

UTS BELL Program

Workbook

Group Work web tutorial

About this workbook

This workbook accompanies UTS' BELL web tutorial on Group Work. It contains activities to help a student group manage the way its members work together on an assignment. The web tutorial gives the framework for these activities and explains how and when to use them.

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Ice-breakers

There are many ice-breaker exercises which help groups get to know each other quickly. Someone in your group might suggest a favourite. Otherwise try these. You might have time for more than one.

Three truths and one lie

Everyone tells three truths and one lie about themselves. Everyone else has to guess which is the lie. You can ask each other questions about the truths if you like.

This can be done orally, by writing, or in an online discussion list.

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What's our name? Logo? Slogan?

Adapted from Scannell E. & Newstrom J. *Still More Games Trainers Play* McGraw Hill NY.

This ice-breaker helps you develop working relationships before you do the academic tasks.

Steps

- Select a name which depicts the group and its task.
- Draw a graphic logo that will portray your mission.
- Write a slogan you could use to advertise your group.

Take it a step further —reflect on the process

1. How democratically do you think you worked together doing these steps, expressed as a mark from 1 (very poorly) to 5 (outstandingly well)?
2. How did you reach consensus? Did someone take charge and others fall silent? Did everyone contribute equally? Did everyone start out contributing then the more dominant personalities won out?
3. How do you want to continue your group work?
4. Have you set off on a positive note or do you need to make changes in how you work together right away?
5. What do you think your name, logo and slogan would show about the group to outsiders?

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Identification exercise

Adapted from Forbess-Greene (1983) *The Encyclopedia of Icebreakers* University Associates, Inc US

Group members share some important personal information that is revealed by the contents of their wallets, purses, handbags or briefcases.

Each person finds one item (or a few items) that shows something about themselves. The item/s are shown and the person says what it shows about them. Examples are: wallet photos, membership cards, money. The rest of the group can ask questions.

Meeting Record

Date

Present

Absent

Summary of discussion & decisions

Tasks

What?	Who?	By when?

Expectations exercise

Adapted from

Adam Morgan, Institute of Interactive Media and Learning, UTS

Harshman & Phillips (1996) *Team Training: From Startup to High Performance*

McGraw-Hill: New York NY.

Steps

1. Sit together in your group.
2. Each student completes Sheet 1 ('My fellow group members') by interviewing every other student.
3. Everyone writes the answers on Sheet 2 ('Some things to think and talk about') on their own. Give this about 5 minutes.
4. Have a discussion on the questions and answers in Sheets 1 and 2. You might select a facilitator to do this. It could be someone who has nominated this as one of their strengths.
Remember: You are aiming to reach consensus, so everyone should try and be open, light and flexible. Don't back anyone into a corner. Changes of mind should be respected as part of flexible group practice; they're not a loss of face.
4. Record your agreements at the end of the meeting on Sheet 3 ('Group expectations')

Make copies

Three pages follow. You need one copy of the first 2 pages for each member. The group needs one copy of the third.

Other group members

The names of my fellow group members					
Phone/email					
What they like most about group work					
What they dislike most about group work					
What makes them a good team player					
What makes them a poor team player					
What mark are they hoping to achieve?					

Issues to talk over

1. How can the 'likes' of each member be brought out in your group?
2. How can you avoid the dislikes emerging? What will you do if they emerge?
3. How can each person's strengths be brought out?
4. How can you avoid individual weaknesses coming into play? (Work this out now; don't wait till it happens.)

Sheet 3 Expectations

Group expectations

We agree that

We like the following aspects of working in a group:	
We are aware of these difficulties of working in a group:	
We will try and overcome these difficulties by:	
Our strengths seem to be:	
Our weaknesses seem to be:	
The group mark we are aiming for is:	

Action Plan

Discuss each and record your decisions here. There's a Help Sheet at the end of this activity.

