

THE PROCESS OF CREATING AND MANAGING GROUPS

When breaking students into groups, it is important to have a clear plan. **It is a good idea to decide what roles each student will play within the group, what product the group will be producing, and how you will grade that product before assigning the students a group assignment.**

The following steps can serve as guidance regarding how to plan, execute, and grade a group assignment.

STEP 1: PLAN

Before breaking students into groups, think about the course learning objectives and consider whether some form of peer learning could be helpful. Have a clear rationale for creating groups, one that you communicate to students. You will need this rationale to positively motivate students and give them a clear direction. **Before breaking students into groups, you must decide:**

- The length of time that students need to think about a problem or issue.
- The number of students who need to be involved to create the dynamic of that you want (research shows that groups of 3 members work best for short-term work).
- The formation of a group—as an informal group for a single class or as a formalized group or team.
- The assignment of group members: random, self-selected (by students), or instructor-assigned. Ideally, students express preferences to the instructor who then creates balanced groups.
- The product for which you want to hold students responsible.

STEP 2: ASSIGN GROUP ROLES

Assign group roles—particularly for informal, in-class group work—to increase student accountability.



STEP 3: DEVELOP A GRADING RUBRIC

Formative Feedback (*non-graded feedback to the learner, designed to modify and improve learning*): Use verbal feedback during in-class group work. Walk around the room, check in with each group, ask for questions and listen to the group. Group members are more likely to ask more promptly for clarification when you approach them.

Hold groups accountable by holding a quick reporting of groups back to class—either all groups or a random selection. Have note-takers turn in their sheets. Respond to group work and involve the class in assessing the benefits of the group’s work. Extend the class discussion into new areas and pursue new implications.

Summative Feedback (“grades”): Give groups clear information about grading and whether you will use individual or group grades, teacher or peer grades, or some combination.

Stage grading for larger assignments: Divide tasks into processes (graded as the semester occurs) and product (draft and final product, as well as presentation).

Grading for process allows students to be recognized for the stages of work in a complex project—such as proposals—on the way to the product.

REFERENCES

Millis, B., & Rhem, J. (2010). *Cooperative learning in higher education: New pedagogies and practices for teaching in higher education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.



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