

**Title:**                   **Preparing students for group work**

**Presenter:**           **Sue Cordell, Miss Helen Waters-Marsh**  
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### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Discuss the use of group work for learning
- Develop strategies for supporting group work
- Reflect on their own behaviour in a group and use this reflection to inform their practice
- Analyse the way in which different tasks change the way groups may work
- Discuss findings from a small research project into group work

### **Session Outline**

Working effectively as part of a group is a key employability skill. A widely used teaching and learning strategy it can have a very positive role in building students' confidence, developing socialisation and producing graduates well equipped for the workplace. (Springer, L et al.1999).

But how well do we prepare students for group work? This workshop will offer strategies for supporting group work and developing students' group work skills in the university classroom. It will draw on some established sources on working in groups, some hands on activities and the findings of a recent, small scale research project into students' perceptions of group work.

The session will open with some comments about the employability drivers for including group work in university learning and teaching and some recent research on using group work.

There will be a short video clip showing what can happen when group work goes horribly wrong. This will be used to introduce the notion that group work can be challenging to manage but also worthwhile in developing students' intellectual, social and employability skills. ([Alexander and Mills 2013](#)) Delegates will be encouraged to share ideas for supporting student participation in group work. They will take part in 2 very different group work activities in a fishbowl approach: a fun, cognitive problem solving exercise and a traditional academic discussion with an output on flipchart paper. They will reflect on the differences and similarities between the activities and the approaches in each task. They will discuss their thoughts with a partner and in the wider group. We will suggest how they might adapt or use the tasks in their own teaching to develop students' learning and their ability to participate

effectively in group work. To conclude additional references will be made to literature on functioning in groups and research into student experiences of group work and how this can inform and support group work. Participants will be encouraged to identify (at least) one thing they can take from this session to develop in their own practice.

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

Introductions, welcome and expectations and explanation – 10 minutes  
Short input on the rationale for group work – 10 minutes  
Short video clip and discussion – 10 minutes  
Fishbowl 1, discussion and debrief – 20 minutes  
Fishbowl 2, discussion and debrief – 20 minutes  
Reflection and discussion on the activities and their potential use – 5 minutes  
Outcomes from our research project with students – 10 minutes  
Close, evaluation and takeaway messages – 5 minutes

### **References**

Cohen, E. 1994, Restructuring the Classroom: Conditions for Productive Small Groups. Review of Educational Research, Spring 1994 vol. 64 no.1 1-35

Dennick R., and Exley, K. 2004, Small Group Teaching, Tutorials, Seminars and Beyond, London: Routledge.

[Alexander, D and Mills, P \(2013\) Small Group Teaching: A Toolkit for Learning Higher Education Academy: York](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/enhancement/definitions/small-group-teaching#sthash.hl3qmf28.dpuf) –available from:  
<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/enhancement/definitions/small-group-teaching#sthash.hl3qmf28.dpuf>

Springer, L et al (1999). *Effects of Small-Group Learning on Undergraduates in Science, Mathematics, Engineering, and Technology: A Meta-Analysis*. Review of Educational Research 69 (1), pp. 21-51