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People, Partnerships and Pedagogies

Developing a good practice guide for group work that transcends disciplines

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Collaborative and group-based learning provides a rich opportunity to enhance student outcomes (Prince, 2004). The Australian National University (ANU) Learning and Teaching Strategy (2022) outlines a goal to promote collaborative pedagogies and ensure students experience group and team-based learning activities. Group assessment is a means to achieve this by structurally valuing and prioritising students working with their peers on complex problems and long-term projects. A small-scale exploratory study (unpublished) conducted by the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) found only 11% of undergraduate courses at the ANU in 2022 had any element of group assessment, emphasising the need to support educators to incorporate more high quality group work and assessment across programs.

To address this need, we developed and delivered a digital good practice guide and training workshop that aims to support educators to create and facilitate group assessments that work best for their context. At the heart of the project was a partnership with staff from the School of Engineering who expressed a keen interest in sharing their experience, knowledge, and existing resources relating to the design and support of group work with the broader University. We saw this as an opportunity to enable and enhance sharing between educators and education support staff across discipline areas and colleges, overcoming silos that exist within the University. To maximise our reach and impact, we chose to co-design a digital resource with the School of Engineering promoted through online communication channels because it offers an accessible format that is available all educators at or outside of the ANU.

Our good practice guide for group work and assessment responds to the diverse needs and contexts of educators, translating theory from the literature into practical recommendations. The guide is underpinned by the theoretical framework of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1980), and was created using a human-centred approach to design. The partnership with the School of Engineering made this design approach possible as it established a pathway for us to engage directly with end users. Importantly, we also engaged with staff from across other areas of the University to ensure the content and design of the guide addresses the learning and teaching contexts relevant to their discipline (e.g. predominantly male or International student cohorts) and the emerging context of transdisciplinary courses. This poster will present the process and outcomes of the project from the initial research and discovery phase through to the design, delivery, and evaluation of the good practice guide and accompanying workshop. Alongside this, we will present a critical reflection on how the partnership and engagement with educators across disciplines affected the design and ultimate impact of the resources.

Keywords: Group work, partnerships, transdisciplinary collaboration, practice guides

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