Groupwork and group assessment are increasingly popular in higher education. This approach is justifiably associated with many educational benefits but also with some perennial problems. This review provides a summary of how some issues are dealt with in the literature.


To link to this article: http://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/documents/Brookes%20groupwork%20Gibbs%20Dec%2009.pdf

**Introduction**

Gibbs introduces the review with a comment on the growing use of groupwork because of its identified benefits but observes that groupwork is also associated with a number of problems or issues. In response he has reviewed the literature in this area to provide evidence-based advice on how to undertake groupwork most effectively. His recommendations reflect the level of attention individual problems or issues have received in the literature so while some areas are comprehensively addressed (such as marking strategies), others (such as group task design) rate little or no discussion.

**Summary of recommendations**

The introductory section (2 pages) summarises the review in 14 recommendations which address:

- the importance of effective assessment in realising the benefits hoped from assigning group tasks
- the unintended negative consequences of allocating a single mark to all group members
- the ready availability of options for allocating marks fairly
- the identification of tasks sub-components as a means of improving individual responsibility
- the inverse relationship between group size and level of individual student motivation, effort and engagement
- the differential impact of group streaming on different ability groups
- the formation of culturally homogenous or heterogeneous groups
- inconsistency in gender effects on student behaviour and performance with the exception of above average performance of female students on group maintenance
- the likelihood of groups producing better quality work than individuals
- mechanisms for rewarding individual effort
- effective use of peer assessment
- the benefits of separating formative assessment of group work from summative assessment of individual learning
• the importance of creating a healthy educational milieu in reducing the problems normally associated with group work.

Literature review and reference list
The basis of the summarised recommendations is discussed in a literature review (10 pages). The 70 references listed provide a valuable resource for anyone interested in further reading in the area of groupwork.

This series of briefs on assessment topics has been prepared by the UQ Teaching and Educational Development Institute (TEDI) for UQ teaching academics. “UQ ASSESSMENT BRIEFS” of journal articles, book chapters, reviews, websites, reports etc are distributed to Faculty and School Teaching and Learning Chairs in a form designed to encourage wider distribution.

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