

Pulling together – Supporting teamwork assessment more effectively

Department of Life Science

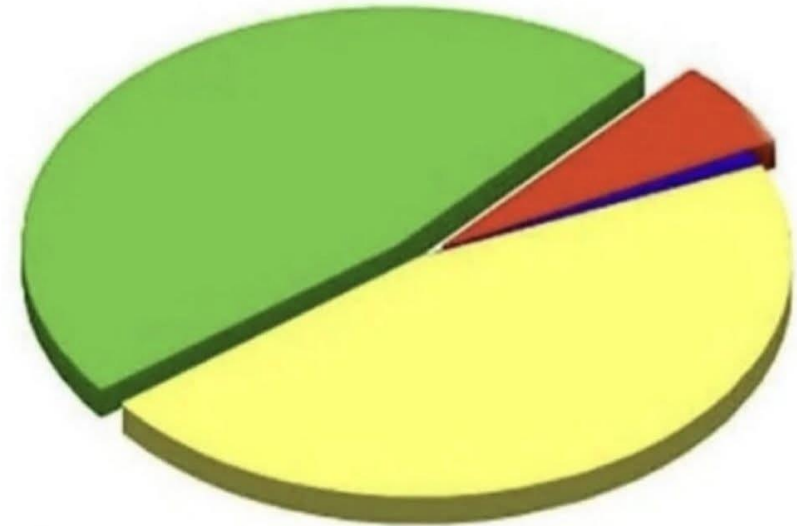
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Student accessibility and inclusion

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WHAT I LEARN FROM GROUP PROJECTS



- The information
- How to work with people
- How to do entire projects on my own
- How much I hate people

Aim of work:

- Identify common issues for students related to group work
- Make groupwork more accessible to neurodivergent students
- Identify how we can improve group working skills as part of Royal Society of Biology accreditation and DLS scheme LOs
- Look at ways of harmonising groupwork assignments in DLS
- Develop a suite of resources for students and teaching staff to facilitate better group working
- Test these in a selection of modules



Key issues:

- How can we manage group composition and role allocation equitably?
- Which are the best methods of communication in group working – to allow staff to monitor student engagement in a task/reduce conflict?
- How can we deal with students who don't engage/contribute to a team/prevent over-contribution of some students?
- How can we allocate marks to an assignment equitably?
- How can we create progression of group working skills through a degree scheme?



Progress so far:

Literature review/comparison with other universities resources on group working

DLS group work assignment audit

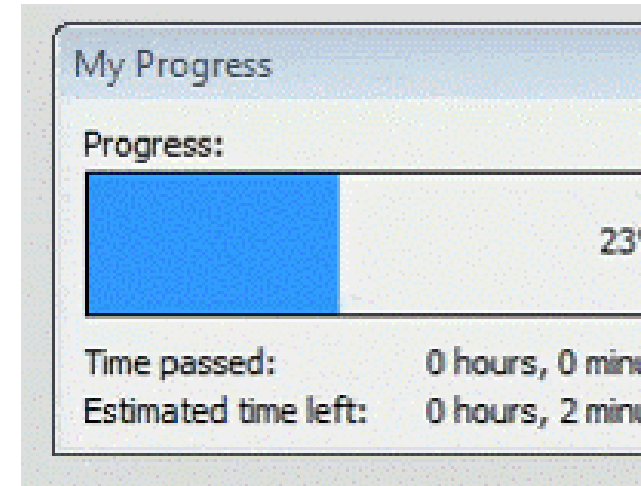
- Assignment briefs/methods of group management and communication/marketing criteria/spread across degree schemes

Short interviews with lecturers outside of DLS

- Insight into group management/communication and marking

Series of focus groups with study skills tutors, DLS module coordinators and supported students

