



Supporting group work online

Being able to work collaboratively is an important skill for our graduates, which is encapsulated in UniSA's Graduate Quality 4:

A graduate of the University of South Australia can work both autonomously and collaboratively as a professional.

As such, group projects and teamwork have been embedded into our programs within selected courses. In this *Guide*, we explore how group work can be enabled, supported and assessed as we move towards more flexible online teaching environments.

Stages of Group Work

Group work has been described as going through a series of stages: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning (Tuckman 1965; Tuckman & Jensen 1977). Each of these stages can be supported when students are studying online. To help illustrate how to support online group work in this *Guide*, we would like to use a case study of a three-member group project as an assessment item within a course, with students self-selecting their groups. The output of the Project is a collaborative report and a class presentation. Students will receive feedback on their development of Graduate Quality 4.

Forming

The first stage of group development is forming – where the groups are formed and common goals are specified.

In learnonline, group formation can be created by the teacher manually or automatically (random), or students can self-select which team they would like to work in.

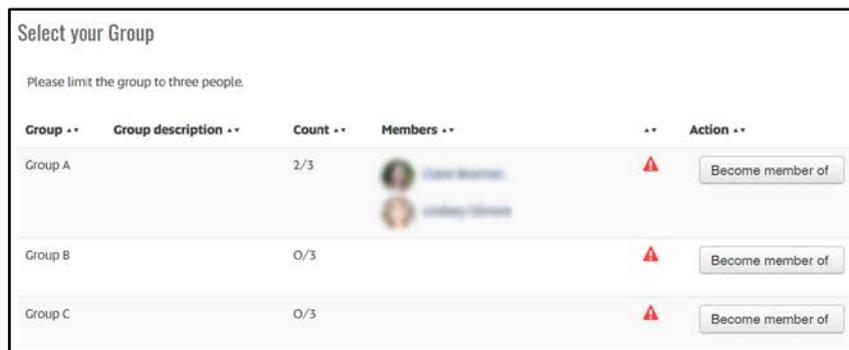
- [Create manual groups](#)
- [Auto-create groups](#)
- [Overview of group membership](#)

In our Group Project example, we would like to let students self-select their own groups, so we will use the Group self-selection tool.

- [Group self-selection activity](#)

To do this, we would need to know how many students there are, divide that by the desired number of members in each group (e.g. 3) and then manually create enough empty groups to hold all the students (e.g. Group A, Group B, Group C). We then need to create a Grouping (e.g. Project Groups), and add all of our manually-created groups into that Grouping. (Note: Groups and Grouping details are copied over when the course is copied over so you only have to do this once!). Then we can add the Group self-selection activity to the website for students to use.

When students access the Group self-selection tool, they are able to see the available groups, who are in these groups and can act to join their preferred group.



Group	Group description	Count	Members	Action
Group A		2/3		
Group B		0/3		
Group C		0/3		

If allowed in the settings, students can also re-name their groups, add more groups, leave groups and even set passwords for groups.

Storming-Norming

The next stages in the group work process are Storming, where conflicts are discussed and solutions negotiated and then Norming, where a consensus is reached and the group is clear about how it will function (Tuckman 1965).

To work through these stages, students need a place to meet in real-time. At UniSA, all students have access to a corporate Zoom account so can set up their group meetings to discuss who is going to do what and when. You don't need to add a Zoom room to the course website to do this – just instruct students to log into <https://unisa.zoom.us/> to schedule and hold their own real-time meetings.

- [Student help – Hosting a Zoom meeting](#)

It is also possible to add group tools (e.g. forums, wikis) to our learnonline website so students can use these spaces to support their group work.

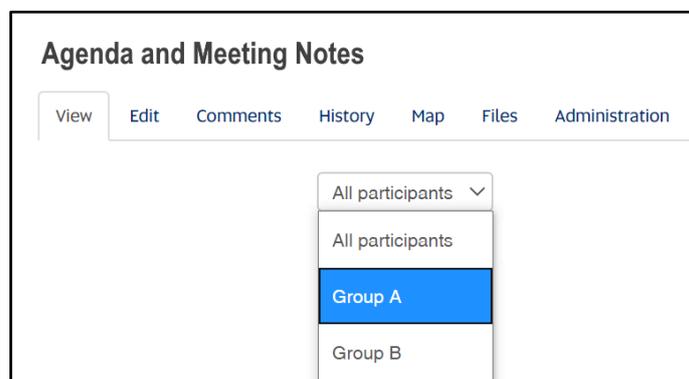
In our example, we would like students to have a **Private discussion forum** for our groups to communicate what they would like to achieve from their project and share communication preferences. To do this, a discussion forum would need to be added to the learnonline site and the Common module settings for the forum be adjusted so that the **Grouping** is Project groups and **Group mode** to Separate groups.

- [Adding a forum](#)
- [Common module settings](#)

In our example, we would also like students to record their meeting agendas and notes in a shared spot so we add a **Collaborative wiki** called **Agenda and Meeting Notes** to the course website. Again, we would adjust the Common module settings for the wiki to Grouping: Project groups and Group mode: Separate groups. Each member of that group would then be able to read and edit the wiki page in the website.

- [Adding a wiki](#)
- [Student help – Editing a wiki](#)

When these settings are made, students only see their group's forum or wiki, but teaching staff will see a group selector so they are able to monitor the activity of each group.



Performing

The next stage of the group process is performing where students have found the balance between conforming and deviance and are working on their project and drafting their report (Tuckman 1965).

In our example, we want to support the performing part of the group work with another wiki in the course website, called **Project report**.

