



PARTNERSHIP FOR HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM – PHER

Guidelines for Effective Collaborative Learning

Here are some proven guidelines for creating effective collaborative learning:

Feature	Description	Example
Choose an assignment that benefits from collaboration	Be sure the assignment incorporates sufficient scope and complexity that it cannot easily be completed by one person alone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a website • Write a marketing plan • Conduct a needs assessment
Optimize group size based on the objective	Groups that are too large become unwieldy and lead to lack of participation. Pairs can be effective for small assignments or tutoring. In most cases groups ranging from 2-5 members are best.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with your partner to review and revise your first draft project plan. • Work with your team to review and critique the assigned websites.
Optimize group composition to balance expertise	Often, heterogeneous groups that mix students with more and less work experience, different job roles or organizations have better outcomes than homogeneous groups. It is usually better to avoid student self-selection into groups	Based on your background summaries, I have assigned each of you into a group. Each group has at least one person who has designed one or more websites.
Use brief team building exercises to facilitate group formation	If students are not used to working in teams, some team-building exercises can help them to work better in teams.	Work with your team to compose a group resume on a wall chart
Structure assignments around products, processes, and roles	Learning is better when you give groups a structure to follow. Process guidelines often benefit teamwork. You can also assign or ask groups to assign specific roles such as moderator, project manager, timekeeper, facilitator etc.	Follow this process to design your website: A. Gather client requirements B. Research the technology Infrastructure C. Develop a prototype Assign one team member

		as project manager.
Use proven collaborative structures	Group outcomes benefit from collaborative structures that ensure that each group member contributes to the outcome	See examples in the Techniques section.
Align rewards to encourage interdependence among members of the learning team	If the collaborative outcome is to be graded, base grades on the contribution of each individual to a total group score rather than on individual scores independent of others or on a group product.	Each of you will receive an individual grade for your website prototype. Then a team score will be calculated based on the sum of individual scores. Work to ensure that both your own work and that of your colleagues meets the standards.

Techniques

Faculty seeking to support collaboration can create groups in the learning management system for use in the forums tool and the following collaborative structures:

- Wikis and other types of collaborative authoring (Google Docs, etc.)
- Jigsaw Learning (where each student becomes an expert in one piece of the puzzle of the overall assignment)
- Debates/Structured Controversy (where students take sides on an issue for the purpose of debate and even then switch sides)
- Role play – either in front of the class or in two person or three person groups – in which the third person is the reviewer
- Group presentations – either in class or online