

Group-Work

Creative Computing Profession
COMP 07060

Why Group Work

“Academic work at University generally focuses on the achievement of individuals. In part, of course, this is to ensure each person is awarded a degree for their own work. In recent years, however, more attention has been paid to the importance of training students in the skills of working with others. These skills are referred to as “people skills” or “interpersonal skills”.

Source: Cottrell S. (2003) The Study Skills Handbook Palgrave MacMillan:Hampshire



Why Group Work

- Interpersonal skills developed through group work:
 - written and verbal communication skills
 - observation and awareness of others
 - ability to be assertive (not aggressive) and to make effective contributions
 - supporting others by managing stressful situations
 - helping others with difficult work and providing constructive feedback
- These skills are worth developing because they are valued by employers



Why Group Work

Group work:

- Increases productivity - group members working together accomplish more than an individual working alone
- Encourages learning - group members learn from each other and the quality of output is increased
- Develops problem solving skills - group members support each other when work is challenging and together find different ways of solving problems



Why Group Work

Group work:

- Allows multi-disciplinary working - students from different disciplines contribute to a project and bring specialised knowledge or skills to the project
- Nurtures group working skills - group members develop group work skills (communication, collaboration, co-operation and adaptability) which employers value



Why Group Work?

Employers list team working, people skills and communication skills as requirements for game designers:



Game Designer Heroes of the Storm

- able to work well in a team environment and outstanding people skills

Source: <http://eu.blizzard.com/en-gb/company/careers/posting.html?id=14000GN>

Senior Games Designer Heroes of the Storm

- able to work well in a team environment and outstanding people skills
- excellent written and verbal communications skill

Source: <http://eu.blizzard.com/en-gb/company/careers/posting.html?id=13000B8>

Why Group Work?

Employers list team working and communication skills as requirements for artists and sound designers:



3D Character Animator - World of Warcraft

- self-driven, good communicator and a great team-player

Source: <http://eu.blizzard.com/en-gb/company/careers/posting.html?id=1400056>

Senior 3D Character Artist - World of Warcraft

- self-motivation, good communications skills, and a great team-player attitude

Source: <http://us.blizzard.com/en-us/company/careers/posting.html?id=1000088>

Composer's Assistant

- able to work within a team dynamic and excellent written and oral communication skills

• Source: <http://eu.blizzard.com/en-gb/company/careers/posting.html?id=14000FD>

Why Group Work?

Employers list team working, adaptability and communication skills as requirements for web designers and compositors:

Compositor

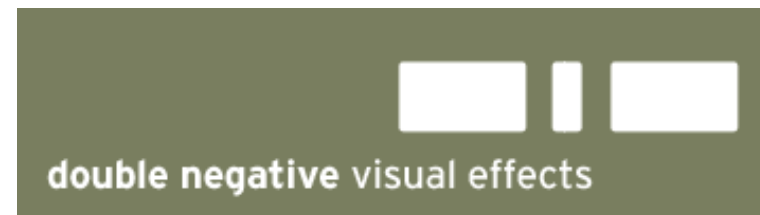
- strong communication skills
- team oriented
- adaptable
- accept change

Source: http://www.dneg.com/jobs/compositor_727.html

Web Designer

- good communication skills dealing with team members and clients
- good documentation skills
- team working skills

Source: <https://ch.tbe.taleo.net/CH10/ats/careers/requisition.jsp?org=FRAMESTORE&cws=39&rid=299>



Why Group Work?

Employers list time collaboration, organisational team and communication skills as requirements for sound designers:

Sound Designer

- excellent communication and organizational skills
- ability to collaborate and work in a team environment

Source: <http://www.creative-assembly.com/jobs/sound-designer/>



Senior Audio Designer

- collaborate with peers in all disciplines to consistently deliver results
- highly organised and detail orientated
- excellent written and verbal communication skills

Source: <http://www.dsvolution.com/careers/audio-designer/>



Group Work Skills

Group work requires team members to be good at:

Listening

- capacity to listen to other group members' ideas
- develop and refine other members' ideas to build on them

Questioning

- ask team members questions so you know what the team's aims and objectives are and can commit to them

Source:

