Pilots Completion Report

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Pilot Completion Report Template

Report Category	Report Requirement
	Overall Rating *(Fully Delivered, Partially Delivered, Not Delivered)*
Summary	This Flexible Learning Pilot explored the use of viva voce assessment and Problem-Oriented Project Learning (PPL) as inclusive, authentic, and dialogic pedagogies within postgraduate and undergraduate teaching. Originally focused on two postgraduate modules, the pilot was adapted to include an undergraduate fieldcourse due to low enrolment on one unit, allowing for comparative insights across levels. With support from Roskilde University practitioners, the project introduced scaffolded group work and oral assessment into two modules: EDUC70252 (Social Justice in Education) and GEOG20072 (Research Design and Overseas Fieldcourse). Students engaged in staged group projects, culminating in either a final presentation and discussion or a field-based formative conference. Evaluation drew on qualitative data from interviews and focus groups and highlighted improvements in student confidence, critical thinking, and peer learning — as well as challenges related to group dynamics and Generative AI (GAI) misuse. The pilot met its objectives, remained on budget, and produced outputs for wider use, including teaching resources, a literature review, and a forthcoming journal article.

Aims and rationale

The project aimed to integrate aspects of Denmark's Roskilde University's problem-oriented project learning (PPL) pedagogic principles into postgraduate course units GEOG60982: Space and Sustainability and EDUC70252: Social Justice in Education at the University of Manchester. Due to low enrolment on GEOG60982, the postgraduate Geography unit originally selected for the pilot, the PPL and viva-style assessment approach was instead implemented within GEOG20072, Research Design and Overseas Fieldcourses. This adaptation allowed the project to explore how group-based oral assessment strategies function across both undergraduate and postgraduate contexts, enriching the comparative scope of the pilot.

In particular, the project focused on developing effective group work alongside oral competencies in order to prepare students for a summative assessment activities including group presentations and viva voce style group discussion. The rationale for the project was rooted in the recognition that viva voce assessment offers a valuable alternative to traditional written assessments in postgraduate education. While viva voce examinations are primarily associated with doctoral defences in the UK, their adoption across

various under and postgraduate programmes in Europe highlights their potential as both formative and summative assessment methods as oral assessments can capture competencies and skills that may not be fully demonstrated through written tasks alone. The implementation of a sustained group work project with a viva voce style summative assessment aimed to offer a unique experience for UK-based students to engage in authentic oral assessments that simultaneously promote critical thinking and communication skills; competencies that are highly valued by employers and cannot be learned solely from textbooks.

Within the learning process, viva voce assessments can serve as powerful formative assessment tools, offering insightful and individualized self, peer, or teacher-led evaluation and feedback to students before they engage with written elements of their assessment.

Whilst it is recognised that viva voce style assessment could increase anxiety levels for certain students, the project aimed to apply pedagogic strategies that stimulated an anxiety-free and inclusive environment by creating a suite of staged and scaffolded authentic learning activities based on several PPL pedagogies. These oral interactions with peers and academics aimed to build confidence for both native speakers and international students with English as a second or additional language.

Furthermore, given the current challenges associated with the misuse of GAI, learning models by students, oral assessments can help mitigate against their overreliance on such tools. This aspect of the project attempted to address a growing concern in academic integrity and ensures that students are demonstrating their own understanding and skills

Finally, the project sought to evaluate the impact of this approach on staff workload, student work quality, and student satisfaction. In addition, it aimed to assess the transferability of this approach to other courses within the university.