Why group work is required in this subject		
The group assignment	Wording of assignment	Assignment tasks and/or stages
How often you'll meet		
Where /how you'll meet		
How long the meetings will last		
Group rules		
Potential problems & their resolution		

Sheet 4 Action Plan

Milestones and deadlines	
Who will do what Name	Tasks

Signatures:

Help Sheet for Action Plan

Issues	Prompts, reminders and activities
Why group work is required in this subject	<p>Why are you working together?</p> <p>Is individual contribution to the group an assessable task? If so, how many marks is it worth? How will it be assessed?</p> <p>What are the benefits of group work in the work sector you are likely to enter?</p> <p>If you don't know, ask your lecturer.</p>
The group assignment	<p>Make sure you all understand the assignment. Is it already divided into tasks, each with allocated marks? If not, can you logically divide it up yourselves?</p>
Number & length of meetings	<p>UTS students on overage meet for an hour once a week. But your group can plan meetings as you think best. If you decide to meet online, commit yourself to a cut off time each week to complete each step.</p> <p>Identify the purpose of each meeting: is it to initiate the tasks? To check in and make sure everyone's up to date? To review the whole assignment?</p> <p>Perhaps you'll allocate different times for different purposes.</p>
When you'll meet	<p>Work out when the whole group has to meet. Are there some reasons for fewer members to meet separately?</p>
Where you'll meet	<p>Check each meeting against everyone's diaries. Check holidays and semester breaks.</p>
How you'll meet	<p>Face to face?</p> <p>Discussion rooms in Library? Book on 9514 3666 or ask at Enquiries Desk. Get in early - they are in heavy demand. Faculty study rooms? Someone's home?</p> <p>Online?</p> <p>Ask your lecturer about setting up a discussion group in UTS Online. Or make your own email list.</p>
Group rules	<p>These group rules of other groups might help you make your own</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>Each speaker will be clear, specific and concise— no five minute speeches.</i> * <i>If you're going to be late, let the group know.</i> * <i>Speaking and listening are equally valued.</i> * <i>Enjoy the process.</i> * <i>We don't have to get it right at first, we just have to get it right.</i> * <i>Everyone has to be the most tolerant person in the group.</i> * <i>The group must agree before someone is identified as not participating or contributing. The person is warned. If the problem continues, the lecturer is notified.</i> * <i>Share problems and questions with each other immediately so they don't magnify.</i>
Potential problems & their resolution	<p>Look back at the Expectations exercise. What problems emerged? Are they solved? Or have you agreed on a strategy to minimise their impact?</p> <p>The FAQ page (Link) might help here.</p>

Milestones and deadlines	<p>Work backwards from the date due.</p> <p>Allow enough time for special needs.</p> <p>Allow enough review time at the end to do another draft of the entire assignment... just in case.</p>
Who will do what	<p>This takes some discussion. If you have time, consider ways you can divide up team tasks: the way your lecturer divided them up? By who is good at what? By preference? By ability and experience? The Belbin team analysis exercise can help you here. It's on Sheet 8 of the Workbook (link for online version).</p> <p>It's usually best to divide the tasks into roles such as research, writing, interviewing, organising interviews, the literature review, preparing the tables and diagrams, completing the statistics, project managing the whole project. (The BELL project management tutorial (link to www.bell.uts.edu.au/pm/index.html) can help you here).</p> <p>Breaking the task into separate areas, then doing them in isolation might sound fine at the beginning but it is usually an awful mess trying to put it all back together at the end.</p>
Signatures	<p>This is a vital step, signifying that everyone in the group agrees to the action plan. Negotiations are over and the assignment work can begin. If anyone is not happy to sign, more negotiation must take place. What is the problem? Can their concerns be accommodated? Perhaps everyone can give a bit in the interests of moving on. Patience and reasonableness will win the day here. If the problem is intractable, ask your lecturer for help. When everyone signs, celebrate. You've already chalked up an accomplishment.</p>

Meeting Record

Date

Present

Absent

Summary of discussion & decisions

Tasks

What?	Who?	By when?

Fast start Expectations

Name					
Special needs					
Desired mark					
Can contribute					
Will rely on others to contribute					
Wants this to happen					
Doesn't want this to happen					

Fast start Contract

Work through each of these discussion points, recording your decision on each one. There's a Help Sheet at the end.