<http://www.careers.brad.ac.uk/student/skills/teamwork.php>



Group Work Skills

Communicating

- formulate your own ideas and communicate them

Persuading

- defend your own ideas but be prepared to be flexible
- be open to suggestions and appreciate others' viewpoints

Source:

<http://www.careers.brad.ac.uk/student/skills/teamwork.php>



Group Work Skills

Respecting

- be respectful to all members of the group
- be critical of other group members' ideas but not the group members personally and work to resolve any conflicts in the team

Helping

- being part of the team means helping other team members
- encourage other group members' efforts and support their contributions to the project task

Source:

<http://www.careers.brad.ac.uk/student/skills/teamwork.php>



Group Work Skills

Sharing

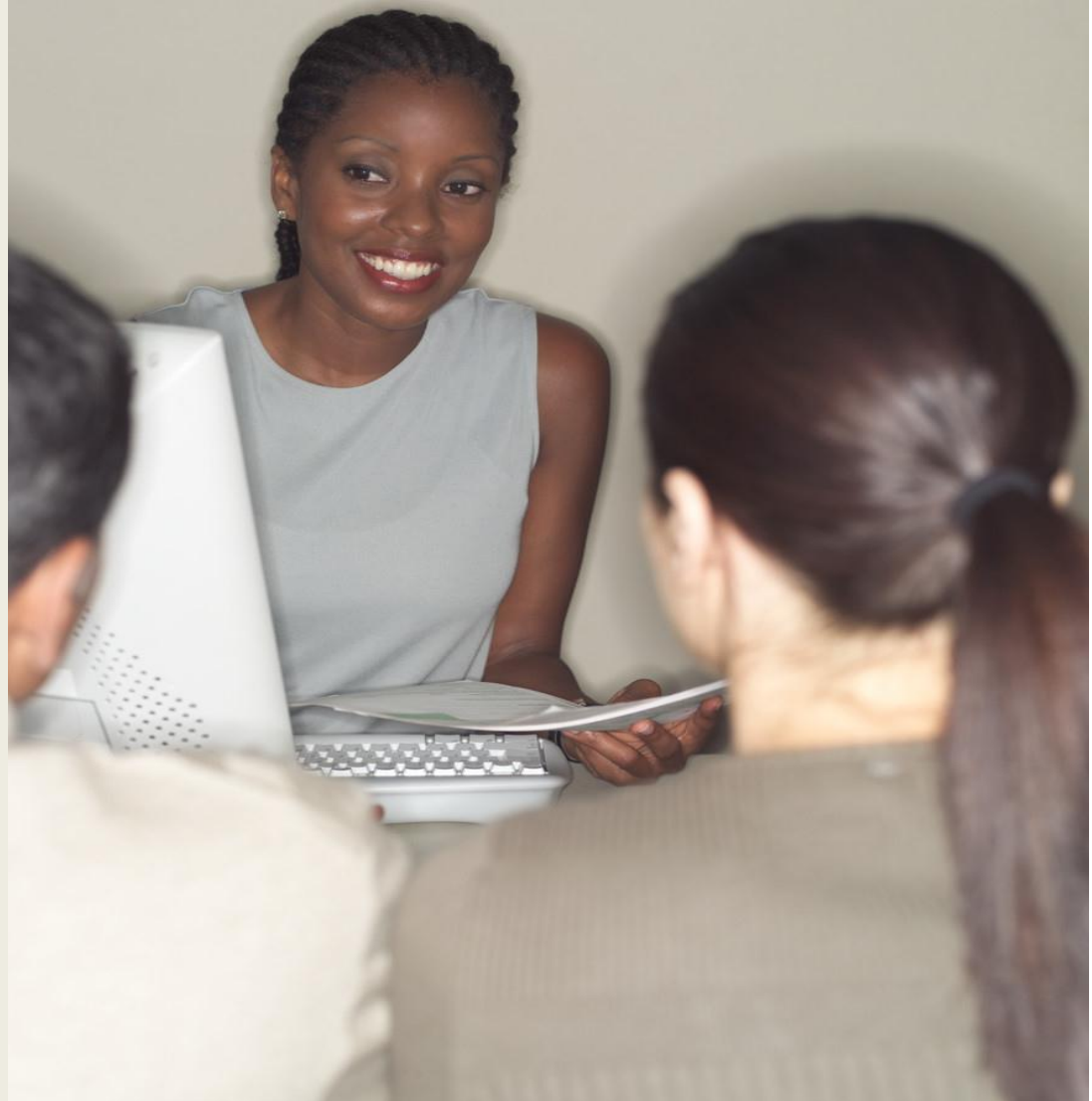
- be willing to co-operate and share your knowledge, experience, time and know-how with other group members

