FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF MAJOR GROUP WORK ASSIGNMENTS

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Submitted from: Kara Woods
Submitted to: Dr. Thomas O. Whipple
Monitor

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ABSTRACT

Post-secondary institutions have the task of providing students with the skills required for future career opportunities. Employers have confirmed that potential candidates with post-secondary education may have the technical skills required to complete the job; however, they may be lacking in the social skills to work effectively with colleagues or within team-based structures. Students can gain decision making, communication, negotiation, and leadership skills through the use of major group work assignments in course curriculum. Community Colleges, in particular, need to provide students with opportunities to work in a team based environment to gain the skills that are in high demand by employers.

The core problem is that many academic disciplines incorporate major group work assignments into course evaluation without providing the proper resources available to students and the professor. Students, along with professors, may not prefer this method of evaluation as many challenges can arise in the group work process.

The purpose of this study was to review current literature on using collaboration in the classroom through the use of major group assignments. The literature covered a variety of topics related to collaborative learning; however, there was a lack of research that provided an overview of all tools and resources available. The researcher reviewed the literature and designed a quantitative survey to solicit feedback from current faculty working in a Community College to obtain more knowledge on different resources available. The participants were asked to share their current practices and their perceptions of their role in the group work process.

The survey data supported the academic literature available to the researcher. Faculty support and implement major group work assignments in the majority of their classrooms. They also confirm that their role in the process can enhance or hinder the process when facilitated effectively. The study concluded that participants are aware that there is additional professional development available to them and that more than half would be interested in attending a session to gain or refresh their current group work facilitation skills.

The study concludes with a number of recommendations that faculty can execute to enhance major group work development. The recommendations include how to determine group sizes and composition, resources that could be used in the classroom, and how academic leaders need to support and provide professional development for faculty to improve their current skills based on innovated research and design. The final recommendation would be to expand this study to include student perceptions of major group work assignments in the post-secondary environment in order to identify any gaps that faculty and students may have. Having a study that incorporates all stakeholders perceptions would be beneficial to enhance the group work process to allow students to gain the required skills employers prefer in potential candidates.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM 5

Background 5

Purpose of the Study 6

Statement of the Problem 7

Research Questions 8

Definition of Terms 8

Limitations of the Study 10

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE 12

Introduction 12

Context of Group Work 13

Benefits and Risks of Group Work in the Academic Setting 14

Group Work Formation 18

Evaluation 22

Faculty Skills 26

Faculty Role 28

Summary 30

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY 31

Research Design 31

Population and Sample 32

Data Collection Methods 32

Survey Description 33

Variables and Measures 35

Data Analysis Methods 35

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS OF THE DATA 37

Data Analysis 37

Hypothesis Analysis 70

Summary 72

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 72

Summary 72

Conclusions 73
Recommendations 76
REFERENCES 85
APPENDICES 89
APPENDIX I: CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL 89
APPENDIX III: DURHAM COLLEGE RESEARCH APPROVAL 91
APPENDIX IV: COMMUNICATION TO PARTICIPANTS 92
APPENDIX V: QUANTITATIVE SURVEY 93
APPENDIX VI: SAMPLE OF A GROUP CONTRACT 105

CHAPTER I: DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

Experts have placed a great deal of effort on analyzing the relationships children form and its impact on future development. From daycare to high school our ability to interact with others was noted and communicated to our parents. If a child does not interact well with others or is perceived to be too shy or inhibited, concern may develop to attempt to explain the behaviour. An academic institution's duty is to instil knowledge in conjunction to providing a learning environment where students can learn and enhance their social skills. Maguire (2001) states, "As educators, we have a duty to prepare students for the rigours of their later careers, and employers have professed on many occasions that their need is for team players" (p. 209). The benefits of academic literature on cooperative learning through major group work assignments provides educators the advantages, risks, and best practices when designing effective and meaningful learning environments. Many authors have discussed that various group work learning techniques are developed but without full commitment these techniques can be misused or poorly implemented (Strother, 1990; Slavin 1989/90; Cohen, 1990). Educational administrators, faculty and students need to see the importance on using group work to increase the necessary employment, communication and social skills to prepare students for the real-world upon graduation.

Background

Group work behaviours are necessary in a variety of environments. A student in an academic environment or an adult working within a team in their professional life must learn

how to work together on a team. Previous research has been conducted on how group work skills learned in school can produce competencies required for the workplace. Skills such as communication, compromise, decision making, problem solving, and negotiation skills can be learned or enhanced through group work assignments. Collectively, students and employers have stated that they appreciate the skills learned in academics that will improve their practical skills in the work environment (Zekeri, 2004). Understanding the need for group work in the academic environment may outweigh the challenges that may occur as a result. Challenges may include interpersonal conflicts, time constraints, or a final product that is considered unsatisfactory to all group members. Wendy McAllister (1995) stated that "[e]xtremes in personality inhibit the child in a group situation but such extremes can be improved upon more effectively in a group situation than in the traditional classroom situation" (p. 11). The use of group work can provide students with opportunities to interact with their peers allowing them to improve or enhance their social skills.

This study will break down the process of group work to evaluate current faculty perceptions during major group work settings. The ability to gauge its use and the rationale behind using different strategies can allow the researcher to analyze the best methods for using collaborative group work in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of using major group work assignments in the post-secondary classroom and will evaluate a variety of resources available for faculty to implement a successful and meaningful environment. In addition, emphasis will

be placed on the skills required of faculty and their role to provide a safe and effective group setting. The use of professional development to increase faculty awareness of the components involved in cooperative learning activities will also be examined. This will show that many faculty may not have experience with group work, but professional development can provide them with the tools and resources to be successful.

Statement of the Problem

The core problem is that many academic disciplines incorporate major group work assignments into course evaluation without providing the proper resources available to the students and the professor. Students, along with professors, may not prefer this method of evaluation as many challenges can arise in the group work process. Maguire (2001) suggested, "[s]ome students will always prefer to work alone but clear identification of the reasons for developing group work, such as 'graduateness' and employment, may go some way to convince them of the benefits of the experience" (p. 214). Students need to be motivated to participate in team building experiences and faculty should embrace their role as a facilitator to provide the students with the resources and opportunities to succeed at the assigned task. One consideration that the study will observe is the level of formal training faculty members have and if more professional development was available would they be willing to participate to enhance their skills.

Research Questions

In order to best investigate the problems faced within utilizing group work in the classroom the following research questions will be analyzed.

1. How frequently do faculty implement major group assignments?
2. What resources do faculty use in group work settings?
3. How do faculty evaluate major group assignments?
4. What skill level does a faculty member need to utilize during a group work project?
5. Do faculty believe they have a role in group work settings?
6. Are faculty open to taking professional development courses on how to effectively implement group work?

Definition of Terms

Evaluation-the process of assigning a numerical number for work submitted for grading.
Free-riding-the problem of a non-performing group member who gains the benefits of the accomplishments of the remaining group members with little or no cost to him or herself.

Grading Rubric-An outline of how an assignment will be evaluated broken into each grading component and the worth of each component.

Group Contract-A document that allows groups to compile information on communication tools, group rules, consequences and project timelines. The document may be submitted to the faculty member for monitoring of group behaviours or to intervene if rules are being violated.

Major Group Assignment-when an assignment is designed for group collaboration of three individuals or more to produce work where the grade is worth at least ten percent of the final course grade.

Peer Assessment-group members provide feedback on the work or effort of others within their group.

Self Assessment-individuals provide feedback on the work or effort they provided within their group.

Social Loafing-With the knowledge that others will produce the required results the behaviour of social loafing may develop with individuals within a group when they minimize the amount of effort in the task.

Sucker-effect-individuals responding to others free-riding upon their efforts by free-riding themselves.

Surveymonkey-An online tool that allows the user to design a survey and send a survey link to individuals to participate. The tool will also compile the results and provide summarizes of the qualitative data.

Team Contract-A team contract allows students to fill in a document that determines different components to group work, such as communication tools, ground rules and/or consequences for violations of the contract.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation that could surface is the timing of the survey as faculty return to campus the last week of August. Faculty will receive a generic email from the Office of Institutional Research and Innovation to separate the researcher from the study on the first day back on campus. The beginning of the academic year is extremely busy to provide faculty with enough time to guarantee a high participation return rate. In keeping the survey window open for three weeks may allow faculty to get settled into the semester and provide them with the motivation to take the ten minutes survey to contribute to this study.

A second limitation to this study is that there is no student feedback in the methodology. The researcher determined that there was adequate academic coverage of the student perception of group work warranting that the opinion of faculty needs to be investigated. A complete study of group work may include surveying student experiences and motivations when participating within the group. A comparison could be done on student and faculty perceptions in order to potentially bridge any gaps in perceptions or misconceived roles of the student and faculty member.

The final limitation is the methodology of the survey distribution. As the researcher is unable to release the email it may be possible that faculty may disregard the generic email from the Office of Institutional Research and Innovation. It also requires another party responsible for implementing the survey and sending reminders, having potential for faculty to respond directly to the email rather than the researcher with questions or concerns. The mass

distribution may also influence faculty to disregard the email as a generic communication, rather than being personalized.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Many studies have been conducted to investigate different models of implementing group work within the classroom.

> Cooperative learning is a pedagogical practice that has attracted much attention over the last three decades because of a large body of research that indicates students gain both academically and socially when they have opportunities to interact with others to accomplish shared goals (Gillies, 2010, p.933).

The following resources present the researcher with results of previous studies that contribute to the decision making process involved in collaborative learning activities to be used inside and outside of the classroom setting. Each study looks at one condition of group work, such as group forming techniques, evaluation methods or faculty skills required for successful group environments. It is also important to investigate the role of the faculty to provide support, both academically and socially, to major group work assignments. Lane (2008) concluded in his study, "[t]eacher behaviour can have an enormous effect on how groups function" (p. 58). There is currently a lack of studies that encompasses all the different components into one study; however, this paper will investigate each topic through the use of academic literature and surveying faculty members in a post-secondary institution.

Context of Group Work

Group work skills are vital for post-secondary students who are approaching the workforce to begin their careers: employer surveys reveal that teamwork skills are essential for student success in the workplace (Blowers, 2003; Lejk, 1996). Group work occurs in many organizations where work is distributed into teams through committees, task forces or project based teams (Tindale, 1991). The employment market currently is in the position of having the ability to pick the best candidate for the position. Therefore, post-secondary graduates need to be prepared to compete with other suitable candidates. Having employable skills such as group work competencency will give them the required experience of working with others towards a common goal.

The use of collaborative learning through group work has increased in post-secondary setting. Orr (2010) writes, "[g]roup work projects are an increasingly common feature of students' undergraduate learning experiences in higher education" (p. 301). In addition to providing students with required employability skills, group work assignments can alleviate increased student numbers in the classroom where faculty face the challenge of increased evaluation time. The use of major group work assignments can reduce the workload of large class sizes by adapting "our teaching strategies and assessment techniques if we wish to maintain the same quality of content and instructional effectiveness" (Strachan, 1996, p. 344). Collaborative learning can occur through many different teaching methodologies. Group discussions, small or large group setting, and major group assignments are ways to have students work together on a task or project. Major group assignments allow students to work

collaboratively throughout the course of a semester to build knowledge about subject matter related to the course objectives. The benefits of major group work can outweigh the risks involved when asking students to work together for evaluative assessments.

Benefits and Risks of Group Work in the Academic Setting

Students enjoy group work for the benefit of a shared workload, diverse skills and ideas of group members when being able to meet new students to work towards a shared goal (Maguire, 2001). When group work is implemented effectively students can gain the experience of working with others, increase their social, organizational, and task management competencies (Maguire, 2001). When students are motivated to participate, the group setting can be a positive environment in which students are able to learn from each other as they work toward a final product that everyone has contributed equally. Group work encourages students to work together to complete tasks, which involve brainstorming, problem solving and decision-making skills. Group work forces students to be accountable for their actions as it has an effect on other students' final assessment. Students can decide to share the tasks and have each student responsible for a piece of the final product, while others decide to delegate roles for each individual member. The intent of the latter would be for students to determine their own strengths and weaknesses in order to utilize everyone's best skills. "The key skills needed to improve careers are oral communication, written communication, problem solving techniques, motivating and managing others, and setting personal and organizational goals" (Zekeri, 2004, pp. 416). It is recommended that professors allow students to choose the best method rather than guide the process of learning.

Group work can provide students with the required skills using major group assignments in the course evaluation process. When students have a successful experience with group work, it can increase their self-esteem by gaining a sense of belonging, improve social skills, become more accepting of others in the classroom, and build relationships that will extend outside the classroom (Strom, 1996). Students will learn how to work collaboratively, produce the required tasks and present it in a format that is clearly organized with proper editing and amalgamation of each group member's ideas.

Even with the appropriate measures and resources in place, students may disband from a group with the sense that the group work was not evenly distributed or contributed resulting in a negative group experience. The most prominent complaint of students when informed that they will be doing major group work in a course is the lack of accountability for students who chose not to participate in the process. The lack of motivation for some students "may be reluctant participants in assessment tasks and be uncommitted to the aims of the group (and the subject for that matter)" (Davies, 2009, p. 566). Students may not necessarily know their fellow group members when deciding or being selected into designated groups by the professor and the final product will be affected if all group members do not equally contribute to the end goal. Literature has determined that social-loafing and free-riding behaviours can negatively affect a group. "Social-loafing, the tendency of individuals to reduce the effort expended towards a task when working in a group, resulting in a disproportionate burden of responsibility on the willing or active members of the group" (Underwood, 2003, p. 331). Some authors believe that social loafing can often be a result of students feeling left out of the process or having a lack of identification in the group (Davies, 2009). Whereas, free riding is "the problem

of the non-performing group member who reaps the benefits of the accomplishments of the remaining group members with little or no cost to him/herself" (Davies, 2009, p. 567). Although similar in behavioural characteristics, social-loafers may participate in the process with little effort while the free rider may not contribute at all and expect the same rewards. Both behaviours can frustrate those group members who are motivated and engaged in the process and will ultimately pick up the work of those non-participants. Students who have been in similar situations in their previous experience may resort to the 'sucker-effect' mentality where "individuals responding to other free-riding upon their efforts by free-riding themselves" (Davies, 2009, p. 567). These students would rather reduce their workload before they are burdened with the increased workload. The threat of these behaviours can result in all members declining to take on a leadership role that will motivate and organize all group members towards the end goal.

There is little opportunity for a professor to estimate how one student will work with another without prior experience with the students, making it difficult to implement a successful experience. Many students feel that if a student is not participating, it should be up to the professor to make the necessary changes to group composition to guarantee that those engaged will not be negatively influenced by another. "Penalty approaches such as explicitly 'firing', 'expelling' or 'divorcing' free-riders from groups (if the majority of the group members agree to do so), result in new groups being formed from 'divorced' group members" (Davies, 2009, p. 573). This accountability adds to the pressure the professor has to manage how the groups interact and intervene when the students believe it is beyond their control. The practice of moving group members in and out of groups leads to two major problems. Firstly, this

practice does not simulate the true working environment. Orr (2010) says, “It could be argued that in the professional domain one does not have choice about one’s work colleagues” (p. 310). Employees cannot go to their manager and make allegations or complaints against another employee or ask them to be removed from a team environment. Employees must learn to work with each other regardless of personal or professional opinions, therefore allowing students this freedom will negatively prepare them for the workplace setting. Secondly, the amount of time it takes a group to perform effectively requires weeks of interaction and team building. If a student is removed from a group, it will force another group to add to its workload of assimilating a new student into the group.

As the student who is removed from a group, he or she may experience a feeling of loss, confusion or rejection. The student may have had extenuating circumstances that lead to the lack of participation in a group, which may lead to expulsion if proper communication channels are not put in place. One surprising study found “that students were more sympathetic to a peer who failed to contribute due to ill health than they were to a peer from whom no justification of failure to contribute had been provided” (Underwood, 2003, p. 331). This study shows that students can work together if they have surpassed the group forming stage and be more understanding based on individual circumstances.

Another factor that could be evident is that students may not have knowledge of the potential for anti-social behaviour. When this behaviour is evident, it can be very difficult for the student, the group members, and the professor to deal effectively with the situation. Many students will not self-identify when they have anti-social behavior, or they may not have been

previously diagnosed. These students need the additional opportunities to work in groups to improve their self-esteem and self-isolation to improve their academic status in order to be a suitable candidate to future employers (Quinn, 1995). By implementing "[s]tructured, cooperative learning activities in the classroom allow students with antisocial behaviour patterns to develop social skills in the context of a reinforcing peer community" (Quinn, 1995, p. 2). Professors need to be extremely cautious when implementing group work composition. Having effective groupings of students can allow students to gain from all of the benefits and learned skills as described in academic literature.

Group Work Formation

While students may believe that it will be easier to complete a task individually, the purpose of group work assignments is to incorporate the social skills into the classroom. When students see value in teaching methodologies and can clearly see how the work is related back to the course and its outcomes. "Students in team based learning courses learn more, are much more prepared, and are better able to engage in lifelong learning" (Lane, 2008, p. 67). The first decision in implementing group work is to determine what size of group will work best for this activity or assignment. A professor will have to forecast timelines for completion, the size of the class, and the complexity of the activity or assignment. Small groups, approximately three to four students, are preferred by authors because it limits the opportunity for social loafing or free riding when the team is small enough to be held individually accountable (Gillies, 2010; McAllister, 1995; Davies, 2009). This will also improve brainstorming and decision-making processes with fewer individuals involved. Small groups are easier for communications,

availability of students, and accountability. In large groups, some students are left out or overshadowed due to other students who may be more vocal or take on a leadership role. The size of the group should be determined by the workload involved to ensure it is feasible for a small work group to complete. Appropriate group sizes will allow the students to use their social skills in addition to their academic skills to create a quality product.

Once the group size has been determined, the professor must now decide how he or she is going to determine the groups. Does one allow students to choose or does one determine the group composition? There are valid arguments for both options of group forming. However, many feel that students may prefer to choose their own groups; there may be a percentage that would rather the professor chose. Students who do not have friends in the class, are introverted or shy may not feel comfortable asking to join a group. "Low achieving students tend to have lower rates of interaction and do not take advantage of leadership opportunities, thereby undermining the benefits of cooperative group work" (Mitchell, 2004, p. 21). When students are not picked for group work settings, they may feel isolated or become outcasts in an environment that is structured to increase social skills through team building. The concept of inclusion and segregation in team formation can lead to heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings. When the professor determines the groups, it limits the opportunity for students to be isolated, even if other students would prefer to work with their friends.

When given the choice to pick their own group, students tend to work with their friends in the course first, and then turn to hard workers to complete their group (Byrnes, 2005).

Although many students would prefer to pick their own group members to satisfy their own social needs or to be able to work in groups with their friends, students also confirmed that group work activities may impact student relationships outside of the classroom. While students may feel that it would be easier and less complicated to work among friends, there can be repercussions if the relationship is strained. When professors pick group members, a lack of success can be pre-determined and attributed to the professor, rather than the students themselves (Mitchell, 2004). This notion puts more pressure on faculty to establish the most appropriate way to determine groups based on the subject matter at hand, along with determining the group dynamics involved.

When the professor is involved in selecting group members he or she may need to be conscious of the diversity in the classroom. Mitchell (2004) identifies that when teachers attempt to create heterogeneous groups, they may be "spotlighting" the differences among group members (p. 21). For example, when a female or a person with a visible minority is in a heterogeneous group setting, he or she may feel isolated within the group as the only person who is different, or when a person is put into a homogeneous grouping of like attributes they may feel like they have no individuality and have lost their uniqueness. It is important to have a diverse group setting and this methodology could be used to facilitate in-class group work; however, major group work should be left up to the students to choose in order to hold them accountable for their choices, actions and contributions. Students at the post-secondary level are young adults and will have better knowledge of whom works best with one another, as some students are in a cohort model and may have had a negative experience with one

member in another setting. When selected randomly, students do not have the opportunity to share this knowledge with the professor.

Paul Bowers (2003) researched how the formation of group membership can become detrimental to the students and professors when a project is poorly implemented. The professor may chose to select members randomly by placing students alphabetically, by distributing random numbers or based on seating proximity. Students may also be distributed based on established grades by putting highly successful students with lower successful students, matching higher students with higher students and lower students with lower students or a mixture of the two or allow students to form their own groups (Blowers, 2003). The professor is the designer of the activity and regardless of the strategy he or she implements the process, it is imperative that they stick to the decision and discourage trading students in and out of groups. The results showed that students enjoyed the randomness of the selection process and that each person brought different skills to the group. There are a variety of studies regarding group selection and this study showed that students attitudes' changed towards group formation choices based on their experiences. Students may recall, "[i]n childhood and adolescence that one works with friends, rather than the reality of adult life in which one is not necessarily friends with co-workers" (Mitchell, 2004, p. 20). In order to provide students with employability skills professors must use a mix of pre-determined groups and allowing students to pick their own groups. With benefits and risks for each option professors must evaluate what will work best in that particular classroom in conjunction with the type of outcome desired.

