

## A guide to successful group work

### What is group work and what will be required of me?

While studying you will be required to take part in group assignments. This will mean that you will have to work from 1-5 others (this could vary depending on the area of study) to create something together to submit.

You may choose your own groups or this may be determined by your tutors. Regardless of this you will be required to work together as a team towards a common goal. How you divide the different aspects of the work up in your group will be up to you and your group members.

Remember that different people will have differing strengths and weaknesses. Being part of a group is about finding your own strengths, utilising them and developing them but also finding your weaknesses and working on these.



### Belbin's team roles

Belbin (1981) put forward the idea that there are 9 team roles that you can play, while part of a group.

Each team role has a strength or key contribution that they will provide, but each role will also have a flipside or weakness. Don't worry about the weakness, the idea is in a group there lots of strengths which will propel the group forward

The link below is to the different team roles that you may be. It may be that you are a combination of a few of the roles.

[http://www.belbin.com/content/page/49/BELBIN\(uk\)-2011-TeamRoleSummaryDescriptions.pdf](http://www.belbin.com/content/page/49/BELBIN(uk)-2011-TeamRoleSummaryDescriptions.pdf)

Why not sit down with your group and decide what roles each team member thinks they are? This could help with the dividing up of work task as everyone will be clear of what other member's strengths are.

### Top tips for successful group work

#### 1. Divide the work out

Ensure that the work is distributed out. However this is, whether this is evenly or task based

#### 2. Write down what has been decided

This could be a simply list or table with names and tasks alongside, or you can go one step further and take minutes for your meetings. This way if for some reason some members can't make a meeting, they will know what they and the rest of the group are up to.

#### 3. Set realistic deadlines

Once tasks have been divided up, ensure the group arrange a time a review where the members are up to with their tasks as a check that the group is moving towards or achieving their goals.

#### 4. Allow yourself and others to have their voice heard

There will always be some members of a group who are more dominant when discussing or debating a topic in a group environment. It is important from the start that the group has set some ground rules for when this occurs. It's vital for a group to work that each member has a chance for their voice to be heard.

#### 5. If someone isn't pulling their weight address as a group

If the group feel there is one or more people who aren't meeting their deadlines, but there seems to be no good reasons why, address this issue as a group with the individual(s) as there could be good reasons why this is.

#### 6. Use technology available to you

If you can, use technology to support your group work. This can be for communication or sharing of work. For example, using Mahara or Google Drive will mean that you can collaborate on the same piece of work if necessary or alternatively share documents with group members. This will save the confusion of 'which is the latest version'.

#### 7. Difficulty working with someone in the group

If you are in a group with someone you find it difficult to work with it can be frustrating. However ensuring that the above points are addressed and the group members have an understanding of what is expected of each of them the group should run smoothly. Remember, you are all trying to reach the same goal.

## References

Belbin, M. (1981). *Management Teams*. London; Heinemann. ISBN 0-470-27172-8.

