

Shared Group Grade

While the teacher may not have much idea about individual students' contributions to a group project, the students themselves are in a very good position to make such judgements. Though the teacher can only award a mark to the group, the members of that group can be left to distribute the mark between themselves in a way which they think reflects the relative contributions of individuals. For example if a group of five students were to be awarded 60% for a group report, they would be given $5 \times 60 = 300$ marks to distribute amongst themselves.

There are three ways in which groups tend to react in this situation:

(a) some groups will agree at the start of the project that all marks will be shared equally at the end, in order to avoid unpleasantness. Such groups must face the prospect of individual group members doing little work, safe in the knowledge that they will get the same mark as the rest of the group;

(b) other groups will not discuss assessment at all until it comes to dividing up the marks. They then find that they disagree about the basis upon which the marks should be divided. Some will value creativity, some will value workload, some will value leadership, some will value the ability to communicate the project outcomes, and so on. Without prior agreement about criteria there are likely to be arguments about who should get what marks for which contributions;

(c) some groups will sit down at the start and decide what criteria they will use in allocating marks, and will keep to these criteria. Everyone will be clear about what their contribution ought to be, and will be more likely to accept the final allocation of marks,

This third way of dealing with shared group grades is clearly the most satisfactory ...

There are two rather different ways in which criteria can be used:

(a) students may naturally adopt different working roles within the group, or the project may even specify such roles. For example one student may become the chairperson, one the note-taker, one the data-analysers, one the report writer, one the 'ideas person' and so on. In this case assessment criteria can focus on how well each student performed her different role;

(b) every student may be expected to contribute equally to all aspects of the project (for example each writing one section of a group report). In this case each criterion should be applied equally to each student.