Title: **Enhancing the student experience of assessed group work: Developing a research-informed framework**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

1. Consider the factors that affect the student experience of assessed group work.
2. Reflect on the importance of structured strategies for performing group work projects.
3. Evaluate a range of best practice techniques for managing different group work scenarios.
4. Acknowledge the importance of actively engaging with students to understand and enhance their experiences of assessment.
5. Share perspectives on developing and implementing strategies to enhance the assessment experience.

Session Outline

This discussion paper explores the student experience of assessed group work within the context of the development, initial implementation and evaluation of an institution-wide approach to improve this experience. The initiative was a response to feedback from our students and Student Services indicating that, for some, this experience was negative. Particular concerns included the practical challenges of managing multiple group projects, as well as perceptions of (un)fairness in monitoring and assessing individual contributions.

In response, the Learning and Teaching Subcommittee of the Academic Council undertook a review of assessed group work within the Institute, including significant consultation with staff and students. Several issues were identified, including coherence across and within programmes, developing group work skills for students, the visibility of group work and number of simultaneous group projects. It was clear from these outcomes that a programme-level approach was needed. Drawing on the literature (e.g. Lee *et al.* 2015,; MacFarlane 2016; Noonan 2013; Rogers & Smith 2014), and examples of good practice, a framework was developed to support programme teams in planning and implementing group work (https://www.dkit.ie/system/files/groupwork_framework_guidelines_2016.pdf). The framework emphasises the need to consider the rationale for and role of, assessed group

work within the programme, and to use this to inform the nature of the group work, where it sits in the curriculum, how it is introduced and how skills are developed over time.

The implementation of the framework and initial evaluation findings will be discussed. While there are challenges, the extensive consultation process and narrow strategic focus have been important enablers. Impact will be discussed in relation to the student experience.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is a follows;

Approximate timing	Activity
10 mins	Outline of the process followed to develop the Framework, and what we learned about the student experience along the way
20 mins	Outline and discussion of the key elements of the framework. Indicative discussion questions: • What is the role of assessed group work in an academic programme? • What are the key factors in determining the student experience? • What techniques and tools can be used to improve students' experience of group work? • How can teams be supported in implementing an approach like this?
15 mins	Outline of the implementation and initial evaluation of the framework and discussion of impact on the student experience. Indicative questions: • How can programme teams monitor progress/measure impact of changes with group work in programmes? • How can programme teams and individual lecturers gauge whether the changes they introduce to their group work projects are benefiting learners? • What are the main barriers and how can we attempt to manage them?

References

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- Macfarlane, B. (2016). 'The performative turn in the assessment of student learning: a rights perspective,' *Teaching in Higher Education*, 21(7), pp. 839-853. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2016.1183623

- Noonan, M. (2013). 'The ethical considerations associated with group work assessments,' *Nurse Education Today*, 33, pp. 1422-1427.
- Smith, M. & Rogers, R. (2014). 'Understanding nursing students' perspectives on the grading of group work assessments,' *Nurse Education in Practice*, 14, pp. 112-116.