Evaluation

After a student group is formed and begins to collaborate together the next concern that students have is determining workload. The ideal student group would have all members equally contributing to the final product; however, the composition of a group may make this scenario unlikely if there is deviant behaviour within the group. When individual contributions are considered as part of the evaluation tool it may influence the success of the product. There are three types of evaluation methods: self-assessment, peer assessment and professor assessment. There are benefits and risks to each type of method; therefore, the professor and the student must work collaboratively to ensure that the determined methods are appropriate and there is student support.

Group work evaluation can be difficult to determine equity. Strachan (1996) concluded that;

> In an equality system, each participant receives the same reward. This system assures members that their diverse contributions will be equally valued. In an equity system, the person who contributed the most receives the greatest reward. The equity systems assure members that in striving for excellence; their contributions will be valued and rewarded (p. 346)

It may be difficult for faculty to decide which method would work best in each classroom setting. When groups have experience working with one another it may be easier to use an equality system as they know what is expected of them. Students will acknowledge that the final grade will reflect the efforts of everyone in the group. This may be dependent on the level

of schooling of the student, as first year students would not have past experience working with each other, while third year student may have. For new groups that do not have a history of previous experience, the equity system may hold those accountable for their actions and contributions. If students understand that their effort will be evaluated and their final grade will be affected they may be more motivated to engage in the group setting and activity. Strom (2002) states in major group assignments "[f]aculty try to facilitate student achievement by helping everyone in class but, in the final analysis, students are each responsible for their own performance" (p. 317). This notion further complicates a professor's role in major group work activities by having to determine both group and individual grades.

The first method of evaluation is a student self-evaluation on his or her contributions to the final product. Students can complete a brief survey identifying how their role was in line with the group processes that can be factored into the final individual grade. This provides the professor with the opportunity to see how the group dynamics worked to compare with peer feedback for validity and reliability purposes. One may question, how reliable would students be if they knew their responses would be calculated into the final grade? Students tend to under-assess themselves when providing feedback in comparison to peers (Lejk, 2001). As a result, professors frequently incorporate self and peer assessments into the design of major group assignments. To have one method without the other does not provide valid feedback to assist the professor in determining individual grades. Lejk (2001) confirmed:

> She (Goldfinch) noticed that in situations where only peer assessment and no self-assessment was allowed, sometimes one group member is over generous in

> marking their peers and the rest of the group are more conservative. The group member effectively penalizes themselves by being over generous (p. 558).

Students who typically rate themselves higher on the scale are mapped at the lower-end of the rating scale by peers, whereas those who rate themselves lower on the scale are mapped at the high-end of the rating scale by peers (Lejk, 2001). Therefore, professors need to create a tool that would allow students to quickly and easily provide feedback on themselves and their peers' contribution to the final product. The survey should also be confidential or completed in secret to solicit honest and open feedback. Students should not receive detailed reports on the feedback as it may cause tension if a student receives a poor review from his or her peers without constructive improvement strategies. Strom (2002) states the benefit of peer reviews by saying, "[b]ecause evaluation is becoming prevalent at work, college students should learn how to evaluate performance of peers, judge personal competence and benefit from teammate criticism" (p. 317). Students need to have access to the skills required in the workforce, therefore, peer assessment would provide them with the competencies to successfully enter into work teams in future employment opportunities. The benefit of peer evaluation allows students to learn how to provide feedback effectively, reduces favouritism, and can help students become less defensive when receiving feedback. The feedback provided from other group members is useful for future developmental purposes.

The final, more common, and constant evaluation tool is for the professor to rate the overall product. The faculty member is the subject-matter-expert on the topic therefore they can provide constructive feedback and give recommendations for future development. The

professor evaluation typically weighs higher in the grading scheme when incorporated with self and peer assessments. Student behaviour may be modified when working in groups where the professor may be monitoring. Strom (1996) writes, “Students feel compelled to act in this way because they realize the teacher’s observation is usually all that matters; their own perspective of what happens in a group has little effect in the typical evaluation scheme” (p. 4). The use of peer evaluations would allow students to voice the behaviours of others that the professor cannot as they are not present at all times during group interactions (Strom, 1996, 2002; Ohland, 2006). A great solution for dealing with group work assessment is to provide all students with a copy of the grading rubric at the beginning of the course and clearly explain how self and peer assessments will be designed to provide feedback for final grading purposes (Cheng, 1999). Some students may not have experience assessing peers; therefore, the professor must clearly state what criteria will be used for assessment, including attending all group meetings, preparation, and completion of individual tasks value or commitment to task and overall share of workload. It is important that students understand that the group grade is not changing, but rather there has been a redistribution of grades due to feedback from the group. Students will become motivated when they can see that the group grade is dependent on the final product in addition to individual contributions, which will be considered in final grade status. This will alleviate frustration or stress when one student contributes a great deal more than the rest as he or she should be rewarded, while those who did not are penalized for their actions or lack thereof (Strachan, 1996; Davies, 2009).

Faculty Skills

Faculty members need to be prepared when implementing major group work assignments. The students need to be put into working groups, then given the detailed assignment, along with the grading rubric for the final product including the self and peer evaluation methods available. The more prepared the students are, the easier the process will develop. A key component in facilitating group work is the level of knowledge and experience professors have with this assessment tool. Lane (2008) explores this by writing, "[w]hen instructors possess the necessary teaching competencies and carefully implement the defining principles of team based learning is more likely to acquire knowledge that facilitates lifelong learning" (p. 55). If a professor is unprepared to implement group work, the entire process will have deficiencies and may cause more frustration for the students and the professor. Some examples of competencies are to be knowledgeable about the subject and project, confident, flexible, use active listening skills, while being available and approachable (Lane, 2008). Many faculty do possess the required skills, however, they may not have effectively used them when the implementing group work environment (Lane, 2008).

Professional development should be encouraged at every level of educational institutions. When the administration supports and provide resources for faculty to take additional training in specific subjects, faculty will be more likely to participate. Scheduling professional development at times that are convenient for faculty or providing "[i]ncentives, such as a stipend, release time, credit applied toward advancement on the local salary schedule, or college credit, then fall into place as a secondary, rather than a primary, motivator

or support"(Chappuis, 2009, p. 57). Faculty can be life-long learners when they receive the encouragement to gain more competencies to improve the classroom setting.

There are a variety of ways to offer professional development for faculty. The content of the delivery may determine the length of time required, dates or times or the capacity for participants. Academic institutions can do in-house training by offering professional development opportunities or they can send professors externally to conferences or seminars. One in-house method is to provide opportunities for professional dialogue where small groups of faculty can get together to discuss issues in the classroom to build upon their knowledge from other's experiences (Glatthorn, 1987). Other options available would be to implement peer supervision or a peer coaching program. Both options provide feedback to faculty members on how they are performing in the classroom through observations and determining best practices or alternative methods. Peer supervision involves faculty visiting each other's classroom for dedicated feedback on observations, whereas peer coaching goes beyond feedback and provides the framework for theoretical models to observe other classrooms to gain knowledge on skills through practicing in their own classrooms (Glatthorn, 1987). Students can benefit greatly from other professors who have received additional professional development. Faculty will be up-to-date with current knowledge on using group work resources in the classroom, but they will also benefit from the observations that they would not have access to outside of a professional development program. Hillkirk (1991) discusses "[p]rospective, as well as in-service teachers, need to be committed to be, and well grounded in, the collaborative skills that fuel classroom inquiry, and change" (p. 481). The use of effective professional development goals are to provide faculty with the desired skills and allow them to

network with one another to build upon and share their experiences in the classroom. When developed successfully, "[w]ith time and practice, teachers integrate seemingly disconnected features of cooperative learning activities into a meaningful whole, making the connections between particular tasks and social skills" (Sharan, 1987, p. 23). With administrative and faculty support, professional development can be implemented and received positively to increase group work activities for the betterment of student development.

Faculty Role

The role of the professor can enhance or imped on group work activities. Faculty need to learn how to interact with the groups, without interfering in their development. At the beginning of the project, the professor should indicate the level of support available to students, as they need to know what the role of the professor is in facilitating group work. It could be an offer to connect outside of class time to answer questions or students having the ability to submit a portion of the assignment for feedback. An assumption made by many professors is the level of experience students have with group work. At the post-secondary level some students may not have worked directly with other students based on their discipline or previous teachers' methodologies. Faculty must assume that the students do not have extensive experience with group work in order for all students to gain from the knowledge of proper work group ediquette prior to entering their groups (Davies, 2009). Team contracts are one way that faculty can begin the team forming process. If students are asked to sit down as a group and complete a document that addresses communication preferences, meeting dates and times, individual tasks, decision-making processes or timelines for a project, they are able

to begin working within the group aside from the academic content required for the end goal (Strom, 1996). Students will feel more empowered when they can hold non-performers accountable through the use of a group contract. The contract can include group expectations and consequences for violating the agreed upon terms. If a student agrees to the conditions of the contract, but does not perform the group has the ability to follow through or move forward with the project, while holding each member accountable for their actions.

Faculty should use their skills in the classroom and determine the level of involvement required in-group work settings. Providing the resources that students need will improve the likelihood that students will be able to work through their own problems and have ownership over their actions. Professors in the classroom should teach students how to interact effectively, encourage student participation, and follow through on the task, without hovering or impeding on the learning process (Lane, 2008; McAllister, 1995). Student frustration can develop when students are unsure of their roles or the criteria required for the assignment. Professors should be available at all times in the classroom in case students have questions or require clarification on the assignment (Lane, 2008). Although professors should not intervene in the learning process, they need to be aware when their presence may be requested or necessary when groups are off-task or experiencing interpersonal conflicts (Chiu, 1998). At times groups require the interference of the professor to produce results in a group that is not working cohesively. In one study the researcher states, "[a]lthough these were post-graduate students, they showed a remarkable reluctance to resolve the problem within the group preferring to call on the tutor to sort out the problem for them" (Underwood, 2003, p. 331). Professors are available to facilitate the learning; however, should not be relied upon for minor

issues that the group could work through themselves. This will provide them with more skills when they enter the workforce and are put into small group teams or project planning.

Summary

There is an immense amount of recent academic literature on the use of collaborative learning in higher learning. Scholars see the validity of using this teaching methodology to improve student's social, communication and problem solving skills. In addition to student competencies, there is a direct correlation of the benefits of having group work skills for employability after graduation. This body of literature reviewed the benefits and risks, recommendations for group sizes, types of evaluation methods, required faculty skills, and how the role of the professor can impact the group learning process. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the current use of group work in a post-secondary setting to align with the existing literature available to researchers, academic leaders and professors. Through the use of a quantitative study, the researcher will be able to make recommendations for future academic professional development.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The focus of this study will be to survey faculty members at a community college outside of the greater Toronto area. Using a quantitative survey the study will review the perceptions of faculty regarding group work, their previous experience and the rationale behind using different tools to guide group work. Careful thought was put into the survey design in order to increase or secure the reliability and validity of each question. Although surveys may be viewed as less valid than qualitative studies, a high return rate will be able to provide a solid foundation of how many programs utilize group work as part of course evaluation.

In order to guarantee complete confidentiality there will be no design controls to indicate who has completed the survey. A reminder email would be preferred for those who have not completed close to the end of the survey; however, this may reduce the confidentiality if faculty realize only those who did not complete the survey were sent a follow-up email. The alternative is to send a reminder email to all participants with a disclaimer suggesting they disregard the message if they already responded to the survey. A control could be set up so that all participants receive a separate link to identify those who have responded, however, the demographical portion of the survey will provide sufficient detail on the employment status of the respondents, along with the school to identify different disciplines. Asking for a specific program may indicate personal classifications, which may reduce the respondent rate or deter participants from being completely honest.

Population and Sample

The participants will include full-time and contract faculty at Durham College in Oshawa, Ontario. There are approximately five hundred faculty who teach for the daytime programs in the post-secondary and apprenticeship programs for seven different schools in over one hundred different programs. Having both full-time and contract professors will add to the validity regarding faculty experiences and levels of formal training with group work. Seasoned professors may have specific knowledge implementing group work, whereas new faculty may have other experiences working with adults in a learning environment or further training on implementing group work. This target audience is appropriate to compare new and experienced faculty who can provide the study with experiences and best practices. The researcher used literature resources dated from 1987-2010.

It will be difficult to determine who chooses not to participate without putting survey design controls in place. The objective of using this target group is to obtain a minimum of 120 returns at a rate of 25% of the total population. This objective is achievable due to access to email distribution lists and the reduction of having email received as junk or spam, which should increase the return rate. There is minimal reason to believe that faculty would be untruthful or refrain from answering all questions, as there is no risk to the participants engaging in this study.

Data Collection Methods

With the use of an online survey database, the survey will be distributed via a generic email address owned by the Office of Institutional Research and Innovation. This will allow the

researcher to be distanced from the research in order to avoid coercion or pressure to participate. The survey will be available on August 30th and close on September 19th, 2010. The email communication will introduce the survey and the topic matter, along with instructions on how to complete and explain that there are no risks or consequences for not participating. Upon completion of the survey, a page will come up thanking participants for their participation in the research and provide the opportunity to review the data upon completion to review the findings. All faculty have access to a laptop, along with access to wireless and networked internet connections that would provide them with the means and ability to complete the survey within the three weeks.

The survey will be distributed using the online tool called Surveymonkey that assists the researcher in designing the layout of the survey, along with setting up and tabulating the survey results. The researcher will be able to analyze the data by compiling targeted information, along with producing statistics and graphical models. The survey link will be distributed from the generic email address in order to ensure the mail servers do not filter the email and to increase the probability faculty will not view the email as spam or junk.

Survey Description

The survey would be separated into six main components. A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix V. Section I would be dedicated to gauging the faculty member's experience with group work. This will allow the researcher to compare the data of years of experience with group work and level of enjoyment both level of enjoyment both for the faculty and their perception of student enjoyment. This section provides a snapshot to put the

survey in context for the research. Section II will cover the group forming stage, by reviewing the preferences of faculty in determining group formation, size of groups and the use of icebreakers or team forming exercises.

Section III focuses on the pre-assignment phase of the project cycle. It will pose questions regarding group contracts, group forming methods, size of group preferences and use of sample works. This section will provide the researcher with faculty responses on use and importance of each resource. Section IV looks at questions regarding class time dedicated to projects, faculty support, timelines and feedback to provide the researcher with a level of understanding of the rationale for current practices and use in the classroom. Whereas, section V looks at the post-assignment period which includes different evaluation methods, how to implement grading and the use of a grading rubrics. Students may be concerned with how they will be evaluated within their group so looking at different methods could enhance the process. Section VI looks at how faculty view their own role within group work settings, level of skills and interactions required to have a positive learning environment. The section will allow faculty to provide their personal beliefs and provide feedback on roles in the classroom.

To conclude, the survey the participant will be asked to identify their teaching classification, professional education, teaching education, years of teaching experience and years of experience implementing group work to provide a context into the participant's background. The participant will be asked what school they teach for, as it was determined by the researchers that including each program in this section would have narrowed down the possibility of identification and guarantee confidentiality. The researcher chose to leave this section to the end of the survey to ensure that participants did not interpret their education or

experience level to be linked to their answers. This variable may influence the reliability or truthfulness of the results if faculty alter their opinions to conform to the prescribed rationale behind group work.

Variables and Measures

A variable in this research would be the amount of major group work assignments used by participants. If participants do not use this method for evaluative purposes the data results could be low or unsubstantiated.

Data Analysis Methods

The researcher will observe the data, form opinions, and develop conclusions. The data will be analyzed to determine if the data supports or does not support the hypothesis and academic literature. The survey will consist of closed-end questions, as this will allow the participants to state their current practices and the opinions of the faculty role in the group environment. After many contextual questions, there will be an opportunity for the participants to pick the top three reasons for specific actions, or lack of actions. This will provide the study with the top reasons on why group work should be implemented along with rationale behind planning processes. There is potential that a portion of the respondents will not have experience implementing group work at a formal level. This may be a result of a program, such as health or police foundations, that uses different teaching methodologies, or the environment is not suited to improving social skills, such as online delivery methods. These scenarios may present itself; however, the majority of the survey is based on statistics on the use of tools in group work settings.

Hypotheses

Faculty support and recognize the importance of group work in the classroom, however, they may have no formal training or resources to make it an effective and successful environment. With proper training on the role of faculty in group work effectiveness the study will be able to implement and troubleshoot group challenges.

Hypothesis 1: Faculty recognize and support the importance of group work within the classroom.

Hypothesis 2: The majority of faculty use a form of major group work.

Hypothesis 3: Faculty use a variety of tools and resources when implementing group work.

Hypothesis 4: Faculty comprehend that they have a major role in the outcomes of major group work.

Hypothesis 5: Faculty know that they have access to professional development designed on making group work an effective and successful environment.

Hypothesis 6: Faculty who use group work in the classroom, would attend professional development sessions on group work

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Data Analysis

An online survey of all faculty members at Durham College was conducted by the researcher between August 30th and September 19th, 2010. One hundred and five participants completed the survey from all academic schools comprised of full-time, contract, and partial-load faculty. The data was analyzed by treating the participants as one homogenous sample of faculty.

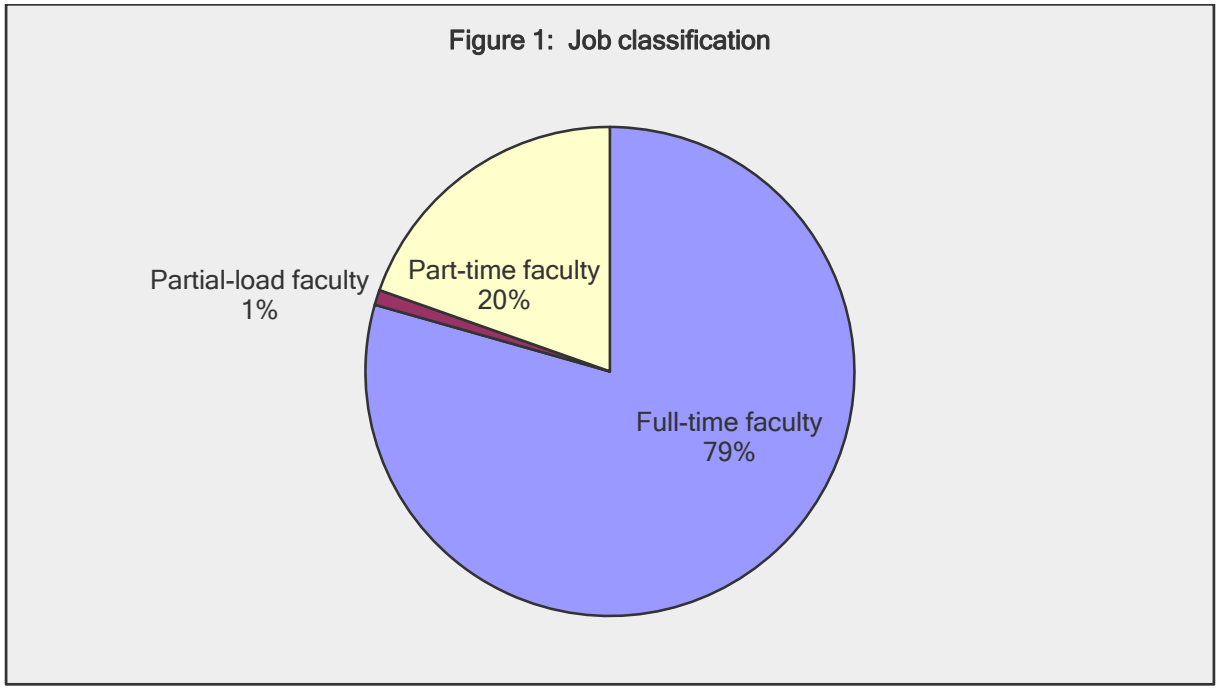
Section A requested information on the participant's current level of experience with major group work. Section B data asked faculty about the different methods they utilize when forming groups in major group work assignments. The following section C asked the participants to indicate what types of techniques they use prior to the release of the assignment, whereas section D looked specifically at the level of interaction during the group work process. Section E reviewed how faculty conclude major group work assignments and use of different techniques. The final section F looks specifically at faculty's perception how their level of involvement and skills required in order to have a meaningful and successful environment.

The data will be compiled and represented graphically for each section, with open-ended responses analyzed by the number of responses.

