This page contains ideas for supporting students as they prepare group presentations and write reports of their group activity.

Allow your students to learn from the experience and findings of other groups by having them share the results of group work with the rest of the class. They can share through group oral presentations, poster presentations and group reports. If you use group writing, you can ask students to provide feedback on the reports of other groups, based on the specified marking criteria.

Presentations and reports might be about the key issues and findings associated with the group task or research project, or the processes of group work—what worked, what didn’t work, and how the group could improve next time—or they might involve a combination of the two.

### Helping students plan for group presentations

Provide students with some simple guidelines for giving group presentations, to enhance the quality of their future presentations both at university and professionally. You might like to give them the following questions on planning their group presentation. Allow them time in class to discuss the questions and plan their presentations. Maybe have them submit their question responses, so that you can provide some formative feedback before they present.

**Student handout 1**

**Planning your group presentation**
What are we going to present?
What will the overall structure look like?
How are we going to divide up the presentation?
Who is going to present what?
What audio-visual aids or handouts will we need?
How will we introduce the presentation, link the parts together and conclude?
How are we going to keep the audience interested, active and involved?


In addition, you could provide groups with a checklist, such as the one below, to help them develop a thoughtful and engaging presentation.

**Student handout 2**

**Checklist for group presentations**
In planning our presentation we have:

☐ Found ways to keep the audience interested

☐ Avoided including too much content

☐ Made it clear where we are going (at the start, linking sections etc.)

☐ Made sure that each presenter states how their section fits in with the rest

☐ Developed clear and appropriate visuals (PowerPoint slides, diagrams etc.) and handouts

☐ Worked out ways to involve the audience (e.g. invited comments, encouraged questions)

☐ Allowed time for questions, and thought through what people might ask

☐ Summarised appropriately, outlining key points

☐ Worked out how we are going to gauge what the audience already knows

☐ Rehearsed our presentation and given each other feedback (checked timing etc.)

☐ Prepared index cards or skeleton notes to refer to (rather than reading notes in full)

(Adapted from Gibbs, *Learning in Teams*, 1994, pp. 50–51.)

The Oral Communication Toolkit contains a number of handouts that students might find useful when preparing presentations. These include:

- Basic principles of effective communication
- A checklist to help students prepare for oral presentations
- Guidelines for giving seminar presentations
- A planning tool to help students structure their presentation
- Tips for speaking to an audience
- Guidelines for producing visual aids
- Guidelines for answering questions.

Supporting students in writing a group report
Writing a group report requires effective organisation, time management and communication skills. Students often find report writing on their own challenging, and group writing can be even more intimidating if students are not given some guidelines on how to approach it. Without guidelines, one or two students in a group often end up writing the group report, and this can create workload issues, and resentment when marks are distributed.

Support students in writing a group report by providing guidelines for structuring the report and dividing the workload — who will write what sections and take responsibility for editing, proofreading, publishing.

Students’ approach to a group writing task will depend on the nature of that task. One of the following 3 options may suit:

**Option 1 — One student in the group writes the report on behalf of the group.**

This option can result in the writer taking on too much of the workload. It may be suitable, however, if the non-writing members of the group have been given responsibility for other major tasks. The advantages include:

- Groups can choose the best writer in their group.
- The report will have a consistent style.
- The writing will take up less of the group’s time (although is time consuming for the report writer).

The obvious disadvantage is that students, particularly those who could improve their writing skills, do not get the opportunity to practise their writing. In addition, the report does not benefit from the diverse ideas and experience of the group, and doesn’t prepare students for a team presentation if one is required.

**Option 2 — Group members write one section of the report each.**

Students divide the task into sections. Each student writes one section, and then the group assembles the report by piecing the sections together.

This might be a suitable option if students are writing about their particular areas of research or expertise as required by the task or project. Students may consider this approach more equitable and it breaks the task down into more manageable sections.

However, it does not require students to work collaboratively on the report in terms of developing ideas and shaping its overall structure. Also, it may be difficult to link the sections together and make the report flow, some sections may require more time and effort than others, it may be difficult to coordinate, and students do not get the opportunity to explore other sections through the writing process. Like Option 1, this approach does not allow students to draw on the collective ideas and diverse experience of the group.

**Option 3 — Students write the report collaboratively and experience various roles**

While this option may be more time consuming, it gives students the opportunity to experience report writing as a staged process involving several drafts, revision, rewriting and, importantly, the giving and receiving of feedback.

The following handout makes suggestions for how students might approach a collaborative group report.

**Student handout 3**

| Steps in writing a collaborative group report |
Plan your report

As a group, meet to discuss and agree on the overall structure of your report—that is, what sections it should have, and what the function of each section is. Roughly what should go in each section?

Create an outline

As a group, create an outline for your report that consists of a list of contents and/or a paragraph explaining what each section will be about. Clarify how each section relates to all the others.

Decide roughly how long (how many words or pages) each section should be.

Who does what?

For each section of the report, decide who is going to write it, and who is going to review it (you might choose to have more than one reviewer for each section). Everyone in the group should write and review at least one section.

The role of the reviewer is to meet with the writer and discuss the outline of the relevant section, read and provide feedback on written drafts, and review the completed section(s).

Other possible roles

You might also like to select members of your group to perform the following roles:

- Editor: works on improving the grammar, overall style and consistency of the report
- Proofreader: reads the report carefully and corrects spelling errors, references etc.
- Publisher: tidies up the report (presentation, formatting and layout etc.)

Towards the finished draft

As a group, discuss the whole draft:

- Is the purpose clear?
- Are the conclusions clear?
- Do all the sections fit together well?
- Does the report address the assessment criteria?
- Are all the required components covered adequately?
- Have we kept within the required word limits?
- What do we like about the report?
- What could we do to make it better?

Make notes during the discussion and then decide who should do what. If only small changes are required, this might be best done by the editor for your group. As a final step, it can be useful to put yourselves in the role of the marker—make comments, give the report a mark for various sections and overall, and check it against the marking criteria. Alternatively, you could ask another group to adopt the role of marker and provide feedback on your report.
Reporting on group processes

When students review and report on the processes of group work, they reflect on their experiences as a group and understand better what makes a group work well together.

You can ask students to write their report as individuals or as a team (or perhaps a combination of the two). Encourage them to draw on specific incidents and examples and take an analytical approach (rather than a descriptive one). Instead of focusing on content, students should consider the group's methods and processes and assess their effectiveness. That is, concentrating on how the group worked as a whole rather than on individual members' actions.

Ask your students to reflect on their own individual role within the group: what their contribution was, what role(s) they played, how well they fulfilled their responsibilities and how they could work more effectively in groups in the future. Ask students who completed the exercise "What am I like when I'm in a group?" to complete it a second time and note any differences in their perceptions.

Use some or all of the following questions to provide a framework for students to report on the processes of group work.

Student handout 4

| Questions to help you review your group processes |
How did you get to know each other as a group and establish ways of working together?

What roles did you adopt within your group?

How did you organise group meetings?

How did you allocate tasks?

What other strategies did you use for dividing up the workload (e.g. working in pairs)?

How did you improve the effectiveness of your group?

What challenges and issues did you experience as a group?

What process did you use to write your group report and/or develop your presentation?

What were your strengths and weaknesses as a group?

What were your personal strengths and weaknesses as a member of the group?

How would you personally do things differently if you were to work with the same group?

How has this experience helped you to understand the role of groups in the workplace?

What else have you learnt about working in groups?