

Working with others

Everyone approaches group work differently depending on their personality and past experience. Setting ground rules at the start of a project provides the opportunity for everyone to express what they need/expect from the group. Even with group rules in place it is still important to be responsive to the needs individuals and to be aware of the group dynamic. The advice provided here offers some strategies to ensure everyone is engaged and issues are dealt with in an active, solution focused way.

Possible Behaviours	Suitable Strategies
A member of the group is silent, withdrawn or shy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break into small groups • Recognise and value any contribution • Invite to speak or check for understanding • If appropriate speak with the student privately • Accept and recognise that someone can participate without speaking as much as others
A member of the group is resistant or has low motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce, encourage and support any contribution • Place with supportive more positive group members • Explore and recognise reasons for reluctance (perhaps in private) • Give responsibility or specific role • Allow part in choosing task/making decisions
Dominant, talkative or self-opinionated member of the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share out discussion time (e.g. everybody has a maximum of 5 minutes) • Use small group work to minimise impact • Encourage/invite contribution from others • Ask person to be responsible for ensuring everyone contributes to discussion • Ask for other views on the subject being discussed
Inappropriate behaviour (e.g. aggressive comments or racist humour)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confront the behaviour when it happens • Discuss the effect the behaviour has on the whole group. Focus on the feelings or difficulties produced by the behaviour rather than targeting the individual • Consider discussing the appropriateness of the behaviour privately outside of the group • Remind the group of ground rules set