

Team working Activity 2 Integrated Project 1 (M1I322997)

Refer to the handouts (Making Groups Work, A List of Things that can Influence the Functioning of Groups and Tips and Techniques for Managing more Assertively)

Read the following scenario and answer the questions

(Scenario adapted from: Moon J. (2009) Making groups work:improving work through the principles of academic assertiveness in higher education and professional development, ESCALATE, Higher Education Academy Subject centre for Education)

Scenario

A tutor, Dr Richard Crombie, supervises a group of biology students doing some research on a project involving the production of genetically modified potatoes. The project involves research on the internet and on hard copy and an outcome in written format as well as a presentation. The students are at level 2. The group members were chosen by Richard Crombie and there was no choice about who would work with whom. The group consists of:

Mat – who is fairly quiet and tries but he is dyslexic and this means that he finds reading hard and he is slow in written work. He tends to be embarrassed about his difficulties as he has had a long history of people around him assuming that is he just not very clever.

Jake – who tends to dominate groups. He is quite loud and he is ambitious. He is somewhat fed up to find himself in the same group as Mat because he feels that the work will be spoiled by Mat's slowness and his other difficulties. Jake does not like working in groups because he feels that they hold him back.

Ellie – is somewhat in awe of Jake – and she likes to please him and is really pleased to be in the same group as him – maybe eventually he will ask her out. She is reasonably able but tends not to be very independent in her studies.

Sal – is fairly quiet and works reasonably hard and does well. She is quite friendly with Mat. She worries about the way in which the project is going and does not feel comfortable with the tensions in the group.

Tone – seems to care for his social life as a priority. He will settle to work when he has to but usually at the last minute. He does well if he can get the materials easily, but does not put a great deal of effort into his work. He likes to be admired by everyone.

The work will involve the group in splitting up the different aspects of the topic and each student researching one or more aspects, they then need to bring the material together and use it to make a judgement about whether Spud and Mash (Market Growers) Ltd should consider growing genetically modified (GM) potatoes when the regulations are relaxed. The group will need also to create and deliver a presentation. The mark for the work will be jointly attributed on the assumption that students have contributed reasonably equally to the project. The work is set over a period of four weeks with the presentation in the fifth week.

Richard Crombie has not run group projects such as this before and the students are not sure if

he is aware of Mat's dyslexia and how it might affect the group. Mat would prefer not to tell him.

In the first meeting of the group, the members try to share out the areas of research – though it is Jake who largely splits up the topic and allocates the parts to the group members. Sal is not pleased to be given the theoretical genetics to research but does not say anything to Jake or the others. She feels quite fed up with the group. There is no talk of leadership or taking roles or the processes of the group.

It is Tuesday. The work was given two weeks ago and this is the second meeting of the group. There is some pressure of time now. The group is meeting in the union bar round a small table. It is crowded and Sal is seated on the outside of the circle and can only just hear what is going on. Tone comes in late. They waited for him. When he gets there, he disruptively pushes himself into the middle of the group and, seeming to assume that everyone is pleased to see him. He starts to tell them his news. Jake takes control again and seems to assume that, like himself, the others have done the research that is required – and that they want to get on. He tries to get everyone to say where they have got to.

Jake has completed his area of research. He chose the area he wanted to research (environmental issues), though, as he tells them, he decided to look at a specific aspect of it because it was particularly interesting to him. He is somewhat tetchy when he realises how little progress the others have made.

Mat has spent probably as much time as Jake on his work but has made little progress in his research. He knows that he needs some help but does not want to admit it.

Ellie has made some progress. When she describes her progress, she looks only at Jake as if he is the key figure in the group. She says that there are areas that she does not understand.

Sal has spent time helping Mat and has somewhat neglected her own area of work. She now expresses concern that the group is not making sufficient progress and tries to talk about the tensions that are arising. However the others do not seem to want to listen to her. Tone says 'Cool it Sal, it'll be fine – just get your bit done and we'll slam it all together and get Jake to talk about it in a presentation. It'll be all right'.

Tone says that there is plenty of time for the work he has to do and that he has been too busy with other things to make a start on it – other than sorting out sources of information. He is going to get on with it this week. Sal tells him that the sources he has chosen are actually not much good because she happened to look at them.

3. *What needs to be done now to get this task achieved?*

4. *What advice might you give to the tutor, Richard Crombie, about managing this group?*