The Groupwork Assessment Dilemma

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Can you assess groupwork without undermining the cooperative process?

**Problem-based Learning** (Grenfell, 2000)

General characteristics of PBL are:
- context-driven, using real-world situations,
- focuses on thinking skills,
- requires the integration of knowledge and skills,
- is self-directed and aims to promote life-long learning involves small groups

**Benefits of groupwork:**

1. developing team and negotiation skills in students
2. greater student involvement in the learning process
3. greater satisfaction with the course
4. learning from each other
5. developing independence from the instructors
6. better motivation to complete the work

“*Groupwork [was the best features of Research Project 3] – so that problems can be shared and more than one point of view can be given.*”

“*the close group atmosphere*” [was the best features of Research Project 2]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response to survey after the second research project</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>working in a group has made this unit more enjoyable</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working in a group has helped my understanding of the content in this unit</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my ability to work efficiently in a team has improved since the beginning of this unit.</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working in groups has been a positive experience</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working in groups has improved my communication skills</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Groupwork assessment questions:

1. How important do you consider group work to be?
2. What are you going to assess – product, or process; group or individual?
3. Who is going to assess the progress – instructor or students or a combination?
4. How do you address the problem of the “free-loader”?
5. Do all students have equity of opportunity? How will this impact on your assessment choices?
6. How much training do students need to be effective team members?

ASSESSMENT OF GEOS116

Assessment tasks:

- Research projects = 35%
- Web-evaluation assignment = 5%
- Tutor’s mark = 10%
- Final examination = 50%

Research projects:
- first research project is 5%; projects 2-4 =10% each;
- one part of each project is a combined effort from the group (for half the marks) + an individual component (the other half of the marks);
- individual component: a 2 page written report (plus diagrams, maps and references) which will concentrate on the synthesis of the ideas and conclusions;

Tutor’s mark:
- each student will be awarded a mark for their performance in class;
- consideration will be given to: your level of preparation for class and team discussions; your reliability as a member of a team; your contribution to team and class discussions and activities.
- particular attention will be given to members of the teams who show initiative, creative problem-solving strategies and who diligently complete the tasks;

Final examination:
- final exam includes material from lectures, text-book readings, workshops and research projects;
- questions will draw on information & ideas from different modules to give an integrated view of the unit;
- exam includes questions that ask you to apply your knowledge to interpret and solve problems