Demographics

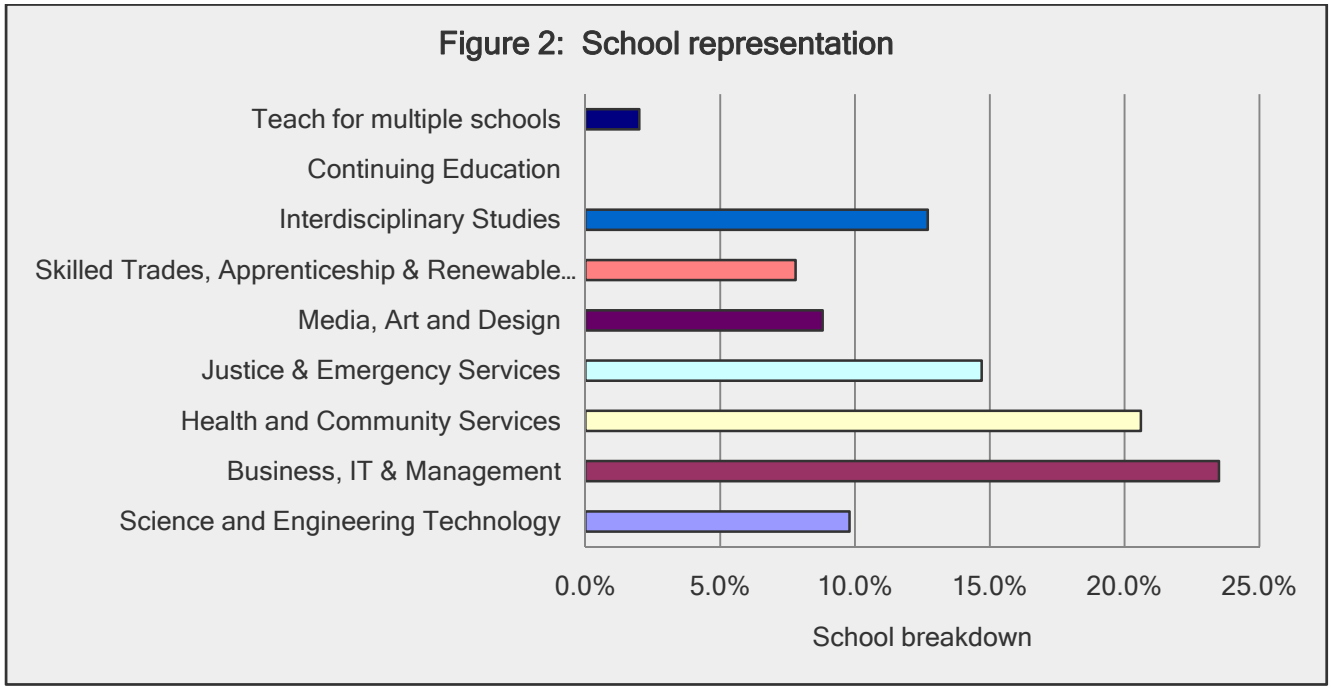
a) Figure 1: Job classification

As illustrated in figure 1, the majority, 79%, of the respondents were full-time (n = 81), contract faculty represented 20% (n=21), and there was one (n=1) partial-load faculty member (one who works 7-12 hour and is a member of the academic union). Two participants chose not to answer this question.



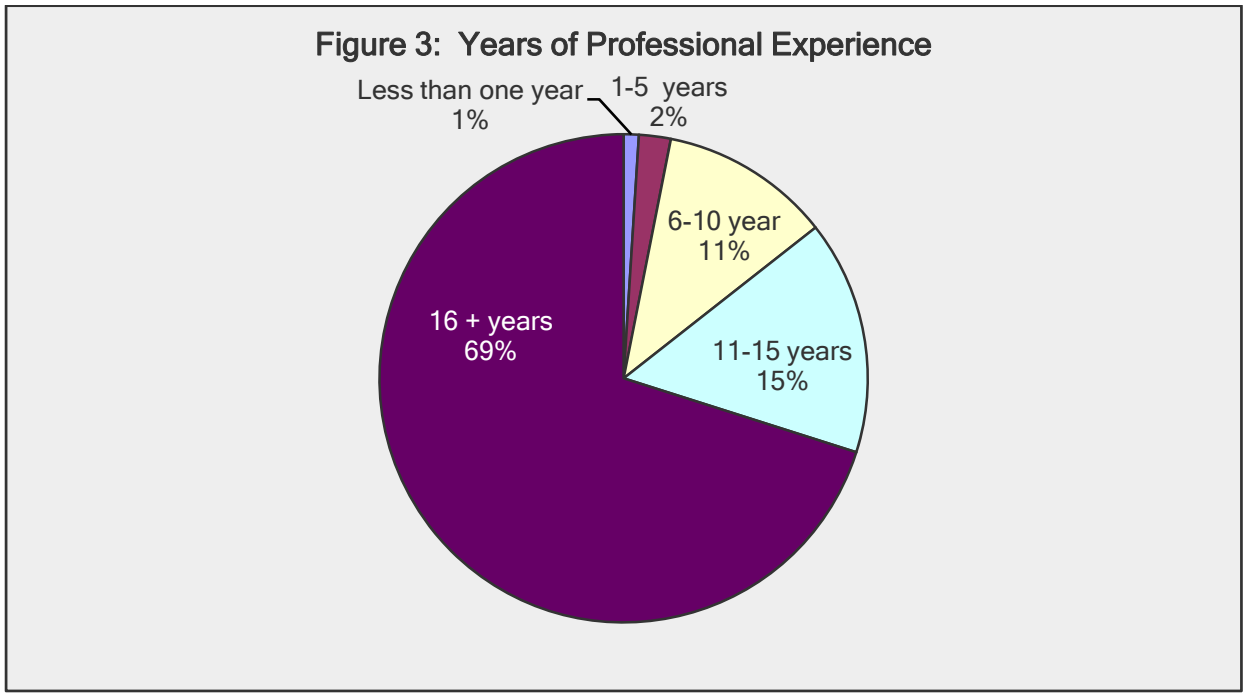
b) Figure 2: School representation

Figure 2 indicates the representation of the faculty from each academic school at Durham College across seven academic schools.



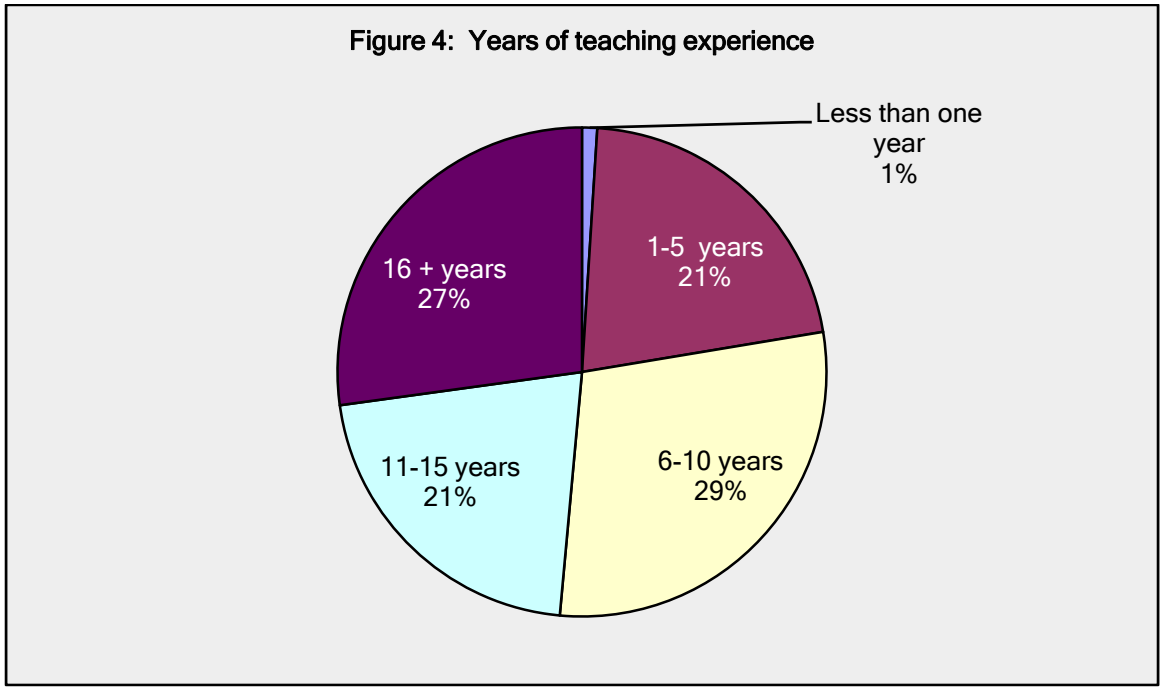
c) Figure 3: Years of professional experience

The following question asked participants to indicate their level of professional experience in the field in which they teach. Approximately 69% (n=69) of respondents had more than 16 years, 15% (n=15) had 11-15 years, 11% (n=11) had six to ten years, 2% (n=2) had one to five years, and 1% (n=1) had less than one year of experience at the professional level. Seven participants chose not to answer this question.



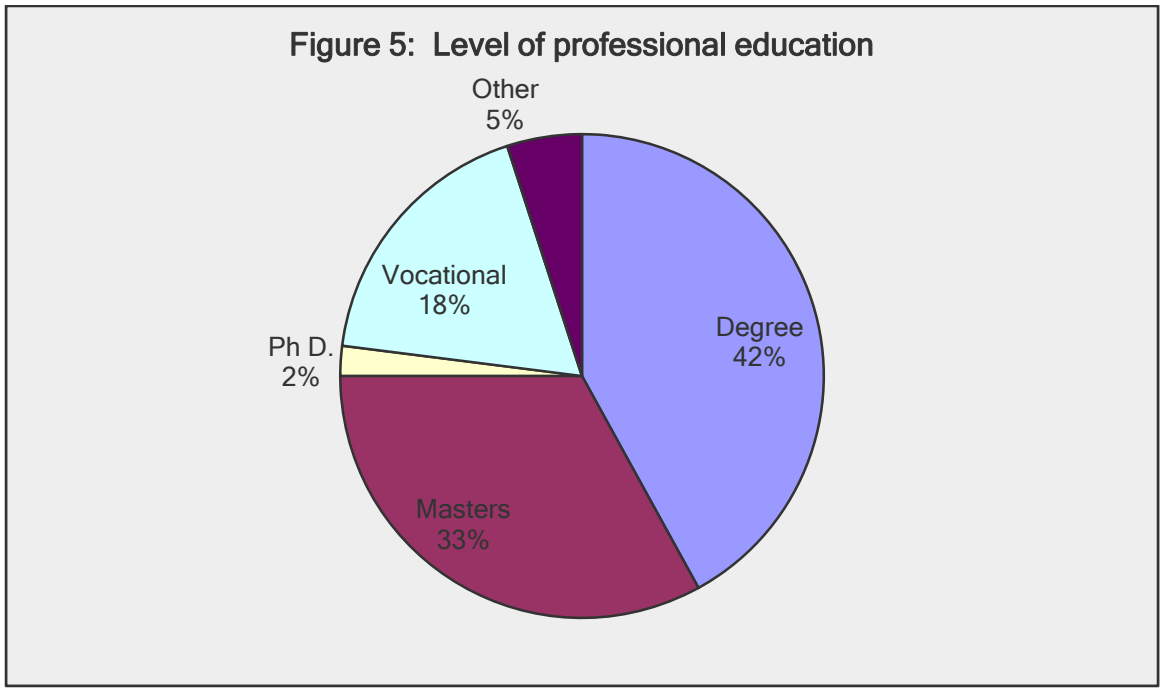
d) Figure 4: Years of teaching experience

The following question asked participants to indicate their level of teaching experience. This graph indicates that there is a uniform distribution of years of teaching experience. One participant had less than one year of experience (n=2), 21% (n=22) had one to five years, 29% (n=3) had six to ten years, 21% (n=22) had 11-15 years, and 27% had more than 16 years experience teaching. Two participants chose not to answer this question.



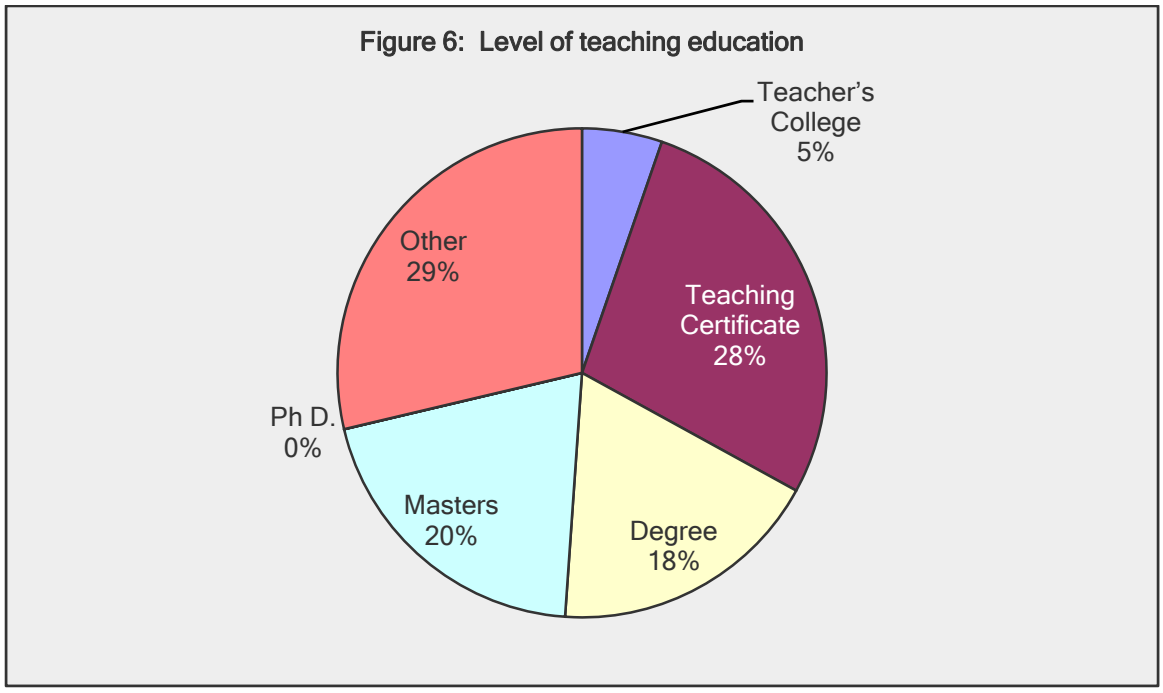
e) Figure 5: Years of professional education

The following question asked participants to indicate the level of professional education they received in the field which they teach. The data shows that there are varying levels of professional education. The data shows the 43% (n=43) of respondents have completed a degree, 33% (n=33) have completed a Master's degree, 2% (n=2) have completed a Ph. D., 18% (n=18) have completed vocational education, and 5% (n=5) have completed other education related to their professional field. Four participants chose not to answer this question.



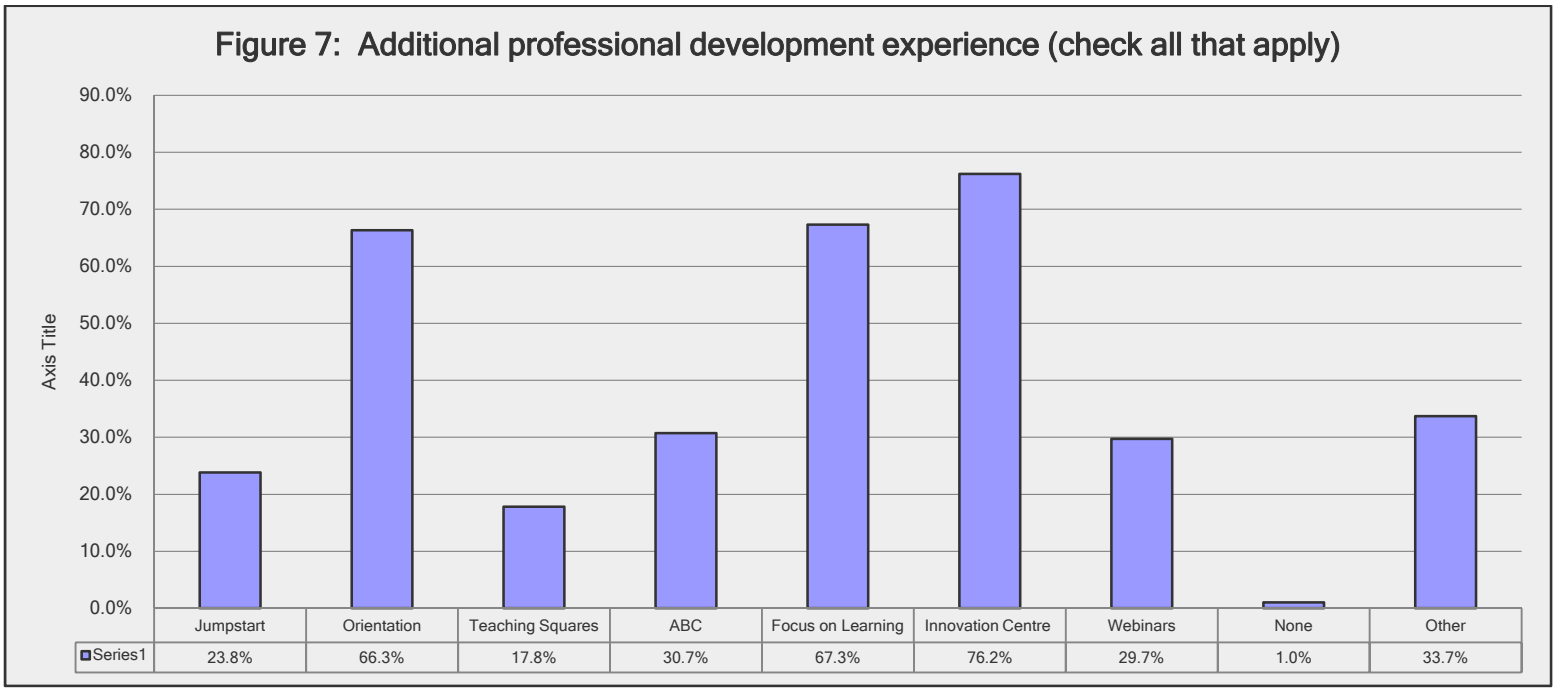
f) Figure 6: Years of teaching education

The following question asked participants to indicate the level of teaching education they have completed. The data shows that 5% (n=5) of respondents have completed teacher's college, 28% (n=26) have completed a teaching certificate, 18% (n=18) have completed a teaching degree, 20% (n=19) have completed their Master's in education, and 29% (n=27) have completed other training in education. Ten participants chose not to answer this question, which may indicate that they have no formal education in teaching.



