

SPARC Guide

Supporting Partnerships to Advance Results of Collaboration



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Introduction – Instructing and Facilitating Teamwork

Welcome to the *SPARC Guide!* This student-designed toolkit is intended as a resource for both educators and students at Ryerson University and beyond.

Teamwork is often an expectation of many professors and employers and is, at times, a dreaded aspect of learning. However, with adequate resources and sufficient training, teamwork can become an engaging, dynamic, and hands-on means through which to learn a variety of transferable skills.

While several professors and students dive into teamwork under the impression that the experience mirrors the ‘real working world’ there are distinct, attention-worthy differences, which inevitably and invariably influence the overall experience of students engaging in teamwork as well as the quality of work and learning associated with teamwork assignments.

As students, one’s roles, responsibilities and sense of accountability in teamwork differ from those in the working world where such considerations are often outlined and reinforced by: job descriptions, paid wage, potential for promotion, long term relations with fellow colleagues, internal policies which outline consequences for poor conduct, and retention of employment. For students, few of these guiding principles are present. Consequently, students may remain passive during team conflict or other challenges.

“With adequate resources and sufficient training, teamwork can become an engaging, dynamic, and hands-on means through which to learn a variety of transferable skills.”

“This toolkit is intended to initiate and support ongoing instruction and to empower students on how to operate as effective members of a team in team projects.”



Thus, it is imperative to teach the fundamental elements of successful teamwork while creating a means through which to attain guiding measures for students throughout the teamwork process.

This toolkit is intended to initiate and support ongoing instruction and to empower students on how to operate as effective members of a team in team projects.

Specifically, it is meant to give insight into some of the strategies that can be taken to address the issues mentioned above and to facilitate students and educators in establishing a firm foundation upon which successful, and productive teamwork and learning can be achieved.

We invite you to modify and adapt these tools as determined by variations in the team size, nature of the assignment, and time considerations but hope that on the whole it will provide a standard for the considerations necessary in making student teamwork a meaningful and memorable means of both teaching and learning.

Group versus Teams

In this toolkit, we have intentionally used the word team rather than group to describe the act of students working together. Although the terms team and group are often used interchangeably, there is a remarkable difference between the two. Although both describe people coming together for a common purpose, a team is a much more powerful connection. It describes not only people coming together, but working together with a great level of commitment to one another and their purpose. Simply put – **All teams are groups, but not all groups are teams.** We hope that this toolkit will help take students from acting as a group to a high functioning team.

Some of the marked differences between teams and groups are described in the table below:

Groups	Teams
Often work independently and pool their work	Constantly work together; either in person or through constant contact
Work often occurs without group discussion	Discuss and make decisions together
Have individual accountability	Have mutual accountability
May be heterogeneous or homogeneous	Are heterogeneous and take on different roles/responsibilities
Concerned with individual achievement	Help and support members
The whole is equal to, or less, than the sum of its parts	The whole is greater than the sum of its parts

(Oakley, Felder, Brent & Elhadj, 2004)

How to Develop a Foundation for Successful Teamwork

1. Distribute and keep as a reference the *SPARC Guide*.

2. Assess your own participation in teams to determine your strengths and areas for improvement (see “Self Assessment - Analysis of My Behaviour in Teams” on the following page).

3. Engage in a team activity (see "Working in a Team" on page 8) in order to begin establishing team cohesion and efficacy before engaging in the assigned project or task.

4. Teach/learn and explore, in depth the various elements of successful teamwork including:
 - Roles
 - Task Planner
 - Team Accord
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