The group assignment	Actual wording	Divided into tasks
How often you'll meet		
Where you'll meet		
How long the meetings will last		
Group rules		

Milestones and deadlines	
Who will do what Name	Tasks

Signatures

Contract Help Sheet

<p>The group assignment Write down exactly what you have to do. Break it into tasks. *See ‘Who will do what’ below.</p>
<p>How often you’ll meet Minimum of once a week, but the more often, the better</p>
<p>Where you’ll meet Online communication is an option, perhaps once you get underway. Ask your lecturer about setting up a discussion group for you in UTS Online. Or agree to email.</p>
<p>How long the meetings will last Minimum of one hour, but sometimes may need to be longer.</p>
<p>Group rules These rules of other groups might help you make your own: <i>*Each speaker will be clear, specific and concise— no five minute speeches.</i> <i>* If you’re going to be late, let the group know.</i> <i>* Speaking and listening are equally valued.</i> <i>* Enjoy the process.</i> <i>* We don’t have to get it right at first, we just have to get it right.</i> <i>* Everyone has to be the most tolerant person in the group.</i> <i>* The group must agree before someone is identified as not contributing or participating. The person will then be warned. Then if the problem continues the lecturer will be notified.</i> <i>* Share problems and confusions with each other immediately so they don’t magnify.</i></p>
<p>Milestones and deadlines Work backwards from the date due. Allow enough time for special needs. Allow enough review time at the end to do another draft of the entire assignment... just in case.</p>
<p>Who will do what This takes some discussion. If you have time, consider ways you can divide up team tasks: the way your lecturer divided them up? By who is good at what? By preference? By ability and experience? Look back to the Expectations exercise. This might help you divide up the tasks by abilities and interests. Be warned: groups that divide the task into separate sections, then go away and complete them without consulting each other, have a terrible time putting the parts all back together at the end. * It is often better to divide the tasks into roles such as research writing, interviewing, organising interviews, reading the literature, preparing the tables and diagrams.</p>
<p>Signatures This is a vital step, signifying that everyone in the group agrees to the contract. Negotiations are over and the assignment work can begin. If anyone is not happy to sign, more negotiation must take place. What’s the problem? Can their concerns be accommodated? Perhaps everyone can give a bit in the interests of moving on. Patience and reasonableness will win the day here. If the problem is intractable, ask your lecturer for help. When everyone signs, celebrate. The group has already chalked up an accomplishment.</p>

The Belbin teamwork system

'What is needed is not well balanced individuals, but individuals who balance well with each other.' Dr Meredith Belbin

Who's Belbin?

Dr. Meredith Belbin is a UK researcher who found that groups need the right mix of people to be effective. His research identified 9 types of people in groups. Fig. 1 shows the nine types with their strengths and weaknesses. Fig. 2 lists the typical sayings of each type. Both will help you identify yourself.

Fig. 1 Nine Belbin types

General role type	BELBIN Team-Role Type	Strengths	(Allowable) Weaknesses
Cerebral	PLANT	Creative, imaginative, unorthodox. Solves difficult problems.	Ignores incidentals. Too pre-occupied to communicate effectively.
	SPECIALIST	Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply.	Contributes only on a narrow front. Dwells on technicalities.
	MONITOR EVALUATOR	Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options. Judges accurately.	Lacks drive and ability to inspire others.
Action-oriented	IMPLEMENTER	Disciplined, reliable, conservative and efficient. Turns ideas into practical actions	Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities.
	SHAPER	Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. The drive and courage to overcome obstacles.	Prone to provocation. Offends people's feelings
	COMPLETER FINISHER	Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors and omissions. Delivers on time.	Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate.
People-oriented	TEAM-WORKER	Co-operative, mild, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens, builds, averts friction.	Indecisive in crunch situations.
	COORDINATOR	Mature, confident, a good chairperson. Clarifies goals, promotes decision-making, delegates well.	Can often be seen as manipulative. Off loads personal work.
	RESOURCE INVESTIGATOR	Extrovert, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities. Develops contacts.	Over - optimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed.

Fig 2. Recognise your type by what you say

Do any of these sound like you?

