

Monash Team Assessment Guidelines

Parent Policy/Procedures

[Assessment in Coursework Units Policy](#)

[Assessment in Coursework Units: Development and Implementation of an Assessment Regime Procedures](#)

1. What is team assessment?

At Monash, *team assessment* refers to assessment tasks in which students work cooperatively and some element of the marks/feedback is awarded collectively. A well-organised and supported team assessment will enhance students' confidence to engage in team-based activities. Such approaches align well with the requirement of students to attain the [Monash Graduate Attributes](#).

Expectations and requirements for all aspects of team assessment within a unit should be clearly communicated to students at the start of semester, in the assessment descriptions and in the unit guide. This includes information about:

- Team assessment design (section 2 of these guidelines)
- Team formation (section 3)
- Team support (section 4)
- Assessing teamwork (section 5)

2. Team assessment design

Educators are responsible for planning the requirements of team assessment to ensure that they are achievable, and relate to and support the learning outcomes of the unit and Monash Graduate Attributes. Team assessments should be designed by a team of educators where possible to ensure appropriateness and workability of the assessment.

In general, team assessments should be designed to promote mutual interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, appropriate practice of interpersonal skills, and regular self-assessment of team functioning. Clear instruction from educators should be given about the roles and responsibilities of students, as well as clear information about the task and subsequent assessment including the marking criteria. This is particularly important for students who may not be familiar with team assessment.

The specification and scope of team assessments and related activities should ensure that:

- they relate to authentic or real-world situations where possible;
- they cannot easily be completed by one student, working alone;
- they cannot be easily broken down into pieces and completed by individual students in isolation;
- they require the collective effort of most, if not all team members, to be successful;
- they require communication and collaboration between team members; and
- opportunities are provided for team members to meet face-to-face or online to work together such as the use of team collaborative tools (see below under 3.1. Team Communication Tools);
- fair and transparent grading processes can be employed;
- students are appropriately supported to develop their communication, leadership and teamwork skills
 - In units where teamwork skill development is explicitly stated in the learning outcomes, educators need to make sure that the assessment task is aligned with stated learning outcomes and that the outcomes of the task can be appropriately measured. This should be clearly communicated to the students. Students should be provided with appropriate learning resources and activities to develop teamwork skills.

Students should be provided with the opportunity to ask questions about the assessment and clarify any uncertainties.

3. Team formation

i. Team formation considerations

The formation of teams should be carefully considered to ensure students are appropriately challenged to work with students:

- of different genders;
- from different cultures and ethnicities;
- with both native and non-native English speakers;
- from different discipline backgrounds, where students from multiple courses are undertaking the same unit; and
- of different learning levels, where class cohorts contain students from different years of study.

ii. Methods of team formation

Common methods for selecting teams include:

- allowing students to self-select one partner, then the instructor forming these pairs into larger teams;
- instructor-formed heterogeneous teams, based on prior unit results or responses to a team selection survey (can ensure diversity, balance of skills backgrounds, replicates work-based environments, but is less efficient in terms of allocation process);
- randomly allocated teams (easy, efficient and fair system of allocation, but can be viewed as the easy option taken by the educator); or
- student self-selection of teams (least preferred due to this method resulting in a lack of diversity within teams, and evidence of the formation of student cliques).

iii. Group Size

Group sizes of around 4-5 members are generally recommended.

Smaller team sizes require greater contributions from individual members, making them more sensitive to individual student dropout or non-contribution. Quiet students feel more comfortable in participating, consensus amongst team members is usually reached more easily, and the potential for strained team dynamics are usually reduced. However smaller groups also require less coordination and communication, which can detract from explicit teamwork learning outcomes and the pool of expertise is potentially less than with larger teams.

Larger teams require more communication and coordination but also provide more redundancy, potentially allowing some students to 'free-ride' which is undesirable. Conflict is more usual in larger teams. Slightly larger teams (6-8) may be appropriate in later year levels, particularly within multi-disciplinary projects and those where students have very clearly defined individual responsibilities. Larger teams do provide for the potential of more ideas being generated, a wider pool of expertise and backgrounds, and more complex tasks to be attempted.

Educators should also consider team sizes in light of the number of teams they can effectively manage and they need to ensure they can provide appropriate support to each team including checking team progress and mediation.

4. Team support

Where students do not know each other, educators should design some tutorial/online activities early in the semester so that students can get to know each other, e.g. 'icebreaker' activities that allow for students to interact with each other and share information about themselves e.g. skills, backgrounds etc.

i. Team communication tools

Opportunities to practice meeting (face-to-face or virtually) as a team, project planning, conflict resolution and providing constructive feedback should be provided in such units. Educators should consider encouraging, or even mandating, the use of specific, domain-appropriate tools for managing team communication and task tracking. These can include:

- Team communication tools (e.g. [Slack](#))
- Online task management systems ([Asana](#), [Trello](#))
- Facilities in Monash learning systems (Google tools, Monash email, Moodle)
- Templates provided by educators

Informal group chat systems (e.g. Facebook Messenger/Groups, WhatsApp) have also been found to be useful in some units featuring team assessment.

ii. Creating and managing project artefacts

Where teams have little experience of team study or teamwork assessment, educators should try and provide some starter resources and artefacts to encourage engagement with the task and the setting off in the right direction.

