



WORKING WITH OTHERS

COLLABORATION OR COLLUSION

It can sometimes be valuable to work with other students, discussing ideas or planning the ways in which you might undertake a major task together. This positive experience of working together – which we call collaboration – can improve your learning and your results. We may also set you collaborative tasks because the ability to work together is an important part of life in an academic community, as well as being a skill that many future employers will expect you to possess.

But you must be careful to recognise that there will normally be limits to the extent to which you are being asked to collaborate; you must not exceed those limits. Individual work, sometimes including specific components of group tasks, must genuinely reflect your own efforts. **You must avoid any practices which could mean that you cannot honestly claim that the work submitted is your own.** Working too closely together, to the point where authorship of an assignment is called into question, is known as collusion.

GOOD COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES FOR INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment at the University of Leeds is usually designed to test your individual effort and to grade your individual knowledge and skills levels. You are expected to submit your own work, unless you have been specifically asked to write up a group project jointly. If you have not been assigned to work with other students there are still ways to collaborate which can be beneficial. Collaborative discussion with other students could help you to:

- Understand what a specific concept or topic means (often by explaining it in different ways to that presented in the course materials);
- See how particular ideas or information could be applied to other areas of study;
- Develop general approaches to the solution of a problem or task

Collaboration should not involve discussing specific answers or approaches to a task and each student must write up their answer individually, in their own time and in their own words.



AVOIDING COLLUDING ON INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT:

- Do not copy another student's work.
- Do not allow another student to copy your work. Keep your work secure, do not leave it where others can access it. Do not lend your work to others or discuss your assessments in detail.
- Do not work together on an assessment task, either by dividing the task between you for submission or working jointly on the whole.
- Do not discuss your answer in detail with another student.

GROUP WORK: WRITING UP EXPERIMENTS, FIELDWORK OR PROJECTS CONDUCTED JOINTLY

In some disciplines you will be set a number of group work assignments during your degree programme. This may involve working on experiments, fieldwork or projects with other students. When writing up an experiment, fieldwork or project on which you have collaborated make sure you know exactly what you are being asked to do and how you are being assessed:

- You may be assessed on your individual input to the joint activity, your participation in the joint activity (including a jointly-authored report), or you may be asked to produce an individual report on the joint activity.
- If you are required to submit an individual report you must ensure that you use your own words to describe any activity undertaken as a group, and offer your own commentary on the results of the group work.
- Within an individual report you must distinguish between those components of any project which were undertaken as a group activity, and those for which you were individually responsible.

TO AVOID COLLUSION IN ASSESSED GROUP WORK:

- Be clear from the outset whether you are being assessed on your individual input, individual participation and/or your individual report on the joint activity. If in doubt ask your tutor to clarify!
- Keep a careful record of who has done what, distinguishing between tasks undertaken by the group as a whole, and those undertaken by individuals or smaller groups. This will help you attribute the material correctly in any written report on the work.
- Ask your tutors to give you examples of good practice in submitting this type of assignment.



TOP TIPS FOR COLLABORATION

1. Make sure you read the assessment criteria and assignment brief carefully to ensure that you are clear about the extent to which you will be expected to work as a group and whether there are elements of the work that you are expected to produce as an individual.
2. When discussing things orally with other students or as part of an online discussion write your own notes about what you have understood and gleaned from the discussion. Do not copy and paste discussions from an online discussion board.
3. If you wish to refer to a group discussion, make this clear by indicating it in your work e.g. 'During an online discussion, Mark Jones (MODL2050 general forum, 4 June 2008) described ...'
4. Make sure that discussion with other students is kept general and is aiding understanding, not being too specific about exactly how to answer a question. Remember that you must not share or copy answers for assignments where you are being assessed individually.
5. If in doubt about anything check your module handbooks, assignment briefs, marking criteria and talk to your tutors.