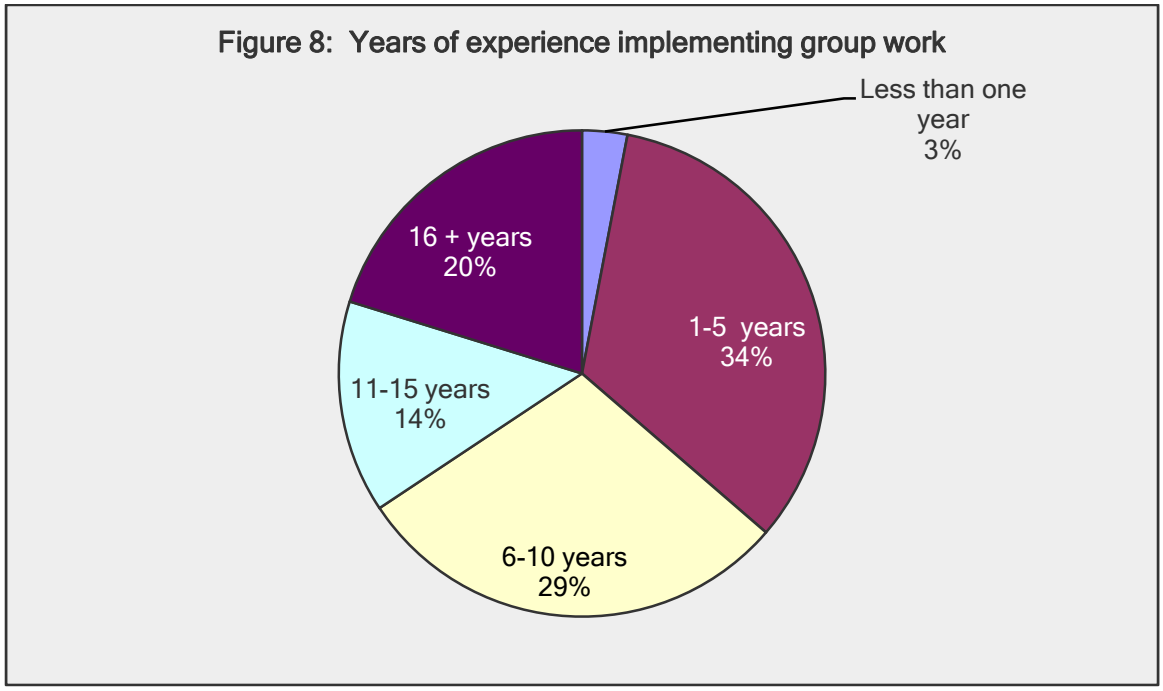
g) Figure 7: Additional professional development experience (click all that apply)

Figure 7 asked faculty to indicate the additional level of professional development faculty have voluntarily participated in outside of formal education. Participants were asked to indicate each experience they have had. Three participants chose not to answer this question. All professional development opportunities are available to all faculty members at no-cost through the Durham College Innovation Centre and Human Resources department.



h) Figure 8: Years of experience implementing group work

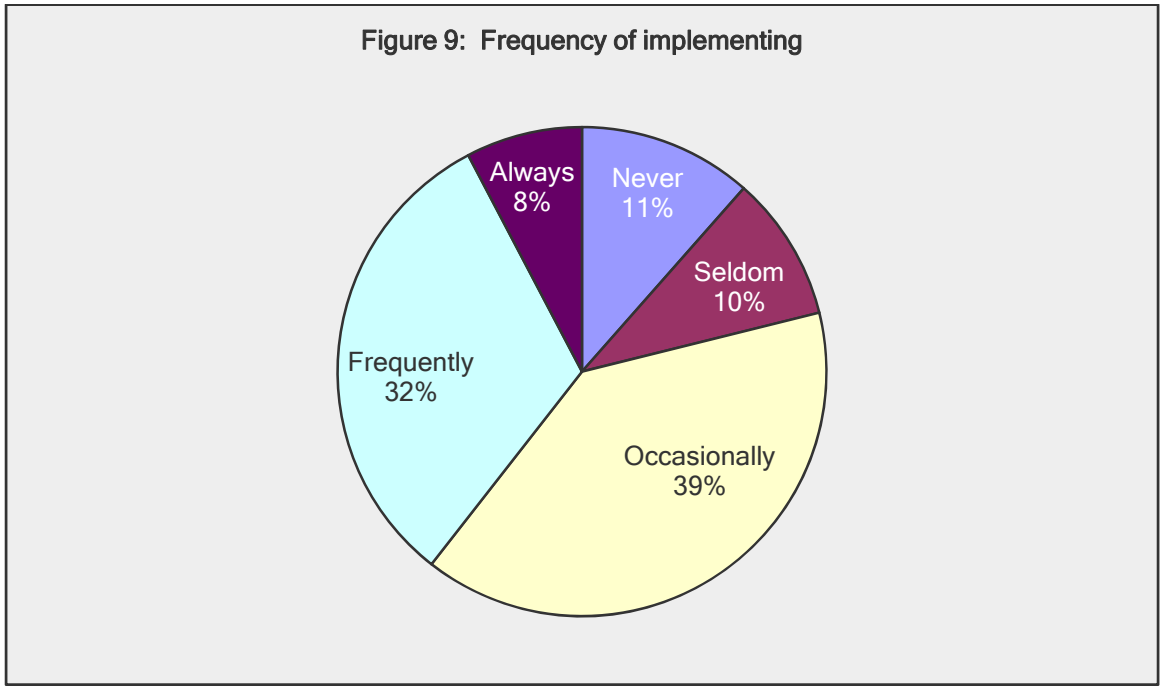
The final demographic question asked participants to estimate the years of experience they have with implementing group work. The data shows that 3% (n=4) had less than one year, 34% (n=33) had one to five years, 29% (n=29) had six to ten years, 14% (n=14) had 11-15 years, and 20% (n=20) had more than 16 years experience implementing group work. Five participants chose not to answer this question.



Section A: Experience with implementing group work

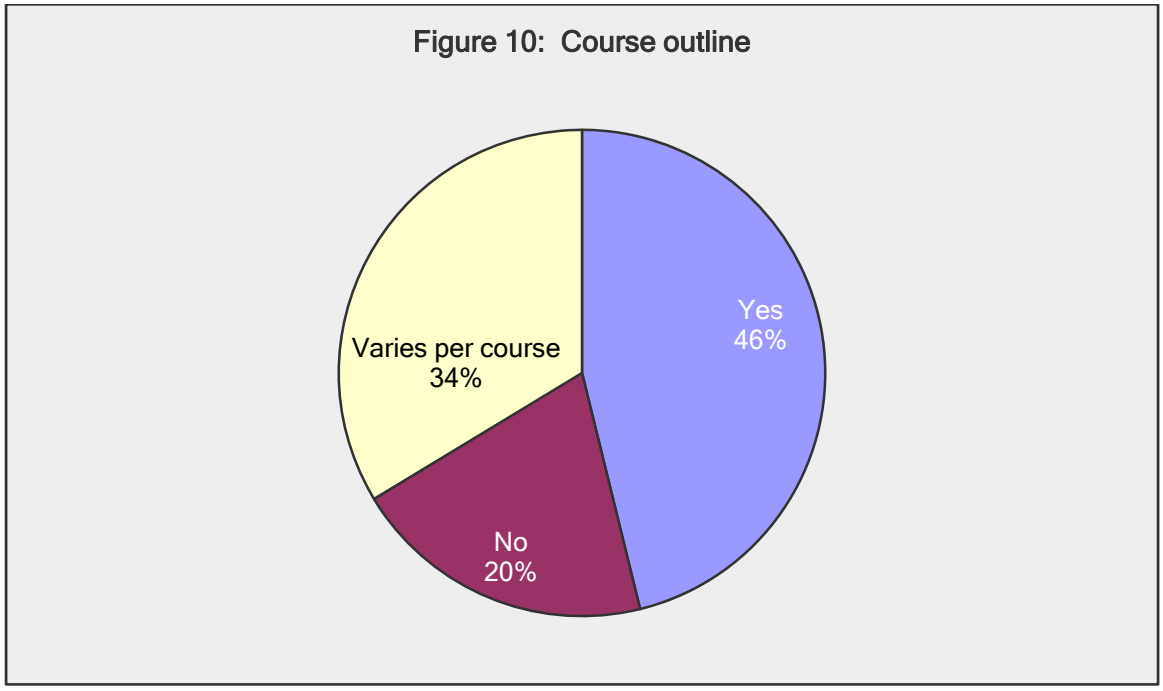
a) Figure 9: Frequency of implementing major group work

The following question asked participants to indicate how frequently they implement major group work assignments. The question stated that major group work would consist of three or more students working together to produce work where the grade is worth at least 10% of the final course grade. The data shows the 8% (n=8) always implement group work, whereas 32% (n=33) frequently, 39% (n=42) occasionally, 10% (n=10) seldom, and 11% (n=12) of faculty never use group work assignments in their courses.



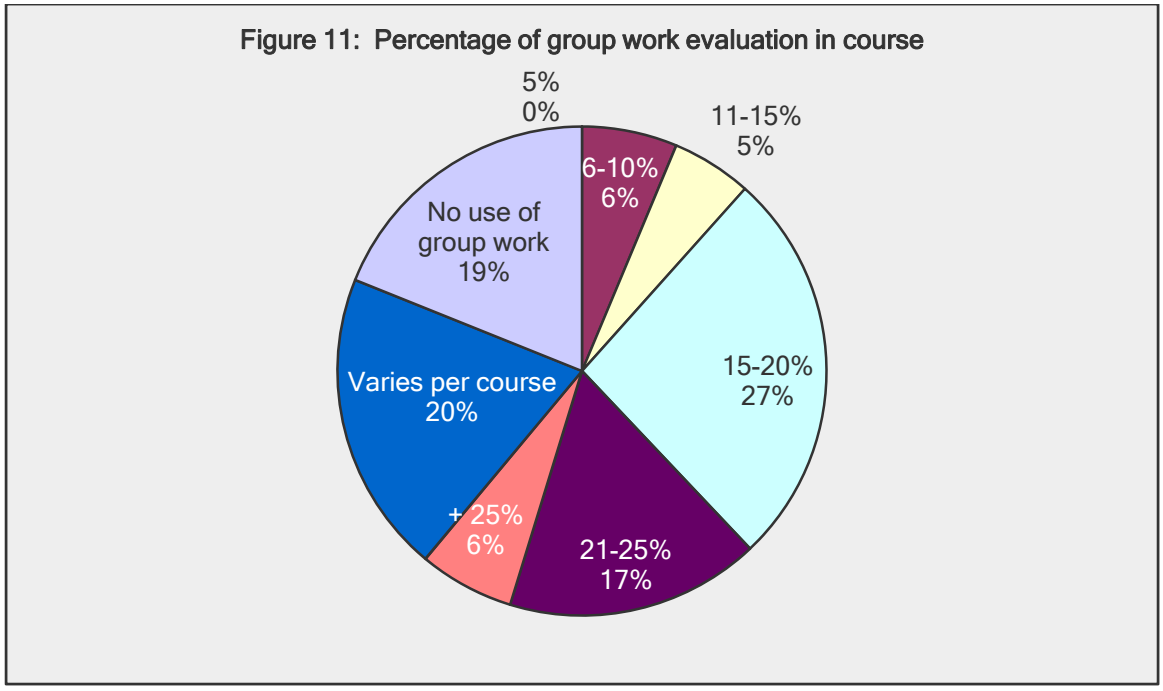
b) Figure 10: Use of major group work in course evaluation

The following question asked participants if individual course outlines required major group assignments. The data shows that 46% (n=48) of participants' course outlines use major group assignments, 33% (n=35) indicated that course outlines vary per course, and 21% (n=22) do not have major group work in their course outlines.



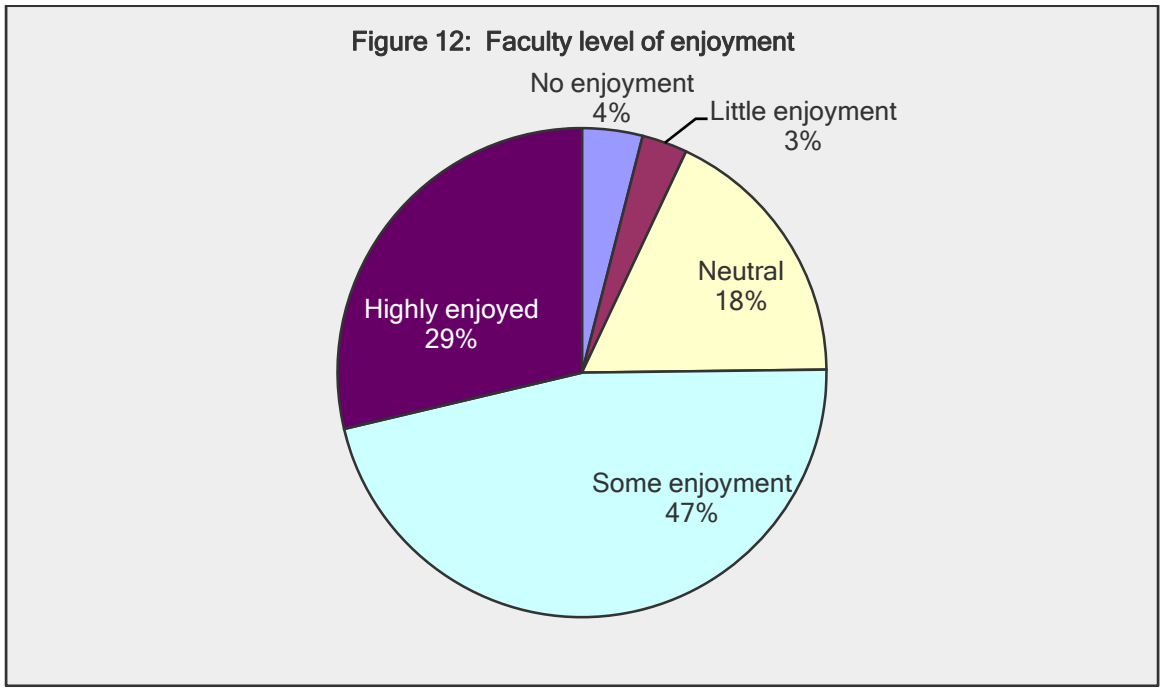
c) Figure 11: Group work assignment worth for evaluation methods

Participants were asked to indicate the average rate of evaluation of major group work assignments. The data shows that 20% (n=19) of participants indicated that evaluation varies per course, 6% (n=6) weighed 6-10%, 5% (n=5) weighed 11-15%, 27% (n=25) weighed 15-20%, 17% (n=16) weighed 21-25%, and 6% (n=6) weighed more than 25%, while 19% (n=18) do not use group work. Ten participants chose not to answer this question.



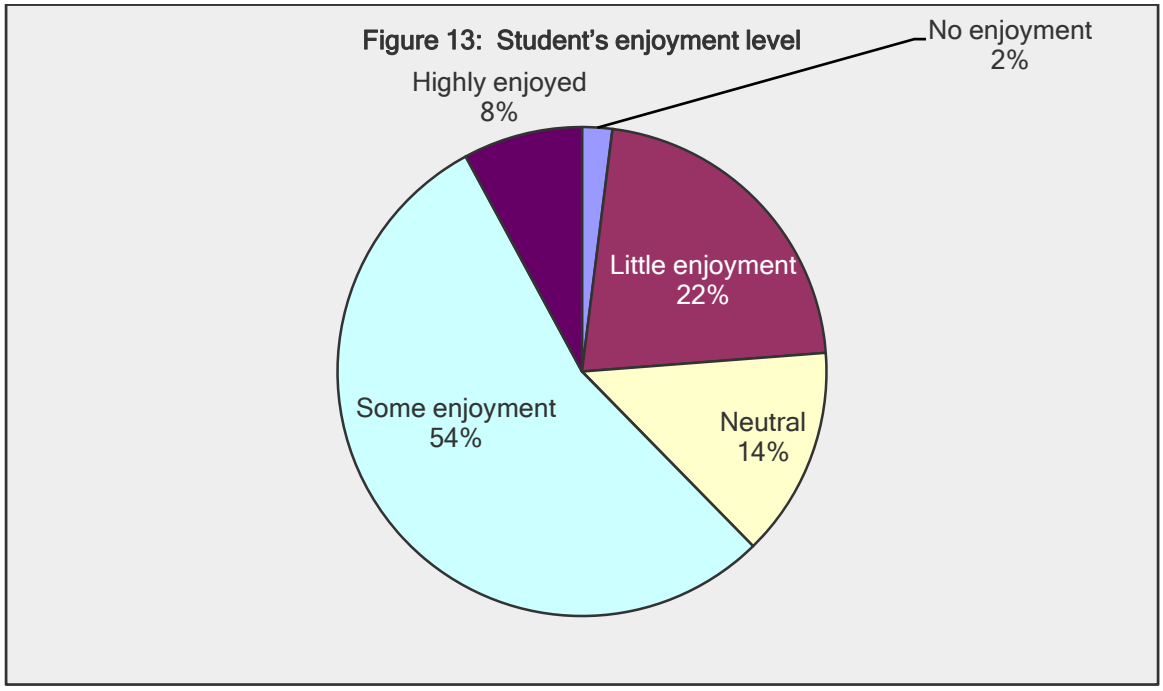
d) Figure 12: Faculty level of enjoyment with implementing group work

The following question asked participants to indicate their level of enjoyment with implementing group work. While 4% (n=4) indicated that they did not enjoy group work, 3% (n=3) showed little enjoyment, 18% (n=18) answered neutral, 47% (n=48) have some enjoyment, and 29% (n=29) highly enjoy implementing group work. Three participants chose not to answer this question.



e) Figure 13: Faculty perception on student's level of enjoyment with group work

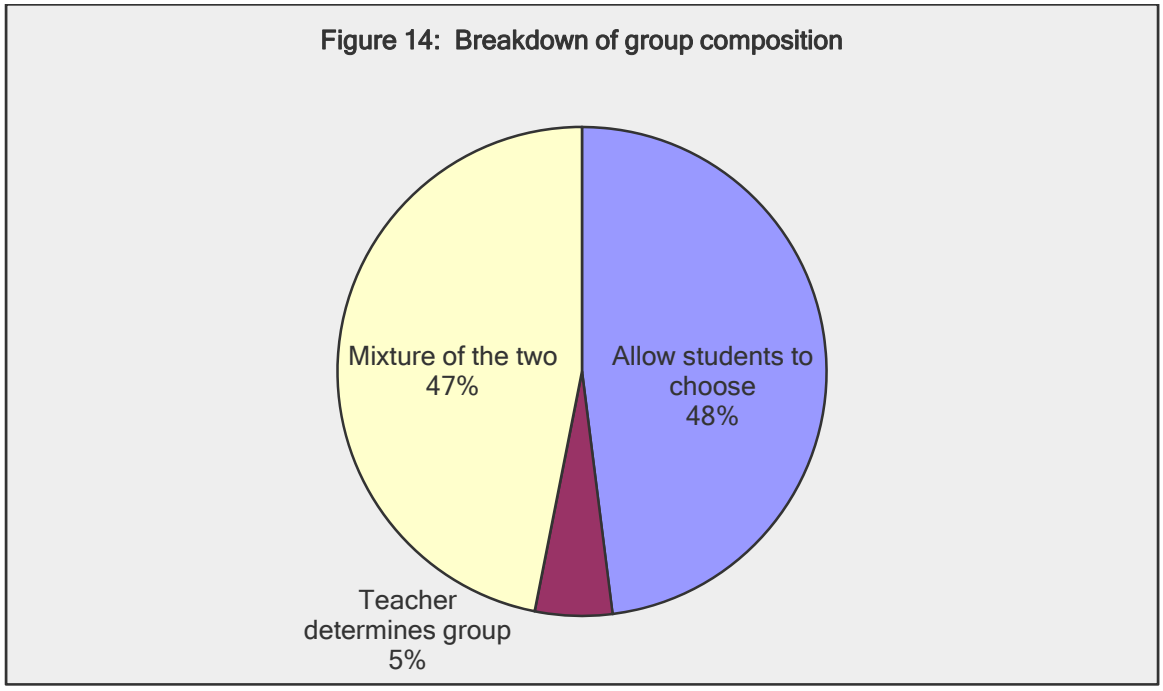
The following question asked participants to estimate the level of enjoyment students have with group work. While 2% (n=2) indicated that students do not enjoy group work, 22% (n=23) predicted little enjoyment, 14% (n=14) answered neutral, 54% (n=55) predicted some enjoyment, and 8% (n=8) of students highly enjoy group work. Three participants chose not to answer this question



Section B - Group Forming

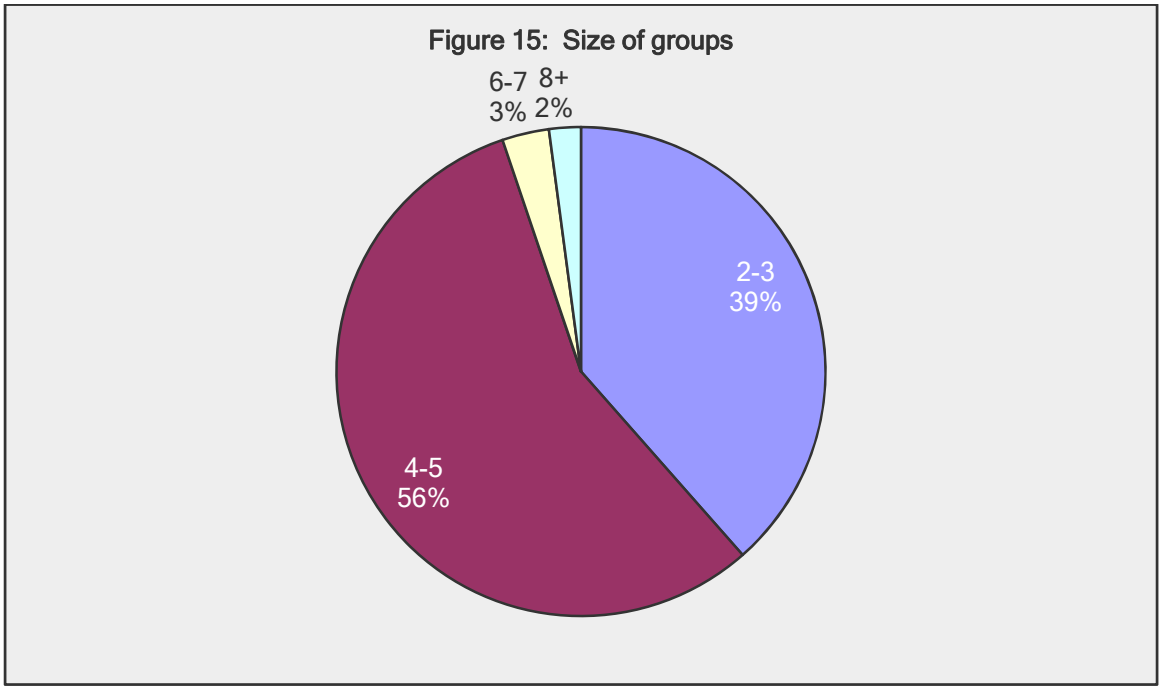
a) Figure 14: Determining group work composition

The following question asked participants to indicate how they determine group work composition. The data shows that 48% (n=48) allow students to choose, 47% (n=46) combine teacher and student forming, while 5% (n=5) allows the teacher to determine groups. Six participants chose not to answer this question.



