



# Supporting Students in Group Work

## Challenging Work

*Group work is challenging for many students to manage, especially when they have busy lives. These tips should help you support students as they try to navigate the challenges of working in groups.*

### **1. Remind students they don't have to meet in person.**

Yes, their projects are important, but there are many, many options for them to discuss virtually. If you haven't already done so, set up group discussion forums for all groups in Moodle. The Moodle Support Team can help you with this if you don't know how to do this.

### **2. Whenever possible, ask students to create group agreements, contracts, or charters, so it's clear who is responsible for what—complete with agreement about what happens if group members don't agree or don't complete their work.**

It's not likely students will agree all the time, especially when their grades are involved. Provide students with a template to create a set of agreements to help them complete their work smoothly, including provisions for what they can do if they don't agree—and what will happen if someone from the group isn't contributing. Need help with this? Contact the CELT Team at [celt@tru.ca](mailto:celt@tru.ca). Also, [Carnegie Mellon University's Eberley Center has some helpful templates here.](#)

### **3. Encourage students to come up with a team name.**

This may sound silly, but belonging to a team with a name helps students feel they belong. Team names help groups form identities, and this helps create community. Community is especially important when groups cannot meet in person.

### **4. Remind students that they can accomplish more as part of a group than any one student can accomplish individually.**

This helps them understand the rationale of group work in a time that isn't conducive to group meetings. Allow them to see that the group's success depends on everyone contributing, and that their success is linked to the success of others.

### **5. Provide examples of how students can break projects up to work independently**

Can you help students divide tasks or content? Can projects be divided in ways that allow students to work to their strengths?

### **6. Provide both individual and group grades, if possible.**

Students need to feel like they have some autonomy over their own grades. Ask students to self-assess and describe their own contribution to the group project. Students also need to feel accountable to the group, so ask them to peer-assess and describe their own contribution to the group project. We in CELT can help you create rubrics for this; e-mail us at [celt@tru.ca](mailto:celt@tru.ca). Also, [Carnegie Mellon University's Eberley Center has some helpful templates here.](#)

## 7. Ask students to reflect on their learning from the group project.

Provide them with prompts, such as “What was the most important thing you learned about [TOPIC] from working on this project?,” and “What are you most proud of with this project?,” and “If you could do it all over again, what would you do differently?” These kinds of prompts can help students feel positively about their group experience, and reflection fosters deeper learning from that experience.

### Resources

- Barkley, E. F., et al. (2014). *Collaborative learning techniques: A handbook for college faculty*. (2 edition). Jossey-Bass.
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