

Activity ➔ 69

Surviving virtual group work

STUDENT HANDOUT

Discuss the scenarios given below with your group members, answering each question as fully as possible (spending about ten minutes on each scenario). After 40 minutes of group discussion we will hold a class discussion about the issues raised.

Scenario 1

A group of first-year students have been chosen by their tutor to work together on a virtual project. The students have never worked together before and only two of them have ever worked on a virtual project before. Some of the group members are very tech-savvy, whereas other members are nervous about using the latest technology for communication and study purposes.

1. How should these students plan and prepare for their virtual project?
2. What issues do they need to discuss before they begin their project?
3. What potential problems can you identify and how can these be overcome?

Scenario 2

Halfway into a virtual project some students within the group are unhappy. One student has not done any work and two others feel that they are doing all the work. Some are worried that they are not going to complete the project by the stated deadline.

1. What strategies can these students adopt to overcome this problem?
2. How can they work together to complete their project by the stated deadline?
3. Could anything have been done to prevent this problem from arising?

Scenario 3

A research professor wants to set up a global virtual team to work on a specific research project. She has the opportunity to choose team members for the project and wants to ensure that she chooses the right people so that the project is successful and grant money is well spent.

1. What skills, characteristics and attributes does she need to be a successful team leader?
2. When choosing team members, what skills, characteristics and attributes should she look for?
3. What issues should she consider in terms of technological requirements and communication?

Scenario 4

A local group of students has been set up to work on a virtual university project. A dominant group member believes there should be a team leader and has nominated himself, but he has never worked on a virtual project before.

1. How should the group handle this issue?
2. Does this group need a team leader?
3. How can this group move forward to work together successfully?

Learning outcome: By the end of this activity you will have a greater understanding of how to undertake virtual group work and will feel more confident about working on virtual projects, knowing how to recognise and overcome problems if they occur.

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