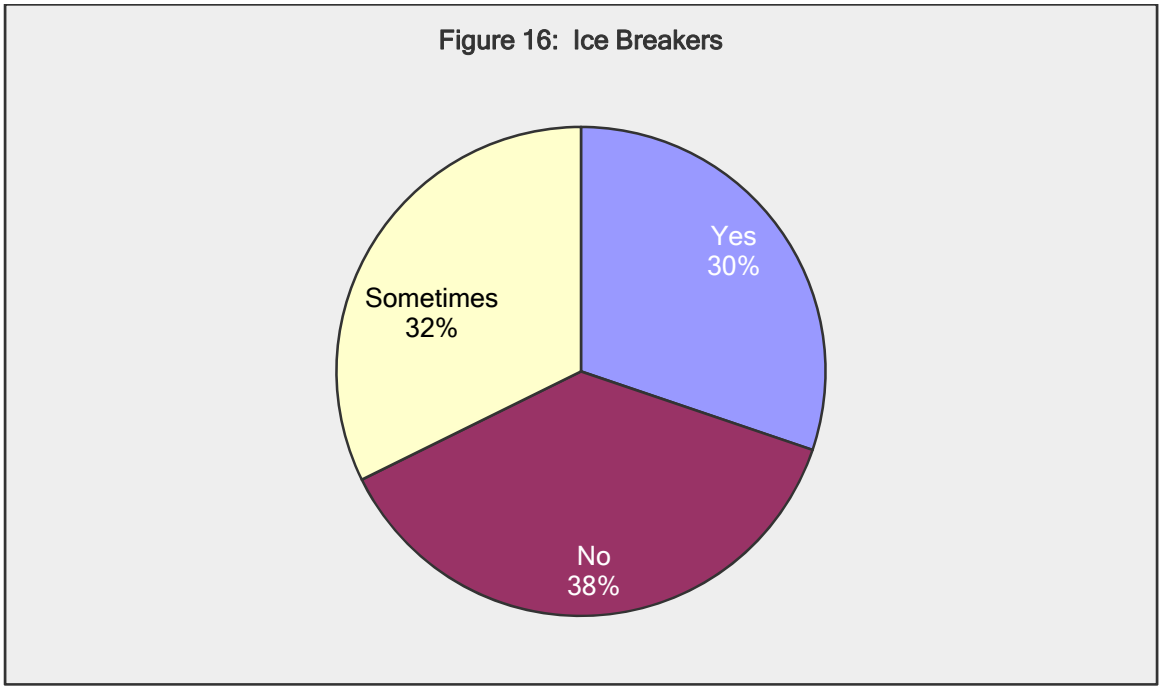
b) Figure 15: Preferred size of group for major group assignments

The following question asked participants what their preferred group size is for major group work assignments. The data shows that 56% (n=54) prefer four to five group members, 39% (n=38) prefer two to three students, 3% (n=3) prefer six to seven students, and 2% (n=2) prefer eight or more students for major group work assignments. Eight participants chose not to answer this question.



c) Figure 16: Use of Ice Breakers when introducing group work

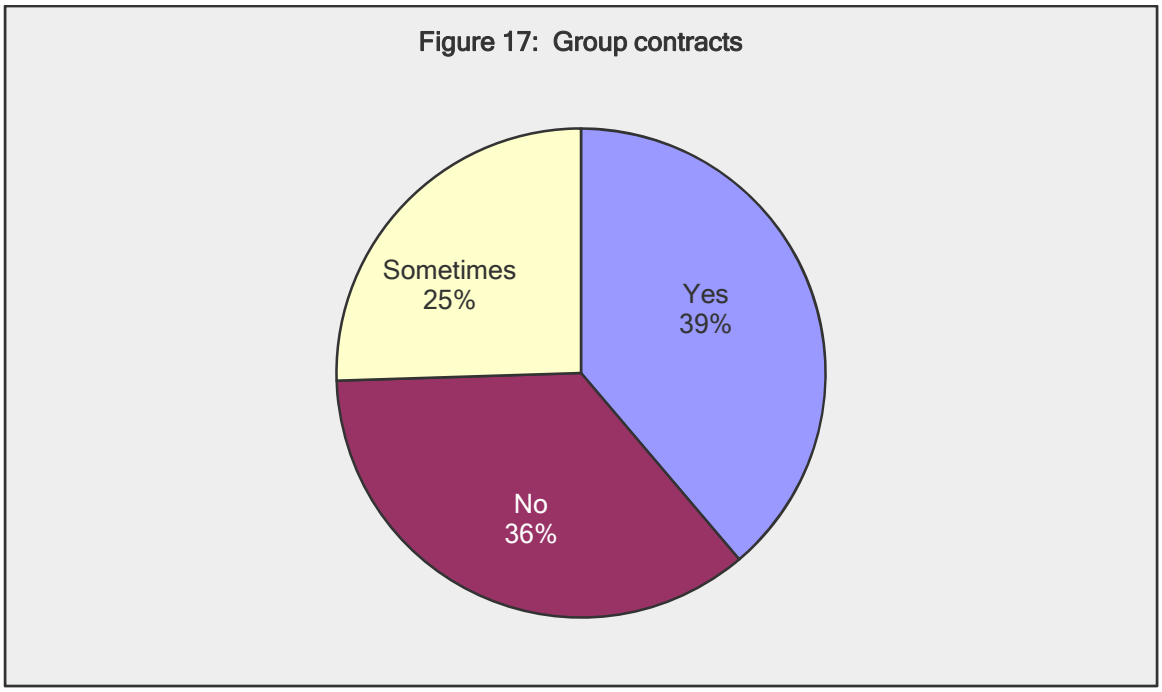
The following question asked participants if they utilize ice breakers or warm-up activities when introducing group work. The data shows that 39% (n=36) do not use ice breakers, 32% (n=31) sometimes use, and 30% (n=30) use ice breakers or warm-up activities when introducing group work activities. Eight participants chose not to answer this question.



Section C – Pre-assignment

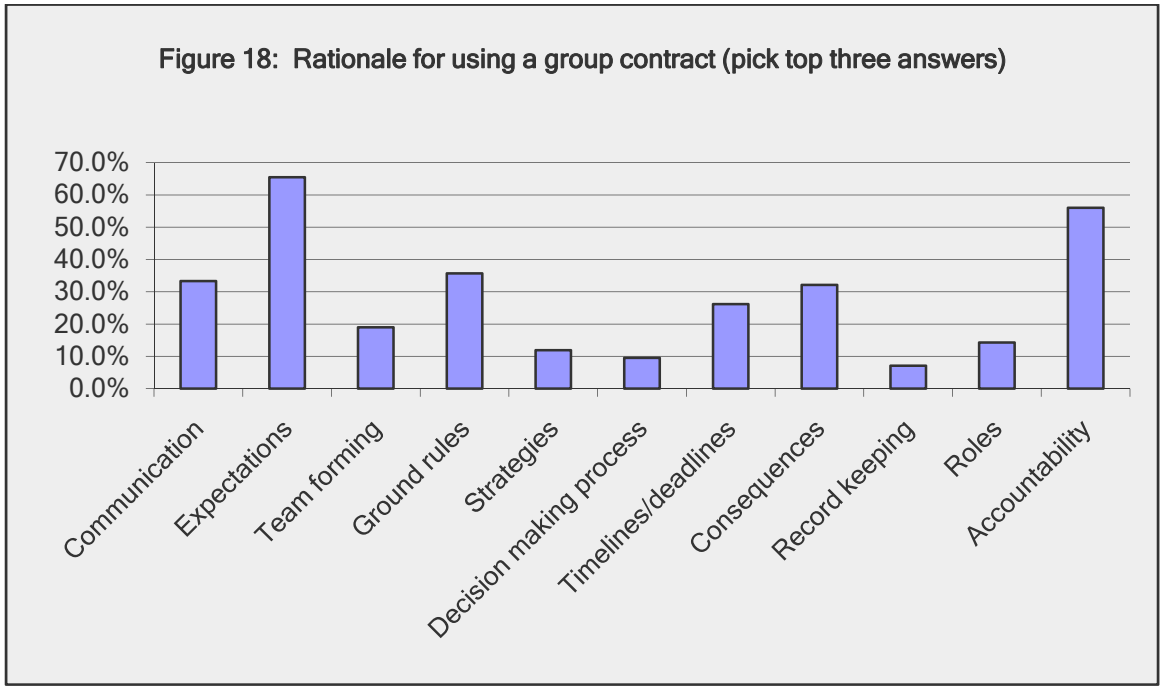
a) Figure 17: Use of group contracts

The following question asked participants if they use group contracts in major group assignments. The data shows that 39% (n=38) do use contracts, 36% (n=36) do not, and 26% (n=25) sometimes use group contracts. Six participants chose not to answer this question.



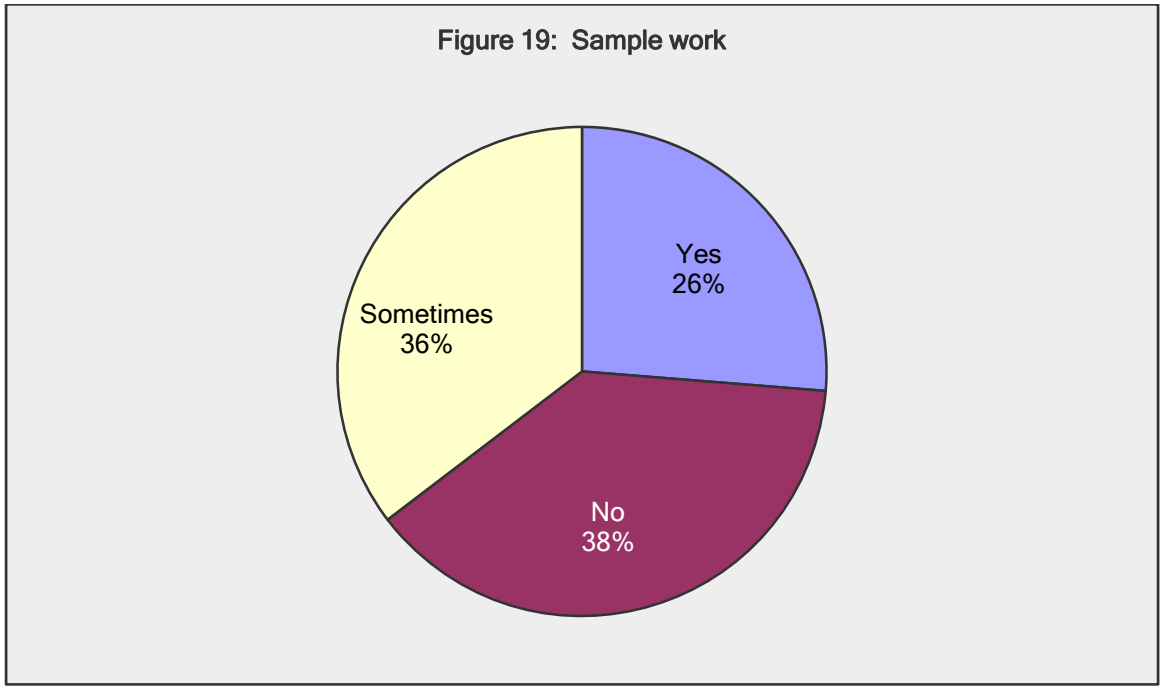
b) Figure 18: Rationale for using a group contract

The following question asked participants to pick the top three reasons for using a group contract. The data shows that the top three reasons was expectations at 66% (n=55) response, accountability at 56% (n=47), and communication purposes at 33% (n=28). Twenty-one participants chose not to answer this question.



c) Figure 19: Use of previous samples for student observation

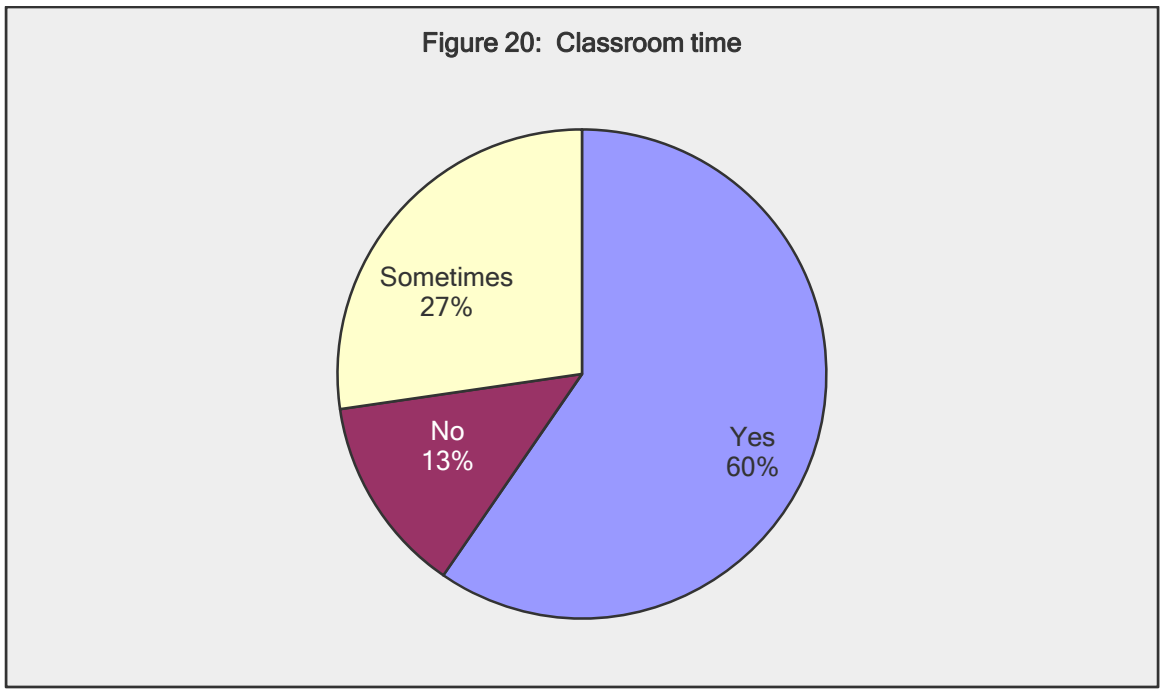
The following question asked participants to indicate if they provide sample assignments for students to review prior to submitting a final project. The data shows that 26% (n=27) do provide samples, 36% (n=35) sometimes provide samples, and 38% (n=38) do not provide samples of work to students. Five participants chose not to answer this question.



Section D – During Assignment

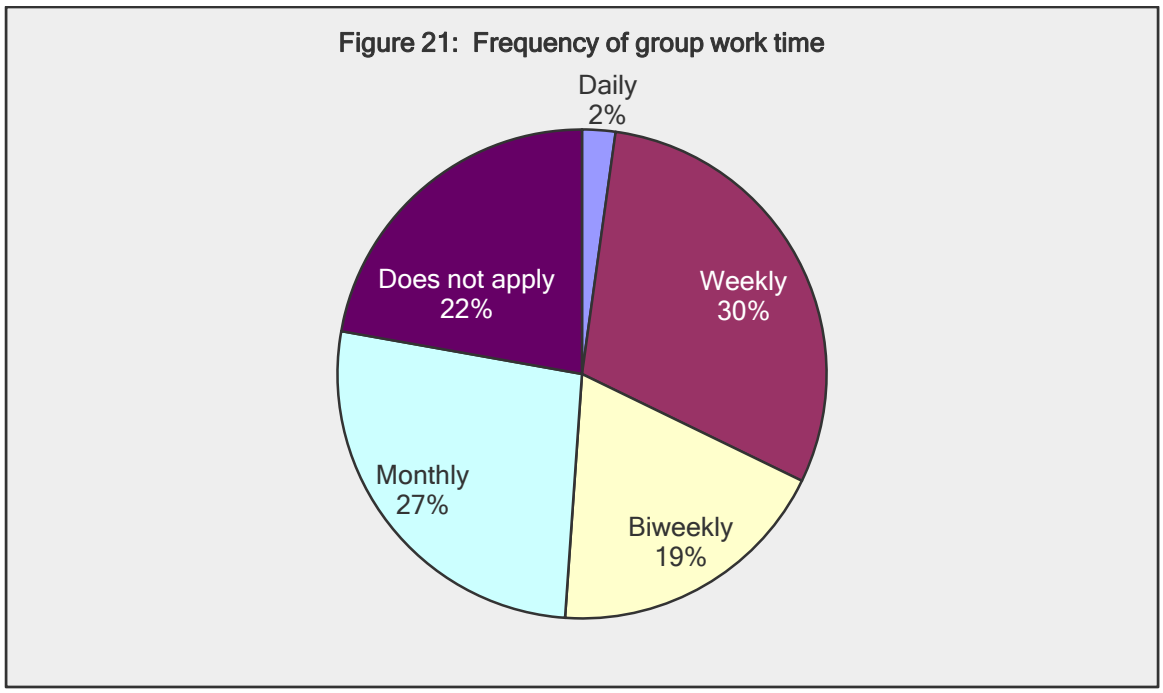
a) Figure 20: Classroom time allocated for major group work

The following question asked participants to indicate if they allocate class time for major group work assignments. The data shows that 60% (n=60) do provide time, 27% (n=27) sometimes allow time, and 13% (n=13) do not provide class time for group work. Five participants chose not to answer this question.



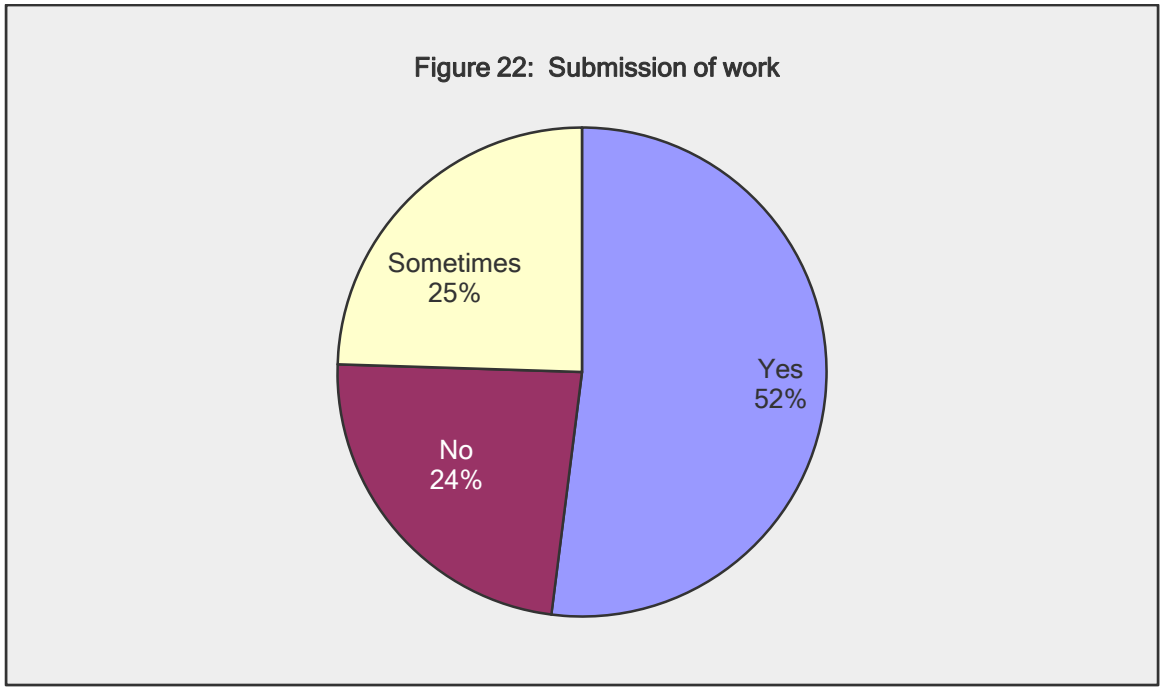
b) Figure 21: Frequency of group work time allocation

The following question asked participants to indicate how often they provide time in class for group work. The data shows that 2% (n=2) give time daily, 30% (n=28) give time weekly, 19% (n=17) give time biweekly, 27% (n=24) give time monthly and 22% (n=20) do not give time in class. Fourteen participants chose not to answer this question.