5. Establish this approach to teamwork as a standard organizational practice.

Self-Assessment – Analysis of my behaviour in teams

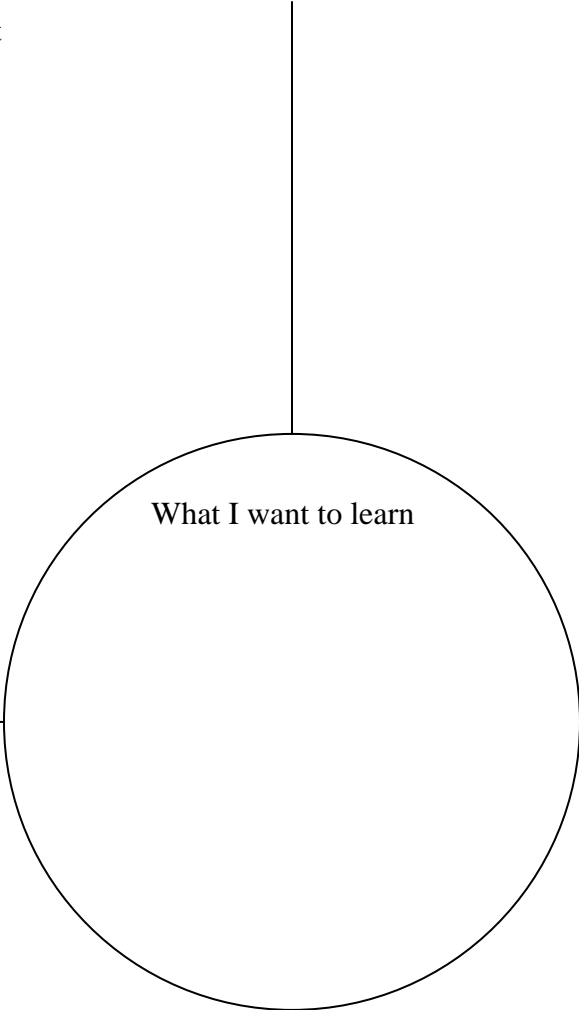
		This is OK	Need More	Need Less
Communication Skills	Amount of talking among the team			
	Being brief and concise			
	Being forceful			
	Drawing others out			
	Listening alertly			
	Thinking before I talk			
	Keeping my remarks on the topic			
Observation Skills	Noting tension among team members			
	Noting who talks to whom			
	Noting interest level among team members			
	Sensing feelings of individuals			
	Noting who is being “left out”			
	Noting reaction to my comments			
	Noting when team members avoid topics			
	Noting seating arrangements			
Discussion Skills	Stating problems or goals			
	Asking for ideas, opinions			
	Giving ideas			
	Evaluating ideas critically			
	Summarizing the discussion			
	Clarifying issues			
Morale-building skills	Showing interest			
	Working to keep people from being ignored			
	Harmonizing, helping people reach agreement			

		This is OK	Need More	Need Less
	Reducing tension between team members			
	Upholding rights of individuals in the face of team pressure			
	Expressing praise or appreciating team members			
Emotional Expressiveness	Telling team members what I feel			
	Hiding my emotions			
	Disagreeing openly			
	Expressing warm feelings			
	Expressing gratitude			
	Being sarcastic			
	Facing conflict and anger			
	Withstanding silence			
Social Relationships	Competing to out do others			
	Acting dominant			
	Trusting others			
	Being helpful			
	Being protective			
	Calling attention to myself			
	Standing up for myself			
General	Understanding why I do what I do (insight)			
	Encouraging comments on my own behaviour (soliciting feedback)			
	Accepting help willingly			
	Making up my mind firmly			
	Criticizing myself			
	Waiting patiently			
	Going off by myself to read or think			

Working in an Interprofessional Team

What I am excited about

What I am worried about



What I want to learn

Things I'm good at

Things I want to build on

Suggested Roles and Expectations in Teamwork

Here are some suggestions for roles that are commonly assigned in teams. Roles may remain constant throughout your project *or* you may choose to have more than one person assigned to a role, for example having more than one editor for written tasks. You may also rotate roles throughout the project to share the workload or to give team members a chance to explore roles they don't commonly attain.

