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Groupwork & Roles

Overview

Groupwork or teamwork is an important strategy for online teachers and students to know about. Here are just a couple of reasons:

- Collaborating with others provides us with other perspectives besides our own, increasing the potential for knowledge gained and products created. Thus, increasing learning.
- For some students, teamwork provides the social presence needed to be successful.
- Living and working in today's "flat world" means we have to know about working online with others.

Of course, there are challenges to address and potential roadblocks to avoid. As we are finding out, there are many ways to arm ourselves with knowledge and solutions so that the challenges and roadblocks disappear...

So get the challenges out of the way first. This guide provides resources and examples to help you and your group address the challenges and start out on the right track in the development of your collaborative product.

Please note that in CEL 560, the most important part is the process. It is through the process that learning, collaboration, knowledge sharing, etc. occurs. Treat each other with kindness and do your best to include everyone. Oh yeah, and HAVE FUN!

Further Information

Establishing Group Policies and Procedures

As a group you will need to consider:

- How you plan to get the work done
- Communication/meeting plans
- Timelines/Deadlines
- Goals/Milestones
- Individual roles Problem/Conflict resolution

If you establish organizational strategies and roles in the beginning, then it's much easier to get your group organized and headed in the right direction. We suggest a synchronous group meeting using your LCMS chat tool or Skype to discuss the **Groupwork Form** (added below). To get work done we recommend continued use of Skype if possible and using your WebCT Group Tool for asynchronous discussion. For actual product development, tools we find helpful are wiki tools such as the Google Docs and Spreadsheets tool or a PbWiki page.

Collaborative Tools'

There are so many collaboration tools available that the biggest problem for groups really ends up being agreeing on which tools to use.

LCMS Tools (WebCT for us)

Group Area

You can have a group area in WebCT Discussions for your content area. You can use this discussion area to discuss your group projects in private. The WebCT Group area also allows you to store and share files and send group email.

WebCT Chat

WebCT Chat is a text chat tool in your WebCT course room. This tool can be useful

(for those that type well) for quick group get-togethers – stuff like checking in to see if the group is on track, and other group administrative duties. For a tutorial on WebCT Chat go to <http://teaching.unr.edu/OTL/webct/studentres/chat/index.html>.

Please note that WebCT Chat uses pop-up windows and java. You will need to disable pop-up blockers and enable java in order to use the WebCT Chat.

Web-Conferencing Tools

Adobe Connect or Centra

If your group wants to use Adobe Connect or Centra, send your instructor an email requesting use of this tool.

SKYPE - <http://www.skype.com>

Skype is great for FREE synchronous collaboration allowing text, audio, and video chat. Sharing files and large chunks of text are excellent features of Skype.

Wiki Tools

Google Docs – <http://docs.google.com>

Google Docs is a great tool for online collaborative writing. It's just like using MS Word and everyone in your group can edit the same document online at anytime. If you have a gmail account, you may already have Google Docs as a feature when you log in to your gmail account.

PbWiki - <http://pbwiki.com> or the class wiki at <http://nmsu-otl.pbwiki.com>

PbWiki is also a great tool for collaboration. It's different from google docs in that only one person can edit a page at a time.

Group Norms (aka policies & procedures but I like the term "norms")

As you think about how your group will work together and accomplish your tasks, discuss and fill out the [Groupwork Form](#) (rtf download).

Resources

CGW Resource Links

Use the following resources to learn more about online collaborative group work. If you find any other great resources, let us know so we can add them to the list.

Online Resources

- Group Projects: Organizing and working with groups in projects - <http://www.studygs.net/groupprojects.htm>
- Working in Groups: <http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/docs/wigintro.html>

Your Texts

- Building Online Learning Communities, pp. 165 - 184
 - Engaging the Online Learner, ch. 6, pp. 60 - 72
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