Participating

- participate in the group's activities without dominating other group members
- be willing to take the lead and encourage and galvanise the group into action

Source:

<http://www.careers.brad.ac.uk/student/skills/teamwork.php>



Listening Skills are Important

- Ask questions – shows you are listening
- Don't assume you know everything and others know nothing
- Don't assume others know everything and you know nothing
- Don't pre-empt others meaning – give them time to think and let them develop their arguments



Listening Skills are Important

- Stop talking – don't dominate
- Don't interrupt – let others have their say
- Show interest - concentrate on what other group members are saying
- Empathize with the person speaking – try to see their point of view



Communication Skills are Important

- Ask questions - open ended questions (How ? Why? Which? What? If?)
- probing questions to get more information about what's just been said
- clarifying questions to make sure you understand what's been said – summarize the key points and repeat them



Communication Skills are Important

- Verbal communication - clearly and concisely express your ideas to group members
- Written communication - keep your written communications simple, direct and lucid
- Persuasion – if you a good communicator you can persuade group members to accept your viewpoint



Communication Skills are Important

- Giving feedback (constructive criticism)
- Be direct and honest and be prepared to help a group member to improve their work
- Demonstrate to the person how they can improve their work or their behaviour because the point is to get them to change it
- Benjamin Franklin: “Any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain - and most fools do.”



Sharing/ Participation Skills are Important

- Share your knowledge and give group members a chance to learn from you
- Be an active participant in the group's activities – demonstrate through your contribution to group work that you are interested in the work, serious about it and will devote time to ensure that your group is successful

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/communicating.htm>



Personal Skills you bring to Group Work

Positive attitudes and behaviours

- self confidence and respect for group members
- interest and participation in the group
- taking initiative and making a positive contribution

Sense of responsibility

- setting goals and priorities
- plan and manage time and resources
- identify and manage risk

Adaptability

- being innovative and resourceful
- willingness to change viewpoint

Source: <http://www.onnip.ca/article/15/>



What is a group?

A group “is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.”

Source: Katzenbach, J.R. and Smith, D.K. (2009) The Wisdom of Teams p45



How do group's operate?

Small number - optimal size for a group for student coursework is 4

Complementary skills - group members need complementary skills:

- technical expertise
- problem solving and decision making skills
- interpersonal skills

Source: Katzenbach, J.R. and Smith, D.K. (2009) The Wisdom of Teams p47



How do group's operate?

Committed to a common purpose - the purpose must be common and meaningful to all group members.

Your purpose is to give a successful presentation on a chosen topic in week 5 and complete a group project report by week 12.

Source: Katzenbach, J.R. and Smith, D.K. (2009) The Wisdom of Teams p47



How do group's operate?

Specific performance goals – these are an essential element of the purpose. Goal like getting an A grade for the group's coursework means that all group members have to perform excellently.

