Group Projects

PURPOSE

Group projects offer you the opportunity work with others to apply your learning to a particular task. This involves working collaboratively in a team and engaging respectfully with the views of others. The project will be assessed in relation to its output, the way the group worked together and the way you contributed to the work of the group. The skills and aptitudes required for successful group learning are vital whatever your ministry or vocation: being involved in a group project offers you the opportunity to receive feedback from peers and your tutor about how you work in a team, and to reflect on your own strengths and weaknesses in this area.

CONTENT

This is a project with an output that involves the whole group and for which there may be group and/or individual assessment that will relate both to the output and to how effectively the team collaborated in achieving its task. Typically there will be at least two pieces of assessed work: one is the output of the group project and the other is a piece of work produced by each individual. Often the latter will be a reflective learning journal or a written task relating to the subject matter and/or the process of working in a team.

Examples of projects include preparing and delivering a presentation on a given topic, writing and performing a play, discussing and agreeing a response to a case study, planning and/or executing an activity (such as leading a service of worship) or planning and/or producing a resource for others together.

Although the exact details will vary from project to project, there are a number of stages that are likely to apply to most group projects:

The group project

1. Spend time as a team discussing and agreeing the objective of the project. Ensure that this is clearly articulated.
2. Engage together with the context and content of the project in relation to the learning of the module, including your independent reading and study, exploring what further areas of study and / or research need to be undertaken.
3. Decide what tasks need to be done, by when and by whom. The tutor may stipulate whether the task has components that can be completed by individuals, or whether every stage is a team effort. In either case, consider how you will ensure that the outcome will be coherent.
4. When the project involves a ‘performance’, rehearse it together, and allow for peer feedback to improve it.

5. When the project is complete, if at all possible, consider evaluating it together as a team. This may be part of the assessment process for some projects.
6. Throughout the project spend some time individually reflecting on how members of the team are relating to one another and how you are engaging with the team. Capture these in a reflective learning journal.

The individual written task

Your tutor will specify the exact nature of the written task to be completed individually. It is likely, however, that you will need to draw on the work done in steps 1 – 6, and, in addition:

1. Analyse the context of the group project and how this shaped the project. This may also involve some engagement with relevant literature and / or some research.
2. Evaluate the group project, including how the group worked together as a team.
3. Reflect on the project: both theologically and on your own practice in, and contribution to, the group and the project.

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

In relation to the outcome of the project itself, this will be evaluated along the same lines as project outputs generally:

1. Was there a clear, focused and realistic objective?
2. Did the task engage effectively with knowledge and understanding of theology and other relevant disciplines at an appropriate level for the module?
3. What skills did the project call for and were they competently manifested?
4. Was the project appropriately contextualised?
5. Was the project well planned, prepared and executed?
6. Was the output of the project well clearly and attractively presented?
7. Does the reflection on practice demonstrate self-awareness and reflexivity?
8. Is the theological reflection methodologically sound, theologically credible and experientially persuasive?

Note that points 7 and 8 may well be assessed through individuals' reflective work.

In addition to the challenge of demonstrating your learning through the project, a group project offers a number of challenges relating to working with others. These include:

- Listening skills
- Facilitation skills
- Readiness to give and receive feedback from others
- Enthusing and encouraging others to take an active part
- Stepping back to enable others to take part

- Working toward consensus and/or agreeing how to disagree
- Recognising and working with your strengths and weaknesses and those of others
- Balancing the goals of working as a team and achieving the task well

TECHNICAL MATTERS

For the tutor:

Designing, implementing and assessing group projects involves making clear decisions about the nature of the group's task, how the groups are formed, how the work is to be submitted, how marks will be allocated to the content of the project and, for example, to how well the group and/or individual collaborated. Note that the way in which the group and individuals collaborated can only form part of the summative assessment if this is stipulated as a learning outcome in the module outline.

There are several options for assessing a group project. Some options are summarised here, but it is a good idea to research good practice in some detail before deciding how to proceed:

- A group task with individual outputs marked separately.
- A single group task and product with a single mark allocated to all members of the group.
- A group task, one product, one mark multiplied by the number of group members. The group determines the distribution of this aggregate mark amongst its members.
- A group task, one product and one mark. In addition each individual submits a (brief) piece of work that is marked individually.
- A group task, one product and one mark. Peer assessment of individuals' contributions to the group task are used to modify individual marks.

When peer assessment is used, it is important to ensure that the students are given a clear set of criteria against which to assess each others' contributions. Students should also be encouraged to use these criteria to assess their own work.

For the student:

The specific format and technical requirements (such as bibliography, report, appendices) will vary from project to project and will be specified by your tutor in the description of the assessment task. This should also set out how the project will be assessed and the criteria it will be assessed against. Remind yourself (and others in the group) of these throughout your involvement in the project.

MARKING CRITERIA

The questions that your marker will be considering when assessing your work are as follows:

1. How does your project demonstrate that you have acquired the knowledge, understanding and skills of the relevant learning outcomes of the module?