

Tools and Frameworks for Teaching Teamwork Skills in Group Projects

Karl G. D. Bailey
kgbailey@andrews.edu

The APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major (version 2.0) identify the importance of teaching and assessing teamwork skills—implicitly in interacting effectively with others (Outcome 4.3) and refining project management skills (Outcome 5.3), and explicitly in enhancing teamwork capacity (Outcome 5.4). However, as the Guidelines note, teachers often neither teach nor assess teamwork processes explicitly—even though collaboration and communication are in-demand skills for a wide range of employers. As a consequence, students often find teamwork assignments frustrating and fail to develop teamwork skills (Pauli, Mohiyeddini, Bray, Michie, & Street, 2008). We will share pedagogical and assessment tools and frameworks for improving the explicit teaching of teamwork skills and processes in courses with group projects. In addition to published measures of teamwork processes (e.g. Johnson et al., 2006; Pauli et al., 2008), we will also examine the feasibility of applying the science of meetings (Mroz, Allen, Verhoeven, & Shuffler, 2018) to teamwork training.

Questions:

1. How is explicit teamwork training for group projects implemented in your university and program curricula?
2. How do you teach your students to work in groups?
3. What assessment tools do you use for group project assessment and student self-assessment of teamwork skills?

APA 2.0 Outcomes:

(4.3) Interact effectively with others

(5.3) Refine project-management skills

(5.4) Enhance teamwork capacity (collaborate on group projects, problem solving from multiple perspectives, identify and solve problems in teams, assess personal and team performances, group leadership skill use, work in diverse settings and with diverse populations)

Relevant checklist items for group work from the Mroz et al. (2018) checklist of factors that promote good meetings (Table 3).

Before-meeting considerations

- schedule meeting length to fit with meeting goals
- set clear goals and desired outcomes for meetings
- prepare an agenda that is circulated in advance
- come prepared by reviewing the agenda
- make sure that the meeting is relevant to everyone invited

During-meeting considerations

- arrive on time
- avoid complaining, dominating communication behavior, and inappropriate verbal statements
- avoid doing unrelated activities, distractions, multitasking, and nonparticipation
- follow the agenda
- start on time
- allow everyone to participate in decision-making
- actively encourage everyone to participate
- intervene when interpersonal communication patterns become dysfunctional

After-meeting considerations

- send meeting minutes and action items out immediately following meeting
- assess satisfaction and quality immediately following meetings and long-term

References

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- Pauli, R., Mohiyeddini, C., Bray, D., Michie, F., & Street, B. (2008). Individual differences in negative group work experiences in collaborative student learning. *Educational Psychology, 28*, 47-58. doi:10.1080/01443410701413746