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# Crynoldebau / abstracts

Teaching Through Teamwork and the Challenges of Assessment

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In 2014-15 I introduced teamwork into my module IP37620 ‘People, Progress, Environment: Environmental Ethics and Politics’. While encouraged in smaller scale, large scale teamwork is rare in my department and the field of international politics. The benefits of teamwork for student learning, skills enhancement and employability are immense. If designed well, every field could benefit from teamwork. IP37620 is divided into two parts; students first develop knowledge of theory, which they then apply to concrete environmental issues. The second part is done through teamwork. Each team works on a project of their choice. Teams present their work in progress to the whole class, get feedback on it from both the teacher and their peers, and eventually produce a joint project report. Despite initial skepticism, IP37620 students loved the teamwork experience and produced impressive work as teams.

Marking teamwork can be a challenge, as students are not ready to lose control over their marks to forces they cannot completely control (i.e. the work produced by their team-members). As teachers, we need to be careful marks are fair. We can also positively impact marks by making sure teams are working well and they get continuous, formative feedback prior to assessing results of their work. This is precisely what I did in IP37620. In addition, the last assignment in the module were reflective reports, in which each student individually reflected on their experience of working in the team, the successes and failures of their teamwork and the learning progress they made as an individual working closely with others. This allowed the marker to reward those who worked hard in the teams and developed skills to reflect on their collaborative learning experience.

The presentation will outline the format of the teamwork element in the module and highlight the benefits of this teaching technique as well as the challenges when marking this type of student work.