

“Assessment and Collaboration: Do Grades Help or Hurt Group Culture?”

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The poster presents a study of how assessment influences collaboration and group culture. Its central argument is that grades are not neutral measures of achievement. In group work, the way students are assessed can shape their behaviour, their relationships with one another, and the quality of their collaboration.

The study examines whether grades encourage students to work together or create pressure that weakens trust and openness. It considers how students respond when contributions are unequal, when individual effort is difficult to see, or when some members feel that their work is not recognised.

The poster compares three common assessment approaches: shared group grades, individual grades and peer evaluation. A shared group grade can promote collective responsibility and encourage students to support one another. However, it can also lead to concerns about fairness, particularly when some students are perceived as contributing less than others.

Individual grading can make personal effort more visible and strengthen accountability. At the same time, it may encourage students to protect their own marks rather than contribute fully to the success of the group.

Peer evaluation may help students reflect on their own contribution and recognise the work of others. It can increase transparency and responsibility, but it may also introduce bias, social pressure and strategic rating, especially when peer scores affect the final grade.

The poster also distinguishes between strategic and authentic collaboration. Strategic collaboration occurs when students divide the task, work separately and combine their contributions mainly to maximise marks. Interaction is limited, and the emphasis is on efficiency and risk reduction.

Authentic collaboration involves shared problem-solving, discussion, negotiation, feedback and collective decision-making. Students do not simply divide the work; they learn with and from one another.

The study therefore suggests that assessment design influences what students understand collaboration to mean. When assessment focuses only on the final product, students may learn that collaboration is simply an efficient way to complete a task. When the assessment also recognises participation, feedback, contribution and group processes, collaboration can become a meaningful learning practice.

The main message of the poster is that effective assessment must balance accountability with trust and performance with process. Assessment should recognise both the quality of the final outcome and the way in which students worked together to achieve it.