

How can we ensure students of different abilities and aptitudes work well in a group?

Independent evidence

Research indicates that apprenticeship programmes that team up students can meet a variety of learner starting points and aptitudes but teachers need to be careful about how the composition of groups affects the dynamics. In one construction partnership teachers organized students' teams, with the intention of developing working relationships rather than maintaining friendships. Two female students in particular were sensitively discouraged from working together all the time by the tutor's skilful management.

Your evidence and reflections

You may find it valuable to explore how your students experience groupwork – who works with whom, how well, and what are the benefits and costs. To identify the dynamics of groupwork on your course, ask students to complete a questionnaire on the following lines once they have completed a particular activity.

| Who did I work with? | What went well? Can you give examples? | What did not go well? Can you give examples? |
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Putting the evidence to work

You could use the learners' feedback to decide what kind of advice you should give them in future when you are setting up groupwork. It may be valuable to discuss the outcomes of the survey with students as a basis for drawing up some shared ground rules for making the most of groupwork. You could emphasise the way these skills are valued in the workplace and ask students to propose ground rules that they think would be most likely to help them function well in that environment.

i Find out more about groupwork within the FE curriculum in the Ofsted evaluation of the young apprenticeships programme: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Education/Providers/Secondary-schools/The-Key-Stage-4-curriculum-Increased-Flexibility-Work-related-Learning-and-Young-Apprenticeship-Programmes>

You can find out more about learner-centred practice in key skills delivery at: http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=96

Follow this link for the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) Post Compulsory commentaries: www.tlrp.org/findings/post_comp_findings/post_comp_findings.html