Interpersonal Skills: Definitions

Higher order skills:

**Leadership** is the process of successfully influencing the activities of a group towards goal achievement. A leader has the ability to influence others by presence, charisma, command of language, expertise, and engendering respect to achieve group objectives ethically. Background skills required are mentoring, decision making, delegating appropriately, motivating others, using persuasive and clear communication, and being empowered by knowledge.

**Networking** is the ability to actively seek, identify and create effective contacts with others and maintain those contacts for mutual benefit. Background skills required are self-confidence, effective communication, building, maintaining, and expanding networks and collegial relationships.

**Teamwork** involves group problem solving, cooperation with others, responsiveness to others’ ideas, harmonious engagement in collaborative learning, taking individual responsibility within the group for developing and achieving group goals. Background skills required are mentoring, group work, decision making, delegation, and collaboration.

Background skills:

**Mentoring** is:
- being a trusted advisor and helper who has experience in a particular field, who actively supports and guides someone who is less experienced in this area in the development of their knowledge and experience base, or the achievement of their career or personal goals;
- a protected, non-judgemental relationship which facilitates a wide range of learning, experimentation and development; and
- a relationship that may be formal or informal, but must involve trust, mutual respect, and commitment as both parties seek to work together to achieve a goal.

**Group work** is:
- any activity in which students work together;
- any activity which has been specifically designed so that students work in pairs or groups, and may be assessed as a group (referred to as formal group work); or
- when students come together naturally to help each other with their work (referred to as informal group work).

**Decision making** is:
- taking responsibility for a decision and its outcomes; and
- identifying appropriate evidence and weighing up that evidence to make a choice.
Delegation is:
• taking responsibility for determining when it is appropriate to ask someone else to make a decision or carry out a task;
• giving someone else the discretion to make decisions that you have the authority to make; and
• the process by which authority and responsibility is distributed from the project leader to an individual working on the project.

Collaboration is:
• working cooperatively and productively with other team members to contribute to the professional outcomes of the team; and
• task-related interactions with colleagues that involve sharing, assistance, and interdependence.

Network building is:
• creating contacts with other persons and maintaining those contacts;
• acquiring and maintaining information of persons that can operate as contacts for specific purposes if needed; and
• using contact persons in an ethical manner for the purpose of meeting specific goals, e.g. collaboration in projects, finding information, etc.

Motivating others is:
• selling ideas and winning commitment to goals;
• generating enthusiasm and energy by being positive: ‘we can do this’;
• maintaining a positive attitude even when things aren’t going well;
• encouraging others to come up with solutions;
• involving the whole team;
• including everyone: listening and taking views on board;
• giving people new challenges and trusting them to deliver;
• encouraging others to perform well;
• being prepared to support others in taking agreed, calculated risks; and
• not blaming others when things go wrong: avoiding creating a ‘blame culture’.