



## Working in a group

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### Introduction

During your time at university you will almost certainly need to work in a group. This could be as part of an assignment, an in class activity or during an exam revision group. Working in a group is a great opportunity to learn more about yourself and develop new skills.

This resource outlines strategies that will help you to make the most of working in a group.

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### The right mindset for group work

Working with other people may require a different mindset compared to working alone. You will be relying on other people during the course of the project, and others will be relying on you.

The following diagram outlines key factors related to successful group work.



## Why?

### Open-mindedness

- People in your group will have different skills and different ways of working. It is important that you recognize this and the personal contribution each group member can make to the project.

### Mutual respect

- It is unlikely that everybody will always agree with each other during the group project.
- Keep things in perspective and remember that all of you share a goal – to get a good grade for your assignment!

### Communication

- Groups only function effectively if all members communicate with each other. Transparent and timely communication help group members get along.
- As you progress with the work, it is useful for the group members to keep others up to date with their progress. Equally, any questions or obstacles should be discussed.
- Group emails or online forums are an easy inclusive way of making sure everybody is 'in the loop'.

### Value others' experience

- Each group member will have their own personal knowledge and expertise. Hearing their point of view will not only enrich your awareness on the subject, it may also improve the overall result.

## Task focus

- This will allow you to get the task done on time and get the most from the whole experience.

## Commitment

- This will ensure that all members willing to invest the necessary time and effort to make the group a success.

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## How to ensure a group operates effectively

There are a range of strategies that you can put in place to improve the likelihood of a group functioning effectively:

<b>Set an agenda</b>	An agenda is a list of items to be discussed at your meeting. Planning it in advance and sticking to it will make sure everybody is literally 'on the same page'
<b>Keep minutes</b>	Keeping minutes, or notes of the issues discussed at your meeting will also help to run the group project effectively. Key points include  1) Who attended 2) What was discussed 3) Actions that people have agreed to complete 4) Time scales and deadlines for completing activities 5) Future meeting details
<b>Future meeting dates</b>	Agreeing the meeting dates in advance allows group members plan their course work. It also ensure that the majority of group members can attend
<b>Making decisions</b>	Introducing a group vote ensures that everybody has a say and objective decisions are made

<p><b>Assign roles</b></p>	<p>Assigning specific roles during group meetings makes sure all tasks are addressed. It is good practice to rotate the roles, so that everybody participates. Common roles are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Chairperson</b> – runs the meeting and helps the group to stay focused on objectives (agenda items). Ensures everyone has the opportunity to speak</li> <li>• <b>Secretary</b> – responsible for the agenda and minute taking</li> <li>• <b>Devil's advocate</b> – encourages a critical perspective by objectively challenging decisions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Allocating responsibilities</b></p>	<p>It is very important to ensure that tasks are divided equally and fairly.</p> <p>Factors to take into consideration are the members' personal strengths and experiences, as well as their willingness to do a certain task.</p> <p>Agreeing the deadlines at the same time is the best way to use the momentum and to monitor group progress.</p>
<p><b>Review progress</b></p>	<p>Regular updates between members will make sure that issues are dealt with effectively and early in the process</p>
<p><b>Checking work</b></p>	<p>It is absolutely vital for the final piece of work to be checked several times before submission. Produced by several people, the final version has to have consistent 'flow' and style. Have everybody read the final draft and discuss it at a meeting.</p>

## Overcoming problems

Even if these guidelines are followed it is still possible to encounter some difficulties. In such cases, consider the following strategies:



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### Further information

The Learning Resources Study Hub provides a range of opportunities (such as workshops and drop-ins) for you to enhance your academic skills. For more information visit:

**[lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub](http://lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub)**

