Learning in Teams at RRU – Faculty of Management

Guidelines, Expectations & Processes

Working in teams is a vital part of the experience at Royal Roads University. Our commitment to teamwork reflects our belief that one of the important benefits you can take away from your program is the ability to learn more about yourself by working in teams. RRU learners have pointed to their team experiences as being the most challenging and yet, ultimately, most rewarding aspects of their learning experience; and employers have identified interpersonal skills as being one of the most remarkable characteristics of RRU graduates. As organizations increasingly rely on cross-functional project teams and shared leadership models, it is important that RRU graduates possess the skills required to step into team roles. Skills such as: self-awareness, collaboration, leadership, communication, the ability to inspire, encourage and provide direction to others.

While individual courses will focus on different aspects of team-based learning outcomes, each student must also demonstrate holistic, overarching success in working in teams throughout their program.

Team-Based Learning: Examples of Assessment Criteria

- Regularly participates in class and team discussions, and contributes to the learning of others;
- Demonstrates support for all team members in team assignments and activities;
- Demonstrates the ability to give, receive and integrate feedback;
- Demonstrates the ability to proactively use conflict resolution tools and techniques;
- Helps to achieve team goals by applying knowledge of team theory and group dynamics;
- Fosters and builds a team culture that is receptive to change, progress and flexibility to achieve desired results;
- Demonstrates leadership and followership when appropriate;
- Recognizes and respects different cultures, learning styles, values of others, and works to find common ground.

Consequently, one of the key learning outcomes for many RRU Programs is Working With Others. Over the program, approximately 30% of your final marks are allocated to team deliverables. Learners can expect to work in several different teams during their RRU experience. This document outlines the processes in place for assisting student learning teams to become a high performing learning team.

Team Building and Team Support

Team building activities and training take place at the beginning of the program, and throughout the program. Team coaching service is available to learners to support your team success. The type and form of assistance available to learners will be described in detail during the start of the program.

Your Team Coach will facilitate:

- o   Team-building activities early in your program;

- o   Workshops on topics related to team development theory, group dynamics, components of successful teams, basic coaching skills, leadership, giving and receiving feedback and resolving conflict;

- o   The development of Team Agreements;

- o   Proactive check-ins and team coaching meetings to encourage individual and team development;

- o   Responsive support to help teams resolve issues should they arise.

One of the common team activities that the Team Coach will guide and encourage your team to formulate is the development of a Team Agreement. Here is a link to a team agreement template. The Team Agreement explicitly captures shared behavioural norms and rules so that the team has a foundation guiding their teamwork through common goals that support personal aspirations. The Team Agreement process is recommended for use with all your teams and a process for each new team you begin working in. The Team Agreement is meant to be a living document and we expect that it will be updated and adapted as needed as part of your ongoing team management. As part of your learning community, the university has a few basic expectations for your behaviour that form a portion of your team agreements.

In our experience the team portion of the RRU experience is overwhelmingly a very positive one. Majority of team members work well together and many become lifelong friends; however sometimes challenges may be encountered along the way. Team Coaches will provide learners with team training, facilitation and coaching throughout your program. Instructors and program staff are available for additional assistance, and below is a process for dealing with common challenges if they arise.

Team Selection

Teams of four to six members are assigned in a variety of different formats across programs at Royal Roads University. These formats may include:

1. Selection by your Program Administration
2. Random selection
3. Self selection (usually done for teams who are in their last term or semester)

Often initial teams are created based upon the sole criterion of diversity: diversity of gender, age, professional experience, educational background, culture and/or geographic location. These teams are usually **final**, and a change to the composition of teams is only done in exceptional or urgent circumstances.

Teams will be re-assigned at strategic points throughout your program (usually during breaks between courses or quarters). Students can therefore expect to work in multiple teams over the course of their program.

Factors influencing Team Dynamics

Withdrawals and Returning Students

Students may need to leave the program for a variety of unforeseen reason, or they are required to repeat a course. This may lead to changes in the team structure and/or cohort.

