**LTC15D134**

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| Title: | ***Proposed minor revisions to Guidance on Group Work*** |
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**Issue**

Some proposals from the Academic Director for Taught Programmes to make minor revisions to the existing Guidance Note on Group Work

**Recommendation**

The ADTP recommends minor revisions only. On the whole, the policy remains fit for purpose and remains a useful reference point for academic staff employing group work as either a learning strategy, or as a means of assessing students.

**Resource Implications**

There are no resource implications associated with the proposal.

**Risk Implications**

There are no risk implications associated with the proposal. The Guidance includes a number of very pertinent and helpful 'tips' for staff to bear in mind when employing group work as an aspect of their pedagogical practice or assessment strategy.

**Equality and Diversity**

There are no equality or diversity implications associated with the proposal.

**Timing of decisions**

Approval by LTC will result in the revised Guidance being applied from the 2016/17 academic year.

**Further Information**

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**Background**

The existing *Guidance Note on Assessing Group Work* was approved by the University's Learning and Teaching Committee in April 2010. It is timely, therefore, that TPPG reviewed it in April 2016. TPPG members felt that the Guidance largely remained 'fit for purpose', though agreed with the ADTP that minor revisions were required that would take into account the updated process for applying for extensions of time for submission of coursework . The ADTP is of the view that the Guidance remains appropriate, and that relatively few changes are required. The only significant amendment proposed

is that which relates to the provision of extensions for group work assessments. This amendment is highlighted in a revised copy of the Guidance which can be seen in Appendix 1. The additional section is also provided below:

***Extensions***
*In cases where one member of a Group requires extra time for completion of the task and submits a self-certification request, or an evidenced request for an extension, the submission date of other group members is <u>also</u> extended automatically to the same revised submission date (assuming it is a group submission which requires a contribution from all group members rather than a group piece where members submit individually). In cases where <u>one</u> member submits a self-certification request, the other group members will not lose their self-certification opportunity.*
*If the assessment is one where each member of the Group submits a separate script, produced by them individually rather than in collaboration with other members of the Group, then the extension only applies to the student who submits an extension request. The other members of the Group submit according to the original submission deadline.*

The ADTP has also inserted two e-links into the Introductory section of the Guidance, which takes the reader to the relevant LET (DOS) Study Guide and to the University's Policy on Plagiarism and Collusion.

**Guidance Note – Assessing Group Work**
This guidance note focuses on the use of Group Work within summative assessment and sets out issues that it would be helpful for Module Organisers and teachers to consider when deciding to use Group Work. The use of group work as part of the learning process or in formative assessment (where the outcomes do not contribute to a module mark) raise different considerations.
The Learning Enhancement Team (DOS) produces a Study Guide on Successful Group Projects, which may be of help to students. Students engaged in groupwork may also find it helpful to refer to the University's Policy on Plagiarism & Collusion.

**Forms of Group Work**
There are various activities which may be described as Group Work, these include
- Small group exercises within scheduled teaching sessions;
- Allocations of a research project or assessment task to a group of students where the group activity informs individual submissions;
- Allocation of a research project or assessment task to a group of students where the group will be assessed as a whole.

**Why Use Group Work in Assessment?**
- To meet module / course aims and learning objectives where an ability to work with others and an understanding of how such processes work are stated.
- To promote and develop key employability skills (such as working in a team, negotiating and collaborating with a diverse range of people).
- To facilitate deeper learning. Asking students to relate knowledge, theory and practice in group situations can encourage students to apply their learning and defend their own understanding.
- To enable students to participate in producing work which is beyond the capabilities of a single student.
- To give students experience of negotiations and group decision making.
- Promote the confidence of quieter students as they find a role within the group.
- Offers a varied assessment mode, which provides an opportunity for students who have a talent for group work, but who may not excel elsewhere in their studies, to demonstrate achievement.

**Issues to be considered**
There is a key principle that dominates a teacher's approach to group work as a form of summative assessment, namely a student passing an assessment must have demonstrated personal achievement of the associated learning outcomes.

The following issues need to be considered and clearly set out and communicated prior to the assessment task:
- Description of how students will be grouped:
  - Will students be asked to allocate themselves to groups or will they be grouped by the teacher?
  - Do students in a group have reasonable opportunities to meet to discuss and undertake the task? (e.g. do members of the group live close to the University or each other? Do members of the group have care responsibilities that limit their availability?)
  - Should the group contain a mix of ages, genders, abilities and experience?

- o Where a class contains students who belong to a minority age, gender, disability or ethnic group within the wider class, particular care may be required to ensure that these students are not excluded and that work groups are balanced
- o Depending upon the way in which groups are allocated, are there mechanisms for changing groups and what are the time limits for doing so?

- The activities the group should undertake:
  - o These must enable each student to demonstrate and provide evidence of their ability with respect to the learning objectives.
  - o Where practicable, the group task may be divisible into equitable tasks for each student (although the actual way in which the task is divided may form part of the group's decision making).
  - o Students might be asked to rotate roles over the period of the group work to give each an opportunity to experience various aspects of the task and demonstrate achievement.
  - o What preparation will students be given? For example, do students need guidance on how groups work, how group activities may be organised and managed and how to manage problems? This may be particularly important where students come from a different cultural background.
  - o What tasks are students expected to undertake as part of the preparation for the assessment? For example, they may be required to arrange a schedule of meetings, each of which addresses a specified topic; they may be required to maintain a blog of activity; they may be required to undertake specified research activity, field work or laboratory work.
  - o The purpose of the exercise (e.g. developing employability skills of team work and negotiation), including the intended learning outcomes.
  - o Depending upon the learning objectives and assessment criteria for the task as well as the students' stage in the course it may be appropriate to define or provide guidance on the separate elements to be undertaken or to expect the group to define elements / an action plan for itself.
  - o What material will be used to assess achievement of the learning outcomes?
  - o Guidance may be necessary on how roles and responsibilities within the group may be agreed by the group.
  - o The task set must be realistic, taking into account the number of people in the group, the time and resources required to undertake the task and also for the group to operate (e.g. incorporating time and resources for discussing, negotiating and reporting within the group).