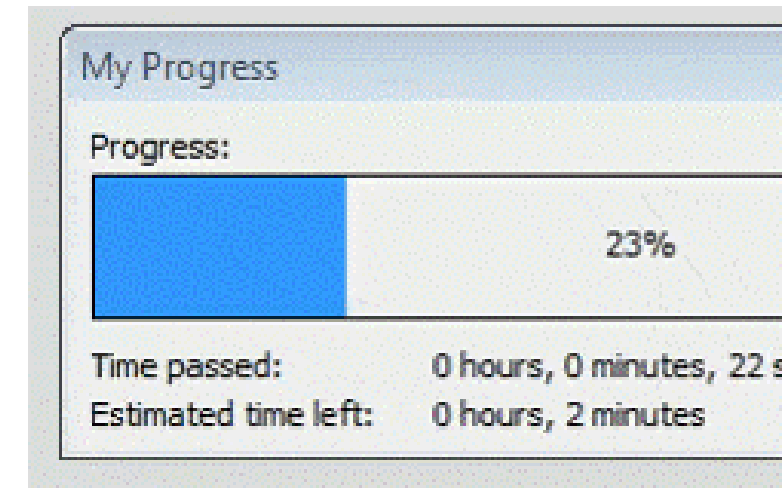
- Gauging opinions on a range of ideas and resources developed to date



Progress so far:

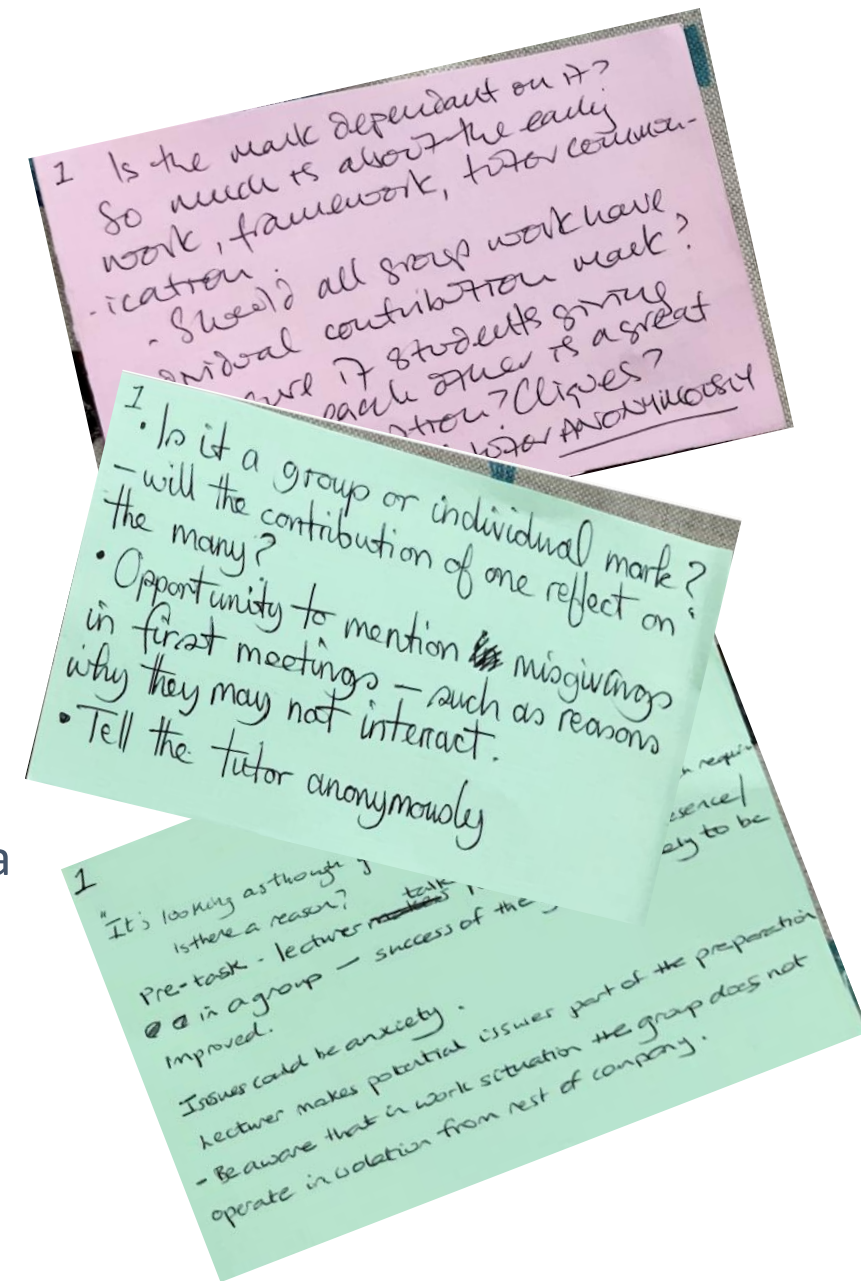
Development of initial set of group working resources