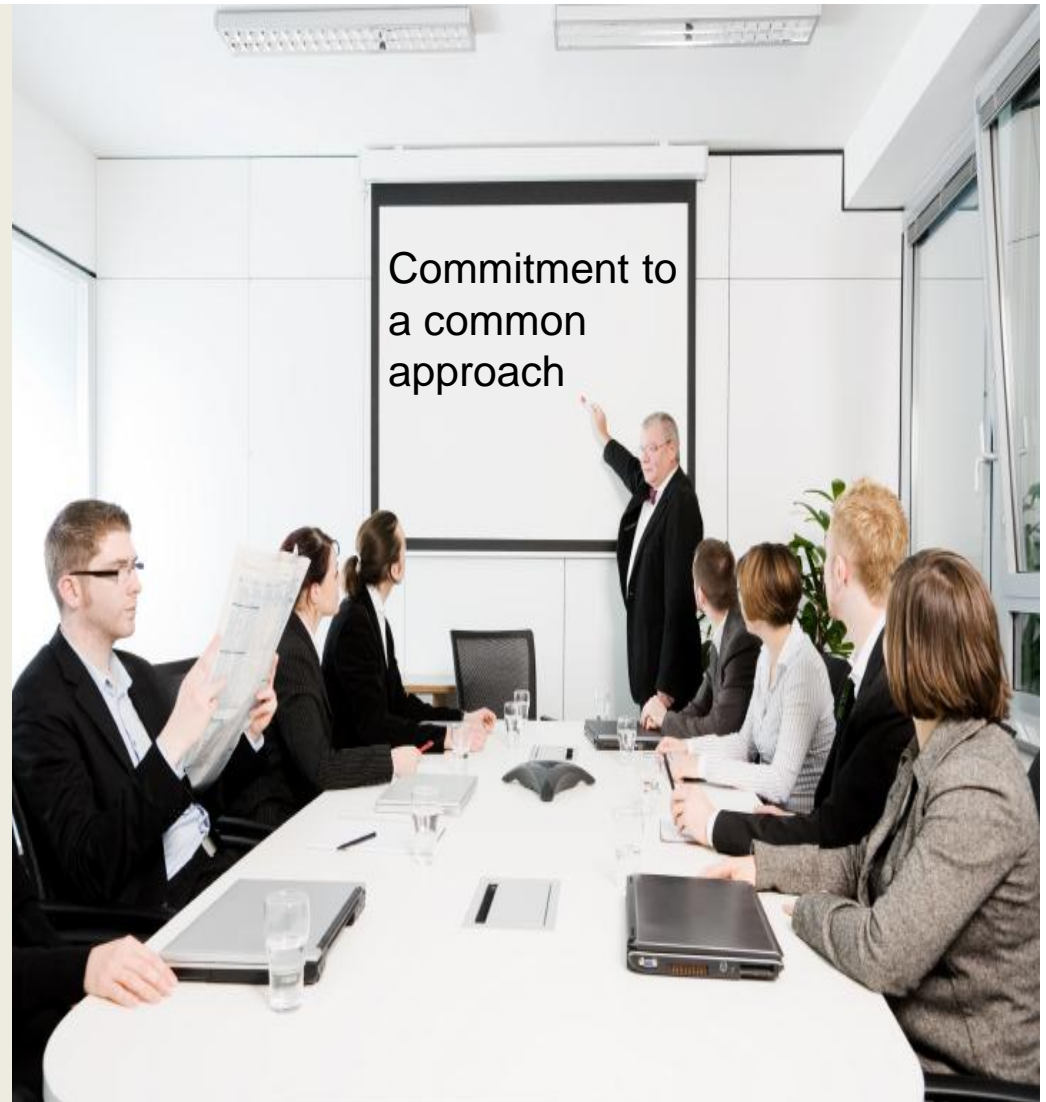
Source: Katzenbach, J.R. and Smith, D.K. (2009) The Wisdom of Teams p47



How do group's operate?

Commitment to a common approach:

- which group member will do which job
- setting and adherence to schedules
- skills that group members need to develop
- how membership of the group continues
- how the group makes and modifies decisions



How do group's operate?

Mutual accountability :

- group members being accountable when they say they will commit to the group's goals



Source: Katzenbach, J.R. and Smith, D.K. (2009) The Wisdom of groups p47

In summary

- Group has small number of members – optimal size for a group is 4
- Group shares common purpose & performance goals
- Group formulates a common approach to the project task
- Group members are mutually accountable



Protocols for Collaboration and Co-operation

- How would you **like** a group to work?
- How would you **expect** a group to work?
- What would you **respect** in other group members?
- What would you **expect** of other group members?
- What would you be **willing to contribute** to the group?
- What would you be **unwilling to do**?



