



TOPIC 1: What's good about teamwork?



Clair knows that teamwork is important and that it is a Deakin Graduate Learning Outcome, but also knows that it poses challenges for teachers and students. She needs some good reasons on hand for when her students ask her why they have to do teamwork.

Teamwork has advantages and disadvantages:

Advantages:

- Students learn differently in teams – they learn in a collaborative manner that extends what they know by drawing from the experiences of their peers.
- Students can work on their strengths and weaknesses.
- Teamwork reveals tensions related to learning that might not otherwise be revealed. Students are forced to learn through these tensions.
- Teamwork is a reality in many workplace situations and students can practise and develop necessary skills.
- Teamwork requires students to display a great deal of self-management.
- Teamwork requires students to act in new ways.
- Teamwork is an excellent opportunity to develop skills of reflection.
- Teamwork requires students to work with peers with whom they might not normally mix.
- Teamwork allows for varying points of view.

Disadvantages:

- Students may not have the opportunity to work on all aspects of the task.
- Tensions may prove insurmountable.
- Tensions may involve considerable staff involvement.
- The threat of the 'freeloader' is very real.
- Students may resent a 'same marks for all' approach to assessment.
- Students may resent being forced to adapt to a workplace model.

What Now?

Clair decides to develop a teamwork assessment task that makes the most of the advantages of teamwork and diminishes the disadvantages. She knows that assessment design involves considerable effort. She begins her effort by talking with her colleagues and reading the next topic in this series on teamwork, "What makes for good design in teamwork assessments?" For further discussion see the contact details below.

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TEACHING IDEAS