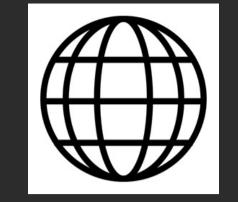# Group Presentation Assessments: Staff and Student 'Team' Web-Mediated Experiences

## Dr Emel Thomas and Dr Kyffin Jones
## Faculty of Health, Education and Society

**Literature:**

Group work amongst undergraduate higher education students can at times be challenging (Khuzwayo, 2018). Some students enjoy the experience of working together in teams whilst others are wary of staged encounters (Lee et al, 2016; Mamas, 2018). The use of group presentation assessments within education has long been accepted as an important mechanism for developing communication and employment competences (Noonan, 2013). At the University of Northampton (UoN) working in small groups feature in several learning outcomes that focus on achieving employability and changemaking skills.

**Background/Rationale:**

- Historically EDU1019 (Education in a Global Context) students chose their own groups for presentation assessments.
- Module feedback suggested that some groups were not working well as a 'team'.
- Students expressed concern to module tutors that some group members were not contributing fairly to pre presentation activities.
- Not all students used the same technologies to communicate or develop presentation materials before the actual assessment date.
- Module tutors managed numerous emails from team members during the assessment period and this became an onerous task.

**Aim:**

To provide students with a consistent and enhanced pre-group presentation assessment experience during the academic year 2019-2020.

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"'My Groups' was good in the sense it could be viewed by lecturers and all communication is accessible".

"This worked well, although all of our communication was through WhatsApp, we only used the my groups section when needed".

"More relaxing but would have enjoyed the challenge of a face to face presentation".

"I am more confident presenting online".

"Personally I felt more comfortable giving my part of the presentation virtually rather than face to face. As a group it was easier to rehearse our presentation virtually as we were all more 'available' than if we had to meet face to face for rehearsals".

| NILE 'My Group' Functions | Students Frequently Used (%) |
|---|---|
| Collaborate | 73% |
| Group Homepage | 10% |
| File Exchange | 10% |
| Send Email | 7% |

"It is apparent that staff advocates are crucial for the development of team modular assessment points".

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**Methodology:**

A module tutor undertook university NILE training for creating 'My Groups' at the start of the academic year. These areas were created for all students undertaking the module EDU1019. Within each 'Group' area in NILE students had the ability to work together on tasks, share files and communicate through blogs, email, discussions boards and Blackboard Collaborate. Students were required to submit presentation materials through created assessment points in NILE (as one team). At the end of the module a questionnaire was distributed to all 40 students. Their views and experiences of using NILE 'Groups' before and during the assessment task were analysed.

**Findings:**

- The consistency of the pre-group assessment experience was identified as an important foundation leading up to the assessment submission and presentation day.
- All students appreciated having one group assessment submission point for presentation slides.
- A significant reduction in emails received by module tutors during the pre-presentation period (about student team communication problems).
- Students retained social media messaging platforms to communicate immediately with each other.

**Summary:**

Presentations took place in Blackboard Collaborate (due to the Corona Virus pandemic). Whilst students expressed nerves about presenting through Blackboard Collaborate, the majority maintained a desire to present face to face on campus in future team assessments.

For further information contact: emel.thomas@northampton.ac.uk