Protocols for Collaboration and Co-operation

Ground Rules:

Communication

- Decide on your method of communication
- Decide how quickly you expect group members to respond

Organising work

- How is the coursework task going to be broken down into sub-tasks?
- Decide how the sub-tasks are going to be allocated to group members

Source: http://www.uc.edu/pbl/student_groups_rules.shtml



Protocols for Collaboration and Co-operation

Timeframe and Deadlines

- Group members should work out the tasks that have to be done and who is going to do them
- Group members should know their deadlines for submission of work and also what happens if they do not keep to deadlines

Standard of Work

- Decide on acceptable standards for completed work

Source:

http://www.uc.edu/pbl/student_groups_rules.shtml



Protocols for Collaboration and Co-operation

Standard of Work

- Set rules for behavior of group members - draw up a set of ground rules for your group to promote good working relationships and avoid conflict
- The rules should be created, improved or modified and then accepted by all group members so that everyone is a stakeholder
- Should be understood by all group members

Source:

http://www.uc.edu/pbl/student_groups_rules.shtml



Protocols for Collaboration and Co-operation

Preparation Expectations

- What happens if a group member hasn't prepared for the group meeting in advance?

Decision Making

- How is the group going to make decisions?
- Do all group members have to be there when a decision is made?
- How are decisions that the group has taken going to be recorded?

Source: http://www.uc.edu/pbl/student_groups_rules.shtml



Protocols for Collaboration and Co-operation

Group roles

- How are roles within the group going to be assigned?
- For example, leadership role – who will do it? Note taker role – who will do it?
- Are the roles going to be rotated?

Information Sharing

- Decide how to share information outside of the meetings, including sharing with people who could not attend

Source: http://www.uc.edu/pbl/student_groups_rules.shtml



Protocols for Collaboration and Co-operation

Group Meeting Attendance

- How often will the group meet?
- How will absences be handled?
- Communication about absence?
- How to get an absent group member's work.
- Some absences more critical than others e.g. absence just before the presentation or report is due is likely to be critical.

Punctuality

- What happens if group members are late for meetings or don't stay until the end?



Protocols for Collaboration and Co-operation

Appropriate group behaviour

- What to do if a group member is not respectful of others
- Need to ensure everyone has an equal say in the discussion to avoid one person dominating the group

Source: http://www.uc.edu/pbl/student_groups_rules.shtml



Group Development

A good group requires effort from all group members and you will need to build your group.

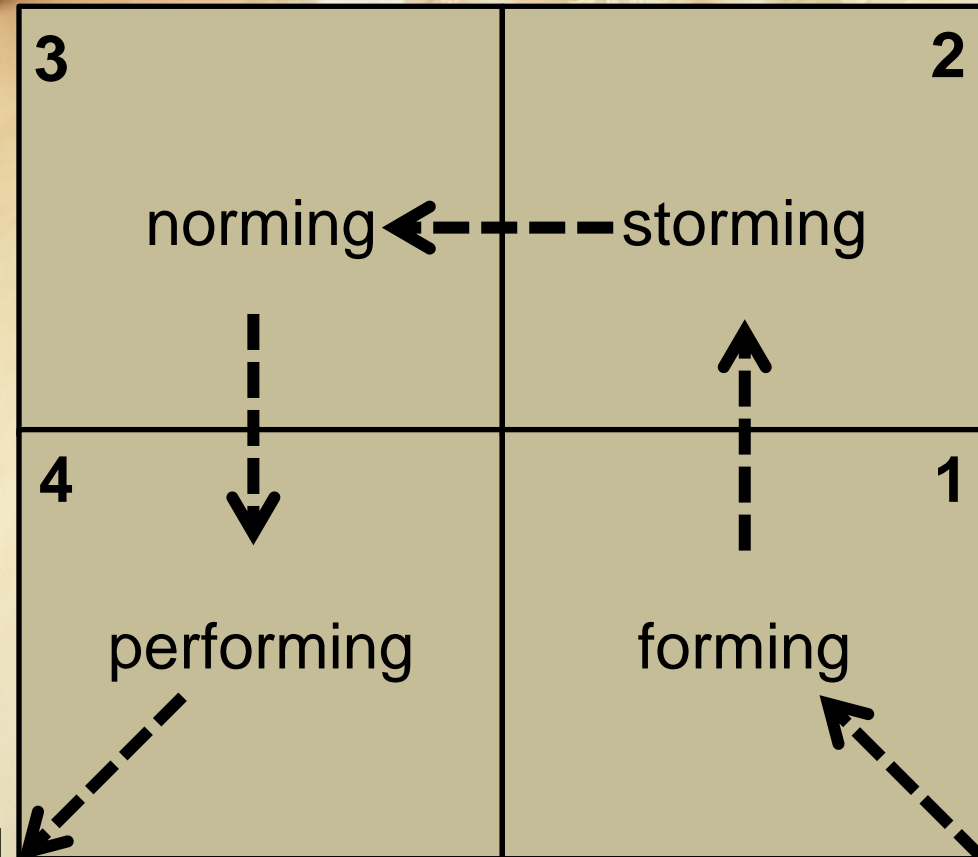
Your group should develop and change and Tuckman's (1965) model shows five stages of group development.

