## P5. ASSESSING GROUP WORK

For students on programmes and awards validated by the University of Plymouth this section of the CAPR has been agreed by the University (as the awarding institution) as meeting its requirements for academic assessment and assessing group work. The shaded sections below form GSM London regulatory and policy framework as applied to Plymouth University and GSM awards.

Related guidance and codes of practice can also be found at the QAA Code of Practice, Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality: Chapter B4 Enabling Student Development and Achievement and Chapter B6, 'Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning').

Purpose and scope

*Introduction*

5.1     Group work gives students valuable opportunities to increase the quality and depth of their learning and promote the development of skills sought by employers.  The College is committed to ensuring all its students have the opportunity to participate in group work.

5.2     Many students experience group work as part of summative assessment.  It can also be used in other teaching, learning and formative assessment activities.  (Broadly, summative assessment means an assessment that counts towards a student's final grade or mark in a module or programme.)

5.3     This policy sets out the College's minimum expectations for organising, managing and assessing group work.  It focuses on the use of group work in summative assessments.  But the principles can also inform other uses of group work to support students' learning.

5.4     This policy accords with principles of equality of opportunity and inclusive practices for all learners.  So it should be read alongside the College's Equality and Diversity policy and Dignity in Study policy.

Procedure

Student participation in assessed group work

5.5     Before students take part in group work, staff should explain:

(a)     the purpose and educational rationale for assessed group work, including the benefits of group working skills; and

(b)     how such activities contribute to the module's intended learning outcomes.

5.6     No student should be disadvantaged by the use of assessed group work.  Staff should ensure they enable all students to take a full and active part in group activities and processes.

5.7     Some students may require reasonable adjustments.  If so, staff should consider how these may affect assessed group-based activities.

5.8     Staff should give sufficient notice of planned assessed group activities.  This will help students prepare and raise any questions or concerns at an early stage.  For certain students, staff may need to

consider other ways of meeting the learning outcomes.  For example, even with additional support, some students may be unable to interact appropriately with others and contribute to the group task.  This may adversely affect their own performance and that of others.  Using alternative forms of assessment should ensure these students continue to meet the learning outcomes.  For example, staff may set additional individual written work or hear face-to-face presentations.

5.9      At the beginning of the module or programme, staff should inform students how they can raise any concerns about group work.

Design of assessed group work

5.10     The tasks staff set for assessed group work need to be realistic given the size of each group. Staff should bear in mind the extra student work of forming the group, negotiation and coordination, as well as collaboratively producing items or artefacts.

5.11     Staff should use a clear and fair way of forming groups, and explain the rationale and criteria for them to the students.

5.12     Any roles and responsibilities – assigned by staff or the group – that individual students are expected to take in an assessed group activity should be clearly explained.  Staff should make clear to students what they are expected to do, how they are expected to work with other group members, and how they should submit or present work.

5.13     When staff are designing group work, they should provide for the re-assessment of students. So, for any student who is referred or deferred in assessed group work, staff will need to have suitable ways of enabling them to redeem their work and demonstrate they have met all associated learning outcomes.  This is normally more straightforward when group work results in individual submissions, provided the underlying group work has been completed satisfactorily.  In some cases, staff will need to provide alternative forms of assessment (for example, additional written work or individual presentations) so that referred or deferred students can demonstrate they have met the learning outcomes.

5.14     If processes and mechanisms for group work are standardised across all assessments in a course, the course handbook should clearly communicate them to students.

5.15     Staff should suitably align their approach to assessing group work (e.g., assessing group processes, artefacts or products) to the tasks set for the group and to the associated learning outcomes.

5.16     Staff should consider and communicate clearly to students how to deal with problems in the groups.  Staff should anticipate how they will deal with such problems if groups appear to need help.

5.17     Staff should consider how to design group work to avoid the potential for academic misconduct, for example plagiarism or collusion.  Based on the College Academic Misconduct policy, staff should clearly explain to students the differences between cooperation/collaboration and collusion/plagiarism.

*Marking group work*

5.18     Staff and students need to be confident that the assessment of an individual's contribution to the group work activity is fair.  Staff marking criteria and how they will mark group work should be made clear to students and fully justified in the assignment brief.  Students should know what proportion (if any) of the final mark will be common to all group members, and what proportion staff will allocate on an individual basis.

5.19     All assessed work done by the group should enable students to demonstrate they have met all associated learning outcomes.

5.20     If assessed group work leads to a group-based mark, each individual student's involvement and contribution should be evident to the internal examiners.  Normally, marks awarded in common to groups of students should not form more than 50% of the overall module mark, unless a professional, statutory or regulatory body requires staff to use a higher proportion.

5.21     The marking process may be informed by group negotiation of marks or by peer-review activities.  Staff should clearly explain such practices to students, including providing transparent marking criteria.  Staff support and guidance should be available if appropriate.

5.22     Staff may choose to use group negotiation or peer feedback techniques to help decide marks.  But staff alone must decide the final marks.  Staff have the right to discount student input if, based on sound evidence, they conclude that assessment processes have unfairly judged or treated individuals.

Advice and support

5.23     Advice for students on assessment and examination principles for group work, and the associated lower-level College rules is available from their programme leader or Head of Department.  More complex queries may be referred to appropriate individuals.

5.24     Advice for staff on assessment and examination principles is available from their nominated Academic Policy Partner or Head of Department.

5.25     If any staff development needs are identified, these may be discussed with members of the Staff and Educational Development Team.

Fees

5.26     No additional fee s or charges are associated with this policy.

5.27     The College is not liable for financial or other consequences arising from action under these regulations.

Legal and regulatory context

5.28     The policy is informed by, and is consistent with, the Expectation and Indicators of Chapter B10 of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Managing Higher Education provision with others (2012).  As reference points for the policy, the College has also used University and College Employment Agency (UCEA) guidance and the ASET Good Practice Guide for Work Based and Placement Learning in Higher Education (2013).

5.29    The College may not be bound by the principles in paragraph 5.30 and this policy alone may not provide the procedure to meet all of these principles, some of which may be met by other College policies and procedures..  It uses the principles as guidance only, to help it deal soundly with these matters.

<u>Enforcement, monitoring and review</u>

5.30    If any person or body in the College refuses to comply with a request or decision made to enforce this policy, their refusal must be reported to the Academic Registrar, who will take such action to enforce this policy as they think necessary.

5.31    Each year, the College must receive a report that enables it to monitor, identify and act on any shortfalls in how this policy is interpreted and applied.

5.32    Every two (2) years, the College must review this policy to ensure that:

(a)    it remains up to date and continues to meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code, applicable legislation or guidance;

(b)    areas of improvement, or any concerns, raised by students, external examiners, or professional bodies have been addressed; and

(c)    opportunities to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy have been taken.


Schedule (not part of the policies or regulations):


Responsible Officer: Provost

Approved by: Board of Directors and Academic Board

Version: 2.0

Date: June 2017

Monitoring and Review Body: Academic Regulations and Awards Committee

Effective From: July 2017

Next Scheduled Review: April 2018