10 Guidelines for Group Work (J.Cuseo)

(1) Task Identification

(2) Timing

(3) Group Formation

(4) Group Size

(5) Group Duration

(6) Collective Responsibility

(7) Individual Accountability

(8) Explicit Attention to the Development of Interpersonal Skills

(9) Instructor as Facilitator

(10) Inter-Group Dynamics

Task Identification

What specific type of course content, concepts or issues should be targeted and selected for group work?

➔ Open-ended questions

➔ Brainstorming

➔ Self-Assessment

➔ Elaboration

➔ Problem-solving

➔ Decision-making

➔ Personal narratives or stories

Timing

When should group work take place?

➜ Online or onsite

➜ In class or outside the class

➜ Prior to lecture to stimulate student interest

➜ During lecture to generate examples and compare notes

➜ End of class as a summary

Group Formation

Who should be grouped together to form a learning team?

➔ Students self-select teammates
➔ Randomly by counting off numbers
➔ Instructor purposefully decides the groups
➔ Homogeneous group formation
➔ Heterogeneous group formation

Group Size

What should be the total number of students that comprise a learning group?

➔ Research recommends 3-6 students

➔ 3-4 students for closer proximity

➔ 5-6 students for diverse perspectives

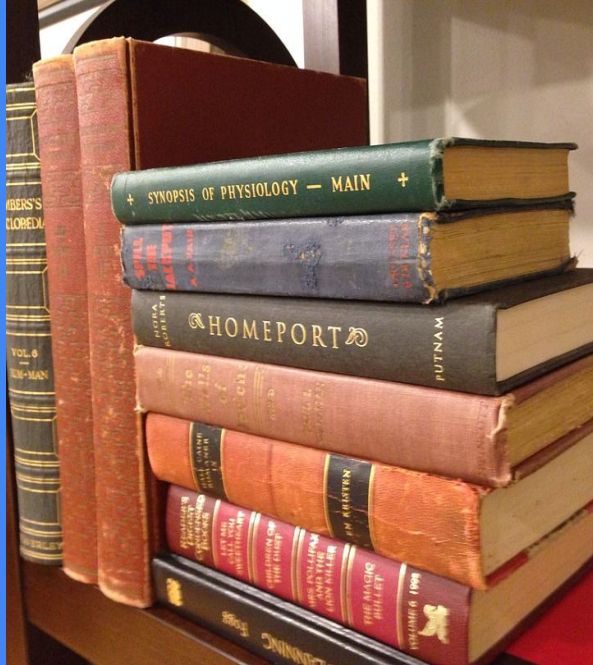➔ Research recommends even number for possible pair-work

Group Duration

How long should groups remain together?

➜ Short-term learning groups for single class

➜ Longer term learning groups for continuity of interaction

➜ Short term for brainstorming, varied membership

➜ Longer term for group project, stable membership

Collective Responsibility

How can a sense of positive interdependence and true teamwork be promoted among group members?

➔ Team-building activities

➔ Team identity and sense of solidarity

➔ Development sequence: form, storm, norm, perform

➔ Emphasis on 'common product'

➔ Independent or complementary roles (rotation, stability)

Individual Responsibility

How will individuals be held personally responsible for their contribution to the group?

➔ Group grade should count for lesser percentage of the grade

➔ Individual grades should be assigned to group members

➔ Explicit roles within the group increase personal responsibility

➔ Peer evaluation

Development of Interpersonal Skills

How will group members be prepared or taught to communicate and cooperate with each other in a supportive and productive fashion?

➔ Specific instructions for interpersonal communication

➔ Instructions on interpersonal skills PRIOR to and DURING group work

➔ Opportunity to reflect on and evaluate social and group interactions

Instructor as Facilitator

What role should the instructor play during group learning to promote effectiveness?

➔ During group work, instructor should 'walk to floor'

➔ Learning consultant or Collegial Coach

➔ Listener and questioner

➔ Instructor in active role, but observing non-directive, learner-centered approach

Inter-Group Dynamics

What role should the instructor play during group learning to promote effectiveness?

➔ Friendly 'competitions'

➔ Groups should 'report out' and share findings

➔ Inter-group synthesis

➔ Identify important themes across groups and form a 'conclusion'

Summary

Make sure to have a detailed group assignment with clear instructions, specific tasks and due dates. Clarify group roles and group rules for working together. Encourage student-driven facilitation but be attentive to issues and needs, be intentional about your interventions.

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