Policy on Assessment of Group Work for Taught Provision

2016-17

Applicable to all cohorts
Policy on Assessment of Group Work for Taught Provision

1. Definitions

1.1. The Policy applies to situations:

1.1.1. where a group of students (i.e. 2 or more) are assessed by a single, jointly produced assignment (whether this is a product, e.g. a report, or a performance e.g. a presentation);

1.1.2. where students are set individual assignments which demonstrate learning derived from formal group-work and where, therefore, the quality of the individual assignment will be impacted by the effectiveness of the group-work element.

1.2. Guidance on academic good practice in the use of group-work recommends that group-work should be seen as an integral and progressive element of each university programme, enabling the development of group-working skills. Detailed guidance is provided in the annexe to this Policy. It is suggested that academic staff review the contents of this document prior to introducing elements of assessed group-work within programmes /modules.

1.3. It must be ensured that students are treated equitably in group working activities and that these activities do not overburden students at the expense of other methods of teaching, learning and assessment. The assessment process must not be biased according to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or belief, age, class or disability.

2. Requirements of Schools/Institutes

2.1. Module Specification

The module specification must clearly set out the nature of the group assignment, with the learning outcomes clearly relating to either the group-work process, and/or, product(s). The module co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring the module specification is kept up-to-date. Assessed group-work cannot be introduced into the assessment model during delivery of a module unless it is already permitted within the relevant module specification.

2.2. Module/Programme/Department Handbook

The information provided to students must clearly indicate:

a) how students will be assigned to groups (by module tutor or self-selecting), whether a student is permitted to request a change to group membership and, if so, how this should be effected. Where groups are self-selecting the information should articulate minimum / maximum numbers;

b) the contribution of the group assignment to the final module mark;

c) the nature of the assignment and the assessment criteria to be used;

d) the process by which the single group mark will be adjusted (where required) to reflect individual contribution e.g. by peer moderation of contribution, individual viva, electronic recording of on-line contribution etc., and the range of adjustment which may be made. If a student in any particular group has a declared disability, the module co-ordinator will monitor the peer moderation process to ensure that the particular student has not been treated unfairly as a result of his/her disability (see Section 7);
e) how the assignment should be submitted, including any co-requirements for submission of individual peer moderation;

f) how the assessment will be moderated where the group assignment is a performance rather than a product (e.g. a group presentation);

g) that all students are advised to ensure, as far as possible, that if the assignment is a single group product, the final piece of submitted work is academically sound, without elements of plagiarism or other features of poor practice. Staff should advise students to retain copies of the final piece of work, and of their contributions to it, until grades have been confirmed by the relevant Board of Examiners;

h) where peers are invited to give feedback on each other’s work, which does NOT form part of the assessment, it should be made clear that such feedback will not be taken into account by the academic marking the module;

i) whether or not anonymous marking will be used. Where it is not feasible for coursework to be marked anonymously then this must be explained within the module specification. In cases of a group-work assignment, it is acknowledged that anonymous marking is not always practical or possible;

j) how feedback will be given. Feedback on the assignment must be given to all students within the group and not solely to an individual representative of the group;

k) information on what support is available, and from where it can be accessed, in cases where a group or individuals in a group feel that the group is not functioning effectively;

l) the responsibilities of students (see Section 5);

m) how claims for extenuating circumstances will be handled (see Section 6).

3. Re-assessment opportunities

3.1. The re-assessment requirements will depend on the nature of the module learning outcomes. Learning outcomes which do not refer to learning about group process but are concerned with the task may be appropriately met by setting an alternative individual task. Tutors should be mindful in this case of the complexity of the group task and should ensure that any individual task set as a re-assessment covers the full range of outcomes.

3.2. Where module learning outcomes do not refer to learning about group processes, then it will be appropriate to use individual re-assessment tasks in situations where one or more members of the group have failed and the other members have passed the assignment.

3.3. Where learning outcomes do include those gained from the process of working as part of a group then any re-assessment task must include the opportunity to meet these learning outcomes.