Belbin type	Favourite phrases and slogans
PLANT	<p>When a problem is baffling, think laterally. Where there's a problem, there's a solution. The greater the problem, the greater the challenge. Do not disturb, genius at work. Good ideas always seem strange at first. Ideas start with dreaming. Without continuous innovation, there is no survival.</p>
SPECIALIST	<p>In this job you never stop learning. Choose a job you love, and you'll never have to work a day of your life. True professionalism is its own reward. My subject is fascinating to me. The more you know, the more you find to discover. It is better to know a lot about something, than a little about everything. A committee is 12 people doing the work of one.</p>
MONITOR EVALUATOR	<p>I'll think it over and give you a firm decision tomorrow. Have we exhausted all the options? If it does not stand up to logic, it's not worth doing! Better to make the right decision slowly than the wrong one quickly. This looks like the best option on balance. Let's weigh up the alternatives. Decisions should not be based purely on enthusiasm.</p>
IMPLE- MENTER	<p>If it can be done, we will do it. An ounce of action is worth a pound of theory. Hard work never killed anybody. The difficult we do it immediately. The impossible takes a little longer. To err is human, to forgive is not company policy. Let's get down to the task in hand. The company has my full support.</p>

Sheet 8 Belbin exercise

SHAPER	<p>Just do it! Say 'no', then negotiate. If you say 'yes I will do it', I expect it to be done. I'm not satisfied we are achieving all we can. I may be blunt, but at least I am to the point. I'll get things moving. When the going gets tough, the tough get going.</p>
COMPLETER FINISHER	<p>This is something that demands our undivided attention. The small print is always worth reading. Murphy's Law 'If that can go wrong will go wrong' ... O'Toole's Law: 'Murphy was an optimist'. There is no excuse for not being perfect. Perfection is only just good enough. A stitch in time saves nine. Has it been checked?</p>
TEAM- WORKER	<p>Courtesy costs nothing. I was very interested in your point of view. If it's all right with you, it's all right with me. Everybody has a good side worth appealing to. If people listened to themselves more, they would talk less. You can always sense a good atmosphere at work. I try to be versatile.</p>
CO- ORDINATOR	<p>Let's keep the main objective in sight. Has anyone else got anything to add to this? We like to reach a consensus before we move forward. Never assume that silence means approval. I think that we should give someone else a chance. Good delegation is an art. Management is the art of getting other people to do all the work.</p>
RESOURCE INVESTI- GATOR	<p>We could make a fortune out of that. Ideas should be stolen with pride. Never reinvent the wheel. Opportunities arise from other people's mistakes. Surely we can exploit that? You can always telephone to find out. Time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted.</p>

Now do these activities...

Activity 1 Identify individual roles

Sit in pairs. Take turns to tell each other about groups you've belonged to. They can include family, friends, work and recreational groups. Describe your role in these groups. Then, with your partner's help, match the description to the Belbin types. Consider that.....

You might be more than one role type.

You might assume different roles in different groups.

You can take a role, even one you aren't familiar with, if the group needs it.

Activity 2 Work out team roles

People volunteer to be Co-ordinator, Completer/Finisher and Recorder for this exercise.

You have to listen to the questions and answers and fill in the team role grid (Fig. 3).

(You can make your own grid if you prefer).

Fig. 3 Team Roles

Name of group member	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
PLANT					
SPECIALIST					
MONITOR EVALUATOR					
IMPLEMENTER					
SHAPER					
COMPLETER FINISHER					
TEAMWORKER					
CO-ORDINATOR					
RESOURCE INVESTIGATOR					

Instructions

** Mark 2 asterisks in the appropriate box if the group member shows strong characteristics of a Belbin type.

* Mark on asterisk if the group member shows the characteristics to some extent.

Activity 3 What's missing?

Answer these questions

What roles are not filled by members of this group?

What action should the group take to overcome this potential problem?

Reference

Belbin M. (1993) *Team Roles at Work*; Butterworth/Heinemann 0 7506 0925 7

Brainstorming

Description

Brainstorming is a popular technique for eliciting all the creative ideas in a group. In normal communication, people often hold back for fear of ridicule or judgement. Brainstorming overcomes the fear factor.