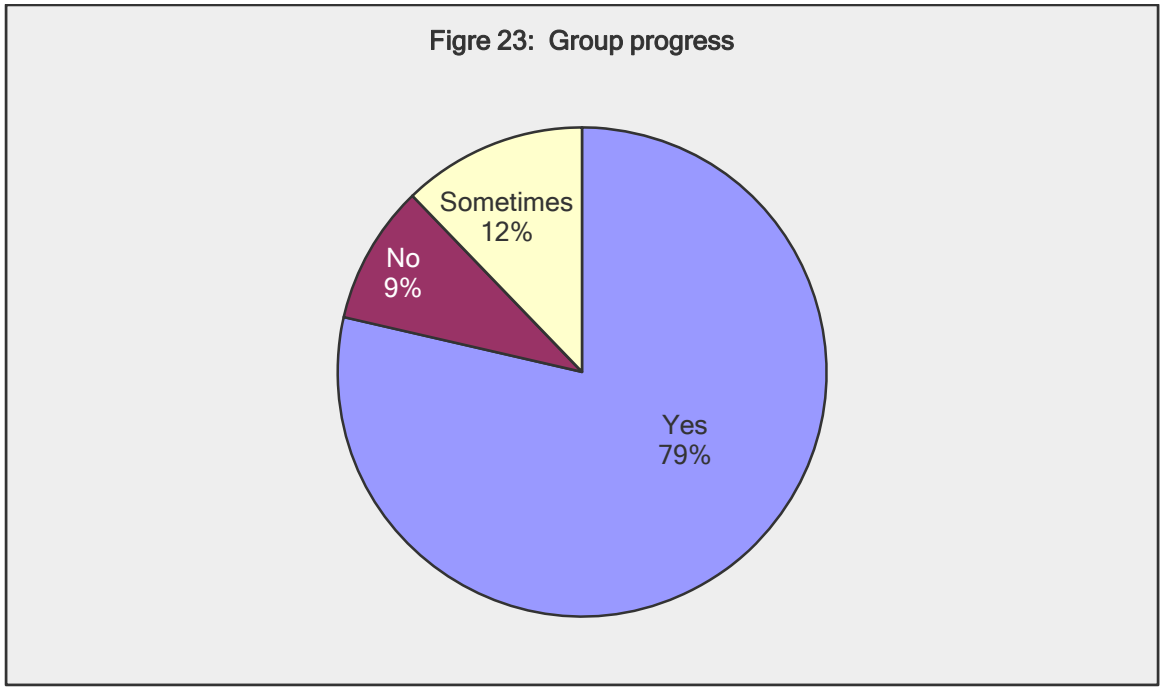
c) Figure 22: Opportunity for your students to hand in sections of their assignment throughout the semester

The following question asked participants if they allow students to hand in sections of their assignment for feedback throughout the semester. The data shows that 52% (n=52) allow students to submit, 25% (n=24) sometimes allow, and 23% (n=23) do not allow students to submit sections of the project in advance for feedback. Six participants chose not to answer this question.



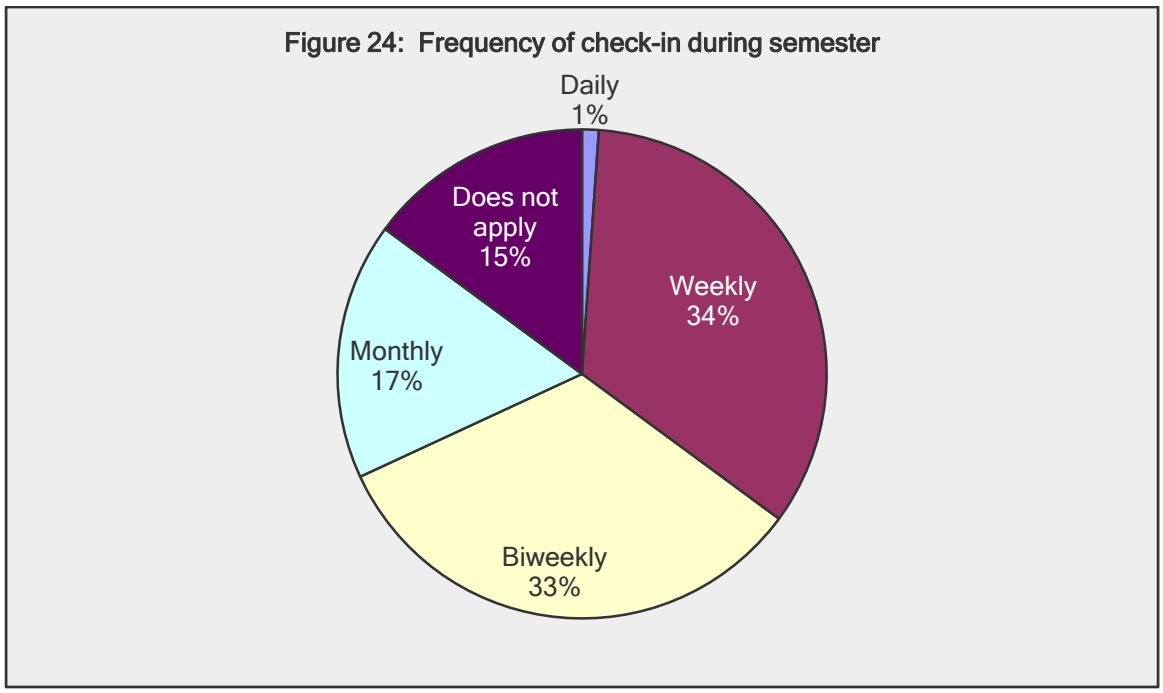
d) Figure 23: Faculty check-in on group progress

The following question asked participants if they check-in with groups on their progress. The data shows that 79% (n=77) check-in on progress, 12% (n=13) sometimes do, and 9% (n=9) do not check-in on progress. Six participants chose not to answer this question.



e) Figure 24: Frequency of check-in during semester

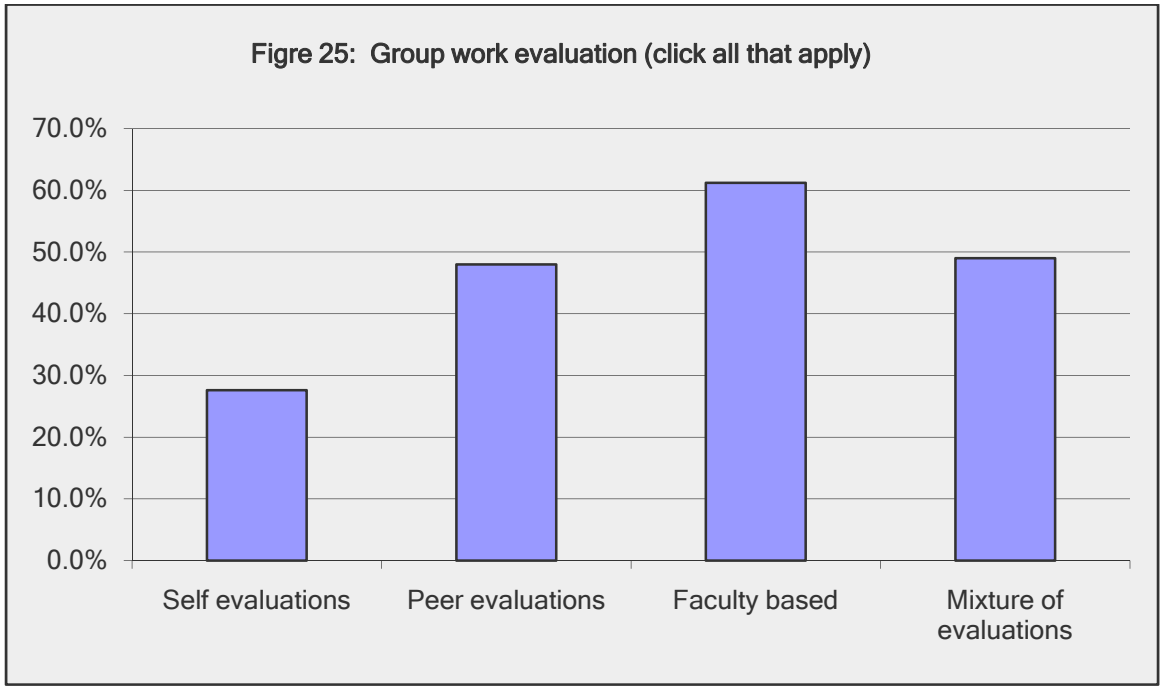
The following question asked participants how frequently they check-in on group progress. The data shows that 1% (n=1) check-in daily, 34% (n=32) check-in weekly, 33% (n=31) check-in biweekly, 17% (n=16) check-in monthly, whereas 15% (n=14) do not check-in on progress. Eleven participants chose not to answer this question.



Section D: Post-Assignment

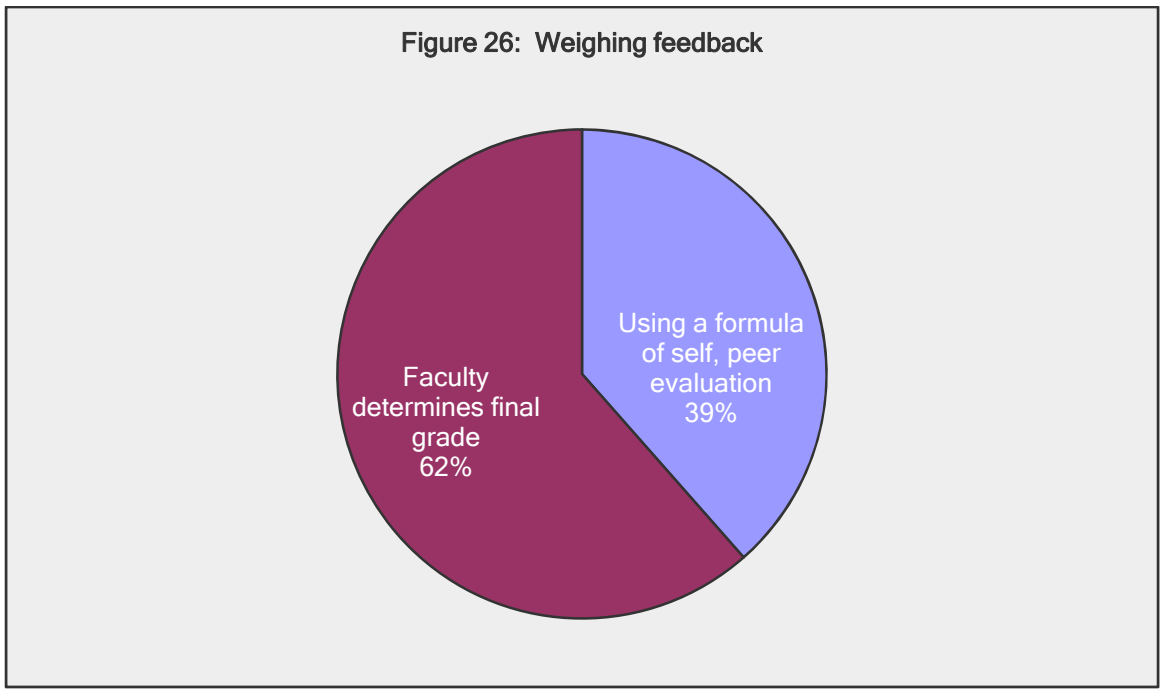
a) Figure 25: Group work evaluation tools

The following question asked participants which form of evaluation they use in evaluating major group assignments. The question asked for all methods used. The data shows that the faculty based tools are more widely used with a mixture of self and peer for many participants. Six participants chose not to answer this question.



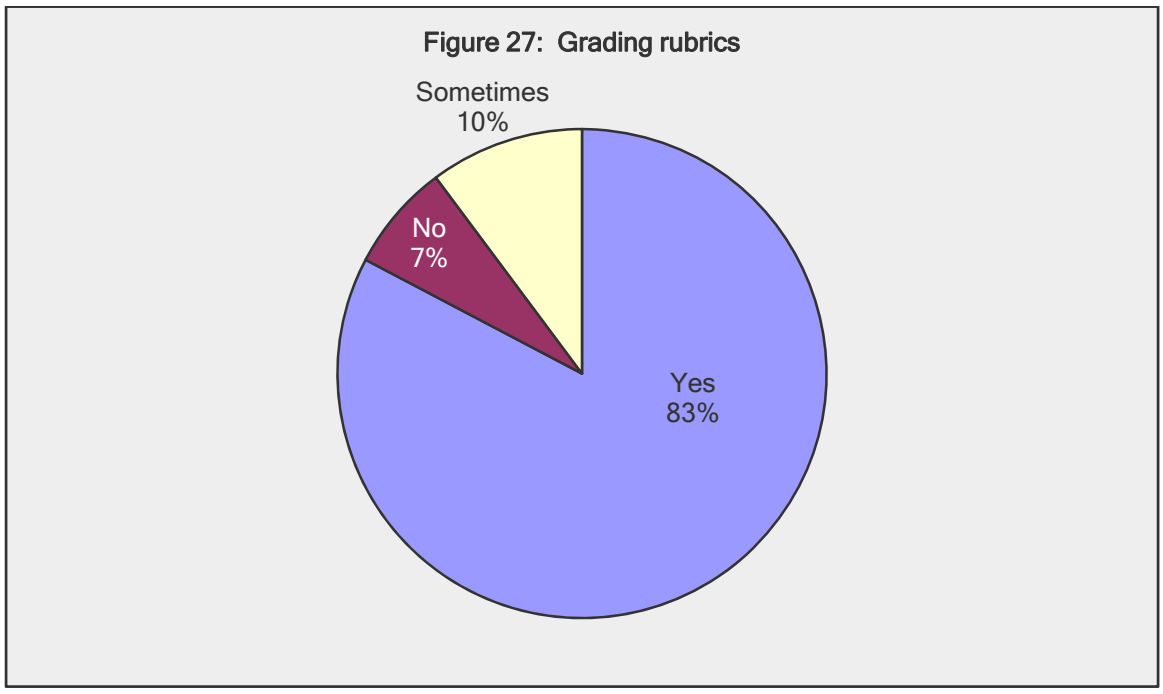
b) Figure 26: Weighing feedback from the group in the final grade

The following question asked participants to indicate if they determine the final grades or if they use a formula that factors in peer or self evaluation. The data shows that 62% (n=60) of respondents determine the final grade, whereas 37% (n=37) use a formula based on feedback from group members. Eight participants chose not to answer this question.



c) Figure 27: Distribution of grading rubric to students

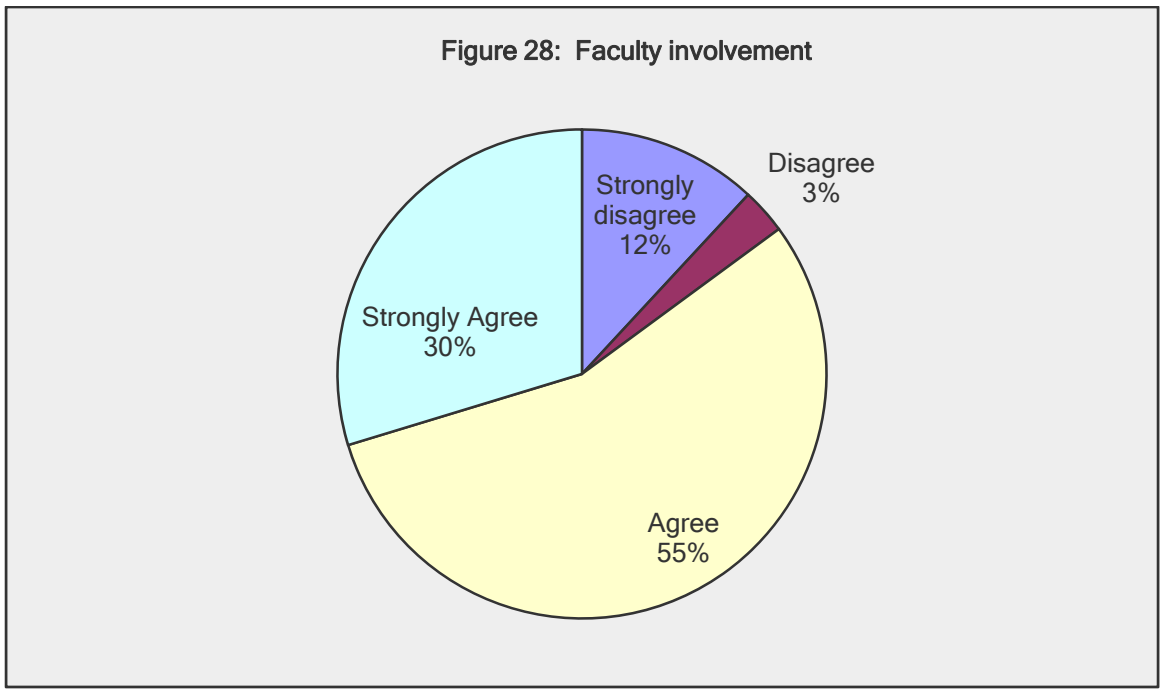
The following question asked participants if they provide a grading rubric to students at the beginning of the group work assignment. The data shows that 83% (n=82) distribute a grading rubric, 10% (n=10) sometimes distribute, and 7% (n=7) participants do not provide students with a grading rubric. Six participants chose not to answer this question.



Section E: Faculty involvement and skills

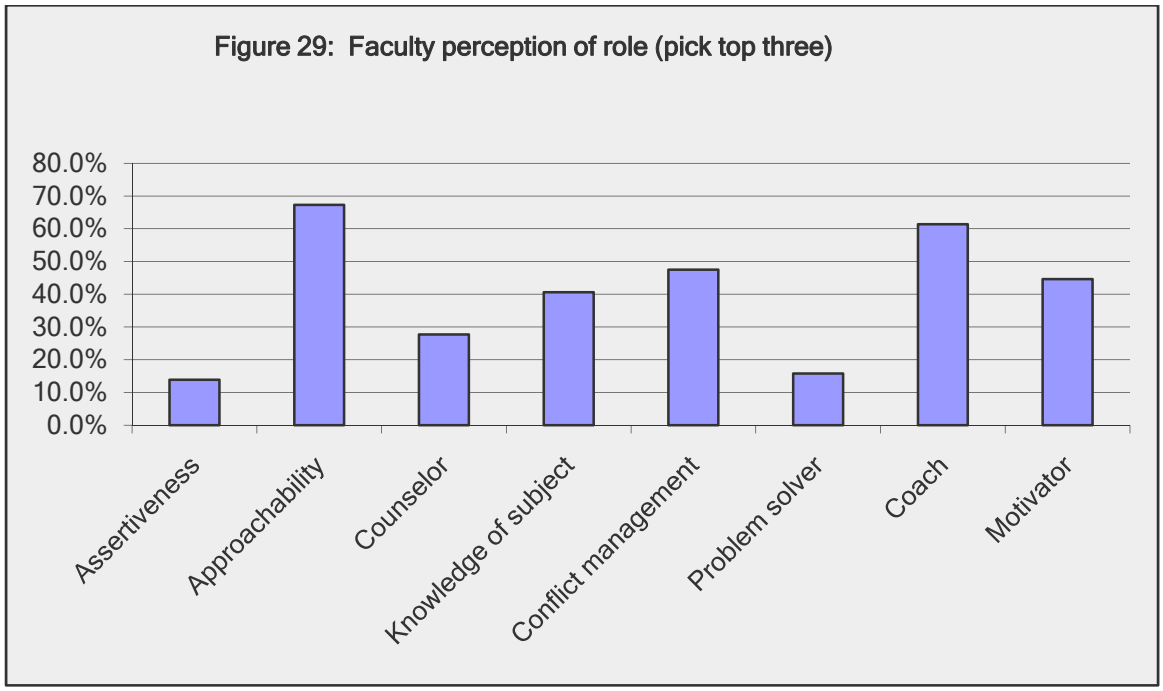
a) Figure 28: Faculty perception of faculty involvement in group work assignments

The following question asked participants if faculty play a significant role in the outcome of major group assignments. The data shows that 55% (n=56) believe faculty play a signature role, 30% (n=31) strongly agree, 3% (n=3) disagree, and 12% (n=12) strongly disagree that faculty play a significant role. Three participants chose not to answer this question.