Students can collaboratively edit this wiki page to create their report. If they use headings in their writing, the wiki tool automatically creates a linked table of contents for their page. Another unique feature of the wiki tool is that the history of each page, showing who contributed to which component, is available and students can view and restore previous versions. Students can also output wiki work as a PDF document.

There are many other collaboration options available to students outside the learnonline website, such as One Drive, Google Docs and Facebook that students may prefer to use, and in some instances it is appropriate to let students decide their preferred collaboration environment.

Adjourning

The final stage of the group process according to Tuckman and Jensen (1977) is adjourning, where feedback is given and the group is dispersed.

When supporting group work in our courses this can be when work is presented, assessed and feedback is provided.

Students will need to create a PDF version of their report from their wiki and submit this document for assessment. The assignment upload tool for this submission is adjusted so that students can submit in groups.

- [Assessment Settings – Group Submission Settings](#)

In our example, we want students to present their findings in two ways, sharing their final report and presenting their work to the class.

To allow the students to see the project reports from the other teams we will change the Common Module Setting - Group mode for the Project report wiki from Separate groups to **Visible groups**. The student will

now see a selector on their wiki that allows them to see the wiki work of the other groups.

Instead of the class presentation, when working online we will ask students to record their group presentation using Zoom and submit the resulting mp4 file for assessment. The assignment upload submission type is therefore changed to Video assignment.

- [Student help – Making a recording in Zoom](#)
- [Assessment settings – Submission types](#)
- [Student help – Video assignment](#)

Alternatively, you could ask students to upload their MP4 file to YouTube, adjust the security to be unlisted and submit the URL of the video as online text. This method makes the marking process faster as there is less time wasted downloading videos before you can play them as YouTube streams media. The drawback is that students will need to have or create a Google account to do this.

We would also like students to see each others' videos. When we do this in our face to face classes it can be a very long (and tedious) process for staff and a stressful time for the students. The good news is that learnonline has a great tool that allows students to peer review and give feedback on each others' work called **Workshop**. When students submit their video (or video URL) they are then allocated five of their peer's videos to watch and using a rubric, give them feedback. The teacher then evaluates the grading process and releases the marks – one mark for their video, and another mark for how well they did on their grading (a statistical comparison of the multiple grades given).

- [Peer review overview](#)
- [Workshop phases overview](#)
- [Student help – Peer assessment using Moodle Workshop](#)

Online options for assessing group work

Finally, we would like the students to reflect on their group processes as a way to foster the development of Graduate Quality 4.

One option is to ask individual students to submit a 3 part written reflection that asks them to reflect on what their level of collaboration



skills was at the **beginning of the course** and what they wanted to focus on in this group learning activity (e.g. leadership skills, time management etc.). Then they need to illustrate what happened **during the course** and provide evidence (forum posts, wiki extracts/links, meeting notes etc) to back up their claims. Thirdly they need to look at what all this means for them **after the course** and their plans for further development of their collaboration skills. A moodle tool that can help with this is an **Individual wiki** (Wiki mode: Individual wiki rather than Collaborative and Group mode: Separate) with students encouraged to write in the wiki regularly much like an online journal. The history of the individual wiki edits will help you to ensure that students are journalling when they are supposed to, rather than generating a work of fiction the night before the journal submission is due!

- [Wiki settings](#)

Another option is to seek feedback from each of the group members using the **Feedback tool** and moderate the students' final grade based on this. (Note: If you want to do this moderation process, then you will need students to not submit their work in groups as described above, but ask them to submit individually).

- [Feedback activity](#)

After specifying which students are in their group, students can be asked, using Feedback, to relatively rate themselves and their group members for skills such as facilitating a team environment, amount of work done for the team, communication skills etc. and justify the ratings they gave.



Relatively rate yourself and your team members for *Facilitates a collaborative team environment*. Did the team member listen to and consider the views of other team members? Did they provide feedback on others' work? Did they seek feedback on their own work? Did they offer helpful suggestions to improve the team's work and support others to complete their work? Did they demonstrate problem-solving and conflict management skills e.g. reach consensus by involving others in decisions?

You have **100 points** to allocate between all the team members.

(Facilitates a collaborative team environment) Yourself (0 - 100) *

(Facilitates a collaborative team environment) Team member 1 (0 - 100) *

(Facilitates a collaborative team environment) Team member 2 (0 - 100) *

Some academic units will have access to a more sophisticated way of achieving self and peer assessment and feedback using the program SPARK^{PLUS}.

- [Why SPARK^{PLUS}?](#)
- [UniSA login for SPARK^{PLUS}](#)

This next image shows what the website might look like for the students in our case study to support them to complete their group work online, using online journaling and a reflection as the basis for assessing and giving feedback on the development of Graduate Quality 4.



Group Project (50%)

-  Assessment Description - Group Project (50%) 422.9KB PDF document
-  Assessment Rubric - Group Project 723.5KB PDF document
-  Journal – My collaborative skills development
-  Select your team

Team Tools

-  Team forum (Private)
-  Team meetings (real time in Zoom)
-  Team meetings - Agenda and notes
-  Our Project Report

Deliverables

-  Project Report (30%; Week 9)
-  Group presentation video (10%; Week 10)
-  Peer review of presentations (Hurdle; Week 10)
-  Reflection on GQ4 (10%; Week 10)

If you would like to ask online teaching and learning questions related to your course, you can look through our [FAQs](#), write to TIU@unisa.edu.au, have an [online consultation with a member of the TIU](#).

References

- Tuckman, B, 1965. Developmental sequence in small groups, *Psychological Bulletin* 63(6) 384–399. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0022100>
- Tuckman, B.W. and Jensen, M.A.C., 1977. Stages of small-group development revisited. *Group & Organization Studies*, 2(4), pp.419-427.