

Guidelines for Engagement

Set guidelines for engagement together and revisit them regularly. They can be modified at any time. Maintaining them is a *team* responsibility. These questions should be addressed early on, and decisions recorded and shared with all members. Making these explicit is an important part of the team process.

Meeting norms

- How will meetings take place, (i.e. zoom, Facetime, other)?
- What happens if additional working group meeting times become necessary?
- How are meetings rescheduled if several participants are unable to attend on a given date?
- Who will facilitate the meetings? Is the facilitator a rotating position or the same person each time?

Communication norms

- Where will shared information be stored (e.g., Google Drive, Box)
- How will group members communicate outside of meetings? E.g., discussion board, Google doc, Slack, email?
- Who will take and share meeting notes (including decisions made on tasks, responsibilities, and deadlines)?
- Who will set and share meeting agendas?

Work norms

- How do we deal with participants who dominate or who do not participate?
- What will happen if someone doesn't follow through on a commitment (e.g., misses a deadline, doesn't show up to a meeting)?

Decision making

- How do we make decisions, e.g., consensus, majority vote, etc? For example: How is authorship for the working group manuscript decided?
- How will you decide who should do what on the manuscript and oral presentation?
- What happens if people have different opinions on the quality of the work?

Example Team Formation Instructions

You will be working together throughout the semester to do X. Teams are different than study or short term classroom groups in that members are very interdependent, and your success depends on how well you work together. Working well as a team rarely “just happens.”

Once your team is formed, it is important to talk together to decide how you will work together, what roles you will each play, and how you will make sure you are all sharing the responsibility. While some find it awkward, a good conversation at the beginning of the process can go a long way toward forming a well-functioning team.

Example Guidelines for Engagement

- Step up and step back (share the air space)
- Count to 3 before you speak.
- Use “I” statements.
- Invoke the ouch rule (say “ouch” if someone says something that hurts your feelings, is offensive, or a microaggression). This signals the instructor to “stop” class to check-in with the group.
- Acknowledge when another student has helped you.

Example Team Expectation Agreement†

In a document, put your names and list the agreements and expectations you developed as a team in response to the questions above in Guidelines for Engagement.

After you review the guidelines you have created to be sure you are in agreement, each team member should sign the document, indicating acceptance of these expectations and your intention to fulfill them. Send one copy to me and keep a remaining copy or copies for yourselves wherever you are storing your work.

These expectations are for your use and benefit – they won’t be graded or commented on unless you specifically ask for comments. If you make the list fairly thorough without being unrealistic, you’ll be giving yourselves the best chance for a productive and rewarding team experience and you will learn skills that will serve you in your future work. I will expect that before coming to me with problems within the team, you revisit these agreements and try to resolve challenges yourselves.

†Adapted from R. M. Felder & R. Brent, *Effective Teaching*, North Carolina State University, 2000.