Activities

Although the two units were taught in the second semester of the academic year 2024/2025, planning and research took place in the first semester. This included an exploratory review of the literature on oral assessments undertaken by a Research Assistant (see finance details below) that informed some planning of the units' pedagogic approaches. Additionally, as part of the project's development, the PI and co-PI undertook a research field trip to Roskilde University (RUC) in November 2024 to learn more about the PPL methodological approach from academics John Andersen and Simon Warren leading practitioners of Roskilde's Problem-Oriented Project Learning (PPL) model - at the University. The field trip also provided opportunities to discuss the PPL approach with students from different disciplines as well as witness how seminars were structured, particularly in relation to the oral discussions and group work supervision. These teaching and learning approaches also informed the planning of the unit, along with support from John and Simon who we hosted as

consultants at Manchester at the start of the semester. They contributed by speaking with staff and students about the principles and practice of PPL, observing a teaching session, and engaging in discussion with students. These exchanges helped both teams consider which aspects of the Roskilde model were pedagogically and institutionally transferable to the UK context, and informed the design of seminar activities and assessments within our pilot.

Teaching started on both units in February 2025. Planning to incorporate both oral competencies and group work activities meant that course unit

EDUC70252 Structure and Rationale

EDUC70252's unit outline was modified both in terms of seminar/lecture activities and content delivery. The unit aimed to model several key elements of the PPL principles through following schedule of teaching in lectures:

Weeks 1-4

Introduction to PPL and Problem orientation/international insights

Students were presented with the overview of the course unit including information and discussion about the PPL pedagogic principles (see Appendix A)

Defining the 'problem': social inequalities and Social Justice/ global education –poverty/power and place

Exemplarity

Discursive framing of the 'problem': How does social mobility approach position poverty?

Critical theories of social justice from different (global) perspectives

Week 5- *Group work and participant control*

Critical Theories of social justice and group project negotiation/organisation. NB Here students were presented with an extensive guide to conducting group work that had been adapted from the Roskilde student guide and other literature outlining effective practice (Appendix B).

Group work project based on students' interests and experiences

Weeks 6 and 7- *international insights*

Transformative approaches to social justice across the world- Part 1 United Kingdom Part 2 examples from around the world

Weeks 8 and 9- *Group work and participant control*

Group work activities in lectures based on students' case studies. These activities were led by students, who created meeting agendas but with input from lecturers.

Week 10

'Rehearsal' group presentations to academics followed by discussion, extensive oral feedback.

Week 11

Presentation and in-depth discussion about the project content with detailed oral feedback for the final assignment

Seminars

Alongside integrating PPL principles into lectures. The taught sessions were planned (as with previous years) to be discussion based and offered opportunities to contribute orally throughout. However, the three seminar activities in EDUC70252 were redesigned to provide staged and scaffolded authentic learning activities to build student confidence in oral interactions. These activities were designed to provide a gradual progression in complexity and challenge, allowing students to develop their skills and confidence over time.

Seminar 1

Guided oral questions based on an academic paper of their choice. Students were paired up to discuss the papers and as pairs presented to other groups. The use of GAI (in particular Google notebook LM) was encouraged to summarise and develop arguments.

Seminar 2

Students were asked to prepare a T talk (10 minute theory informed short presentation/talk) with a heavily scaffolded series of prompt questions (Appendix C).

Prague Fieldcourse (GEOG20072): Structure and Rationale

As an adaptation of the original pilot plan, the undergraduate module GEOG20072 was selected to trial group-based viva voce assessment. The unit culminates in a fieldcourse to Prague, where students conduct small-group research projects and present findings in a conference-style setting. In preparation, students participated in a series of structured workshops designed to introduce Problem-Oriented Project Learning (PPL) principles, build research and oral communication skills, and support the development of group research plans.

Pre-Fieldtrip Workshops

Five preparatory workshops were delivered in Semester 2 to scaffold student learning and gradually build towards the fieldwork and assessment. The structure was as follows:

- **Workshop 1 – Introduction to the Fieldcourse and Group Work:** Students were introduced to the aims, assessment format, and expectations for the Prague fieldcourse. The student-facing group work guide (Appendix B), adapted from Roskilde University and other literature, was distributed and discussed to establish shared norms for collaboration.
- **Workshop 2 – Introduction to Problem-Oriented Project Learning:** This session was co-led by Professors John Andersen and Simon Warren (Roskilde University), who introduced students to the Roskilde PPL model and its application in Danish higher education. Students discussed how core principles such as participant control, exemplarity, and real-world relevance could be applied in their own project planning. Andersen and Warren also engaged students in reflection around institutional differences and group dynamics.
- **Workshops 3–5 – Project Design and Research Planning:** These sessions focused on group topic development, research design, and fieldwork planning. Students refined their research questions, considered methodological approaches, and discussed ethics and logistics. Structured peer feedback and staff mentoring were embedded to support confidence and accountability in group processes.

