First aid for

STUDY SKILLS

WORKING IN GROUP

Every student knows that working in group is often associated with **frustration and procrastination**. How to turn your group work in a **success story**? Below you'll find some useful tips to ensure that the **cooperation** runs **smoothly** and everyone **participates actively**.

PREPARATION PHASE

- **Analyse** the task: what is the goal, what are the expectations, what are the deadlines? Break the assignment into smaller tasks.
- **Plan** SMART, make a timeline with contact moments, meetings and deadlines, make good and clear agreements.
- **Divide** the (sub)tasks and the roles of each group member **fairly** and **equally**.
- **Motivate** each other to deliver a good job: help and support each other and deal constructively with feedback coming from each group member.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

- Stick to the agreed **schedule and deadlines**.
- Work in an **online** environment and save all your files in a commonly accessible place. As such the other team members can track what you are doing and it will be easier to give feedback to each other.
- Provide regular **feedback** to each other and deal constructively with the supervisor's feedback.
- Make a **report** of each group meeting.

REFLECTION PHASE

- Be critical and constructive with any **feedback**.
- Note down the **points of improvement** for the group and for yourself.
- Discuss the **strengths and weaknesses** of the group and yourself.
- How does the group **feel**, how does each group member feel about the **received feedback**?

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Communication is key for a good **cooperation**. How is this working out in your group? Is there space to discuss issues? Try to resolve these conflicts internally before you go to your supervisor. And above all, reflect on **your own communication style** and what it could mean for others. Sometimes natural interactions (verbal or non-verbal) can clash. In such a situation, try to change your communication style to a **more effective and calm approach**.

WHAT ARE YOUR NEEDS?

Talk to the others about what **your needs** are, e.g. I need more structure during the meetings or I want to settle deadlines in time.

WHAT ARE THE NEEDS OF THE GROUP?

Does everyone feel **equally** involved in the project, ...?

I-MESSAGE

Point out to someone what bothers you by starting your sentence with **"I feel/I think/I find that..."** instead of "you are/you do...". This way the message sounds less offensive.

LISTENING WITH AN OPEN MIND

An **open attitude** and **active listening** to the opinions and thoughts of others is also communication. Check with your team: What do they think? How do they see it? What are their doubts?

GIVING FEEDBACK

- Be **objective** and **honest**.
- Name each other's **strengths**.
- Provide **constructive feedback** and specific points for improvement.
- **Topics** you can discuss: taking initiative, creativity, communication, contribution to the group atmosphere, compliance with deadlines, contribution to the final product.

RECEIVING FEEDBACK

- Prepare yourself for the **feedback meeting.** What do you want to ask your team members and/or your supervisor?
- Did you get negative feedback? Think of it as a **learning process** for the next group assignment.
- Note down other people's feedback and take it with you to the **next task**.