

## **How can I assess group work?**

All of the principles of assessment that apply to individual work apply to group work as well. Assessing group work has added challenges, however.

First, depending on the objectives of the assignment, the instructor might want to assess the team's final product (e.g., design, report, presentation), their group processes (e.g., ability to meet deadlines, contribute fairly, communicate effectively), or both. Second, group performance must be translated into individual grades – which raises issues of fairness and equity. Complicating both these issues is the fact that neither group processes nor individual contribution are necessarily apparent in the final product.

Thus, in addition to evaluating the group's output, instructors may need to find ways to determine how groups functioned and the extent to which individuals contributed to the effort. This isn't always easy, but these general principles can guide you, and the Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence can help you find and implement the right approach for your goals and context.

- Assess individual, as well as group, learning and performance.
- Assess process as well as product.
- Make your assessment criteria and grading scheme clear.
- Find samples of group project assessment tools here...

### **Assess individual, as well as group, learning and performance.**

Diligent students can be profoundly demotivated by group projects if they feel that their own success is dependent on team members who don't do their share. One way to counteract the motivational hazards of group projects is to assess individual students' learning and performance in addition to the group's output. This strategy gives diligent students a greater sense of fairness and control and discourages free ridership.

Individual learning and performance can be assessed in any number of ways. Some instructors add an individual component to group projects (e.g., a short essay, journal entries); some combine a group project with an individual test or quiz. Both group and individual performance are then reflected in the total project grade (e.g., some faculty members make the group grade

worth 50% and the individual grade worth 50%; others split it 80%/20%. There's no perfect breakdown, but the grading scheme should (a) reflect your goals for student learning and (b) seek to motivate the kind of work you want to see.)

*Professor Solomon asks student groups to research a famous anthropological controversy, and give an oral presentation analyzing the issues, positions, and people involved. She assigns a group grade for the presentation, but also requires all the team members to write a short, individual paper summarizing what they learned from the assignment and what they contributed to the team. If the individual piece demonstrates a poor understanding of the material or a low level of participation in the group, she reserves the right to lower the individual's grade by a full letter grade. If it is particularly informed, thorough, or demonstrates an exceptionally high contribution to the team, she raises the individual's grade by a full letter grade.*

### **Assess process as well as product.**

If developing teamwork skills is one of your learning objectives for the course, it's important to assess students' progress toward that goal. In other words, you should assess process (how students work) as well as product (the work they produce).

Process can be assessed according to a number of dimensions, such as the ability to generate a range of ideas, listen respectfully to disparate perspectives, distribute work fairly, resolve differences, and communicate effectively. Since instructors don't always have a direct window into the dynamics of student groups, they often rely on teams to self-report via:

- team evaluations: each member of the team evaluates the dynamics of the team as a whole.
- peer evaluations: each team member evaluates the contributions of his/her teammates.
- self-evaluations: each team member documents and evaluates his own contributions to the team.
- ***Find samples of evaluations here...***

These assessments can be quantitative or qualitative. They can be done as reflective writing assignments or as questionnaires targeting specific dimensions of teamwork. Think about which tools suit your purpose and context. Also give some thought to when you'll use them (in the middle of the semester? at the end? both?), who should see them (just you? other team members?), and whether or not they should be anonymous. The Eberly Center can help you find, adapt, or create the right tool and determine how to use it to best effect.

Remember, too, that process assessments are subjective and students are not always straightforward when evaluating one another or themselves. However, in combination with product assessments and individual assessments, they can offer valuable glimpses into how teams function and alert you to major problems (e.g., particularly problematic team members or serious conflict), which can help to inform your [feedback](#) and grading.

*Professor Montoya assigns a multi-stage information systems project where students work together in teams over much of the semester. Over the course of the semester, he periodically asks students to evaluate both the dynamics of the team as a whole and their own contributions, and to reflect on ways to improve both as the project continues. At the end of the project, he asks students to complete a peer evaluation for every member of their team, indicating each member's contribution to the group. Professor Montoya's total grade for the project combines a group grade (75%) and an individual grade (25%). The individual grade is based, in equal parts, on how each student's teammates evaluated his contribution to the group and on the quality of the feedback he provided to them.*

### **Make your assessment criteria and grading scheme clear.**

It's always important to articulate your performance criteria so students understand your expectations and standards. This is especially true if you are emphasizing skills that are not usually assessed, such as the ability to resolve conflict, delegate tasks, etc. Criteria for evaluating both product and process can be communicated by giving students a [group work rubric](#) (pdf) before they begin their work and then using it to provide meaningful feedback during and at the end of the project.

It's also important to think about how you will weigh the various components of group projects in your grading scheme. Some questions to consider include:

- What percentage of the student's total project grade will be based on the group's performance vs. individual components?
- What percentage will be based on assessments of product vs. assessments of process?
- How much weight will you give to peer evaluations or self-evaluations?
- Will feedback from external clients also be incorporated into your assessment of the group's work? If so, what sorts of feedback will you solicit: feedback on product (e.g., Does it work? Is it

- a good solution/design?), feedback on process (e.g., Did the group communicate effectively with the client? Did it meet deadlines?), or both?

A number of dimensions of group work can factor, either formally or informally, into a student's grade. What's important is to think about what dimensions of student performance matter to you and how your grading criteria and the weighting of assessment components can help motivate the behaviors you want to see. Finally, it's critical to clearly communicate your grading scheme to students.