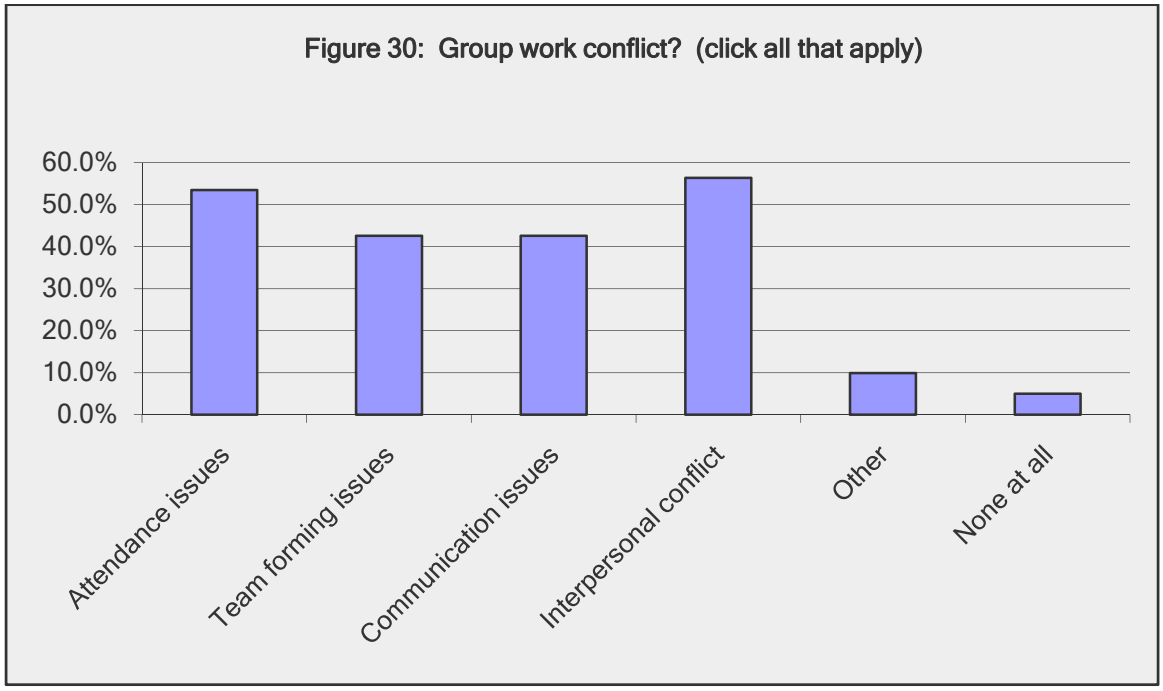
b) Figure 29: Faculty perception of role in major group work assignments (pick top three (3) skills)

The following question asked participants to choose the top three skills that faculty should have when implementing major group work assignments. The top three responses were approachability at 68% (n=69), coach at 62% (n=63), and conflict management at 48% (n=49). Three participants chose not to answer this question.



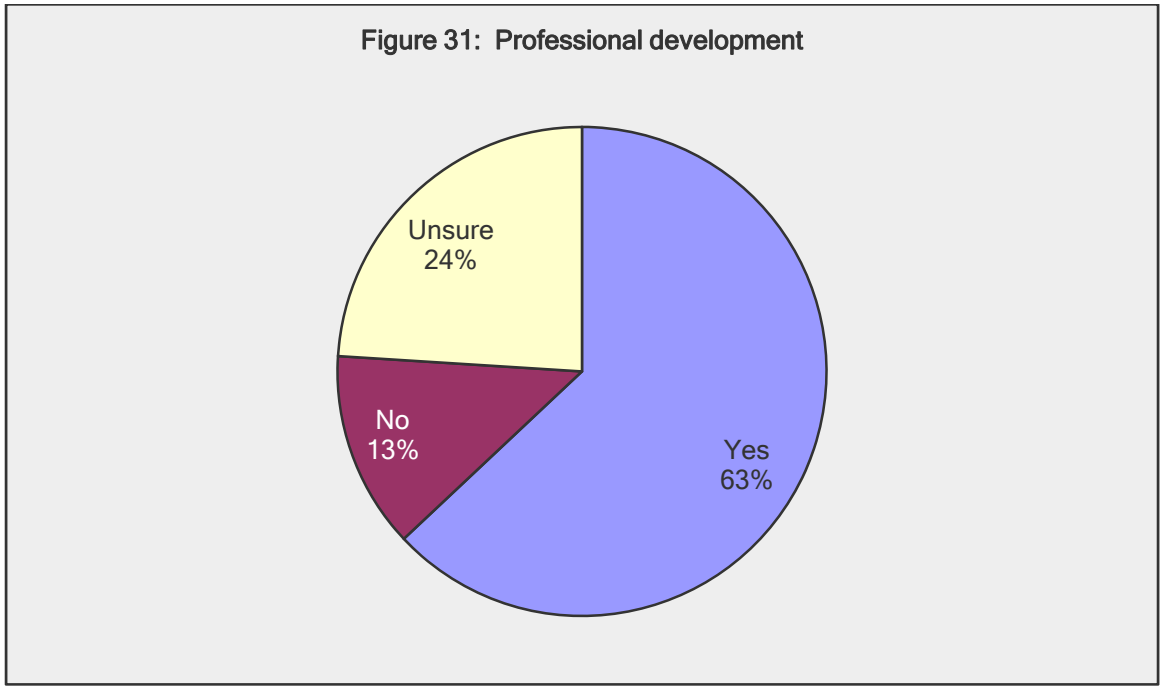
c) Figure 30: Faculty perception of when a faculty member should become involved in group work conflict

The following question asked participants to indicate when a faculty member should interject on a group's dynamics by clicking all options that apply. The data shows that 56% (n=57) believe that groups should be approached when there is interpersonal conflict, 53% (n=54) when there are attendance issues, 44% (n=44) when there are team forming issues, 42% (n=43) when there are communication issues, and 10% (n=10) when other issues arise. The data also shows that 5% (n=5) do not feel that faculty members should interject into group work dynamics for any reason. Three participants chose not to answer this question.



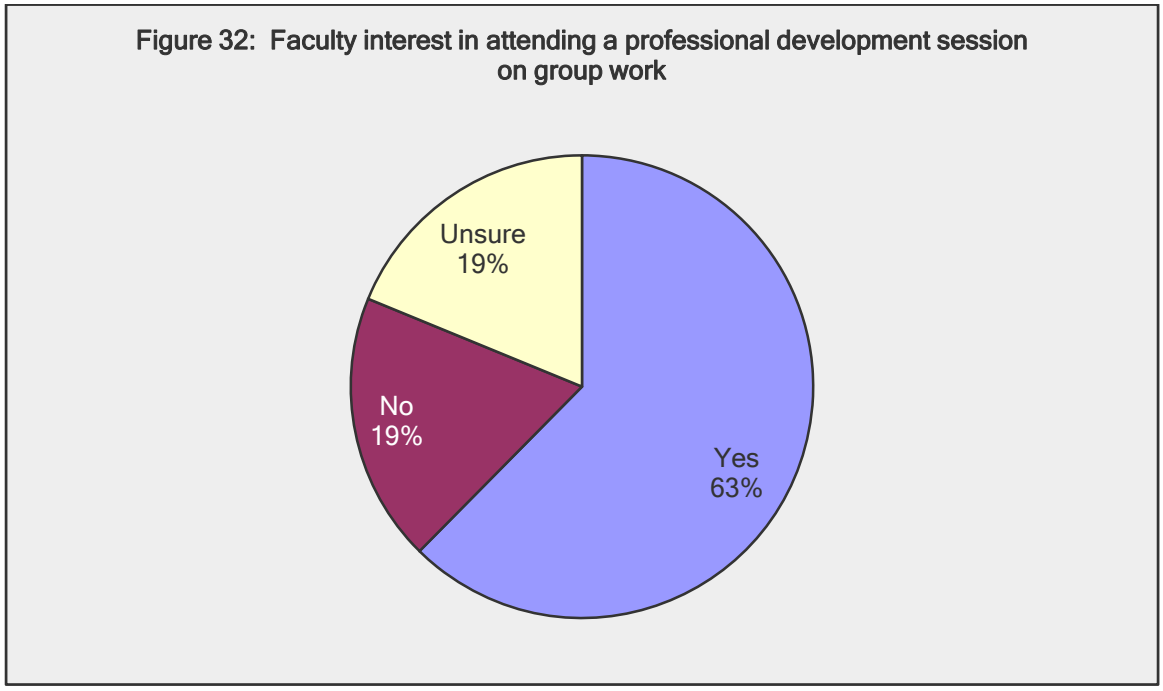
d) Figure 31: Faculty perception of access to professional development specific to group work

The following question asked participants if they have access to professional development focused on group work. The data shows that 63% (n=64) know that they have access, 24% (n=24) were unsure, and 13% (n=13) did not know they had access to professional development on group work. Four participants chose not to answer this question.



e) Figure 32: Faculty interest in attending a professional development session on group work

The final question asked of participants was if they would be interested in attending a professional development session focused on group work techniques. The data shows that 63% (n=64) would be interested, 19% (n=19) were unsure, and 19% (n=19) would not be interested in attending a group work professional development session. Three participants chose not to answer this question.



Hypothesis Analysis

This research project analyzed six hypotheses to understand the benefits of using major group work assignments in post-secondary institutions. The analyzed data supports all six hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Faculty recognize and support the importance of group work within the classroom.

When participants were asked what their level of enjoyment is with implementing group work within the classroom the majority of the respondents indicated that they enjoyed the process. Forty-seven percent indicated that they had some enjoyment and 29% highly enjoyed implementing group work. A small percentage had a neutral response, with only 7% showing they had no enjoyment. This data supports the hypothesis that faculty recognize and support the importance of utilizing major group work assignments.

Status: The data supports the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: The majority of faculty use a form of major group work.

When participants were asked if they used major group work assignments in their classrooms the majority of the responses indicate that many use this methodology as a component of course evaluation. With only 11% stating never and 10% stating they seldom use major group work assignments the remaining data indicates that group work assignments may vary by course; while 46% confirmed that it is a part of all course outlines. As previously mentioned,

some disciplines do not use this type of methodology, which may have influenced this hypothesis.

Status: The data supports the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: Faculty use a variety of tools and resources when implementing group work.

The data supports that the majority of faculty use tools and resources to enhance the group work process. Approximately 83% provide students with a grading rubric at the beginning of the project, 79% check-in on group progress throughout the semester, and 52% allow students to submit sections of their assignment for feedback prior to final submission. When asked if they provided samples of previous work, group contracts, and ice breaker activities the responses were divided up equally between yes, no and sometimes. This could indicate that some faculty do not see the value in these particular resources or do not have access to such resources.

Status: The data supports the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: Faculty comprehend that they have a major role in the outcomes of major group work.

When asked what role faculty have in the group work process only 15% did not feel they had a significant effect. The remaining 85% acknowledged that the faculty role was very important to how the progression of the activity developed. Participants were also asked what core skills were required to facilitate major group work assignments. The top three responses were approachability, role as a coach, and conflict management.

Status: The data supports the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 5: Faculty know that they have access to professional development designed on making group work an effective and successful environment.

The data supports this hypothesis with 63% of respondents confirming they have access to professional development, 24% indicating they were unsure, and 13% indicating that they did not have access to group work professional development.

Status: The data supports the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 6: Faculty who use group work in the classroom would attend professional development sessions on group work.

When asked if participants would attend professional development specific to group work, 63% confirmed that they would be interested, 19% were unsure depending on the content of the session, and 19% indicated that they would not attend additional professional development.

Status: The data supports the hypothesis.

Summary

Faculty support the use of group work within the classroom as a learning technique to develop or enhance student knowledge and skills. The data shows that the majority of faculty use major group work assignments in their courses and have years of experience implementing the process. The participants provided data on the use, methods used, their perceptions of required skills, and the role of the faculty member. The data also showed that faculty do have formal education in teaching and have participated in a number of professional development

sessions. The final analysis was on the interest of faculty, at over 60% showing interest to attend a professional development session designed to improve faculty skills and resources on group work implementation.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Chapter I reviewed the background, purpose, statement of the problem, research questions, definitions of the terms, and limitations of the study. The purpose of this study was to review the current use of major group work assignments in the post-secondary classroom and evaluated a variety of resources available for faculty to implement a successful and meaningful environment. The study also identified whether faculty would be willing to take additional professional development on group work techniques. The study concluded the findings of the data results in conjunction with the academic literature available to produce recommendations on major group work assignments in the classroom.

Chapter II examined the current literature available on group work specifically in the post-secondary educational environment. The literature focused on the benefits and risks of implementing group work, group work formation, evaluation methods, faculty skills required and the role of the faculty member in the process. The literature concluded that the benefits of group work out weighed the risks when appropriate measures and resources are available for the students and the faculty member. The research also proved that faculty play a significant role and require skills to help facilitate the process that can be enhanced by professional development.

Chapter III described the methodology of this study. The population of the sample was detailed as all faculty members at a community college, Durham College, in Oshawa, Ontario. The total population rate was approximately 500 faculty members teaching in a full-time,

contract or partial-load capacity. An online survey was developed to measure the current use and

experiences of faculty members. The researcher reviewed the available literature and developed hypotheses to compare with the data collected from the methodology process.

Chapter IV reviewed the data compiled from the methodology and analyzed the hypotheses. All six hypotheses were analyzed and were supported by the data. The conclusions of the research are described in the following section.

Conclusions

The researcher reviewed the literature review and analyzed the methodology data to construct conclusions based on the supported hypotheses.

Academic literature, along with the data results from the survey of faculty experiences concludes that the use of major group work is increasing in higher learning institutions. This may be a result of increased class sizes (Nilson, 2003) or the recognition of the benefits of allowing students to work together to produce a final product will provide them with lifelong skills that they can use in their future education or employment environments. The literature showed that students can gain valuable communication, leadership, critical thinking, and social skills, along with self-esteem, and a sense of belonging when group work is incorporated into course work (Strom, 1996; Payne, 2006). These skills can provide students with a framework of experience for working on teams in the work world that are necessary for development. Payne (2006) described that group projects, “can effectively serve as a bridge between the academic community and the business world (p. 441). Therefore the use of group work can benefit

students in more ways than academically by providing them with the skills that employers desire in new selection candidates.

The use of group work may vary across disciplines as evident in the data collection. Some faculty stated that they do not or have not utilized major group work assignments in their classroom. This may be based upon the subject matter of the class, faculty skill level with group work or methods of delivery. Some disciplines such as technology, health or design courses may not see the relevance of incorporating group work into the curriculum. Payne (2006) states, "[s]till, group projects should be integrated into all majors' coursework in one form or another to ensure that majors are learning how to work together, how to learn from one another, and how to communicate with one another" (p. 446). Given the unique course outcomes of different disciplines major group work assignments may not apply to all post-secondary schools; however, it may be important to integrate smaller group work activities into these classrooms. Payne (2006) states that authors "suggest that group work supplementing lectures helps make courses more interesting to students, and subsequently helps students learn more" (p. 442). Perhaps students could brainstorm together on the task to promote active learning then design individual submissions of work to enhance individual creativity.

The researcher also concluded that faculty currently use multiple tools and resources when incorporating major group work assignments into curriculum. The literature discusses a variety of ways faculty can implement activities to encourage team work cohesiveness. The data also showed that many faculty are using resources to assist teams throughout the group forming, norming, storming and performing stages. Ice-breakers or warm-up activities, group contracts, and providing samples of previous work can enhance the learning environment and

allows students to work together as a group prior to working on the required project tasks. When students feel comfortable with their group members they will be able to gain skills to improve their current skill level and expand their knowledge of decision making and conflict resolution.

The final conclusion based on the literature is that administrative leaders need to support and provide professional development to faculty focused on group work activities. The importance of group work activities is evident in the literature and the data collected from this study; however, if faculty do not have access to professional development opportunities it would be improbable that they would take initiative to seek out such opportunities. Post-secondary institutions need to be proactive by encouraging faculty and providing them with the time to participate. Chappuis (2009) writes, "[t]hey (administrators) need to hold the time allocated to professional development sacred, protecting it from interference or distraction" (p. 59). Administrators can facilitate the process by providing faculty with multiple opportunities to obtain the knowledge of group work techniques through online tools, webinars or on-campus sessions that faculty can attend outside of class time. Professional development may become an added expense or conflict with other priorities, but Ellis (1990) concludes, "[n]ot surprising, in those schools where principals took an active role in promoting the use of cooperative learning, more teachers acquired the strategy, and now use it regularly" (p. 36). Administrators could use the internal human capital of faculty who have experience implementing successful group work or provide faculty with the opportunity to discuss problems and brainstorm solutions through peer discussion. Many of the risks involved in group work can be alleviated by using existing tools and resources available to faculty.

The limitations stated in chapter I had an insignificant effect on the final research. The timing limitation may have impacted the final return rate which was estimated at 120 returns but only 105 responses were received. Upon analyzing the data it appeared that the contract faculty responses were lower than anticipated. This may have been a result of the timing at the beginning of the semester or new contract faculty becoming familiar with the emailing system and start-up time constraints.

Recommendations

As a result of analyzing the literature review and data collected from the surveying of faculty members the researcher has made the following recommendations.

Recommendation #1: Illustrate the benefits of group work to students

Many students have had negative experiences with group work activities and have an aversion to being evaluated on team-based work. For those students who prefer to be graded solely on their own contributions to the subject matter the best way to introduce group work is to cover the benefits of working collaboratively within a group. One solution would be to have all students brainstorm all of the advantages that can occur and identify risks that may occur. Students who can envision how group work can enhance their skills and minimize the amount of individual work may be more willing to participate. Also, by identifying the risks as a large group, students may be able to alleviate or identify ways to reduce the chances of social-loafing or free-riding behaviours.

Recommendation #2: Allow students to form their own groups

The literature has shown that studies have focused on strategies for forming group work can enhance or hinder group work environments. If the faculty member determines the group and there is conflict or turmoil, the students will naturally put blame on the person who determined the groups. Allowing the students to make their own group decisions puts the onus on the students to pick the right group members and work through any conflicts on their own. This will empower students to make rational, sound and responsible decisions in regards to their behaviours within the group setting. A risk to having students choose their own groups can lead to homogenous groups, so it is important for the faculty member to be aware of the social pressures that students may face when having to form their own groups (Davies, 2009). Faculty can observe behaviours and intervene if necessary when certain students are not able to join groups as easily as others. This can be alleviated by stating a minimum number of students that groups must meet and indicate that groups with less than the minimum may have students added at the professor's discretion. It is also important to form groups early in the semester if extenuating circumstances require groups to be reconfigured due to low group size (Davies, 2009). This could occur when students drop out of the class and the workload needs to be redistributed. This also provides groups sufficient time to develop relationships with each other to build trust and social interactions (Davies, 2009).

Recommendation #3: Appropriate group sizes relative to the assignment

The best group size for major group work assignments will depend on many factors, such as the scope of the assignment, the learning outcomes and timelines for the project

(Strom, 1999). For projects on a smaller scale it may work best to have smaller group composition that allow for increased dialogue and easier decision making (Strom, 1999). Larger groups may be more appropriate based on the amount of work that needs to be produced in a shorter period of time (Strom, 1999). It must also be noted that the larger the group, the more difficult it is to schedule meetings outside of class, the longer decision making may take with more opinions, and the greater the opportunity for students to free-ride or social-loaf (Strom, 1999). The research data showed that more than half of respondents tend to form groups based on four to five students. The literature also confirms that the average group size should be approximately four to five students (Strom, 1999). Faculty should determine group size after designing the assignment to meet the needs of the objectives and factoring in the deadlines and feasibility of students being able to produce the work based on the amount of members.

Recommendation #4: Set clear objectives and goals

It is very important for students to know the tasks involved when embarking in group work assignments. Students need to be focused on the scope of the assignment before they begin working on it to avoid going off track or missing key elements. This can be easily done by providing a detailed description of the assignment and the grading rubric at the beginning of the semester. This will allow students to forecast the depth of the assignment and allow them to distribute the work amongst themselves, if necessary (Payne, 2006). When students know how they will be evaluated they will be able to set goals and timelines to obtain their goal of a satisfactory grade. Strom (1999) concluded, "[e]very student should know ahead of time the evaluation criteria and the process of assessment that teammates will rely on to judge them in cooperative learning groups" (p. 173). Faculty members can also decide if they will provide

samples of previous work for students to review during the semester. This will depend on the scope of the assignment and whether or not the content of the assignment is similar. Students may appreciate the opportunity to see how other students designed and formatted the assignment or the amount of supplementary material included. It must be made clear that students are not to copy or reproduce the same material, but simply use the sample for guidance, not content.

Recommendation #5: Design team building activities

When all groups collaborate, time is required for students to bond, build trust, and form relationships. Once groups are formed, it is recommended that faculty implement ice-breakers or group forming activities to introduce members who may have not had the opportunity to meet previously. Quinn (1995) wrote,

> The underlying rationale for team-building activities is to create a social and emotional climate conducive to the development of a sense of intimacy among group members, thus enabling them to feel comfortable in future tasks that require them to express their viewpoints, disagree with others, reach consensus in an open, non-defensive fashion (p. 6).

An excellent way to have groups build team dynamics is to have them work on a team contract. A team contract allows students to fill in a document that determines different components of group work, such as communication tools, ground rules and/or consequences for violations of the contract (Kim, 2003). Students will be able to brainstorm what will work best for their team

and individual needs to ensure that all students are on the same track and have common goals towards the final product. By planning in advance, students can reduce the chance for conflict and miscommunication amongst group members.

