

## *IncludeAll* - Inclusive by Design: Group-work

Group-work is an important element on many courses and so it is important to plan it effectively, considering a range of different implications. Working with a variety of others to achieve an outcome of course helps students develop skills to communicate effectively with a wide range of people from different backgrounds and cultures in preparation for employment in a global society.

Essentially we cannot assume that all students will know what to do within group-work, or have automatically have the skills and patience to work effectively with others who are

different from themselves. Rather than allowing groups to self-form there are other ways to make it a successful and effective experience.

### **What our students say**

*'I have valued the time spent in small groups to discuss problems and increase my understanding of topics.'*

Level 6 BSc Hons Nursing Practice  
(Adult)

The following hints and tips might be of use:

- Groups can be different sizes, from pairs to 7-10.
- Ensure the group size allows all students to take part.
- Encourage culturally mixed, integrated groups and a mix of language background if you have International students.
- Ensure any students with specific needs are supported – students with hearing and visual impairments and Asperger syndrome may have particular difficulty with groups (see section on Enhancing Practice).
- Be prepared to manage any conflict.
- Think about the most effective way to arrange students into groups. This helps students to mix and work together Here are some ways:
  - Giving each student a number and then asking all 1s, 2s, 3s etc. to sit together.
  - First name/last name alphabetical.
  - Giving out coded labels.
- Encourage the setting of ground rules e.g. everyone to have an equal opportunity to contribute and be listened to; everyone to be treated with dignity and respect; no responses should offend others; take time to communicate; keeping the focus on learning not winning arguments.

- Fun icebreakers can be useful before more focused work begins.
- If you have a hearing impaired student then it is important to sit in a circle so everyone's faces can be seen; get people to raise hand when they wish to speak; and to speak one at a time.
- If you have a student who is visually impaired then it is good practice for everyone to introduce themselves and/or say who they are before they make their contribution; this is especially important whilst people are getting to know each other.
- Be clear with students about the task; the roles required (e.g. scribe, facilitator, presenter) and the timeframe for completion of the task.
- Be aware of dominance within groups by an individual or a few students. To counteract this, set tasks that require the opinion of all students to be heard. Some group dynamics is inevitable bound up with learning preferences but it is important to watch that this does not stray into ignoring others or even bullying.
- However, students should also not be forced to contribute – the more comfortable they feel, and therefore part of the group, the more confident they will feel to be able to make contributions. This is one of the responsibilities of the lecturer as well as the group themselves. Starting with pairs or threes and then building up the group size can help here.
- The group will also be a mix of learning preferences – activists who leap in and talk, and theorists, who sit back, listen, collate and then contribute.
- Consider any cultural sensitivities, including that of gender, that might make participation from all students difficult.
- If working in group to achieve a given end is part of an assessment, then consider including marks for working together and a reflection on how they think the group worked.
- Synchronous and Asynchronous discussion boards can be useful as they are not face to face and can go at a slower pace. This is a good way work with cultural and linguistic differences, distance learners or part-time students, students with Asperger Syndrome or dyslexia. They are also useful for visually and hearing impaired students as they can contribute at their own base backed up with assistive technology.

## Checklist for reflection: Group-work



Have I:

Explained the purpose of the activity and how it aligns to the learning outcomes for the session?	✓
Clarified how this activity will be either assessed or fed back to the whole group at the end?	
Purposely divided the students to ensure they get experience of working successfully with those who are different to themselves?	
Purposely mixed home, European and international students so that inter-cultural learning can take place?	
Explained what the students need to do?	
Established some ground rules which will guarantee that all students can be treated equally and with respect?	
Made sure any dominant students do not prevent quieter group members (and sometimes students whose first language is not English) from expressing their views?	
Encouraged only one student to talk at any one time?	
Backed up verbal instructions with written information? (this is particularly important for students whose first language is not English including sign users)	
Outlined the roles of each of the group members?	
Suggested how the different roles within the group can be assigned?	
Made sure that any student with specific learning needs has been accommodated – for example - hearing or visually impaired students; students with Asperger Syndrome; any note-takers; English as a second language?	
Explained how you will monitor a) the progress of the group and the contribution of individual students? If it is part of an assessment, is this being aspect being given a mark?	

## Reflection into action



Having reflected on the above, my key priorities for making my teaching more inclusive are:

Changes to be introduced	By when	Indicators that it has made my practice more inclusive

This document is part of an inclusive practice 'toolkit' - *IncludeAll*. The whole Toolkit, as one complete document or as separate documents, can be found on the University website at [www.staffs.ac.uk/inclusivepractice](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/inclusivepractice).

It is split into four sections: Core Concepts; Inclusive by Design; Enhancing Practice; Checklists for Self-reflection.

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