BE AN EFFECTIVE GROUP MEMBER

Some of your courses may require you to complete group projects and assignments. Some points you should consider:

- **Clarify** what **your instructor's rules** are about working together.
- Set up **regular meeting** times over video and consider setting up other, more frequent additional progress check-ins using shared documents or group chats.
- Create a **project plan** or a list of **project goals** and regularly devote time to working towards them.
- Avoid the urge to leave your group work until right before your next group meeting, because it could take longer than anticipated.
- Assign a **note-taker for each group meeting** and make the meeting minutes accessible to all team members. End each meeting with a list of action items, associated deadlines and who will be responsible for each item.
- Try to **work through differences or conflicts in an open and respectful way.** If the issue is large or affecting the team's ability to accomplish their goals (e.g. a team member isn't showing up to meetings or contributing to the work getting done), you may want to let your instructor know.

To work together successfully, group members must demonstrate a sense of cohesion. Cohesion emerges as group members exhibit the following skills:

Openness: Group members are willing to get to know one another, particularly those with different interests and backgrounds. They are open to new ideas, diverse viewpoints, and the variety of individuals present within the group. They listen to others and elicit their ideas. They know how to balance the need for cohesion within a group with the need for individual expression.

Trust and self-disclosure: Group members trust one another enough to share their own ideas and feelings. A sense of mutual trust develops only to the extent that everyone is willing to self-disclose and be honest yet respectful. Trust also grows as group members demonstrate personal accountability for the tasks they have been assigned.

Support: Group members demonstrate support for one another as they accomplish their goals. They exemplify a sense of team loyalty and both cheer on the group as a whole and help members who are experiencing difficulties.

Respect: Group members communicate their opinions in a way that respects others, focusing on "What can we learn?" rather than "Who is to blame?"

Constructive Feedback: Giving constructive feedback requires focusing on ideas and behaviours, instead of individuals, being as positive as possible, and offering suggestions for improvement. Receiving feedback requires listening well, asking for clarification if the comment is unclear, and being open to change and other ideas.

Problem solving: Group members help the group to develop and use strategies central to their group goals. As such, they can facilitate group decision making and deal productively with conflict. In extreme cases, they know when to approach the professor for additional advice and help.

Management and organization: Group members know how to plan and manage a task, how to manage their time, and how to run a meeting. For example, they ensure that meeting goals are set, that an agenda is created and followed, and that everyone has an opportunity to participate. They stay focused on the task and help others to do so too.