work done, but often incomplete
* Did not contribute at all

3. How fully did they participate in the writing / presentation of the final submission?

* Played a full part in the construction of the submitted piece of work
* Made some valuable contributions but left the hard work for others
* Contributed to a small extent, but the contributions needed to be edited
* Did not contribute at all

Group coursework grades on modules that use peer assessment are composite grades made up of the raw grade given to your group for the submitted assignment and the outcome of the calculation based on the grades your peers have awarded you for your input into the assignment.

The mechanism is redistributive and your final grade is calculated based on the differential between your average grade and the group average grade.

* If you score lower than the group average for peer assessment then your overall grade for the coursework will go down, if you score higher than the group average then your overall coursework mark will go up.
* If your score is the same as the group average you will get the group coursework grade assigned by the lecturer.
* If everyone gets the same grade, because you all feel you have performed equally then everyone gets the assigned group coursework grade.

In extreme cases the result of the peer review could modify a student’s grade by as much as 15-20%.

Therefore it is in your interest to engage fully in all group work: if your peers feel you have not contributed effectively they may mark you down, and this has the potential to significantly affect your coursework grade.

To ensure everyone feels comfortable grading honestly, peer assessment grades as well as the comments are kept confidential – unless you decide you wish to discuss them with your peers.

You are also asked to provide comments on your peers’ input into the assignment. You should think carefully about both the grading and the comment as it will be reviewed and moderated to ensure that it is fair.

What if I encounter problems in my group?

The vast majority of groups work well together, but there are occasionally problems. If you encounter problems whilst working in your group, you are expected to work together to resolve the issue.

If you are unable to resolve the problem yourselves you must:

* Advise the Module Leader by email. This should be done as soon as possible and not left until the coursework submission date as it is more difficult to help you at that point.
* You must fully outline the problem and detail what has been done to attempt to resolve it. In doing so you should provide the records of your meetings to enable the Module Leader to evaluate the working dynamic of the group.

Please note the following points when considering your group performance:

* You must not be unavailable due to travel during term time and assessment periods other than in exceptional circumstances, covered by legitimate, recorded, extenuating circumstances. In these circumstances the Module Leader and your group colleagues should be notified immediately.
* It is expected that in all but the most serious cases, the issue will be resolved within the group and Peer Assessment (where applicable) will be used fairly in order to reflect the level of work completed by all members of a group.
* Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times and where individual students are facing particular difficulties, colleagues are expected to be sympathetic and flexible in attempting to reach a conclusion.
* Working in groups typically involves working with people with different cultural or social backgrounds, and different working styles. Such differences are perfectly normal, and research has shown that having diversity in a group often helps the group perform better. You should consider whether your colleagues’ behaviours are actually problematic, or simply a result of different working methods.

In the case of:

* Unresolved problems within a group, or
* Complaints about unfair Peer Assessment grading which cannot be resolved through the moderation process

a Peer Assessment review may be requested. This is a process whereby evidence will be requested from members of the group, either in person or virtually, to ascertain whether there is cause for complaint.

Usually, all group members will be asked to submit evidence in support of their case; once this evidence has been reviewed, a decision will be made and all group members informed of the outcome. The outcomes will be ratified by the Assessment Board as part of the grade confirmation process.

*You are strongly advised to keep accurate records of all meetings and workload allocations for group assignments as this will help with the review process should there be any problems.*

If peer review reduces your mark from a passing to a failing grade then the module leader will conduct a similar review of your grade.

Please note: Reviews may result in the moderation of the grades, but rarely result in significant changes. Major issues may be referred through the Academic Appeal process.