The benefits of group-based learning are well documented, and a student’s work with other students is seen as an integral part of the learning process. However, when the groups are formally constituted as part of the learning design for the unit of study, issues related to students’ expectations and to fairness and equity in the design need to be considered. Numerous relevant and detailed guides on group work exist (e.g., Google University Group Work). Rather than repeat them, this guide summarises the essentials in the three key processes: learning design, preparing the students, and assessment. More details on each are also provided in the additional resources on the next page.

**DESIGNING GROUP WORK FOR LEARNING**
- Like all learning activities, the designed group work should be aimed at addressing at least one of the learning outcomes for that unit of study.
- Any assessment of group work processes or content should also be related to learning outcomes.
- These relations should be clearly articulated in Unit of Study Outlines.
- Designs for learning should enable students to see the role of group work activities in the context of their overall program and engage with a variety of approaches to group work over the course of their studies, such as distributed tasks, shared tasks, and groups within groups.
- It is not appropriate to design group work for the sole purpose of reducing the assessment workloads of staff.

**PREPARING STUDENTS FOR GROUP WORK**
- Organised group work can take many forms, including some that students may not have previously encountered. The purpose, group activities and assessment processes to be used must be made clear to students before they start so that they know how to participate in the processes.
- Written versions of these expectations are to be included in unit outlines, and additional reminders provided for students during the group work processes.
- Additional guidance on what is required, and practice for assessments is often necessary. This can include seminars or guidance videos as well as written materials, and include the mechanisms of accountability, both for individual students and the group as a whole. [click here for examples]
- Addressing the purposes, activities and assessment in this way and in some detail is likely to be the best form of prevention of academic misconduct and result in the best outcomes.

**ASSESSMENT OF GROUP WORK**
The University of Sydney’s four principles of assessment apply to the assessment of group work, with several additional considerations.
- Where teamwork processes are assessed in group work, students should be given feedback on their contributions to those processes. Students often struggle with the process aspect of group work because they are focussed on the outcomes. A requirement to report (in oral or written form) on the process helps them to see the value of group work and to learn group work skills.
- A fair system would include an appropriate weighting of assessment for both interactive elements and individual tasks. [click here for an example]
- Where possible contributions from individual students should be included in mark distributions [click here for an example]
- In terms of academic misconduct, the University of Sydney Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism in Coursework Policy 2012 applies, and students should be advised that they should take reasonable steps to ensure that their joint submission is consistent with academic honesty processes. Steps could include group discussion on the origins of work submitted, and the use of similarity detecting software such as Google.
EXAMPLES OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

General Group work principles: Oxford Brookes University, UK  
http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsld/group_work/principles.html

Group work guide for students: University of Auckland, NZ  

Group work guide for staff: University of Western Australia  
http://www.teachingandlearning.uwa.edu.au/staff/policies/conduct/group-work

Assessing individual learning in teams: OLT report  

The University of Sydney - Faculty of Education and Social Work - Group work guidelines for staff and students  

The University of Sydney - Business School – Guidelines for Teaching with Group work  
http://sydney.edu.au/business/learning/staff/teaching/groupwork