Facilitator/Moderator:

- Organizes meeting place, time
- Deals with 'Big Picture' organization
- 'Project Manager'
- Facilitates meetings
- Deals with team conflict if necessary
- _____
- _____
- _____

Editor:

- Strong writing skills.
- Establishes the standards for writing for submissions to the editor (in discussion with team). For example: format, style of referencing, font size, and deadlines for submissions to the editor.
- Granted 'authority' to return submissions back to team members for modifications or further standardization, while in discussion with other team members.
- Responsible for editing, not re-creating, or re-writing, or for all of the referencing.
- _____
- _____

Record-Keeper:

- Keeps and organizes emails exchanged amongst team members.
- Responsible for keeping minutes of meetings (skill to be taught as part of team skills).
- Organizes 'To Do' lists, recording accurately who has volunteered to do what jobs/been designated or delegated to what jobs/details.
- The 'go to' for 'evidence' in the event of ongoing concerns (i.e., a team member consistently missing meetings, not submitting work on time etc...).
- Timekeeper at meeting to ensure the meeting doesn't run long
- _____
- _____

Other Relevant Role(s) as dictated by the nature of the assignment:

Role: _____

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Team Accord and Planner Considerations

The accord & planner are best filled out after all team members have filled out the "Analysis of my Behaviour in Teams" form.

Team Accord and Planner:

- Topic of inquiry
- Agreed upon goals for the project/assignment outcome.
- Team members names and roles
- Submission of goals, challenges and activities associated with each stage of the team process
- Team-established agreements on conduct and consequences
- Decision-making methods with the team: Consensus or majority?

Notes for Team Accord and Planner:

A Sample Task Planner

Schedule of events and deadlines:

Use these calendars to record all important dates and meetings as discussed by your teams.

Tasks

- Literature search & article summary
- Rough draft 1
- Rough draft 2
- Final draft
- Power point
- Rehearsal
- Presentation

November

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
		lit. review		article sum		
		rough draft 1				

December

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
				rough draft 2		
				final draft		

January

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
		ppt. present- ation		rehearsal		
		in class present- ation				

Task Planner

Schedule of events and deadlines:
Use these calendars to record all important dates and meetings as discussed by your teams.

Tasks

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT

A Sample Team Accord

Team Topic:

Team work in Community Services

Goals for outcome:

To work as a team and create an A assignment

Learn more about one another

Learn more about the importance of team work

Have fun!

General Expectations of conduct:

May include attendance at meetings, conduct at meetings (how decisions will be made, etc.), expected behavior with fellow group members

Team Members & Establish Roles:

MEMBER NAME	ROLE
Jenna	Facilitator/Mediator
Amber	Editor
Leigh-Ann	Record keeper
Lauren	Power Point designer
Anna	Videographer
David	Video editor

This page is to be established by the team. Keep in mind that the more detail you include, the more accountable you all are to yourselves and each other. Professors and students can suggest new roles as per required/inspired by the nature of the assignment.

Team Accord

Team Topic:

Goals for outcome:

General Expectations of conduct:

Team Members & Establish Roles:

MEMBER NAME	ROLE
	Facilitator/Mediator
	Editor
	Record keeper

This page is to be established by the team. Keep in mind that the more detail you include, the more accountable you all are to yourselves and each other. Professors and students can suggest new roles as per required/inspired by the nature of the assignment.

Debriefing: An Integral Part of Teamwork

What is debriefing?

Debriefing happens after a team has had a meeting or completed a stage of a project for review purposes. This allows team members to talk about their own personal thoughts, feelings and experiences. Debriefing is used to clarify concepts and reflect on the learning experience.

Why is debriefing done?

Debriefing helps a team obtain information about how to proceed in the future. It assists team members in overcoming challenges and discovering what went well in a meeting (as well as areas needing improvement). It is important that each team member participates in the process and is open about how he/she is feeling.

What questions are asked during a debriefing session?

The following are some suggested questions that may be used to help prompt discussion:

- 1) *How does everyone feel that went?*
- 2) *What have you learned from today's experience?*
- 3) *What went well?*
- 4) *What could have been improved?*
- 5) *How do you feel the team is functioning?*

Debriefing can also be done individually.

Upon completion of the project, each member may benefit from rereading the Self-Assessment answers they recorded during project launch. Ask yourself what you learned and if you would answer any questions differently now.

Evidence for Excellent Teamwork

Biech, E (2001). A Model for Building Teamwork, In *The Pfeiffer Book of Successful Team-building Tools*. California: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer. 13-26.