Method

- * Keep the atmosphere relaxed - disciplined but informal
- * Break down barriers
- * Choose a facilitator
- * Define the problem or options clearly
- * Encourage wild ideas. Don't criticise or try to evaluate.
- * Everyone has an equal chance to participate
- * Write down all ideas in the words they are given on flip chart, whiteboard, butchers' paper.
- * Allow time for ideas to gel.
- * Finally analyse / sort / sift / prioritise.

Voting

If you need to, vote on it. Use the weighted voting technique if you like. Here's how it goes: if there are say, 5 options, each person has five votes. You can put the whole 5 on one option if you feel strongly, or spread the votes in any way you want. Everyone votes, and the votes are tallied. It gives a good idea of what a group thinks.

Rules

1. No comment, critical or praising, is permitted during the brainstorm.
2. Wild ideas are welcome.
3. Quantity not quality is desired.
4. The second stage involves refining the first round of ideas by combining some of them or improving them.

Six Thinking Hats

From De Bono E. (1999) *Six Thinking Hats*, US Little Brown & Co (Pap).

This is a well known method of enhancing team communication created by Edward De Bono. It fosters collaboration, creativity and innovation. There are six metaphorical hats. You 'put on' or 'take off' one of these hats to indicate the type of thinking being used. 'Putting them on' and 'taking them off' is essential: you must all be wearing the same hat at the same time. The hats must never be used to categorise people, even though their behaviour may seem to invite this.

White Hat thinking

This covers facts, figures, information needs and gaps. 'I think we need some white hat thinking at this point...' means 'Let's drop the arguments and suggestions and look at the data.'

Red Hat thinking

This covers intuition, feelings and emotions. The red hat allows the thinker to put forward an intuition without any need to justify it. 'Putting on my red hat, I think this is a terrible proposal.' Usually feelings and intuition can only be introduced into a discussion if they are supported by logic. Often the feeling is genuine but the logic is questionable. The red hat gives full permission to a thinker to put forward his or her feelings on the subject at the moment.

Black Hat thinking

This is the hat of judgement and caution. It is a most valuable hat. It is not in any sense an inferior or negative hat. The black hat is used to point out why a suggestion does not fit the facts, the available experience, the system in use, or the path that is being followed. The black hat must always be logical.

Yellow Hat thinking

This is the logical positive— why something will work and why it will offer benefits. It can be used in looking forward to the results of some proposed action, but can also be used to find something of value in what has already happened.

Green Hat thinking

This is the hat of creativity, alternatives, proposals, what is interesting, provocations and changes.

Blue Hat thinking

This is the overview or process control hat. It looks not at the subject itself but at the 'thinking' about the subject. 'Putting on my blue hat, I think we should do some more green hat thinking.'

Thinking about the thinking ...

The six hats represent six modes of thinking and are aids to thinking rather than labels for thinking. The method promotes fuller input from more people. In de Bono's words it 'separates ego from performance'. Everyone is able to contribute to the exploration without denting egos: they are just using one hat or rather. The six hats system encourages performance rather than ego defence. People can contribute under any hat even though they initially support the opposite view. You don't get stuck defending something you said previously.

The key point is that a hat is a direction to think rather than a label for thinking. The key theoretical reasons to use the Six Thinking Hats are to:

- encourage parallel thinking (ie being able to hold different views while a decision is in the process of being made).
- encourage full-spectrum thinking (ie the full range of possibilities)
- separate ego from performance. (You are communicating about an assignment: it's not personal. This technique keeps the personal out.)

Pareto chart

The Pareto Principle

This is a concept of disproportion observed by Vilfredo Pareto (1848 – 1923) that 20% of people in Italy owned 80% of the wealth. Similarly
20% of the time expended produces 80% of the results.
80% of phone calls are made to 20% of people in your phone directory.
20% of streets handle 80% of traffic.
80% of meals ordered in a restaurant come from 20% of the menu.
20% of the paper has 80% of the news.
20% of the people cause 80% of the problems.