Action steps to take as a team if you lose or gain a team member:

- Revisit your Team Agreements, it is important to ensure everyone is on board with your foundational agreements.
- Spend time building a trusting environment by focusing on the relationship(s) with your new team member(s).
- Communicate learning styles, values, preferences. Examples of two short assessment tools: personality style assessment and conflict assessment by ITP Metrics are available here.
- Refer to these guidelines for transitioning to a new team (Link here)

Poor Writing Skills and/or Reading Comprehension Issues

Team members have various levels of writing and reading comprehension. The team is responsible for ensuring that any issues about diversity in writing/reading is not simply a clash of writing styles or unreasonable expectations. Teams are expected to identify and document any academic issues that may need resolution (*see paragraph below on issues that require*

immediate attention below) and to consult with the course instructor. Instructor(s) are responsible for evaluating the quality of academic work.

 If teams encounter issues related to ***writing and/or comprehension,*** take the following steps:

- Contact the Instructor and copy your Team Coach who can support and provide guidance for the team to capitalize on the strengths of the various team members.
- Students with weak writing and/or reading comprehension can seek support from the Writing Center and English Language Support Center.
- Consult with the instructor for additional action steps and guidance.

Out of Touch - AWOL (Absent Without Leave) Behaviour

If a team member does not respond to e-mails, phone calls, or general contact with the team and has not notified their team, course instructors, or Program Administration of planned or unplanned absences from their participation in the program then the following process will apply. Before contacting the Program Administration or Instructor, please ensure that all alternate contact options have been utilized (phone call, text message, email to RRU and personal account). As part of your Team Agreement, you should include alternate contact information such as private/work phone numbers and email addresses. When a team member is AWOL,

1. Contact the course instructor and advise them of the missing team member, include the Program Administrator, your Team Coach , and your team member in this communication.
2. Keep documentation of all details regarding repeated attempts to locate the missing team member.
3. If the learner remains out of contact for more than 48 hours, contact your Team Coach and the team may send a Note of Concern using the process outlined here (link to the Note of Concern and Letter of Warning).

Behavioral or performances challenges

There are times when teams encounter difficulties. This is normal for most teams and is part of the developmental cycle, link here for an overview of team cycles. Some teams are unable to resolve these difficulties on their own and seek help from the Team Coach. The Coach will work with teams, and individuals to support guidance with appropriate next steps. It is expected that teams will seek the help of the Team Coach ***before*** the issue becomes critical and is preventing the team from functioning effectively.

Examples of performance challenges may include:

- Writing challenges that the team is not able to support on an ongoing basis
- Repeated mistakes or lapses in understanding course outlines and instructor's guidelines
- Unclear guidelines for team roles and responsibilities
- Poor attendance/participation in class or team meetings

- Missed external deadlines
- Poor quality of academic work

Examples of behavioral issues may include:

- Poor intra-group communication
- Missed internal deadlines
- Interpersonal conflict
- Poor process participation
- Lack of accountability
- Breach of confidentiality

Recommended action steps: **Try to resolve the issue within the team**

Students are encouraged to follow the steps below to promptly address and proactively resolve non-urgent team issues:
a) Identify the specific issue and the impact on the team;
b) Create time and space to address the issue directly and respectfully;
c) As a team, brainstorm strategies for addressing the concern, applying team development, leadership and conflict resolution skills;
d) Review Team Agreement to see if anything needs to be altered or revisited;
e) Develop an agreed upon description and timeline of what needs to happen to satisfy the team's expectations;
f) Contact your Instructor for clarification on academic and performance concerns;
g) Document this process.

*At any time if an individual or team of students would like guidance on how to approach an issue or concern within their team, they are encouraged to **contact their Team Coach** for advice.

If the team issue is **urgent** please refer to the Working through Conflict guidelines here: (insert link) or the paragraph below for appropriate support services.

Issues that require immediate attention of the Program Manager

- Evidence of plagiarism or cheating: see link here to the policy on Academic Integrity (contact the instructor directly with a copy to the Program Manager).
- Evidence of harassment or discriminatory language or behaviour: See here for the link Student Rights and Responsibilities and a link to the Student conduct process
- Personal or confidential issues that may impact a learner's ability to participate effectively in the program (e.g., physical or mental illness, change in financial status, family emergencies, work circumstances, etc.). Link here for information about RRU counselling services and Link here for information about RRU Accessibility services.