

Planning group work SCALE-UP style



Students in a SCALE-UP class learn largely inductively, carrying out carefully designed group activities through which they construct knowledge for themselves, with the tutor acting as facilitator and guide. Activities include 10-15 minute problem solving activities and longer, enquiry based tasks, and are structured to emphasise collaborative, active, student-centred learning.

The groups are carefully structured to give students many opportunities to collaborate with their peers, questioning and teaching each other as well as interacting with the tutor. Students work in mixed ability groups of three and have assigned roles which are changed regularly **manager/organiser, scribe, sceptic/ questioner** (and if required an optional fourth role: **summariser**).

Group tasks are specifically designed to encourage interdependence of members while the defined roles promote individual accountability and support the development of a variety of skills.

Students engage in regular, structured self-assessment of group functioning and reflection on their own working styles and strengths.

Group formation

There are several different ways of forming a group: allocation to mixed ability groups; random assignment; self-selection or friendship groups. SCALE-UP originator Bob Beichner found that tutor-assigned groups of mixed ability and/or background worked most effectively. The membership of the groups is switched every 3-4 weeks.

Each table seats three teams (Beichner calls these A, B, and C) of three students. The tables are numbered so a specific team can be identified (e.g., Group 4C), an entire table can be selected (e.g., Table 3), the room can be divided in half by specifying even and odd table numbers, or the room can be split into thirds by setting the 'A groups' one task, the 'B groups' another and the 'C groups' a third task.



In the NTU evaluation (2013) those tutors who employed the use of group roles and group contracts, as advised by Professor Beichner, reported positive results.

Several tutors also observed that tutor allocation to groups tended to result in a better focus on tasks than friendship groups did.

NTU students' reaction to group work

As evidenced by questionnaires in the NTU evaluation, the majority of students enjoyed group work, appreciating the opportunity to develop team working skills and the increased interaction with tutors and other students.

Where there were some negative responses, these indicated hesitancy to work with new people or peers or a preference for working in friendship groups. Where group membership was not rotated a desire for groups to be mixed around was made.

Prompting students to consider the value of group work and providing structures for them to reflect on and develop team working skills is very beneficial to ensure students understand and actively engage with group working principles

For further resources including the SCALE-UP Handbook see: [SCALE-UP resources](#)

For further information or to get involved in SCALE-UP, contact [NTU SCALE-UP](#)