

# Checklist

## *Working with others online*

### The 'I' in 'Team'

**1. I will participate in creating aims and outcomes for the online group project as early as possible.**

As a group, work together in the first week or two of your studies, to establish the goals of your project.

**2. I will play an active role in developing and maintaining a project plan, which details how the group will achieve identified goals.**

All members of the team must agree how, and when, the group will reach their agreed aims and outcomes. A project plan should be created and updated regularly.

**3. I will help to identify tasks and assign them to members of the group based upon individual strengths and preferences.**

Online collaboration works best when each learner is playing to their strengths and preferred ways of working. This will make for an effective project and ensure that each learner is confident that they can complete their tasks on time.

**4. I will assist the group in establishing preferred channels of communication online.**

The group must decide which channels of communication they will, and will not, use. There should be clear and agreed ground rules about how often all members of the team must check these channels.

### Working in the group

**5. I value working collaboratively online with my fellow learners and tutor(s).**

This is key to a successful online group project. You will rely upon your fellow learners for support and also your tutor(s) when potential problems arise.

**6. I will respect group guidelines.**

Online group work can become chaotic. It is important to remember that group projects are a team experience, and not a solo one. Once ground rules have been established, team members must adhere to them so that the group work is completed on time.

**7. I will contact my fellow learners if I become unsure of my contributions to the group work.**

It is easy to become lost and confused in the work involved in online group learning. If you are worried about your work, talk to members of the group as soon as possible.

**8. I will listen to, and value, the different views of other members of the group.**

Actively listen when your fellow learners are presenting their ideas. You may not agree but you should respect these different perspectives. Afterwards explain, politely, where you agree, and do not agree, and explain your reasons.

**9. I am willing to raise concerns with the group about possible shortcomings or problems.**

You will be working with your group to ensure there are no major issues. If there are issues, it is essential that you raise your concerns as soon as possible. You should try to provide positive, realistic solutions on how the group can fix the problem in a cordial and timely manner.

**10. I am willing to trial online technologies for the benefit of my team.** There are many different technologies for online group work. Groups need to decide the best technologies for recording and presenting their work.

## Skills for being an effective online team player

**11. I am able to convey my ideas in online discussions.** It is essential that you are as professional as possible in all your messages to the group. Take time to craft your posts to the team and re-read them a few times. Do not use text language or slang which can easily be misunderstood.

**12. I am able to manage my own time effectively as part of a team.** Establishing protected time for working around other commitments and responsibilities is essential. This should be organised in advance in case changes need to be made when discussing the group work with other members of the team.

**13. I am self-motivated and self-disciplined.** Keeping yourself enthusiastic and organised will ensure tasks are achieved effectively and in a timely manner so that you do not disappoint other members of the group. Fellow members of your team will be frustrated if they have to compensate for your lack of contribution to the group project.

**14. I am able to participate in online activities without interruptions or distractions.** I am able to dedicate a quiet place for online group learning. This should be a quiet space with minimal distractions, ensuring a conducive online learning atmosphere.

**15. I am able to remain professional online at all times.** Group working may be demanding and stressful since your fellow learners may be balancing study, work and family responsibilities. You will need to remain calm, positive and retain a professional approach to completing the online tasks while working with other members of the team even though you may never meet face-to-face.

## Top tips

**Working in groups takes time.** You will need more time than you expect. Always leave extra time especially when near to assessment deadlines.

**Show your group you value their ideas.** Encourage others to join discussions by asking specific members to share their thoughts or by suggesting limited talking so that everyone will have time to express their ideas. If you show you are genuinely interested in the ideas of other group members, it will encourage them to contribute more.

**No one is talking.** Always check that everyone has shared two ways in which the team can communicate with them, just in case. Organise regular meetings. If the problem persists, contact your tutor.

**Support each other.** If someone is having a work crisis and struggling with the tasks, do what you can to help. They will do the same for you!

**Help is available if you need it.** Remember that not everyone has the same level of IT literacy. Offer to help other members of your team. Remind fellow learners about IT workshops and services that are available in your university.

# Reflective activity

## Working with others online

Please complete this activity individually, with access to the Internet. The results are for your personal use. Start by reading the Introduction and then proceed with the activities. You might wish to refer to the video, checklist and further resources while taking this activity. In total the activity should take about 20 minutes. If, after completing the activity, you have further queries, please contact your tutor and support available at your university. Remember to save your completed activity as it will be useful to return to later in your course.

## Introduction

Working in groups can be fun and very rewarding but from time-to-time it can be perplexing, and even frustrating. A lot of the benefits and challenges of working in face-to-face groups are the same for online group work but there are some different ones too e.g. communicating using technologies.

Many of the skills that you have learned working in groups face-to-face can be transferred to the online environment e.g. setting of goals and planning. However, online group work requires some specific skills too e.g. knowing how to communicate professionally in different technologies.

