Groupwork Charter – template document

This document provides a template for groupwork charters – charters, contracts or agreements that can be used to initiate and support effective groupwork practice by students. The template contains different sections, not all of which might be present in any single groupwork charter. Instead, you are encouraged to adapt this template to your needs. Each section is preceded by a brief introduction (in RED) explaining why you might include it in a final version used in your unit.

This template was adapted from a charter used in HFB3202 and shared by Laurie Chapin.

Throughout the template, content in RED is for information purposes only: you should remove red text from any version that you share with your students.

Introduction to this charter

This section – "introduction to this charter" – provides guidance for students on what this charter is for, how it can help, and how it should be approached. This type of introduction is a valuable inclusion in a charter – it makes explicit the rationale for using groupwork and guides good practice.

Establishing the project agreement

The Project Agreement is a document that lists how you and your team agree to act and perform in a group. The objective is establishing an agreement that sets out what the group wants to achieve and what each individual will work towards, with a focus on trust and respect.

Why have a project agreement?

Beyond the classroom, work is rarely conducted by individuals. The contributions of many individuals are necessary and all must carry out the work they have agreed to do. The objective in developing a project agreement within your studies is to establish respect within the classroom, assist in establishing clear communication and behavioural guidelines, support all group members in activities and assignments, and encourage all to work towards the same goals and understanding.

How do we develop a project agreement?

The important thing when developing a project agreement is to be honest, to consider what you want to achieve, reflect on how you like to be treated, and commit to how you will behave to support this. It's important to develop a project agreement that is unique to the team and the project you are working on. There is no point copying another agreement, such as those developed previously as each situation is unique and each group of students differ. However, to assist in understanding how this works –page 2 of this handout (Project Agreement ideas) has examples of points included in an undergraduate student group project agreement.

It is also important to consider all the components of the current project and begin assigning tasks right away. Your group should generate a list of things that must be done and agree who will do what. Page 3 of this handout (Suggested documents) has tables you and your group can modify to assist in this process.

1. Names and communication details

Most charters will incorporate a section that details the members of the group. Further details can be added to this listing of names – rationales for these additions are provided below.

Student Name	Communication details	Non-university responsibilities	Signature
This includes names – obviously! – but it can also provide a place to detail preferred names and pronouns.	This can include email addresses, phone numbers or social media details. It can also add basic communication principles – when communication is ok and when it is not.	Students can use this field to clarify what their life outside of university is like. This can help to set expectations for when collaboration is possible and when it is not.	Some groups may wish to include a formal signature – something that expresses their commitment to meeting standards or behaviour.

2. Principles for groupwork

Issue	Principle
Attendance	I agree to attend class on a regular basis. In the result that I am unable to attend class, I will make it my personal responsibility to get any and all notes from my team
Illness or emergency	If I am sick and unable to make it to class on the date a team assignment is due, I will contact my team members to make other arrangements to get my work turned in on time. Should an emergency arise that prevents me from attending a team meeting, I will notify my fellow team members immediately
Meetings	The team will schedule meetings. The time and place/Zoom of team meetings shall be agreed upon unanimously within our team
Fairness	I will do my share of the team-work. There will never be an occasion where one team member does all of the work nor will there be a time when a member does none of the work
Mutual support	I will do everything in my capabilities to help my fellow team members and I will not hesitate to ask my fellow team members for help. I will communicate with my fellow team members about any concerns I have with our group work. I will promptly report any team functioning problems to the instructor
Active engagement	I will be an active member of this team in all aspects, agree to rotate team roles

3. Tasks and Responsibilities

This section is crucial for two reasons. Firstly, the identification of specific tasks is an important step in any groupwork project. Secondly, allocating tasks to individuals is an important part of holding group members accountable for their work. Overall, this involves breaking the project down into its constituent parts – doing this well can greatly enhance the quality of groupwork. Doing it poorly can set a group up for conflict and difficulty.

Crucial things to consider here are whether a task is suited to being broken up into similar or specialised tasks. For those with limited groupwork skills, identifying similar tasks – all students do a similar type of work (one reading each, one presentation section each, etc.) – may be easier. As groupwork becomes more advanced, specialised tasks requiring specialised skills may be more relevant (e.g. content development, project management, communication, etc.). In such cases, considering the timeline of task completion is also important.

Task and details	Timeline for completion	Person responsible	Date and time completed
Providing enough detail is important so that it is possible to observe whether or not it has been completed.	This may focus on dates/times or it might focus on the order in which tasks must be completed.		Including this column may support groupwork by ensuring members are accountable.

4. Proposed meeting schedule

In this section, group members articulate when and how they will meet to undertake their work. In units that require students to complete groupwork outside of class, such a section is of obvious importance. In units where class time is devoted to groupwork, this section offers an opportunity to begin professionalising group collaboration through the charting of agendas.

Date/time	Location/Zoom	Agenda