

Working in Groups

During your study and subsequent career you will be required to work collaboratively in groups. At university you may be expected to do this face to face or online in your tutorials, workshops, during practical work, or outside of the classroom. If you are asked to complete an assessment, all the members of your group will be expected to contribute to the final product. This means that everybody will need to work together to plan, research, write and complete the assignment. Outlined below are some strategies to help you attain success when working in groups during your studies and professional career.

At your first meeting – *Plan your project and stick to it.*



Get to know your group members: Learn about the background, experience and skills of each member of the group. Collate contact details.



Analyse the task together: Go over the assessment materials as a group. Break down the task into its parts so you plan and equitably assign work to group members.



Create a timeline and schedule future meetings: Create a timeline that schedules future meetings and sets deadlines for each stage of work e.g. research, writing, reviewing, editing, proofreading, and final submission.



Allocate tasks and roles: Agree on what each member of the group will do, what their role will be, and when tasks need to be completed by. You may like to do this in the form of a **group contract**. Assign roles early as everyone needs to contribute.

Group Roles – *Assign responsibilities and set expectations.*

Organising your group into allocated roles will ensure it runs smoothly. It is important to select a leader early to facilitate work and future meetings. Some common group roles include:

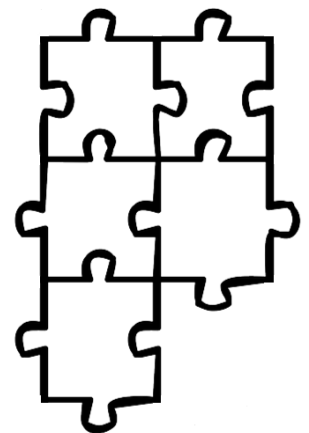
Chair or Coordinator: Keeps the group focused and organised, guides task breakdown, ensures every member of the group contributes.

Thinker or Critic: Asks questions to promote rigorous discussion, critically reflects on group ideas and decisions to test their validity.

Recorder: Keeps track of group activities, documents or summarises group meetings while actively contributing.

Conciliator: Attempts to resolve conflicts, promotes group cohesion, and facilitates comfortable discussion.

Explainer or Interpreter: Restates key points or ideas, ensures all members of the group understand discussions, tasks and responsibilities



N.B: These roles may naturally occur within the group formation process, or your group may choose to formally assign them. Rotating these responsibilities can help ensure no one member of the group feels overburdened.

Communicating and Coordinating Work – *Communicate regularly and often.*



Work out your communication method: Regular communication during the project is important to keep things on track. Decide how and when the group will do this.



Consider using online project management tools: There are a range of different platforms you can use to keep track of the project, communicate and share files. Some options include: Google Drive, One Drive, or Trello.



Keep records: Keep track of you work, communications, and meetings. You may be asked to provide records as evidence of group work for assessment purposes. It also helps the team stay on task.

N.B: **Online group work** is possible if you get organised and establish clear regular communication channels. Don't underestimate the importance of planning thoroughly during your early meetings.

Group Contracts – *Keep everyone accountable.*

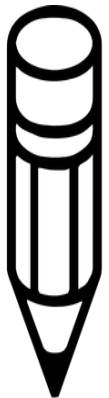
Contracts help set expectations for the group by outlining the level of commitment required by each member. Below are sections to include in a group contract:

Group members contact details: A contract is a great place to record these details, as it can act as the group's central reference document to help coordinate the project.

Communication and meetings: Record the group's expectations of meeting and communication frequency. Set out the communication channels that will be used.

Skills and roles: Outline what each group member can do and their assigned role. This could be presented as a table so you can match strengths with appropriate responsibilities.

Deadlines, tasks and review process: Provide an outline of the projects main tasks and the completion deadlines. It is important that this includes a review process.



Managing Group Conflict – *Cooperate and Collaborate.*

Conflict does not have to stop your group from completing its tasks. It can help growth if the focus remains on resolving problems and completing tasks. Below are some tips to help:



Deal with the problem: If issues arise deal with them promptly and calmly, focus on the project and what needs to be done rather than taking it personally.



Demonstrate fairness and be open-minded: Try to consider all sides of the issue, be fair and listen to different points of view.



Work together: When a problem does arise try to resolve it as a group, brainstorm solutions together or consider compromises. Work through the problem and find an acceptable solution.

N.B: For further advice visit the Study Support page on [Working in Groups](#).

Need more help?

Study Support, USQ Library can help you to develop your academic learning language and maths skills for success at university. Consultations are available face-to-face, via video chat, by phone or email.

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