This is a useful resource for students striving to form a high performance team. This article educates students with a visual model of the 10 characteristics of a high performance team, as well as thoroughly describes them. The 10 characteristics outlined in this article include: clear goals, defined roles, open communication, effective decision making, balanced participation, valued diversity, managed conflict, positive atmosphere, cooperative relationships and participative leadership.

Goode, S. and S. The (2005) Peer Review to Support Student Assessment in Teams, *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 16(4), 379-383.

Given the emphasis employers place on collaborative work skills, it is essential that post-secondary students develop related proficiencies through group work opportunities. Commonly evaluation includes self-assessment and peer review; however, concerns often arise regarding students' ability to fairly gauge contributions made by themselves and their peers. A method of 'weighted peer evaluation' and sample evaluation form are presented. Comments sampled from completed evaluation forms indicate that peer review assists students develop reflective analysis skills. The authors conclude that peer review must be based on clear evaluation criteria developed by instructors in conjunction with students.

Gretchen N. Vik (2001). Doing more to teach teamwork than telling students to sink or swim. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 64(4), 112-119.

A fantastic resource for professors interested in enhancing the student experience of group work. This article entails a call to action for professors/teachers to actively facilitate and teach students how to participate in effective teamwork. Offers an overview of Dufrene & Lehman's (2000) forming, storming, norming and performing stages of teamwork. Includes a substantial annotated bibliography of other resources for teaching effective teamwork strategies to students.

Oakley B., Felder M. R., Brent R., & Elhajj I. (2004). Turning student groups into effective teams. *Journal of Student Centered Learning*, 2(1), 9-34.

A fantastic and thorough resource for effective teaching and facilitation of teamwork in a post-secondary setting. The paper offers a complete step-by-step instructional guide for professors/teachers and includes extensive appendices for implementation of the strategies discussed and ongoing team management. Topics include forming teams, anticipating challenges and compiling strategies for resolving group conflict, peer ratings, frequently asked questions from professors regarding common challenges in facilitating teamwork in classrooms and suggestions for dealing with them.

Lumsden, G. & Lumsden, D. (2000). The “Work” in Teamwork: Planning the Process. In *Communication in Groups and Teams: Sharing Leadership* (2nd ed). California: Wadsworth. 55-79.

This is an excellent article for students to reference when planning effective teamwork. This article offers a thorough look into the initial planning process that every team should follow prior to beginning a project. This planning includes choosing a leader, qualities of a good leader, choosing a recorder, setting expectations, and planning agendas.

Monk-Turner, E. and B. Payne (2005) Addressing Issues in Group Work in the Classroom, *Journal of Criminal Justice and Education*, 16(1), 166-179.

This article provides an in-depth review of post-secondary students’ perceptions of group work in order to assist post-secondary instructors and faculty effectively implement group work as an instructional strategy. Discussed are the factors that impact students’ opinions about group work and how a group work experience colours students sentiments about future collaborative experiences. The authors contend that in order to empower all students to attain the greatest learning value from group work opportunities, instructors must understand the barriers, concerns, and worth of group work from a student’s perspective. Several recommendations about the elements required to support groups, as well as characteristics of both individual students and groups that lead to positive group work experiences are offered. Factors such as race, gender,

students' diverse time demands and lifestyles, as well as GPA that may impact the dynamic of groups are addressed.

O'Connor, D., Yballe, L. (2007). Team leadership: critical steps to great projects. *Journal of Management Education*, 31(2), 292.

This is a useful resource for teachers inclined to broaden classroom expectations from the traditional outcome expectations of teamwork (or project submission). Personal development goals such as: having a positive overall experience, learning about group dynamics and learning about the self as a team member and leader will help students in future team academic or business ventures. This article also has great tools in the appendices that you may consider using, such as a team planning sheet for writing, a quality checklist, and reflection sheets.

Postholm, M.B. (2008). Group work as a learning situation: a qualitative study in a university classroom. *Teachers and Teaching*, 14(2), 143.

Postholm discusses feedback collected from students after a group work experience. Main findings include: what behaviours of the teacher can help motivate students, what students feel they gain from teamwork, and that ambition increases with time while engaged in teamwork. Reveals the student perspective on learning in teams that are self-selected.