This activity is designed to get you thinking about working in groups online, and how you can ensure it is beneficial to you (and others).

## Section 1: Learning in groups (10 mins)

Consider the benefits and challenges when working in groups, professionally and personally, face-to-face and online. Then, consider the skills you will need in online group work – some of these may be new and some adapted from face-to-face group work.

### 1a: What are the benefits of learning in groups for me?

In your experience, professionally and personally, what are some of the advantages of group work? Do you anticipate different benefits working in groups online or will they be the same?

| Face-to-face (classroom based learning) | Online (blended or fully online) |
|---|----------------------------------|
|   |                                  |

**1b: What are the challenges of learning in groups for me?**

Reflect upon some of your experiences of working in groups, professionally and personally. What were the challenges for you and the group? Group work online will have similar challenges but there may also be some new ones too. Do you anticipate different challenges working in groups online or will they be the same?

| Face-to-face (classroom based learning) | Online (blended or fully online) |
|---|----------------------------------|
|   |                                  |

**1c: What skills do I need to work effectively in groups?**

In your experience, professionally and personally, what skills did you need to perform well in a group and to help others in the group too, so that your group achieved its targets? This could include communication, time management and organisational skills. Do you anticipate that you may need different skills to work effectively in groups online or will they be the same?

| Face-to-face (classroom based learning) | Online (blended or fully online) |
|---|----------------------------------|
|   |                                  |

**1d: What approaches do you use to work in groups effectively?**

This may include strategies you use to ensure you work well in groups and strategies you use to help others in your group to work well e.g. diffusing group tension with humour.

| Face-to-face (classroom based learning) | Online (blended or fully online) |
|---|----------------------------------|
|   |                                  |

## Section 2: Working in groups (10 mins)

In this activity, think about the challenges that you could face in group working, whether face-to-face or online, the impact of these challenges and finally how you might resolve them.

First, think about a scenario, which could be real or fictitious, involving a group which is experiencing issues. Outline the impact these problems may have on you and the group. Next consider the implications for you and the group of these challenges. Then, outline how you, as a team, might resolve the issues.

|  | Face-to-face (classroom based learning) | Online (blended or fully online) |
|--|---|----------------------------------|
| <b>Scenario</b><br>Describe a scenario in which a group is experiencing problems. This could be real or fictitious.  |   |                                  |
| <b>Impact</b><br>In what ways will the issues outlined impact on you and the group?  |   |                                  |
| <b>Implications</b><br>What are the implications of the issues for you and the group?  |   |                                  |
| <b>Resolution</b><br>How would you try to find a solution to the issues that you have raised? What would you do and what would you encourage other members of your team to do? |   |                                  |

# Further resources

## *Working with others online*

### General

**Online group working guidelines.** Student Kate Jones offers tips and tricks when studying in an online group. She closes with a list of frequently asked questions about online group work:

[https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/2/2436/Online\\_Group\\_Work\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/2/2436/Online_Group_Work_Guidelines.pdf)

**How to survive virtual group work.** This short guide by eLearners is part of a portal to finding online degrees, but usefully outlines common scenarios in group work and offers practical solutions: <https://www.elearners.com/education-resources/online-learning/how-to-survive-virtual-group-work/>

**Online Learning Tips: 5 Rules for Online Group Work.** Part of the GetEducation.com portal, this short guide offers five useful tips for studying in groups:

<https://www.geteducated.com/elearning-education-blog/online-learning-tips-5-rules-for-online-group-work/>

**Tips for participating in group work and projects online.** Created by Drexel University, this visual infographic offers a brief overview of how to work in groups virtually:

<https://online.drexel.edu/news/group-tips.aspx>

**Five steps to improving online group work assignments.** This blog post by Gregory Wells from Colorado State University provides five practical tips about making online group work successful. Wells has a very pragmatic approach:

<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/five-steps-to-improving-online-group-work-assignments/>

**10 Netiquette tips for online discussions.** Some tips on 'netiquette' and how to behave professionally in an online environment: <https://elearningindustry.com/10-netiquette-tips-online-discussions>

**Discussion board Netiquette.** A video outlining how to engage with discussion boards and other online platforms in an educational context:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwdqQjCfWSc>

**University of Exeter iTest.** A short quiz from the University of Exeter to find out how you can improve the way you use technology to make you more effective in your studies:

<http://wip.exeter.ac.uk/collaborate/itest/>

## Open online courses

**Learning online: Learning and collaborating.** FutureLearn two-week MOOC by the University of Leeds on being an effective online learner and developing your online communication skills for working with others on discussion boards, wikis and other collaborative tools: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/learning-and-collaborating>

**Learning online: Reflecting and sharing.** FutureLearn two-week MOOC by the University of Leeds on getting the most out of online learning by reflecting and learning with others: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/reflecting-and-sharing>