4. Situations where the group size is reduced after the start of the group-work activity

4.1. If the group size changes after the start of the group-work activity this should be taken into account when assessing the group product i.e. when the assignment has been produced by fewer students than originally envisaged.

4.2. The monitoring of group process should be sufficient to allow the tutor to intervene expeditiously when a group falls below the optimum range for group size for the particular context. The intervention made will depend on the judgement of the tutor but should involve
discussion with the group members. It could include merging groups and/or amending the form of expected task output(s), whilst ensuring that the learning outcomes can still be met.

4.3. If the group reduces to one person for whatever reason, and the learning outcomes and assessment require the opportunity of experiencing a group process, the remaining individual should be integrated into another group with appropriate support/guidance for this process to both the individual and the members of the group being joined.

5. Responsibilities of students

5.1. Students should be informed that:

5.1.1. all members of the group need to ensure, as far as possible, that if the assignment is a single group product, the final piece of work is academically sound, without elements of plagiarism or other features of poor practice;

5.1.2. all members of the group should, where practical, retain copies of the final piece of work, and of their contributions to it, until grades have been confirmed at the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners;

5.1.3. all members of a group are responsible for monitoring the group’s progress and should be prepared to access support from the module tutor(s) if the group is not functioning effectively;

5.1.4. individual students who feel that their group is not functioning effectively and/or are not happy with their treatment by the rest of the group should inform the tutor concerned as soon as possible.

6. Extenuating circumstances

6.1. Students should be informed that:

6.1.1. claims for extenuating circumstances by individual students within the group will be dealt with in accordance with the Policy on Extenuating Circumstances (Appendix M to the Code of Practice on Assessment) http://www.liverpool.ac.uk/aqsd/academic-codes-of-practice/code-of-practice-on-assessment/

Any influence on the effectiveness of the group-work activity will be considered when marks are awarded to all within the group;

6.1.2. where a student is unable to make a contribution due to circumstances likely to be considered valid for an extenuating circumstances claim, each member of the group is responsible for informing the module co-ordinator as soon as possible after they become aware of this. If other members are not aware of an individual student’s circumstances, the module co-ordinator will exercise appropriate academic judgement;

6.1.3. where one or more of the learning outcomes of a module is to be assessed by group-work activities, it should be identified how the group-work component will be assessed if an individual student has a re-sit opportunity. Reassessment must enable a student to demonstrate the same intended learning outcomes as the first assessment.

7. Declared disabilities

7.1. Where a member of a group has a declared disability (as previously notified to the University’s Disability Support Team), highlighted via the Student Support Information Sheet (SSIS) on the class list in Spider, module co-ordinators should ensure that reasonable adjustments are in place, where possible, to ensure that the student can actively participate in the group activity or otherwise meet the learning outcomes of the module.

7.2. Module co-ordinators should not reveal details of the disability to other members of the group, unless the student specifically requests it or gives permission following a discussion with the module co-ordinator.
7.3. Module co-ordinators should consult their department/school Disability and Dyslexia Co-ordinator (DDC) in the first instance for advice on any appropriate adjustments to be made within the group-work if a group member appears to require disability support. The Disability Support Team (DST) website can be viewed at http://www.liv.ac.uk/studentsupport/disability/index.htm

7.4. Where a student declares a disability after the group-work process has started, the module co-ordinator should:
   7.4.1. check via Spider if an SSIS is in place,
   7.4.2. if an SSIS is not highlighted, the department/school DDC should be contacted to ascertain if the student is already known to the DDC/DST but that an SSIS is not in place; if this is the case, the module co-ordinator should discuss possible appropriate support measures with the student,
   7.4.3. if a student is not known to the DDC or DST, the module co-ordinator should encourage the student to make themselves known to the DST.

8. Related Policies

8.1. Students and staff should also note the University’s Dignity at Work and Study policy, which states that “It is the responsibility of all members of the University community to behave professionally, courteously and respectfully towards each other”. https://www.liv.ac.uk/intranet/hr/diversity-equality/dignityatworkandstudy/policyprocedure/