Sources:

<http://www.businessballs.com/tuckmanformingstormingnormingperforming.htm>

<http://dev-zone.cen.brad.ac.uk/lss/learnerdevelopment/stddev/group/useful/gwbooklet/index.php#prob>

5 adjourning

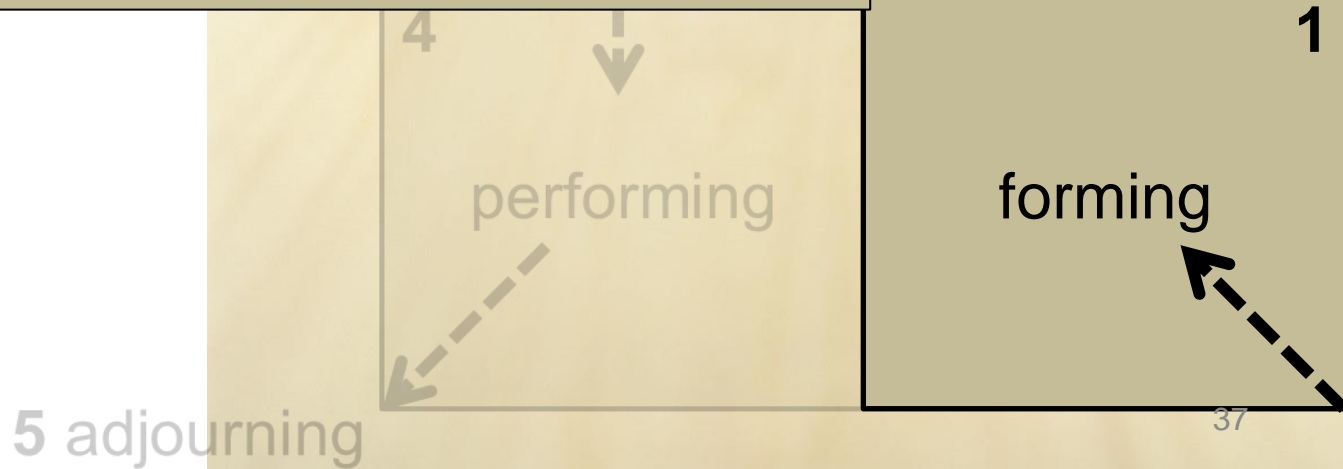


5-Stages of Group Development



1. Forming

- at the beginning the group is a number of individual members and not a cohesive unit
- members are slightly wary of each other and can be reticent about speaking because they are unsure of their function in the group
- may be high dependence on the group leader for direction



5-Stages of Group Development



2. Storming

- group starts its work and members are less reticent and differences within the group are asserted
- members may be in conflict over group roles and express hostility towards other members
- leader may have to broker compromises between group members

storming

forming

5 adjourning

5-Stages of Group Development



3. Norming

- group members are now familiar with one another and cooperate to work collectively as a whole
- behaviours are listening and seeking opinions and leader is more of a facilitator
- ground-rules have been established and group members are collaborating on the task

norming

storming

performing

forming

2

1

5-Stages of Group Development



4. Performing

- group members have settled into the group, are generally satisfied with their roles and supportive of other group members
- group has sense of itself as a distinct body and works as a unit - any disagreements are worked through
- group has its own identity and culture and members feel it is “their” group