Rinehart, Tammy A., Laszlo, Anna T., and Briscoe, Gwen O. Collaboration toolkit: How to build, fix, and sustain productive partnerships. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), 2001.

This extensive and detailed resource is designed to help those in law enforcement successfully build effective partnerships, yet contains valuable information that can be applied to any group work situation. Topics covered in the toolkit include collaboration, trust, communication, and teamwork strategies. Many of the chapters outline potential problems or "pitfalls" of working with a group and suggest ways to overcome them. Of particular interest are the games, worksheets, tips, and tools that can easily be applied to the classroom setting.

Tasa, K., Taggar, S., Seijts, G.H. (2007). The development of collective efficacy in teams: a multilevel and longitudinal perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(1), 17.

Tasa, Taggar and Seijts offer a model illustrating the dynamic interplay between individual and collective performances and how those modes converge towards a successful team. The determinants and importance of collective efficacy are explored. Consider the SPARC Guide as a mode of increasing collective efficacy in the classroom! Early engagement (by self-assessments or the team accord enclosed) can build a team's confidence and therefore, efficacy. Group success hinges on continuous, active participation by all members of a team.

Wilson R. F., Rapin S. L., & Haley-Banez L. (2004). How teaching group work can be guided by foundational documents: Best practice guidelines, diversity principles, training standards. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 29(1), 19- 28.

As an overview of Best Practice Guidelines for Group Workers this article discusses several documents and their application to teaching effective group work strategies. Of particular note, the article calls upon teachers, facilitators and participants of group work to explore “their own worldviews, biases, and belief systems” (p.25) and how these impact on the different stages of group work. Sensitivity toward diversity of culture, religious, sexuality, ability, age, and relationship status and the potential for ‘invisible’ diversity are discussed as tools for enhancing the professionalism and relational aspects of effective group work.

When Instruction Should Take Place:

- The first required course for first year, preferably first year, first semester.
- Can be integrated as a legitimate component of the course (i.e., a full three hour block of time dedicated to teaching teamwork), instead of mentioning merely in passing. Evidence suggests that this approach increases the effectiveness of teams.
- Course outline can include required reading on teamwork such as the one accompanying this Guide in addition to those in the bibliography.
- Students can be encouraged to use and re-use their toolkit in whichever course they are taking, even if it is not formally adopted by that course's instructor. This allows students to be empowered around teamwork instead of always relying on the instructor to address issues.

Team Roles:

- Verbally review/teach the expectations for each role according the *Instructing and Facilitating Teamwork in a Classroom Toolkit*.
- Define/tailor roles as determined/required by team size/course expectations.
- Comment on the possibility for roles to be rotated where appropriate.
- Emphasize the importance of taking meeting notes as a way to keep the team on track and focussed on the project
- Teach strategies for conflict resolution whenever possible. These strategies are useful in any context where people are engaged in work that matters.

Team ‘Norms’ & Stages of the Team Process:

- Offer a sample of a Team Accord form as related to team norms as a resource and an example for the teams to follow.
- Discuss some considerations for each of the ‘norms’.
- Give examples of some considerations for the team accord & each stage of the team process (Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing).
- Provide examples of what may occur in the event that certain norms/activities are overlooked in order to emphasize the importance of thinking through the process before challenges arise.

Team Accord:

- Consider establishing the submission of the Team Accord as a mandatory project submission. This reinforces the importance of the accord to the overall course expectations.
- Devote sufficient class time for the creation of team accord.
- Evaluate the team accord for completeness once it is submitted. Inquire with teams who do not submit complete accords. This may be an early indication that the team process is not going smoothly.
- Provide instruction and ongoing guidance regarding the norms/expectations of teamwork. Share stories of productive teams and of how teams work through challenges to be successful.
- Facilitate the accountability of team members when necessary.

Notes:

Confidential Self and Peer Evaluation of Team Work¹

Your Name: _____ Date of Group: _____

Title of Group Project: _____

A. Please provide your written comments about how you feel your group has worked together.

B. Please assess your group's teamwork process on the presentation (e.g., consider the group's work in preparing for and delivering the presentation).