Where possible, teams should store all data related to the team project in a centralised repository accessible to all members. Teaching staff may consider mandating the use of such repositories. For instance, all Monash students have access to Google Drive, which offers a centralised file repository and provides automated version tracking facilities. This can greatly reduce the risk of data loss, and allows teaching staff to trace contributions to submitted documents if required.

iii. Managing dysfunctional teams

Group work should be designed so that the likelihood that a team becomes dysfunctional is minimised. This may include clear instruction from educators about the roles and responsibilities of students, as well as clear information about the task and subsequent assessment. Also, if team-work spans several weeks, checkpoints should be established within teams. This may involve team meetings or submission of draft work for formative feedback.

Both students and educators are responsible for managing conflict. Team members have the same status and this can cause problems as members try to manage each other. Conflict in a team situation can be both productive and destructive. When conflict arises within a team, students often struggle to deal with it – particularly if working to a deadline. Educators need to monitor team progress as a strategy to deal with conflict. Educators may choose to include a conflict resolution statement within a team assessment, which can provide students a time frame in which to identify potential conflict issues or problems, describe a process for dealing with conflict, and identify possible options to deal with conflict.

If a problem arises that seems insurmountable, the educators should have alternate plans in place, such as splitting the team or specifying additional individual assessments for problem members. If the primary purpose of the team activities is to develop collaborative skills and a student is unable to perform in a team task, the student may be assigned a fail mark, after full investigation of the situation by educators.

Educators should also prepare strategies for balancing team numbers, particularly in response to changing enrolments in the early weeks of semester and late semester drop-outs. In small teams, the loss of a single member may be quite significant, so the scope of the project might need to be revised so as not to overburden or disadvantage such teams.

5. Teamwork assessment

i. Assessing the product and the process

Where possible, both the product submitted for assessment and the way in which the group has worked as a team (the process) should be assessed.

In units where teamwork skill development is an explicit requirement and activities are provided to support this, it is recommended that a portion of the assessment is allocated for completion of these activities, rather than just assessing the team product. Such activities may include team meetings, project planning, critical reflections, and the provision of constructive feedback. Depending on the requirements of the activity, these marks may be allocated individually or on a team basis.

For small team assessment tasks (e.g. in a 2 hour tutorial), or where it is not possible or economical to distinguish between individual student contributions, all team members may receive the same team mark. For larger projects and those with larger teams, it is desirable to have some element of moderation or scaling of teamwork marks for individual members. This helps to motivate and acknowledge students who contribute the most time and effort, while deterring and penalising students that choose not to contribute as much as other team members but expect the same marks (“free-riders”). There are several common techniques used to moderate or scale teamwork marks (in terms of assessing the product and/or the process) for individual students:

a. Open statements of individual contributions (**not** recommended)

It is still common practice across Monash University for team-work assessments to be submitted with a cover sheet document which requires students to specify either the number of hours worked on a project or the percentage contributed by each individual. This practice is not recommended for a number of reasons:

- Students are often unwilling or unable to accurately agree upon individual contributions due to peer pressure and the lack of privacy in this process. Many find it easier to avoid confrontation by giving each member the same contribution. This means that important learning outcomes pertaining to team-work are side-stepped, and team members are deprived of valuable feedback on their work. Harder working members are not appropriately acknowledged nor rewarded.
- Asking students to state hours worked does not account for differences in work efficiency, and encourages some students to contribute and document long hours of low productivity work. Students should instead focus on the value their work brought to the team rather than the number of hours they invested.
- Brief, open statements of work usually lack any requirements for evidence or supporting information, hence large moderations are difficult to justify.
- This method is typically retrospective, in that student teams complete their statement of contribution just before submitting the assessment. This allows no time or opportunity for poorly contributing team members to improve their performance. This system has some value as a deterrent, but provides no constructive feedback on how students can improve their teamwork.

b. Anonymous Self and Peer Assessment (recommended)

Self-assessment is where students are asked to critically reflect on the quality and quantity of their own work. Peer assessment requires students to assess the work or contributions of other students. In a team-work context, the use of regular, anonymous self and peer assessment within teams is highly recommended. Several different free online tools are available to streamline this process (e.g. [CATME](#), [WebPA](#), [SparkPlus+](#)).

Once these results are reviewed and moderated by educators, the results of self and peer assessments can be used to appropriately scale team marks for each individual team member. It is recommended that these assessments be used for each major assessment, and perhaps multiple times for large projects which run all semester. Teams should be given the opportunity to discuss the feedback from these surveys, and how their team-work can be improved, with mentoring from educators.

In addition to student self-reported information, it is recommended that team members are required to keep an individual log of their work or some other appropriate ‘paper trail’ to provide evidence of work completed and interaction with their teammates. This evidence can be reviewed by teaching staff to further substantiate individual contributions in the case of peer review disagreements and inconsistencies.

Evidence from centralised project repositories (discussed in Section 4.ii) can also be used to substantiate contributions in case of such disagreements and inconsistencies.

ii. Individual marks within a team project

Some components of a team project may be assessed individually. In such cases the project details should clearly state which marks are awarded to individuals and which are to be shared by the team. That component can be self and peer assessed (e.g. as a Workshop in Moodle). Educators may allow team members to develop work contracts which specify the component for which each team member is individually responsible.

Document history

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