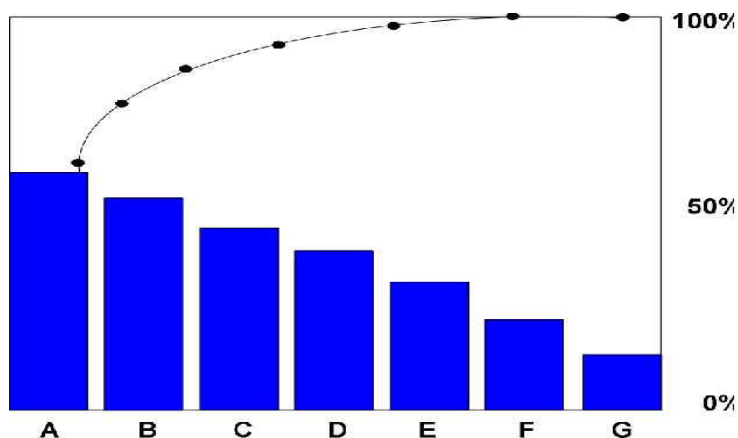
How Pareto helps group work

Pareto's Principle is really a trick to save time. Here are some of its uses:

- * If you can identify the 20% of activity that will produce 80% of your assignment, you can plan accordingly and save a lot of time.
- * In any situation where there are a number of factors, separate the VITAL FEW from the MINOR MANY
- * Don't give equal weight to all factors. Give the VITAL FEW the VIP treatment.
- * Most of your answers will come from a small amount of information (so a huge amount of data is no guarantee of quality information).
- * If you have too much to do in the time available, identify the critical 20% and do that.

Description

Pareto charts are bar charts. The bars are arranged in descending order, with the largest to the left. Each bar represents a cause or problem. The chart shows the relative contribution of each smaller element to the total.



Method

1. List all elements of the issue.
2. Measure the elements for their importance.
3. Graph the elements according to their size.

4. Work on the largest elements first.

Benchmarking

What is it?

Benchmarking is a method of measuring your processes against those of recognised leaders. It helps you to establish priorities and targets.

Use in assignments

If your assignment asks you to compare or evaluate something (such as an aspect of your organisation or your project compared to similar professional projects) benchmarking may be an ideal way to do it.

Group work is ideal to undertake a benchmarking exercise as there are several steps. A benchmarking exercise also benefits from having more than one mind applied to it.

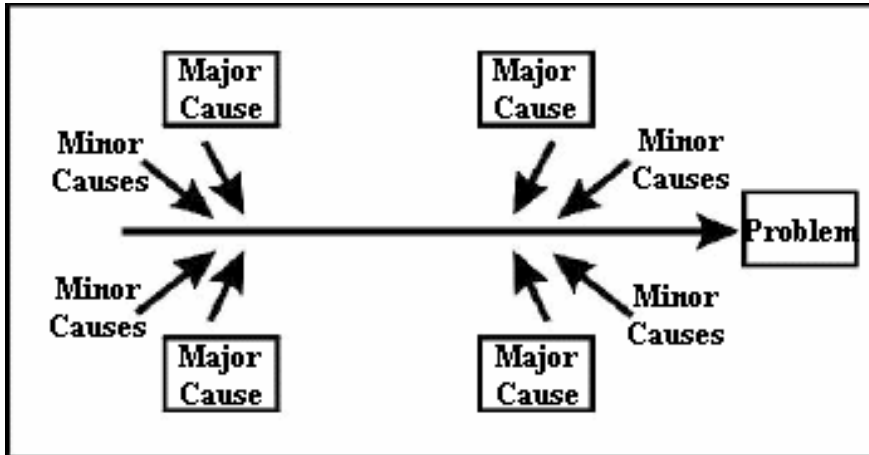
Steps

1. Identify **processes** to benchmark and their key characteristics.
2. Determine **who** to benchmark: companies, organisations, or processes.
3. Determine benchmarks by **collecting and analysing data** — from direct contact, surveys, interviews, technical journals, and advertisements.
4. From each benchmark item identified, determine the "**best of class**" target.
5. **Evaluate your process** in terms of the benchmarks.
6. If relevant, trace the steps you would take to reach or exceed the highest standard you have identified.