- Persona based role identification tool
- Group working contract pro-forma
- Meeting minutes pro-forma
- Resources related to methods of group communication



Study Skills tutors “What happens if?” focus group

- Need for guidelines on role allocation within groups
- Methods for monitoring group progress and providing support
- Clear pathways for escalating issues if they should arise
- Methods to manage group communications
- Assignment briefs with clear learning outcomes and marking criteria
- Rewarding perceived effort within group working activities



DLS Staff focus group

The need to be clear and consistent about LOs in group work tasks

- Is it the group working element being assessed or the written assignment?
- Could this change during the course of a degree scheme?

Could existing networks be used to provide impartial support to group working activities?

- Could peer guides be used in a more strategic manner?



Study Skills tutor workshop (x2)

Development of 'personas' role identification tool for tutorials

- Would ASD students be able to identify objectively with the personas provided?
- What happens if there are a number of similar personas in an allocated group?
- How easy is it for students to equate a persona to a role in a group work activity?

Persona 1
I'm an energetic and outgoing person who thrives in discussions and builds rapport with other people quickly.
I enjoy leading conversations and motivating others.
I may, unintentionally, dominate discussions and sometimes overlook quieter members of a team.
I prefer speaking to writing. My written work may be rushed or less detailed than it could be.
I'm pretty organised but sometimes I may rush things which reduces the precision of my work.

Timekeeping ★★★★★

Verbal Communication ★★★★★

Written Communication ★★★★★

Organisation ★★★★★

Procrastination ★★★★★

Attention to Detail ★★★★★

Research Ability ★★★★★

Supported student focus group

Personas activity

- Positive response for role allocation, if more exemplar descriptions of characteristics added
- Concerns about exposing “weaknesses”
- Difficult if more than one with similar personality in a group

Groupwork contract

- Overwhelming support for contract
- Especially for role allocation, agreeing communication methods and agreement on how and where to meet
- Needs information on how to escalate grievances



Department of Life Sciences



Group working contract pro-forma

The assignment:

Identify the outline of the assignment and deadline here:

Timeline for completion of work:

Identify any major milestones towards completion of this task.

Supported student focus group

Group communications

- Strongly opposed to using WhatsApp or equivalents
- Strongly in favour of using Teams channels to allow transparency and oversight of communications and file sharing

Marks Allocation

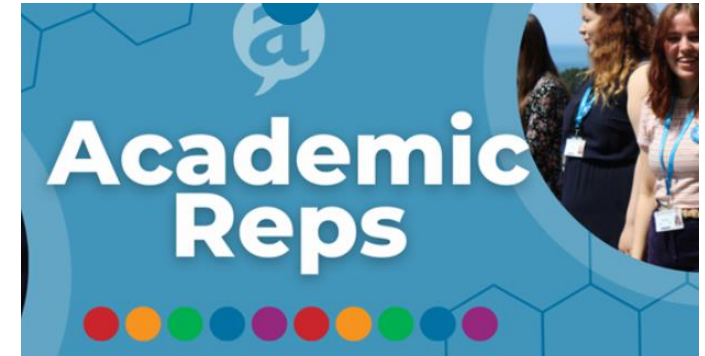
- Most favour high percentage weightings for relative contributions
- Marking should be aligned with tasks agreed in original contract document

Creating a Channel in MS Teams for collaborative working



Moving forward

- **Academic reps focus group in DLS**
- **Welsh Language focus group** – looking at relationships between first and second language Welsh speakers in group work activities
- Redevelop resources based on feedback
- Discuss findings with DLS DLT and present in DLS academic forum
- Identify coursework assignments in DLS where these resources can be trialled in 2026/7
- Develop a repository for resources in relevant BB courses in DLS
- Communicate effectively with students



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