

Why work in Groups?

An important aspect of your university studies is the opportunity to work as part of a group. Group working is used at university because it can be an effective and powerful way to learn, and is also highly relevant to the workplace. The following points highlight the benefits of group learning:

Effective learning

Group working can make study more efficient and fun. Working with others enables you to pool your ideas and see problems from different perspectives. In a group situation, you can attempt tasks that could not be accomplished by an individual, combining a variety of skills and expertise to tackle more complex and larger scale problems. If you are working to a limited time frame, group work allows analysis to a greater depth and breadth than if you were working individually. Furthermore, group work gives you the chance to learn from each other. There are many benefits from analysing, discussing and exploring your own ideas and questions and gaining feedback from your peers.

Development of Generic Skills

Group working can provide a great opportunity to develop generic skills such as,

- Organisation
- Delegation
- Effective communication
- Co-operation
- Leadership
- Following

These are all valuable qualities that will be sort after and highly valued once you have left university.

Relevance to the workplace:

The organisational structure of the workplace means that teamwork is becoming increasingly important. Group work will prepare you for when you become a graduate and make you immediately useful for employers. Many companies require tasks to be completed in teams with the teams functioning to best of their abilities, for example, an engineering company recruiter says;

'Team working is an absolutely vital requirement in the graduate recruitment criteria. When assessing recruits, Corus looks for evidence for team working skills and experience in the candidates' applications. We subject short-listed candidates to a team working exercise in our Assessment Centres and one of the first training courses we provide for graduate recruits is on team building, covering the theory and practice of team working and the various roles of members in effective teams. In industry our experience is that problems are solved by multidisciplinary teams and innovations have the best chance of success if implemented by multidisciplinary teams.'

Development of Social Networks

Working in groups gives you an excellent opportunity to get to know one another. It can be useful for encouraging social interactions and for developing strong social/learning networks.

Development of Group Dynamic awareness

Group working is likely to become an important aspect of your working life. Central to effective group working is group dynamics, and practising group work at university may help you gain a greater understanding of the various factors that apply in a group-based scenario (e.g. group roles, communication, delegation).