Cause and effect diagram

What is it?

Cause and effect diagrams show the relationship between an effect (problem/ issue/ process or event) and its potential causes.



Method

1. Name the problem, event or issue
2. Decide the major categories of causes.
3. Brainstorm for causes and group them by major cause.
4. Eliminate causes that do not apply.
5. Discuss the remaining causes and decide which are most important.

Consensus Decision Making

Description

All members equally participate in a discussion of the pros and cons of the issues. Consensus occurs when all members of the group agree to a particular course of action or decision.

Uses

- To benefit from each person's unique knowledge, logic and creativity--everyone is a resource.
- To reach a greater commitment and support of a decision and its implementation.

Rule

All participants should be free to voice their opinions and everyone should be open to opposing views.

Method

1. Review ideas for possible courses of action generated by **brainstorming** or some other technique. "Clean up" the list by eliminating duplicates and combining ideas where appropriate.
2. To narrow down a long list of ideas, get all group members to place a tick next to the 3 to 5 ideas listed that they consider to be the best.
3. Take a piece of paper for each of the best choices. Write each choice at the top of the page and draw a line down the middle of the page to create two columns. Label one column "Advantages" and the other column "Disadvantages."
4. Group members suggest advantages and disadvantages for each choice.
5. Based upon the analysis, select the choice with the greatest impact. The facilitator should not allow any decision to be reached without everyone's participation.
6. Try to achieve a unanimous decision. Although unanimous agreement may be impossible, it is important that everyone feels they can work with and support the group's decision. If consensus cannot be reached after discussing all relevant points, the facilitator should ask the participants if they will support the option with the most support.

Adapted from Scholtes, P., Joiner, B. & Streibel, B. (1996) *The Team Handbook: Second Edition*. Madison, WI: Joiner Associates, Inc.

Nominal Group technique

Description

Nominal group technique (NGT) is a way of achieving consensus. It is used to generate ideas and survey the opinions of a small group.

The technique works because it is structured to

- focus on problems, not people;
- open lines of communication;
- ensure participation;
- tolerate conflicting ideas;
- build consensus and commitment;
- use a democratic voting system to decide if there is not consensus.

Method

- State the issue.
- Generate ideas through 5 to 10 minutes of quiet thinking time and no discussion.
- Gather ideas, one idea at a time, and record on paper.
- Process/clarify ideas, eliminating duplicates, and combine like ideas. Limit discussion to brief explanations of logic or analysis of an item and brief agreement/disagreement statements. Focus on clarification of meaning, not arguing points.
- Set priorities silently. Each person picks top (say) 5 items and ranks them from 1 to 5.
- Count votes. There may be a clear winner. If it's not clear, identify the favourites and vote again.
- Develop an action plan.

Adapted from Scholte, B et al. (1996) *The Team Handbook, 2nd Edition*. Madison, WI: Joiner Associates Inc.

Multi-voting

Description

Multi-voting is a way to reach consensus on the most important items from a list. This list could be generated through a brainstorming exercise.

Method

1. Take a first vote: each person votes for as many items as desired, but only once per item.
2. Circle the items receiving a relatively higher number of votes than the other items. (Example: A team has ten members. Items receiving five or more votes are circled.)
3. Take a second vote: each person votes for a number of items equal to one-half of the total number of circled items, again only once per item. (Example: if six items received five or more votes during the first vote, then each person gets to vote three times during the second vote.)
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 until the list is reduced to three to five items, which can be further analysed. *Never multivote down to only one.*

Adapted from Scholte, P. et al (1996) *The Team Handbook, 2nd Edition*. Madison, WI: Joiner Associates Inc.

