

Group assessment strategies

(Source: Winchester-Seeto, T. (April, 2002). Assessment of collaborative work - collaboration versus assessment. Annual Uniserve Science Symposium, The University of Sydney)

1.0: Options for tutor assessment of group product

| Assessment option | Some possible advantages | Some possible disadvantages |
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| <p>Shared Group Mark The group submits one product and all group members receive the same mark from the lecturer/tutor, regardless of individual contribution.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourages group work - groups sink or swim together decreases likelihood of plagiarism more likely with individual products from group work relatively straightforward method. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual contributions are not necessarily reflected in the marks stronger students may be unfairly disadvantaged by weaker ones and vice versa. |
| <p>Group Average Mark Individual submissions (allocated task or individual reports as described below) are marked individually. The group members each then receive an average of these marks.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may provide motivation for students to focus on both individual and group work and thereby develop in both areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may be perceived as unfair by students stronger students may be unfairly disadvantaged by weaker ones and vice versa. |
| <p>Individual Mark - Allocated task Each student completes an allocated task that contributes to the final group product and gets the marks for that task</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a relatively objective way of ensuring individual participation may provide additional motivation to students potential to reward outstanding performance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> difficult to find tasks that are exactly equal in size/complexity does not encourage the group process/collaboration dependencies between tasks may slow progress of some students. |
| <p>Individual Mark - Individual report Each student writes and submits an individual report based on the group's work on the task/project</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures individual effort Perceived as fair by students. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> precise manner in which individual reports should differ often very unclear to students likelihood of unintentional plagiarism increased. |

| Assessment option | Some possible advantages | Some possible disadvantages |
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| Individual Mark - Examination Exam questions specifically target the group projects, and can only be answered by students who have been thoroughly involved in the project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may motivate students more to learn from the group project including learning from the other members of the group. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may diminish importance of group work additional work for staff in designing exam questions may not be effective, students may be able to answer the questions by reading the group reports. |
| Combination of Group Average and Individual Mark The group mark is awarded to each member with a mechanism for adjusting for individual contributions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> perceived by many students as fairer than shared group mark. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> additional work for staff in setting up procedure for and in negotiating adjustments. |

2.0: Options for student assessment of group product

| Assessment option | Some possible advantages | Some possible disadvantages |
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| Student distribution of pool of marks Lecturer/tutor awards a set number of marks and let the group decide how to distribute them. For example, the product is marked 80 (out of a possible 100) by the lecturer. There are four members of the group. Four by 80 = 240 so there are 240 marks to distribute to the four members. No one student can be given less than zero or more than 100. If members decide that they all contributed equally to the product then each member would receive a mark of 80. If they decided that some of the group had made a bigger contribution, then those members might get 85 or 90 marks and those who contributed less would get a lesser mark. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> easy to implement may motivate students to contribute more negotiation skills become part of the learning process potential to reward outstanding performance may be perceived as fairer than shared or average group mark alone. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> open to subjective evaluation by friends may lead to conflict may foster competition and therefore be counterproductive to team work students may not have the skills necessary for the required negotiation. |
| Students allocate individual weightings Lecture/tutor gives shared group mark, which is adjusted according to a peer assessment factor. The individual student's mark comes from the group mark multiplied by the peer assessment factor (eg. X 0.5 for 'half' contribution or X 1 for 'full' contribution) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above |

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| <p>Peer Evaluation - random marker, using criteria, moderated</p> <p>Completed assessment items are randomly distributed to students who are required to complete a marking sheet identifying whether their peer has met the assessment criteria and awarding a mark. These marks are moderated by the staff member and together with the peer marking sheets are returned with the assessment item.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps clarify criteria to be used for assessment • encourages a sense of involvement and responsibility • assists students to develop skills in independent judgement • increases feedback to students • random allocation addresses potential friendship and other influences on assessment • may provide experience parallel to career situations where peer judgement occurs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time may have to be invested in teaching students to evaluate each other • staff moderation is time consuming. |

3.0: Options for tutor assessment of group process

| Assessment option | Some possible advantages | Some possible disadvantages |
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| <p>Individual mark - based on records/ observation of process</p> <p>Each individual group member's contribution (as defined by predetermined criteria) is assessed using evidence from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • team log books • minutes sheets and/or • direct observation of process. <p>And they are awarded a mark</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • logs can potentially provide plenty of information to form basis of assessment • keeping minute sheets helps members to focus on the process - a learning experience in itself • May be perceived as a fair way to deal with 'shirkers' and outstanding contributions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing logs can be time consuming for lecturer/tutor • Students may need a lot of training and experience in keeping records • Emphasis on second hand evidence - reliability an issue • direct observation by a lecturer/ tutor likely to change the nature of interaction in the group. |
| <p>Group average mark -based on records/observation of process</p> <p>Each individual group member's contribution (as defined by predetermined criteria) is assessed using evidence from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • team log books • minutes sheets and/or • direct observation of process. <p>The group members each then receive an average of these marks.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • makes students focus on their operation as a team • logs can provide plenty of information to form basis of assessment • keeping minute sheets helps members to focus on the process - a learning experience in itself. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewing logs can be time consuming • students may need a lot of training and experience • emphasis on second hand evidence - reliability an issue • averaging the mark may be seen as unfair to those who have contributed more than others. |
| <p>Individual mark - for paper analysing process</p> <p>Marks attributed for an individual paper from each student analysing the group process, including their own contribution that of student colleagues</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps students to focus on the process • minimises opportunities for plagiarism. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information from students may be subjective and/or inaccurate • may increase assessment burden for lecturer/tutor. |

4.0: Options for student assessment of group process

| Assessment option | Some possible advantages | Some possible disadvantages |
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| <p>Peer Evaluation - average mark, using predetermined criteria Students in a group individually evaluate each other's contribution using a predetermined list of criteria. The final mark is an average of all marks awarded by members of the group.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps clarify criteria to be used for assessment • Encourages sense of involvement and responsibility on part of students • May assist students to develop skills in independent judgement • Provides detailed feedback to students • Provides experience parallel to career situations where group judgement is made • May reduce lecturer's marking load. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may increase lecturer/tutor workload in terms of - briefing students about the process - ensuring the criteria are explicit and clear - teaching students how to evaluate each other • students may allow friendships to influence their assessment - reliability an issue • students may not perceive this system as fair because of the possibility of being discriminated against. |
| <p>Self evaluation- moderated mark, using predetermined criteria Students individually evaluate their own contribution using predetermined criteria and award themselves a mark. Lecturers/tutors moderate the marks awarded.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps clarify criteria to be used for assessment • Encourages sense of involvement and responsibility on part of students • May assist students to develop skills in independent judgement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may increase lecturer/tutor workload in terms of - briefing students about the process - ensuring the criteria for success are explicit and clear - teaching students how to evaluate themselves • self evaluations may be perceived as unreliable. |