Assessing Student Learning: Group Projects

**Group projects**: Students work together over an extended period of time in structured groups to complete a graded multifaceted project.

**Challenges**:
- What is the balance between group output and individual student performance?
- What is the balance between product and process?
- How do I address real or perceived free rider problem?

**Solutions**:
- Use **positive interdependence** and **individual accountability** as the frameworks for assessment.
- Plan assessment
  - Use student **learning outcomes** as the starting point.
  - Explain the **purpose of the group assignment**.
  - Make **assessment criteria** clear.

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**Assess Positive Interdependence: Process**
- Discuss the **criteria** for assessing group process beforehand.
- Have each student keep a log of **group process assessments**.
- Collect process assessment at the end of each stage of the project.
- Make peer assessments confidential.
- Have students complete **culminating group process evaluation**.
- Factor group process evaluations into the determination of individual grade.

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**Assess Individual Accountability: Product**
- Determine **grading methods and weightings** for product and individual grade.
- Use **self and peer-evaluation** to achieve individual accountability.
- Have students keep a log of **self-included** and **self-excluded** peer-evaluations.
- Collect self and peer-evaluations at the end of each stage.
- Have students complete a **culminating peer-evaluation** at project end.
- Make adjustments for ratings that appear unfair.
- **Grading mechanism** should comprise of:
  - Product grade (i.e. base grade or group grade).
  - Individual grade: Adjusted up or down based on self and peer-evaluation scores).

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**EVIDENCE**
- Anson and Goodman (2014) found that interim formative peer assessments coupled with timely feedback fostered positive group processes.
- Sprague et al. (2019) supported the effectiveness of peer and self-evaluations to fairly assess students’ contributions to group work.

**ADVICE**

Please consider the following recommendations:
- Keep peer-evaluations confidential.
- Use a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions.
- Encourage students to include comments.

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**References**


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