Recommendation #6: Provide class time for group work

Major group work assignments can be very time consuming depending on the scope of the assignment. Students have full-time class schedules, part-time jobs, and family commitments, in addition to personal lives. It can be very difficult for groups to get together outside of class time, and faculty need to be aware of this when planning major group work activities. This concept is validated by Lane (2008) when he states, "[a]nother important point is that instructors should avoid the need for students to complete application assignments outside regular class sessions" (p. 66). Also, when faculty are available for assistance during group interactions, they can provide feedback or guidance when groups face dilemmas or confusion with the assigned task. Faculty can enhance the learning process if they pre-plan when groups can have class time allocated specifically for group work. The amount of time given will depend on the class schedule and when the curriculum provides for time dedicated for group focus. One of the risks of providing in-class group time is when all group members do not attend. This results in some group members producing work without the help of those who are absent. When students are not able to meet in person the group may decide to delegate roles or tasks which reduces the social aspect of group work. This can also result in work that is not uniform or does not flow properly in the final product. The ideal situation would be for the faculty member to be able to estimate dates and times at the beginning of the course when

groups can work together to encourage attendance and the ability for students to meet deadlines.

Recommendation #7: Formulate self and peer feedback into evaluation

Evaluation can be difficult when implementing major group work assignments. Research has shown that, regardless of how much effort faculty members put into group work techniques, some students have no dedication or motivation to the learning environment and will purposely become social-loafers or free-riders. This is one of the largest concerns students have with group work. The majority of students have been in groups where all members equally did not contribute to the final product and this evidence will negatively impact all group work situations in the future. Using a formula for evaluating group work that is based upon feedback given by peers allows those students who did contribute the opportunity to let the professor know the work was not equally distributed. Students should also be given the opportunity to evaluate themselves, "that enables people to know when to think of themselves and when it is appropriate to alter their behaviour" (Strom, 1999, p. 173). It is important for faculty to teach students how to evaluate themselves and their peers (Cheng, 1999). Many students may not see the need or comprehend the skills required to evaluate themselves or others. Some students only see the professor's feedback, as subject-matter-experts, as important to their final grade; however the professor is not involved in the group processes and may not be able to accurately judge how the group managed the tasks (Nilson, 2003). Assigning individual grades can motivate students to work together and guarantee that individuals will be rewarded based on their effort. An effective way to collect peer feedback is to have groups complete an evaluation form as a team. This can limit conflicting opinions on

how the workload was distributed. Informing students at the beginning of the semester on the criteria of the evaluation and when the group will complete the task allows students to comprehend how they will be evaluated and what behaviours they need to observe from their peers. One concern could be the attendance level on the day of the exercise; however, the professor should make it clear that only those students participating in the evaluation will have an effect on the final grade distribution. It is also important that all groups have the option to distribute the grades equally, which will encourage group cohesiveness opposed to competition.

Recommendation #8: Develop faculty group work skills

The data showed that the majority of faculty agree that they play a significant role in the outcome of group assignments. Most faculty have inherent skills that allow them to facilitate a classroom environment successfully; however when implementing group work there are skills that faculty should focus on or enhance their skills to improve the process. The data results showed that participants considered approachability, coaching, and conflict management to be the top skills required to conduct group work activities. The literature also discussed that faculty require the ability to listen to students and have trust in student's ability to be involved in group work. When students perceive that faculty do not enjoy implementing group work, it may project a negative environment that could hinder student development in the process. Faculty need to know that students are able to adequately perform group work and have the ability to work among others and use evaluative tools to provide valid feedback (Strom, 1999).

Recommendation #9: Faculty role as a facilitator

The role of a faculty member is to assist students with the group work process. They provide guidance and support for students by overseeing the goal by designing the process, group interactions, and troubleshooting obstacles. Although, students may see the faculty member as the person who will solve problems related to group dynamics; however, it is not their role to resolve conflicts. It is their role to listen to students when they have concerns or questions regarding the given assignment. Faculty need to be accessible to students without interfering with the process. Students need to work through their own issues as they would in the work world to avoid having dependence on others for conflict resolution. The data results also showed that faculty could intervene in group work situations when there is interpersonal conflict, attendance issues, team forming issues or communication issues, whereas a small percentage stated that they should not intervene at all. Each situation should be evaluated on an individual basis and not compared to previous experiences. If a faculty member intervenes too soon or too assertively, it could hinder the group dynamics beyond repair. Faculty should instead act as a facilitator to the process rather than a solver of all problems (Quinn, 1995). Facilitators can assist with setting goals, providing feedback, and guiding students to see the benefits of group work (Nilson 2003; Davies; 2009; Lane, 2008). Faculty should clearly state the support and resources they are able to provide at the beginning of the project to ensure that there are no misconceptions or misunderstanding throughout the process.

Recommendation #10: Professional development opportunities

Faculty, new and seasoned, should be open to gaining more professional development on specific skills related to group work. New teaching methodologies are being developed through innovative research and analysis. Faculty may not have access to this information without attending sessions to learn of new resources or tools available to both them and the student. Post-secondary institutions can also facilitate discussion between faculty members by encouraging them to share their experiences, best practices, and recommendations. Ellis (1990) confirmed that, "[c]ooperative learning is a valuable teaching strategy that more than repays teachers for the time and effort they must invest in learning to use it" (p. 37).

Recommendation #11: Further research opportunities

The researcher recommends that future research could be designed to include the student perceptions on major group work assignments. The research could include surveying current students in a similar quantitative methodology as the current study. This may yield results to compare how students participate in major group assignments and how faculty design and facilitate the process. The results of this proposed research could create recommendations from each stakeholder in the process to incorporate both perceptions into a professional development resource for new faculty and those seasoned faculty who would like to refresh their skills.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL

DATE:	August 12, 2010
TO:	Kara Woods
FROM:	Central Michigan University IRB 2 (other colleges)
STUDY TITLE:	[177098-2] Faculty involvement in major group work assignment
IRB REFERENCE #:	
SUBMISSION TYPE:	Revision
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	August 12, 2010
EXPIRATION DATE:	
REVIEW TYPE:	Exempt Review

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this research study. Central Michigan University IRB 2 (other colleges) has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/ benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This study has received Exempt Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

If you have any questions, please contact Deborah Stanek at 989-774-6401 or stane1dm@cmich.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

APPENDIX II: CENTENNIAL COLLEGE ERB APPROVAL

CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

Ms. Kara Woods
Durham College

August 26, 2010

RE: Protocol 088: Faculty perceptions on major group work assignments

Dear Kara;

The Centennial College Research Ethics Board involving Human Subjects has reviewed your ethics review application and documentation and grants approval for the above-named study. The approval is based on the following:

1) The Centennial REB must be informed of any protocol modifications as they arise
2) Any unanticipated problems that increase risk to the participants must be reported immediately
3) You have one year approval for the study: if needed, an annual renewal form will be required at that time
4) A study completion form is submitted upon completion of the project.

These forms can be downloaded from the Centennial College ethics website or will be sent to you at the appropriate time.
On behalf of the committee at Centennial, I'd like to wish you every success with your project.

Sincerely,

Lynda Atack, R.N., Ph.D
Chair
Research Ethics Board involving Human Subjects
Centennial College
Email: latack@centennialcollege.ca
Tel: 416. 289-5000 x 4003

APPENDIX III: DURHAM COLLEGE RESEARCH APPROVAL

DURHAM COLLEGE
SUCCESS MATTERS

July 26th, 2010

Ms. Kara Woods
c/o Durham College
2000 Simcoe Street North
Oshawa, ON L1H 7K4

Dear Ms Woods:

I have reviewed your request to conduct a research project regarding faculty perceptions of major group assignments. I feel information resulting from this research project may be beneficial to Durham College as well as to the project participants.

You have my permission to survey all full-time and part-time faculty at Durham College as the participant pool for this research on their use of major group work assignments and to study the resources that faculty can use to enhance the group work environment. The results from the data collected through your research may be useful for future faculty development purposes.

It is understood that the survey will be released to faculty in mid August and conclude in mid September. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary and there will be no risk to those faculty members who chose not to participate. All communications will indicate this and provide a disclaimer to this fact.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding this letter of approval.

Sincerely,

Judy Robinson

Judy Robinson
Vice President, Academic

Oshawa Campus
2000 Simcoe Street North
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada L1H 7K4
T: 905 721 2000
www.durhamcollege.ca

APPENDIX IV: COMMUNICATION TO PARTICIPANTS

This email is being sent on behalf of Kara Woods. Please direct all questions or concerns directly to Kara at kara.woods@durhamcollege.ca **or at 905.721.2000 ext. 3648.**

My name is Kara Woods and I am a graduate student with Central Michigan University. I am working on my Masters of Arts Degree in Adult Education with a concentration in Community Colleges. I am also an employee at Durham College; working in the Human Resources department and as a contract professor in the School of Business, IT and Management. As part of the Master's Degree program I am conducting research for my capstone project, which will study faculty perceptions of major group work assignments. The objective of this study is to measure the amount that faculty currently utilize major group assignments and the variety of resources available to implement a successful and meaningful group experience.

I am inviting you to participate in the study as your input in this survey is very important for my research. Your knowledge and expertise with group work in your individual programs will provide me with current data to explore with academic literature. There is no risk involved in participating and no compensation should you choose to participate. The benefit of this study will be to provide future faculty with additional major group work resources to assist in implementing a successful environment.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary and there will be absolutely no repercussions if you choose not to complete. There will be no identifiable information provided which will ensure complete confidentiality in your responses. If you choose not to participate, please be advised that a reminder email may be sent out prior to the closure of the survey.

This survey should take approximately ten minutes to complete by clicking the link below. The survey window will be open from Monday August 30th until Friday September 17th, 2010.

URL: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DLNSRWT

I thank you in advance for assisting me with my research. I believe the information will provide me with the experiences of new and experienced faculty in their planning and implementation of major group work assignments. Please feel free to contact me at any time if you require any further information, have questions regarding my research or would like to be informed of the results at the conclusion of the study.

Thank you,

Kara Woods

APPENDIX V: QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

Faculty Perceptions of Major Group Work Assignments

1. CURRENT LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE

1. How frequently do you implement major group assignments?

Major group assignment is when it is designed for group collaboration of three individuals or more to produce work where the grade is worth at least ten percent of the final course grade.

- ◯ Never
- ◯ Seldom
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Frequently
- ◯ Always

2. Does your course(s) require a major group assignment as part of the course outline?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Varies per course

3. If you answered yes to question #2, how much is the group assignment (based on standard course) worth to the overall course grade?

If you answered no to question #2, please check no use of group work.

- ◯ 5%
- ◯ 6-10%
- ◯ 11-15%
- ◯ 15-20%
- ◯ 21-25%
- ◯ + 25%
- ◯ Varies per course
- ◯ No use of group work

Faculty Perceptions of Major Group Work Assignments

4. Please rate your level of enjoyment with implementing group work.

- ◯ No enjoyment
- ◯ Little enjoyment
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Some enjoyment
- ◯ Highly enjoyed

5. What level would you rate your average student's enjoyment level with group work?

- ◯ No enjoyment
- ◯ Little enjoyment
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Some enjoyment
- ◯ Highly enjoyed

Faculty Perceptions of Major Group Work Assignments

2. GROUP FORMING

1. How do you determine group composition?

- ◯ Allow students to choose
- ◯ Teacher determines group
- ◯ Mixture of the two

2. What is your preferred size of group for major group assignments?

- ◯ 2-3
- ◯ 4-5
- ◯ 6-7
- ◯ 8+

3. Do you incorporate any activities (ice breakers) to introduce group work?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Sometimes

Faculty Perceptions of Major Group Work Assignments

3. PRE-ASSIGNMENT

1. Do you utilize a group contract?

A group contract allows students to fill in a document that assigns different components to group work, such as communication tools, ground rules, consequences for violations of the contract.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Sometimes

2. If you use or would use a grade contract rank your top three (3) reasons for using a contract?

- ☐ Communication
- ☐ Expectations
- ☐ Team forming
- ☐ Ground rules
- ☐ Strategies
- ☐ Decision making process
- ☐ Timelines/deadlines
- ☐ Consequences
- ☐ Record keeping
- ☐ Roles
- ☐ Accountability

3. Do you provide your students with samples of previous assignments to review?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Sometimes

Faculty Perceptions of Major Group Work Assignments

4. DURING ASSIGNMENT

1. Do you factor in class time for students to work on their projects?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Sometimes

2. If you answered yes to question #1, how often over the course of a semester?

If you answered no to question #1, please click does not apply.

- ◯ Daily
- ◯ Weekly
- ◯ Biweekly
- ◯ Monthly
- ◯ Does not apply

3. Do you provide deadlines for your students to hand in sections of their assignment throughout the semester?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Sometimes

4. Do you check in on group progress throughout the semester?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Sometimes

Faculty Perceptions of Major Group Work Assignments

5. If you answered yes to question #4, how often over the course of a semester?

If you answered no to question #4, please click does not apply.

- ◯ Daily
- ◯ Weekly
- ◯ Biweekly
- ◯ Monthly
- ◯ Does not apply

Faculty Perceptions of Major Group Work Assignments

5. COMPLETION OF ASSIGNMENT

1. How do you evaluate group work? Click all that apply.

- ☐ Self evaluations
- ☐ Peer evaluations
- ☐ Faculty based
- ☐ Mixture of evaluations

2. How do you determine group evaluation?

- ◯ Group grade
- ◯ Individual grading scheme
- ◯ Mixture based on self and peer feedback

3. How do you weigh feedback from the group in the final grade?

- ◯ Using a formula of self, peer evaluation
- ◯ Faculty determines final grade

4. Do you provide your students with a grading rubric prior to submission?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Sometimes

Faculty Perceptions of Major Group Work Assignments

6. FACULTY INVOLVEMENT AND SKILLS

1. Faculty can play a significant role in the outcome of group assignments?

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly Agree

2. What skills does a faculty member need to have to effectively manage group work activities? Please pick top three (3) skills.

- ☐ Assertiveness
- ☐ Approachability
- ☐ Counselor
- ☐ Knowledge of subject
- ☐ Conflict management
- ☐ Problem solver
- ☐ Coach
- ☐ Motivator

3. For what issue(s) should a faculty member become involved in group work conflict? Click all that apply.

- ☐ Attendance issues
- ☐ Team forming issues
- ☐ Communication issues
- ☐ Interpersonal conflict
- ☐ Other
- ☐ None at all

4. Do you have access to professional development specific to group work?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Unsure

Faculty Perceptions of Major Group Work Assignments

5. If given the opportunity, would you be interested in attending a professional development session on group work?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Unsure

Faculty Perceptions of Major Group Work Assignments

7. DEMOGRAPHICS

1. I am

- ◯ Full-time faculty
- ◯ Partial-load faculty
- ◯ Part-time faculty

2. In the school of

- ◯ Science and Engineering Technology
- ◯ Business, IT & Management
- ◯ Health and Community Services
- ◯ Justice & Emergency Services
- ◯ Media, Art and Design
- ◯ Skilled Trades, Apprenticeship & Renewable Technology
- ◯ Interdisciplinary Studies
- ◯ Continuing Education
- ◯ Teach for multiple schools

3. Years of professional experience (years in the workforce)

- ◯ Less than one year
- ◯ 1-5 years
- ◯ 6-10 year
- ◯ 11-15 years
- ◯ 16 + years

4. Years of teaching experience

- ◯ Less than one year
- ◯ 1-5 years
- ◯ 6-10 years
- ◯ 11-15 years
- ◯ 16 + years

Faculty Perceptions of Major Group Work Assignments

5. Level of professional education

- ○ Degree
- ○ Masters
- ○ Ph D.
- ○ Vocational
- ○ Other

6. Level of teaching education

- ○ Teacher's College
- ○ Teaching Certificate
- ○ Degree
- ○ Masters
- ○ Ph D.
- ○ Other

7. Additional Professional Development completed. Please click all that apply.

- ☐ Jumpstart
- ☐ Orientation
- ☐ Teaching Squares
- ☐ ABC
- ☐ Focus on Learning
- ☐ Innovation Centre Seminars
- ☐ Webinars
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other

Faculty Perceptions of Major Group Work Assignments

8. Years of experience implementing group work

- ◯ Less than one year
- ◯ 1-5 years
- ◯ 6-10 years
- ◯ 11-15 years
- ◯ 16 + years

APPENDIX VI: SAMPLE OF A GROUP CONTRACT

Guidelines for Writing Team Contract

*Adapted from: math.arizona.edu/~kerimar/Team%20**Contract**.doc*

To prepare you for the teamwork in the business world, you will work with a team on the major group assignment. Your team will work together to complete the collaborative project in this semester.

Rationale

According to concepts from Organizational Behavior, there are five stages of team development: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

1) Forming - During the forming stage, teams tend to communicate in indirect polite ways rather than more directly.
2) Storming - The storming stage, characterized by conflict, can be often be productive, but may consume excessive amounts of time and energy. In this stage, it is important to listen well for differing expectations.
3) Norming - During the norming stage, teams formulate roles and standards, increasing trust and communication. This is characterized by agreement on procedures, reduction in role ambiguity, and increased “we-ness” or unity.
4) Performing - These developments generally are precursors to the performing stage, during which teams achieve their goals, are highly task oriented, and focus on performance and production. W
5) Adjourning - When the assignment has been completed, the team adjourns.

To accelerate a team’s development, a team contract is generated to establish procedures and roles in order to move the team more quickly into the performing stage. This process of generating a team contract can actually help jump-start a group's collaborative efforts by immediately focusing the team members on a definite task. The group members must communicate and negotiate in order to identify the quality of work they all wish to achieve, and the level of group participation and individual accountability they all feel comfortable with.

Successful team performance depends on personal individual accountability. However, conflicts can arise when individualistic motives or behaviours disrupt team-oriented goals. For example, conflict can stem from an unequal division of resources. When team members believe they are receiving too little for what they are giving, they sometimes reduce their effort and turn in work of lower quality. Such "social loafing" occurs most frequently when individual

contributions are combined into a single product or performance, and individual effort is perceived as unequal. At this point, some individual team members may take on extra responsibilities while other team members may reduce their own efforts or withdraw from the team completely. These behaviours may engender anger, frustration, or isolation—resulting in a dysfunctional team and poor quality of work. However, with a well-formulated team contract, such obstacles can usually be avoided.

Team Contract Assignment

Your team contract template is divided into three major sections:

1. establishing team procedures
2. identifying expectations
3. specifying the consequences for failing to follow these procedures and fulfill these expectations

Since the basic purpose of this team contract is to accelerate your team's development, to increase individual accountability for team tasks, and to reduce the possibility for team conflict, make your contract **as specific as possible**:

(a) specify each task as detailed as possible,
(b) specify each step in a procedure or process as detailed as possible,
(c) specify the exact person(s) responsible for each specific task, and
(d) specify the exact time and exact place for completion or submission of each task.
The more specific you describe your team expectations, roles, and procedures, the greater chance you have for a successful team experience.

Use the Team Contract template to discuss and finalize your team roles, procedures, and standards. Complete, sign, and submit a **copy** of your finalized contract.

Once your team contract has been developed, you are ready to begin work on the major group assignment. However, you may soon find that your team is not working as well as you had hoped. This is normal but needs to be attended to immediately. Perhaps your team is simply not following the established contract procedures or roles as strictly as you should be, or perhaps you need to change some of the procedures or roles as outlined in your contract. Call a team meeting immediately to discuss and resolve the challenges your team is facing; do not delay. Seek guidance from your instructor, or preceptor to resolve any conflicts so that you will have the most positive team experience possible.

TEAM CONTRACT

Team Members:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

Team Procedures

1. Day, time, and place for regular **team meetings**:

2. Preferred method of **communication** (e.g., e-mail, phone, Blackboard Discussion Board, face-to-face, in a certain class) in order to inform each other of team meetings, announcement, updates, reminders, problems:

3. **Decision-making policy** (by consensus? by majority vote?):

Team Expectations

Team Participation

1. Strategies to ensure cooperation and equal distribution of tasks:

2. Strategies for encouraging/including ideas from all team members (team maintenance):

3. Strategies for keeping on task (task maintenance):

Personal Accountability

1. Expected individual attendance, punctuality, and participation at all team meetings:

2. Expected level of responsibility for fulfilling team assignments, timelines, and deadlines:

3. Expected level of communication with other team members:

4. Expected level of commitment to team decisions and tasks.

Consequences for Failing to Follow Procedures and Fulfill Expectations

1. Describe, as a group, you would handle **infractions** of any of the obligations of this team contract:

2. Describe what your team will do **if the infractions continue**:

Estimated Project Timeline		
Task	**Responsibility**	**Due Date**

****

a) *I participated in formulating the standards, roles, and procedures as stated in this contract.*
b) *I understand that I am obligated to abide by these terms and conditions.*
c) *I understand that if I do not abide by these terms and conditions, I will suffer the consequences as stated in this contract.*

1) _____date_____

2) _____date_____

3) _____date_____

4) _____date_____

5) _____date_____