5 adjourning

performing

norming ← --- storming

forming

2

1

5-Stages of Group Development



5. Adjourning

- work of the group is completed and members feel a sense of achievement

5 adjourning



Group Development

- Your group may not go through all the stages – some move to the storming stage right away without much forming and others skip storming moving from forming to performing. For most groups forming and storming are important so members get to know each other, work out initial differences and get down to work.
- Your group should change and develop as you work your way through the task. If it is not developing and you have stalled then it is worthwhile investigating why so that you get back on track. Ask your lecturers for help.

Sources: <http://www.businessballs.com/tuckmanformingstormingnormingperforming.htm>

<http://dev-zone.cen.brad.ac.uk/lss/learnerdevelopment/stdev/group/useful/gwbooklet/index.php#prob>



Problems with Groups

Group members make no effort to get to know each other

**Group members dominating the group
controlling the discussion**

**Group members don't contribute to the
discussion**

Group members talk but don't listen

**Group members do not constructively comment
on ideas (ridicule/dismiss ideas)**

**Group members disagree and cannot resolve
their differences**

Solutions to Group Problems

**Group work is social learning - socialise group
members into a coherent unit so that everyone buys
into the idea of the group. To do this group members
have to spend time together**

**Keep discussion open and invite all members to talk so
all get a chance to contribute. No one should be afraid
to talk for fear of ridicule.**

**Communication is 2-way - talking and listening
When differences arise they have to be worked
through to arrive at compromise**



Problems with Groups

Group members are late for meetings or don't attend

Meetings have a vague purpose – not sure what they are about

Group members not clear about the work they have to do

Group members do not contribute work to the group

Bad time management and deadlines are missed

Solutions to Group Problems

Stress the importance of ground rules for meeting attendance, work organisation, timeframes and deadlines and standards of allocated work.

Make sure all group members know the deadlines and sanctions if rules are ignored and work not handed in.



Assertive Behaviour

- being prepared to compromise and find common ground
- listening to what others think
- showing understanding of others viewpoints
- working through difficulties to find solutions
- being clear about your point
- respecting others' views and ideas
- expressing your feelings honestly and with regard to others' sensibilities

Passive Behaviour

- not saying anything so as to avoid upsetting anyone
- avoiding confrontation
- not saying what you really feel
- going along with something you don't agree with and feeling frustrated as a result
- being unclear about your views and ideas
- appearing to dither

Aggressive Behaviour

- having it your own way regardless of anyone else
- getting your point across come what may
- being loud and in others' faces
- butting-in and talking over other people
- belittling the views of other people
- unsettling people by keeping silent or being sarcastic

<http://www.canberra.edu.au/studyskills/learning/groups>



Managing Behaviour

Assertive behaviour can avoid difficulties such as:

- some members dominating the group and clashing with others
- members not being able to resolve differences
- members appearing to be uncommitted to the group
- people doing more than their fair share of work

Use assertive behaviour to:

- counter aggressive behaviour towards others and prevent clashes between members and
- include those who are passive in the group by actively engaging with them so that they have to take part



Group Roles

- Group leader
 - makes sure everyone joins in the discussion
 - maintains order among members
 - keeps the discussion on track
- Note taker
 - records what has been agreed at the meeting (eg who is doing what and when)
 - notes any changes to decisions
 - circulates a record of the meeting so members know what has been agreed
- Record keeper
 - collects all the work files for the project
 - makes sure all members of the group have copies of all of the project work files



Group Leadership

- The leader should:
 - organise the group so that the work gets completed
 - make sure the ideas of everyone in the group are heard - brainstorming is a good technique to achieve this
 - manage group interactions to stimulate good working relationships and a positive atmosphere
 - encourage and monitor progress so that the work gets completed on time
- Groups working well:
 - all group members are heard and can affect group decisions
 - all group members agree on resolutions to disagreements
 - all group members work hard to produce good quality work and are collectively responsible for the group's success

References

- Cottrell S. (2003) The Study Skills Handbook Palgrave MacMillan:Hampshire
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