**Title:** **Group projects: developing students in learning communities**

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## Abstract:

**Session Learning Outcomes**
By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

Share novel ideas for the management of student group-based learning and assessment

**Session Outline**
Key issues to be addressed are:

The session aims to share the outputs of a process which has been developing over several years at Cranfield University.  Here, group projects are a central element of most MSc courses, and for over two years a special interest group of academic staff involved in the support and assessment of group projects has been meeting to share experiences and ideas.

Our group projects are an effective mechanism for helping students to:
* Apply and refine their disciplinary learning to real and current problems in organisations outside the university;
* Develop their 'soft skills', which focus primarily on the challenges of learning and working in multi-cultural learning groups and communities of practice;
* Engage with important aspects of personal development planning, including heightened self-awareness, competence evaluation, and self-esteem.

The session will start with a very brief overview of theory relating well-being to the three psychological needs of competence, relatedness and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which has in turn been linked to achievement of academic success (Scheyvens et al, 2003).  It will then introduce and explain the mechanisms of the process whereby the students on one suite of courses are supported and assessed.  It will then invite participants to assess some of the issues associated with these mechanisms, in the light of their own experience and practice.

**Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

15 minutes:
An introduction to the one of the key group project mechanisms in place at Cranfield University.
20 minutes:
An interactive element exploring ideas for resolving problems such as:
* Creating time in the academic year for 'non-academic/soft' learning activity;

- Justifying the time required to provide effective individual student feedback
- Equipping/finding faculty with the appropriate skills and interest to facilitate this approach to development of students;
- Encouraging students (often technically-focused) to be more open and honest with their peers.

10 minutes:
Feedback from interaction

## References

Ryan, R., & Deci, E. (2000) 'Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development and well-being.' *American Psychologist* Vol. 55, No. 1: 68-78

Scheyvens, R., Wild, K. and Overton, J. (2003). 'International students pursuing postgraduate study in geography: impediments to their learning experiences'. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*. Vol. 27, No. 3