GROUPWORK

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Preparation for Groupwork

Skills Audit

A good way to **get to know your team members** is to begin with a Skills Audit. This brings your team together and exams the skills that will be required to complete the task at hand. Teams should assess the following:

- What skills are present at **a high level**?

- What skills are present but may **need some development**?

- Identify **any skills gaps**.

> 🔍 **TOP TIP**
> A good skills audit will allow for a vision of the project to be created by all team members and it may even help decide what roles are most suited to each person. If roles are pre-determined then it will allow the team to know where the skills of the group lie and to be able to help each other complete the tasks to ensure the success of the project.

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Belbin's Team roles

Resource Investigator	Team worker	Co-ordinator
Uses their inquisitive nature to find ideas to bring back to the team. **Strengths:** Outgoing, enthusiastic. Explores opportunities and develops contacts. **Allowable weaknesses:** Might be over-optimistic, and can lose interest once the initial enthusiasm has passed. **Don't be surprised to find that:** They might forget to follow up on a lead.	Helps the team to gel, using their versatility to identify the work required and complete it on behalf of the team. **Strengths:** Co-operative, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens and averts friction. **Allowable weaknesses:** Can be indecisive in crunch situations and tends to avoid confrontation. **Don't be surprised to find that:** They might be hesitant to make unpopular decisions.	Needed to focus on the team's objectives, draw out team members and delegate work appropriately. **Strengths:** Mature, confident, identifies talent. Clarifies goals. **Allowable weaknesses:** Can be seen as manipulative and might offload their own share of the work. **Don't be surprised to find that:** They might over-delegate, leaving themselves little work to do.
Plant	**Shaper**	**Specialist**
Tends to be highly creative and good at solving problems in unconventional ways. **Strengths:** Creative, imaginative, free-thinking, generates ideas and solves difficult problems. **Allowable weaknesses:** Might ignore incidentals, and may be too preoccupied to communicate effectively. **Don't be surprised to find that:** They could be absent-minded or forgetful.	Provides the necessary drive to ensure that the team keeps moving and does not lose focus or momentum. **Strengths:** Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Has the drive and courage to overcome obstacles. **Allowable weaknesses:** Can be prone to provocation, and may sometimes offend people's feelings. **Don't be surprised to find that:** They could risk becoming aggressive and bad-humoured in their attempts to get things done.	Brings in-depth knowledge of a key area to the team. **Strengths:** Single-minded, self-starting and dedicated. They provide specialist knowledge and skills. **Allowable weaknesses:** Tends to contribute on a narrow front and can dwell on the technicalities. **Don't be surprised to find that:** They overload you with information.
Monitor Evaluator	**Implementor**	**Completer Finisher**
Provides a logical eye, making impartial judgements where required and weighs up the team's options in a dispassionate way. **Strengths:** Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options and judges accurately. **Allowable weaknesses:** Sometimes lacks the drive and ability to inspire others and can be overly critical. **Don't be surprised to find that:** They could be slow to come to decisions.	Needed to plan a workable strategy and carry it out as efficiently as possible. **Strengths:** Practical, reliable, efficient. Turns ideas into actions and organises work that needs to be done. **Allowable weaknesses:** Can be a bit inflexible and slow to respond to new possibilities. **Don't be surprised to find that:** They might be slow to relinquish their plans in favour of positive changes.	Most effectively used at the end of tasks to polish and scrutinise the work for errors, subjecting it to the highest standards of quality control. **Strengths:** Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors. Polishes and perfects. **Allowable weaknesses:** Can be inclined to worry unduly, and reluctant to delegate. **Don't be surprised to find that:** They could be accused of taking their perfectionism to extremes.

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Challenges

Group work involves more than yourself so **keep an open mind** and **pay attention to others input and ideas**. Keep **an outline for what needs to be done and what has been done**, that way there isn't double the work for things that have already been finished. **Separate the work evenly**, that way no one is overwhelmed and everyone has a part in the project.