To describe your group, please check one of the three boxes below:

- The team worked effectively based on agreed upon roles and responsibilities. Everyone in the team should receive the same mark for the group project.
- Or**
- The team did have some challenges, but we were able to work through them and they have been resolved. Everyone in the team should receive the same mark for the group project.
- Or**
- The mark should not be the same for everyone in the team.
-

C. Please list the names of all group members (including yourself) and provide the percentage contribution by each group member and your assessment for each group member out of 10 marks.

**Group Member Names
(include yourself)**

**Individual's Percentage
Contribution & Score/10**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

¹ Adapted from Dr. Dan Mahoney & Dr. Sharon Wong, School of Nutrition, Ryerson University. Permission granted for use.

1-Hour Lesson Plan for SPARC Guide:

Intro - 5 min

Once you have outlined the team assignment and student teams have been selected, segue to the SPARC Guide as a resource to support student teams. Use any part of the intro or annotated bibliography we wrote to start a conversation about common concerns regarding teamwork and performance expectations in the classroom. Acknowledge common anxieties and talk about the type of support you would like to provide as an instructor when it comes to conflict resolution and other issues, though we recommend that students use the Toolkit to solve group problems before they come to the instructor. Describe Groups versus Teams (p.4) to outline the possibilities that can come from working as a team. You may find the Evidence for Excellent Teamwork (p. 17-20) additionally helpful to spark dialogue.

Individual reflection - 5 min

Ask students to individually complete the Self Assessment - Analysis of my Behaviour in Teams (p. 6,7) exercise. This makes time for students to reflect on their strengths when working in groups while also considering skills that could use strengthening. Students will begin to form expectations about their personal performance and it creates a mindset for the first team exercise. Reinforce that these answers will remain private.

Team activity - 25 min

Seat teams together and allow a moment for introductions should the team members not know one another. Now they should proceed to individually complete Working in a Team (p. 8) with at least one answer per section to start. Students should know that these answers will later be shared with their team members. Some groups will have insightful answers that can be shared with the class. Learning within and between groups is possible in this exercise.

Roles, Task Planner - 10 min

Elicit roles that may best serve the type of assignment at hand. Encourage students to use their personal reflection to determine whether they want to tackle an unlikely role, or to learn to do a more natural or typical role in a different way. Alternatively students may wish to rotate roles. Breaking down tasks into manageable packs and planning due dates is a great way to reduce stress in teamwork. The Task Planner (p. 13) is one way to achieve this. Students should use this time to plan their next meeting and more.

Accord - 10 min

Students should now fill in the accord and submit one per group for the sake of accountability. Circle the class to make sure questions are answered and productivity continues to keep the class focussed.

Debrief - 5 min

Elicit answers from the group about how issues that were brought up earlier could be solved with the Toolkit or the completed exercises. Use questions from Debriefing (p. 16) for suggestions.

Feedback Form

Please share your thoughts with us. We would like comments from students and instructors that can enhance this toolkit's effectiveness. You can give us your feedback by email anytime. Thanks!

Corresponding creator:

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Toronto, ON, M5B 2K3

1. Did you use this tool kit? (Please circle your responses.)
 - a. Yes, in its entirety.
 - b. Yes, in part. Please specify which part(s) you used:
 - i. Team roles?
 - ii. Team accord?
 - iii. Other parts? _____

2. Students, were you required to submit any part of this toolkit for evaluation?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.

3. If you used the toolkit, did you notice any changes in how your team worked together?
 - a. Yes. Please elaborate on the changes you noticed:

 - b. No.

4. Did the toolkit facilitate conversation between the team members?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.

5. To your knowledge, did the toolkit cause any negative outcomes to your team experience?

- a. Yes. Please elaborate on what you noticed:

 - b. No.
6. Did this toolkit change how you will approach Teamwork in the future?
- a. Yes. Please elaborate on the changes you anticipate:

 - b. No.
7. Do you have any other feedback for us to consider?
-
-
8. Can we contact you for further information?
-