Facilitating group work

INCLUSIVITY DEVELOPMENT WITH PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY

What?	How?	Why?
Give prior notification of group work activities	Provide timetabled details at the start of the module in the course handbook, include when groups will be formed and how. Also make announcements in lectures. Consistency across programme is important.	Allows the student and notetaker / study assistant to prepare themselves, including possibly with a strategy such as beginning to make acquaintances or sit in a certain place in the teaching rooms.
Always allocate group membership and roles	Assign members on a randomised basis, sometimes also stratified to ensure balanced representation (e.g. gender). Ensure students are allocated specific roles, e.g. chair, note-taker, scheduler. Emphasise the importance of professional skills. Provide relevant training.	Allows for different individual strengths and reduces anxieties. Encourages a more professional attitude. Friendship groups are not authentic and may lead to more time spent on chatter than work. They turn a spotlight on other learners who have lower levels of social interaction.
Monitor progress	Require shared documents to be uploaded to Moodle (DLE). Set interim deadlines.	Allows staff to monitor and moderate if need be, avoiding 'free-riders' or domination by individuals.
Facilitate professional group communication	Encourage use of Moodle (and discourage use of social media) for group meeting arrangements and apologies for absence.	Avoids distraction on social media sites and accounts for certain dislikes and concerns of bullying. Encourages professionalism and focusses attention on course material.
Ensure fair assessment and marking	Allow for mix of tutor and peer input, collective and individual contributions, can be done via PepplePad. Set interim formative deadlines. Consider different methods for providing formative feedback, e.g. groups to self-assess or peer-assess each other.	More transparent and fair. Avoids bias from group towards any individual.

What?	How?	Why?
Incorporate student feedback	Provide opportunities for students to feedback on individual input to group effort. Anonymity essential.	Avoids feelings of injustice or having to do others' work to avoid grades being affected.

If as part of the module outline it says you will be allocated randomly based on student number, that's what the student is dealing with, that's what they do and then we make a plan to overcome that. If that's not known and on the day it says there's group work and they've put all this prep in and then on the day, "Right, you, you and you. You, you and you. Panic!"

I think one of the most difficult things that all of my students have found with group work is where they'll do a lot of the work and you get the people who don't. And they haven't got the social skills or the confidence to be able to voice that injustice or to process that injustice, so they retreat and then it affects their grades as well.

If we know there is a group work assessment of this format in week 10, the student can be looking from week 7 as to which student she wants to pair up with, be part of a group with and approach them prior to the lecturer announcing it. The other students appreciate it because - "ooh we hadn't seen that in the module guide, oh what have we got to do?"

Further information:

https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/teaching-and-learning/inclusivity

https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/disability-and-dyslexia

7 Steps to using group work in your teaching: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/teaching-and-learning/guidance-and-resources/7-step-series