Communication

UCC gives all students and staff G-suite accounts (a.k.a. the student number@umail.ucc.ie). **UCC students have access to multiple online resources to keep everyone in the group up to date on the project.** As a group, you can work on the same documents and make individual changes that everyone can see by using **the Drive in the G-suite**. **This could be useful to inform the group of updates, work completed, etc.**
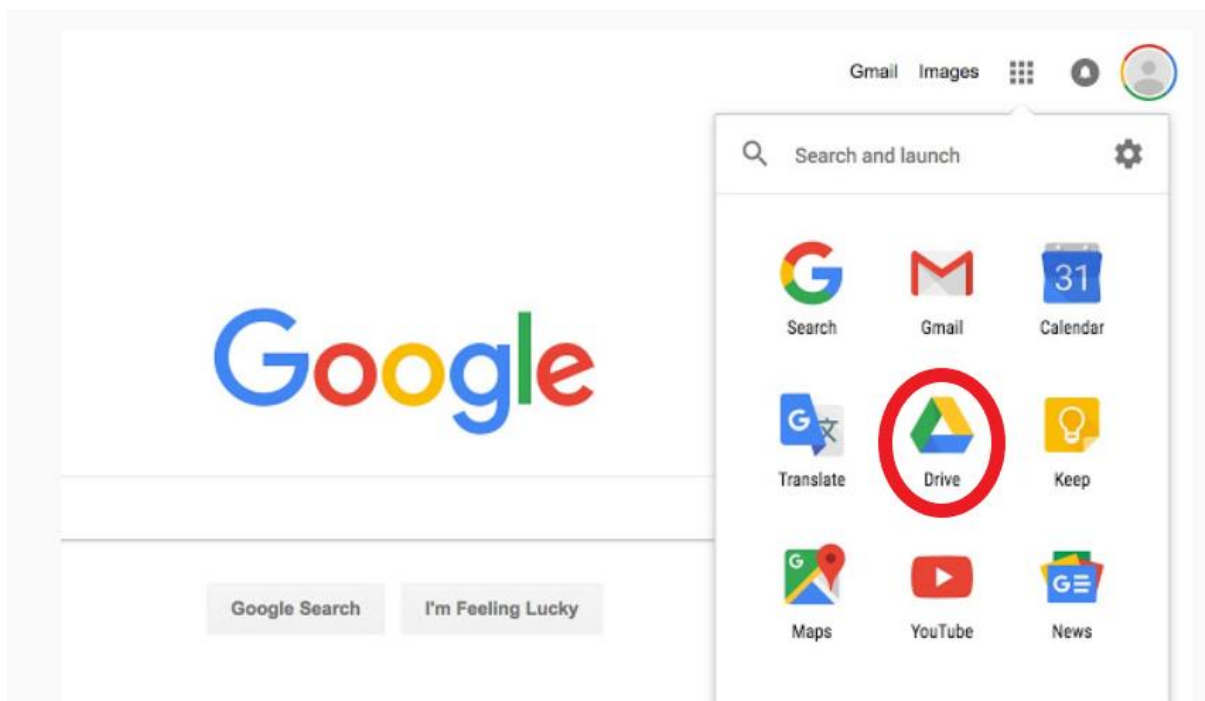
There are **other more complex versions of this available online** (see Useful Links below). For example, **Trello is a Team Dashboard and can be used for larger projects**. It is free to download for all group members.

Organisation

Step 1: Breaking down the Task

1. **Review the assignment requirements** and talk about them in the group so everyone understand what is being asked.

2. **Confirm the due dates and write down achievable deadlines**. For example, editing will be completed by Week 4.

3. **Keep in mind what discipline you are doing** the project in and **who the audience is** going to be.

4. **Generate ideas and work together** to figure out the **end goal**.

🔍 **TOP TIP**

Working backwards will enable the group to confirm deadlines and break down the tasks for the overall project.
For example, if the project is due on Wednesday, there would be a presentation practice on Tuesday and the slides would be prepared 2 – 3 days beforehand.

Step 2: Creating Rules

Ground rules help everyone stay on track and work together to avoid conflict.
The **rules may change the more you work together** but they should ensure that all **members in the group agree and know what is expected of each other**. Here are questions to keep in mind when working with others:

- Treat all in the group with respect
- Keep the group informed on changes and updates for the project
- How often is the group meeting?
- How long will the meetings be?
- Give everyone an opportunity to be heard. Is there a designated time for each member to speak and respond to each other?
- Are the minutes of each meeting emailed and is one person responsible for this?
- Will there be a chair at each meeting and what does that role entail?
- If a team member is unable to attend, what is the acceptable time to give notice?

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Step 3: Getting Started

Stay positive! **The more confident the individual and group, the more confident the outcome of the project**. Make sure **the location has a place where everyone can be heard, and work can be done**. This might be the responsibility of one of the team members.

Step 4: Reviewing & Updating

🔍 **TOP TIP**

When creating a timeline leading up to the due date leave extra time just in case there are unexpected issues dealing with other aspects of the project. Give yourself plenty of time to revise and review.

Make sure the dates that have been agreed are realistic with the workload and time frame.

The update log (maybe developed in G-suite), **should be shared and emailed to everyone in the group, that way everyone can refer to past notes if there is any confusion.**

- Create a list of due dates for the group
- Leave plenty of room to practice and troubleshoot
- Keep dates achievable
- Keep an update log for every meeting
- Are there any problems that needs to be resolved?
- What is the progress on the project?
- What needs to be done next?

Conflict

Make sure everyone gets their voice heard. If an issue cannot be resolved, remember this is a group project and you all must work together.

You do not have to like everyone in the group to create an amazing group project. If the issue keeps coming up **refer to the ground rules that the entire group created**. The rules can **bring attention back to the project and what needs to be done**.

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Reflection

At the end of the group project there may be a reflection required and the following questions are helpful to ask yourself throughout the process:

1. **What did you and the group do well**?
2. **How did you feel** about what happened?
3. **What could have been improved**?
4. How can you **explain what worked and what did not**?
5. How **would you do things differently**?

🔍 **TOP TIP**

Remember the focus is on your reactions/ actions/ accomplishments/ failures – not on specific team members.

You can only control you! The "blame game" will not be sufficient as an excuse for a late submission/lack of communication within the group.

Useful Links

- Team Roles: https://www.belbin.com/about/belbin-team-roles/
- Team Roles: https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=eFsA4wUf3I0
- Team Dashboard: https://trello.com/b/dmxpv8rt/team-dashboard
- Electric Planner: http://meetomatic.com/calendar.php
- Electric Team Hub: https://slack.com/

Other Relevant Online PDFs

- Reflective Writing
- Top Tips for Presentation Skills

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