Communication tips

- Listening is as important as speaking. *Really* listen to what someone is saying.
- Up to 80% of all communication is non-verbal. This means it's very important to be aware of your expression, gesture and other body language.
- Use checking questions to make sure you've understood. This usually means paraphrasing what the person has said; for example, 'As I understood it you're saying we should rewrite the conclusion section because it's too general and doesn't reflect our data accurately. Is that right?'
- Strike the right balance between saying what you think and restraint. Both are good tools. Wisdom comes in using each at the right time.
- Allow for cultural differences. Talk to someone in the Equity and Diversity Unit (link to www.uts.edu.au/div/eounit) if your group needs some help or advice in this area.
- Keep the atmosphere professional, calm and friendly. Remember that your contact with each other is probably limited. The aim is to work together well on this project; you don't have to have ongoing relationships.
- Practise good workplace communications. This is a rare opportunity to add a skill to your CV.
- Be kind. Keep perspective and a sense of humour.

Reflective Assessment tasks

1. Reflective journal

A reflective journal is a form of personal diary that you keep throughout the group project. In it you make regular entries about your group activities, usually after each group meeting, mentioning such things as

- Who was present
- What took place in the group
- Your observation of the groups dynamics
- Your participation in the group
- Your ongoing assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the group process.
- Final entry: an overall assessment of what you would suggest if the group was to do another project together; what you personally have learned from the process.

2. Reflective essay or exam question

This is a short writing task (the essay is usually about 1500 words) about your group experience. It usually asks you to reflect on your role in the group, that is

- What you did as an individual within the group
- What the group as a unit accomplished
- An assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of both you as a group member and of the group itself.
- The skills you have learned and/or improved by participating in the group (eg giving and taking)

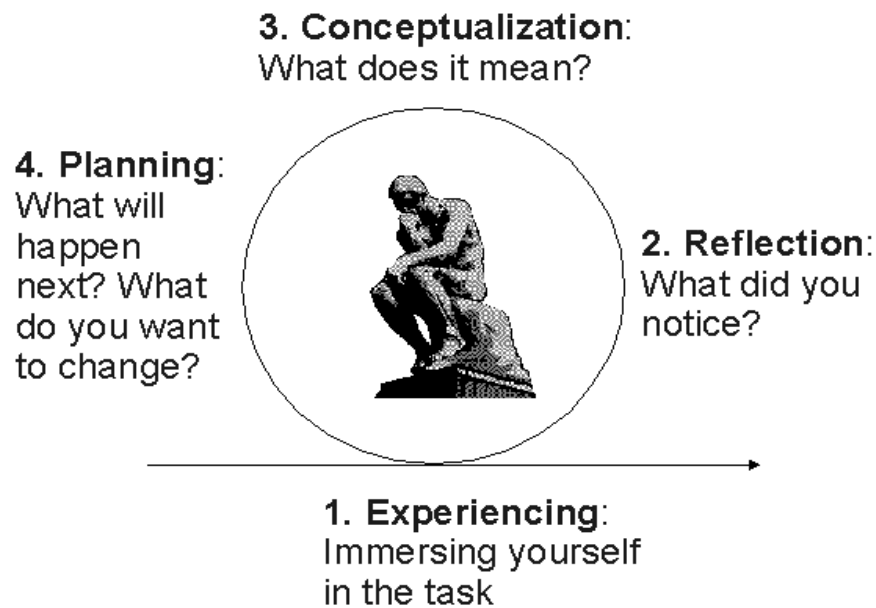
How is it useful?

A journal lets you look back on your own and the group's development. It also helps your lecturer monitor and assess individual and group progress.

Group reflection exercise

There is no point thinking back on your experience of group work unless it helps you improve your work or study in the future. The idea of reflection is to escape from the cycle of repeating your mistakes. David Kolb's Learning Cycle is based on the idea that the more often people reflect on a task, the more often they can modify and refine their efforts. He talks about 4 stages in the reflective process:

David Kolb's Learning Cycle



Steps to group reflection

1. **Experiencing:** You have already completed Kolb's first stage, Immersing yourself in the task. Now—
2. **Reflection:** Reflect on the question, "What did you notice about the way your group undertook its tasks?"
3. **Conceptualisation:** Interpret your answers to question 2. What does each mean?
4. **Planning:** Think about groups you will have to work in the future. What would you want to change about how future groups work? How will you change your own contribution to the group?

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.