To develop group skills, students need to do more than just complete group tasks. Along the way, it's important that they reflect on group processes. Reflection can be informal or formal (built into assessment). Students can reflect individually or in groups.

Students can reflect on both the processes and products of group work. When incorporating reflective activities into group work, it is important that students have the opportunity to apply what they have learnt through their reflections to future tasks to improve their learning. This section outlines a number of ways to build reflection into group tasks and projects.

Helping students monitor their development and reflect on their performance

Reflective activities

To develop effective group skills, students need to practise using their skills and reflect on what worked and did not work. This helps them form generalised principles based on their experience, which then inform their future actions.

You can use one or more of the following strategies to help your students reflect on their group work skills. Depending on the nature of your group task or project, you might include a reflective activity during the task or at its completion. For example, at the end of the group task, students could submit a collaborative reflective report on group processes, or they could reflect on how to in the future by completing the student exercise: Planning ahead—What can I do better next time?).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflective activity</th>
<th>What is involved in this activity?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Checklists</td>
<td>Checklists help students reflect on their group's preparation and performance of tasks. For example, students (individually or as a group) can complete checklists to help them reflect on their group contributions, performance in a group presentation; or the process of compiling a group-written report. You can use checklists to ensure that students create time for reflection in meetings, so that they come to understand that reflection is integral to group work, and factor it into their future meetings.</td>
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Learning journals

Students keep a learning journal to track the development of their group skills. For example, after each task or key stage of a project, they reflect in the journal on the things their group is doing well or not so well, and consider what they could be doing better in later stages of the task/project. Learning journals are also an effective way for you to monitor group activity, particularly the relative contributions of group members.

Peer review

Encouraging students to give each other regular constructive feedback in group meetings helps them to develop integrated reflexive practices. In peer review, students reflect on their own and others' performance of group tasks. Reviewing the performance of peers (strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement) builds students' understanding of the principles of effective group processes and behaviour.

Class discussion

You can ask students, once they have reflected on their group’s performance, to share their reflections with the rest of the class: the aspects that they found rewarding or challenging about the experience, and how they think they could do it differently next time.

Articulation

Provide opportunities for students to practice articulating aspects of their skills development. Employers and recruitment agencies expect students to understand what is meant by effective group skills and to articulate their experiences.

Responding to feedback

You can ask students to indicate action they have taken in response to feedback given to them by you or by their peers, to improve their performance in groups.

Reflective paper

Students complete and submit a report on group processes to help them reflect on various group processes. This includes how they got to know each other as a group, how they organised group meetings, how they allocated tasks, what processes they used to develop a group presentation etc. See the student handout Steps in writing a collaborative report on group processes.

This paper can be extended to deal with individual performance, e.g. What were the best aspects of my performance, and what was the worst? What did I learn from listening to my peers' presentations? How can I improve my performance next time? For more information, see Assessing Group Work.

Student portfolio

Student portfolios can help students keep track of the development of their group work and other skills, and provide a powerful reflective tool.

Helping students identify how they can improve

The following exercise helps students to think about their experiences in groups, about the group's functioning and about their individual roles and contributions to the group. Importantly, it also helps students to identify how the group might function more effectively next time. Using the prompts, students can reflect individually, then discuss their responses in groups or as a class.

Student exercise

Planning ahead—What can I do better next time?
Last time

- What I liked most about the group was…
- What I liked least about the group was…
- The most effective things about the way the groups worked were…
- The least effective things about the way the groups worked were…
- The things I did that helped the group most were…
- The things I did that helped the group least were…

Next time

- The types of people I’d like to work with are…
- The roles I’d like to play in the group are…
- The exercises I’d like the group to go through are…
- The working methods I’d like to use are…
- The way I’d like us to run our meeting is…