

ASSESSMENT OF GROUP WORK POLICY

Introduction

1. Group work is widely recognised as providing students with valuable opportunities to enhance the quality and depth of their learning, and promoting the development of recognisable skills sought by employers. The University of Suffolk is committed to ensuring **all** its students have the opportunity to participate in group work. Many students will experience group work as part of formal summative assessment, but it can also be effectively used in a range of other teaching, learning and formative assessment activities.

2. This policy sets out the University's minimum expectations for the organisation, management and assessment of group work. While this policy is focused on the use of group work in formal summative assessments, the principles can also be used to inform other uses or applications of group work to support students' learning.

3. This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's policies relating to assessment of students' work including: the Assessment and Feedback Framework, the Framework and Regulations for the relevant award, the Assessment Moderation Policy, the Academic Misconduct policy, and the Assessment Board procedure.

4. This policy accords with principles of equality of opportunity and inclusive practices for all learners, and should be read in conjunction with the Equality and Diversity Policy and the Dignity at Study policy.

Student participation in assessed group work

5. The purpose and educational rationale for assessed group work (including the benefits of group working skills) should be explained to students in advance of participation, including an explanation of how such activities contribute to the intended learning outcomes of the module.

6. No student should be disadvantaged through the use of assessed group work, and tutors should ensure that mechanisms are available to enable all students to take a full and active part in the group activities and processes.

7. For students for whom reasonable adjustments are required, tutors should consider how particular arrangements for such students may impact on assessed group-based activities.

8. Students should be given sufficient advance notice of planned assessed group activities to help them to prepare and to raise any queries or concerns at an early stage. For certain students, it may be necessary to consider alternative ways of meeting the learning outcomes in cases where, even with additional support, the student would be unable to interact appropriately with other students and contribute to the group task (particularly where this might have an adverse impact on their own performance and/or the performance of other students). Alternative forms of assessment should ensure that learning outcomes continue to be met, and might include additional individual written work and/or presentations on a one-to-one basis with the tutor.

9. Procedures for students to be able to raise concerns with tutors about group member involvement should be communicated to students in advance of participation.

The design of assessed group work

10. The work set for assessed group work needs to be realistic given the size of each group, and mindful of the additional student work involved in group formation, negotiation and coordination and for the collaborative production of any group product or artefact.

11. A clear and fair mechanism for forming student groups should be set out. The rationale and criteria for tutor-based selection of group members should be made transparent to students.

12. Any roles and/or responsibilities that individual students are expected to take within an assessed group activity (whether assigned by the tutor or by the group) should be clearly set out. It should be made clear to students what they are expected to do, how they are expected to work with other group members, and how their work should be submitted or presented.

13. Tutors should make provision for the re-assessment of students at the point of initial design of the group work activity. For any individual student who is referred or deferred in assessed group work, there will need to be appropriate mechanisms in place to enable the student to redeem their work and demonstrate achievement of all associated learning outcomes. This is normally more straightforward when group work results in individual submissions, provided that the underpinning group work has been completed satisfactorily. In some cases, alternative forms of assessment (for example additional written work or individual presentations) may be needed to allow referred or deferred students to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes.

14. Where processes and mechanisms for group work are standardised across all assessments within a course, these processes and mechanisms should be clearly communicated to students in the Course Handbook.

15. The approach to assessing group work (in terms of assessing group processes and/or assessing any artefact or product produced) should be appropriately aligned to the task(s) set for the group and to the associated learning outcomes.

16. Tutors should consider and communicate clearly to students the mechanisms for dealing with problems within student groups, and should anticipate how they will deal with any such issues or challenges.

17. Tutors should consider how to design group work activities to avoid the potential for academic misconduct, for example in relation to plagiarism or collusion. The distinction between cooperation and collaboration and collusion and plagiarism should be clearly communicated to students, with reference to the Academic Misconduct policy.

The marking of group work

18. Tutors and students should be confident that the assessment of an individual's contribution to the group work activity is fair. The methods by which group work will be marked, and associated marking criteria, should be transparent to students and fully justified in the assignment brief. This should make clear the proportion (if any) of the final mark that will be common to all group members, and the proportion that will be allocated on an individual basis.

19. All assessed work undertaken by group work should enable students to demonstrate their achievement of all associated learning outcomes.

20. The involvement and contribution of each individual student should be evident to those assessing the work where the assessed group work leads to a group-based mark. Normally, marks awarded in common to groups of students should not constitute more than 50% of the overall module mark, unless there is a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirement that a higher proportion is used.

21. The marking process may be informed through group negotiation of marks or by peer review activities. Such practice should be clearly explained to students, including the provision of transparent marking criteria, with tutor support and guidance available where appropriate.

22. While tutors may choose to employ group negotiation or peer feedback techniques to help determine marks, the final marks awarded will be wholly determined by tutors. Tutors have the right to discount student input where, based on sound evidence, they conclude individuals have been unfairly judged or treated within the assessment processes.

Further guidance

23. Further guidance on group work can be found in the *Staff guide to using group work for learning, teaching and assessment* and *Group work: a student guide*, both of which are available on MySuffolk.