- Means by which group activities are to be tracked and reported:
  - o Students should be given guidance on what to do if things start to go wrong, for example if a member of the group does not participate. This may include initial training in how to manage group work in order to try to resolve the problem themselves as well as reporting mechanisms to the Module Organiser.
  - o Students may be asked to draw up and sign a "contract", agreeing to participate in the group activity.
  - o Students may report on activities at regular intervals during the task.
  - o The group or individual students may be asked to keep minutes of meetings or a reflective log, recording their activities as a group and how the group was operating.
  - o What form of support will be given to students during the task?
  - o The assessment may be based on a record of the group's activities, such as a blog, notes of group meetings, or record of agreed tasks.

- How grades will be awarded:
    - Students should be informed of the consequences of non-participation or non-engagement with the group work activity. (For example, a mark of zero for the assessment or for the group work element of the assessment may be recorded for non-participation).
    - The marking scheme should take account of both situations where a student does not engage fully with the task and where a student is prevented from fully engaging because of extenuating circumstances.
    - Any boundaries between group work and collusion should be discussed.
    - Does the marking framework recognise that individual students may contribute to the group in different ways, that students have differing abilities and strengths and that students may contribute different volumes of work?
    - Is the ability to work in a group itself being marked or the outcome of the group's activity?
    - The marking criteria should make clear which aspects of the task are assessed and which are part of the learning process.
    - Students should feel confident that their marks would not suffer as a result of a group work assessment and have confidence that all members of the group would participate / contribute equally. (Mechanisms for achieving this should be considered when devising the group work assessment criteria.)
    - Will a mark be allocated to the group's work, which is then recorded against the assessment for each member of the group? (It may be appropriate to assess the group with reference to the agreement of allocation of tasks negotiated by students or to require a presentation in which all members of the group participate.)
    - The mark may be derived from two components, part of the mark from the outcomes for the group as a whole and part of the mark for individual achievement.
    - The group could be asked to negotiate the allocation of marks awarded by the Marker according to the group's evaluation of members' contributions or agree a group participation mark through peer assessment or self-assessment.
    - Where appropriate, the group task may be divided into separate component tasks, with each student taking responsibility for and marked on their individual contribution and submission.
    - Students work as a group, but make individual submissions which are separately marked.
    - Additional guidance may be needed where the assessment is based on a presentation or poster where this mode of assessment is unfamiliar to students.

- How students will be reassessed (as a group or individually):
    - Where students are being assessed on individual submissions this will be more straightforward (provided that the underpinning group work activity has taken place satisfactorily).
    - Reassessment must enable a student to demonstrate the same learning outcomes as the first assessment.

- Mechanisms for taking account of authorised student absence and other extenuating circumstances:
    - Consideration will need to be given to the extent to which a student has been able to participate in the group activity.

- o  Is the weighting of the group work component such that the Board of Examiners is in a position to exercise discretion for a student who is unable to complete a group work task due to extenuating circumstances or is a delayed assessment attempt more appropriate?
- o  For students with a delayed assessment, can learning objectives be achieved via another assessment task that does not involve group work?
- o  Do students need to be given guidance on how to manage issues with participation within the group and are they aware how to seek advice and support?
- o  Will the group be able to complete the task set if one member is prevented from fully participating or will adjustments be necessary if such circumstances emerge?
- o  Can mechanisms be put in place to compensate a group for the loss of a member?

- • Inclusivity. All students must be able to take full part in the group activity and no student should be disadvantaged by assessment through group work:
  - o  The task must enable students with physical disabilities or specific learning difficulties to fully participate.
  - o  Does the cohort contain students with care responsibilities or who live a distance from the University and who may, therefore, have barriers to be taken into consideration when groups arrange meetings or joint activities?
  - o  Where a group is particularly diverse does the proposed group work enable minority students to participate fully?
  - o  Is guidance explicit about appropriate academic methodology and expectations? Is help signposted or available for students who feel uncertain about this?

- • How will Feedback on the assessment task be given?
  - o  Depending on the nature of the assessment task, will feedback be individual or to the group as a whole?

## Collusion and Group Work

The University defines collusion as unauthorised co-operation between at least two people, with the intent to deceive. Collaborative assessment undertaken in accordance with published requirements does not fall under the heading of collusion. Clarity is therefore essential when setting group work based assessments to ensure that students understand which aspects of the task require working together and represent joint effort and which aspects (if any) must represent individual effort. Particular thought must be given to these issues in groups where students are from diverse learning backgrounds. Guidance may be helpful in respect of the ways in which individual contributions and ideas are acknowledged and recognised. It is likely that greater care will be required where students work together informally and provide each other with formative feedback on draft individual assessments.

## Extensions

In cases where one member of a Group requires extra time for completion of the task and submits a self-certification request, or an evidenced request for an extension, the submission date of other group members is also extended automatically to the same revised submission date (assuming it is a group submission which requires a contribution from all group members rather than a group piece where members submit individually). In cases where one member submits a self-certification request, the other group members will not lose their self-certification opportunity.

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