Prague Fieldtrip

The one-week fieldcourse in Prague provided students with an immersive opportunity to conduct primary research in an international urban context. Working in small, self-selected groups, students gathered data aligned with their research questions using a range of qualitative and visual methods. The field setting encouraged real-time collaboration, adaptability, and collective problem-solving — all core tenets of the PPL approach. Tutor presence throughout the trip ensured consistent support, while allowing groups the autonomy to develop and direct their own work.

Formative Conference and Viva Voce Presentation

The fieldcourse culminated in a formative group presentation at the Centre for Architecture and Metropolitan Planning (CAMP) in central Prague. Each group presented their research findings and participated in a structured viva voce discussion with staff and peers. This format encouraged students to articulate their individual and group contributions, respond to critical questions, and reflect on the limitations and implications of their work. The setting and format simulated a professional research conference, reinforcing the authenticity of the task and offering a supportive space for developing oral assessment confidence.

	Project Evaluation Evaluation is a significant component of the project activities. A research assistant (RA) conducted student voice activities via a survey and focus group and analyse evaluation data to assess the impact of the pilot on student achievement, wellbeing and satisfaction.
Deliverables	Another activity was the development of effective strategies for formative and summative assessment using viva voce. This included the co-design and implementation of effective marking criteria (rubrics) with students. By involving students in this process, the project aims to increase transparency and understanding of assessment expectations.

Relevance	.
	
	Has the pilot topic and its activities met the information/experience needs of the intended stakeholder groups? To what extent are the completed pilot outcomes still in line with the needs and priorities of the Flexible Learning Programme?
	
	The pilot was designed with several Universal Learning Design (UDL) principles in mind. In particular, students were provided opportunities to seek out their learning foci through discussion and engagement with topics that felt relevant to them and were encouraged to draw on prior experiences in education and beyond to inform their projects. 'Participant Control' is key element of the PPL principles since it encourages learning strategies to include the needs and experiences of students, as stakeholders take responsibility in the definition of relevant topics, issues, methods and learning goals. The viva voce also offered an alternative way to evidence knowledge, understanding and critical thinking. The key stakeholders' (students') evaluations revealed that this was an element of the unit's pedagogy that was appreciated.
	
	     "We like created a project and then presented it as a group, was also a like of a positive way of doing it because I mean. Just like the overall workload was a bit lower and presenting on your own is always like a bit more intimidating than doing it as a group. So, it kind of showed the the positives of group work, pretty clearly."
	(UGI1)
	The students also appreciated the collaborative nature of the group work and the opportunity to learn from each other
	
	     "To be honest, I think this project is the best projects in my my studying and the biggest benefit was how much I learned through this project because I I can get diverse perspective[s] from my teammates." (PEI4)
	
	However, within the parameters of the existing course outlines, there were limitations and challenges to incorporating more wide-ranging aspects of the UDL and in particular, regarding the formalised aspects of the assessment component and relevant Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs).

	Optionality in particular is an area for future development for both courses but will need to go through formal QSDE/Institutional processes for the academic year 2026/27. Formalised assessment has been one of the biggest concerns for students: *"I would say it's giving me like a slightly, ever so slightly, more positive view [of group projects]. But I am kind of in the process now of considering my modules for next year and there's one where I quite like the look of the content. But I noticed it has group work for a big percentage of the grade, which is sort of putting me off taking it, because I suppose when I'm picturing doing that group work. I'm just kind of imagining it being more similar to the first year kind of group work than the project-oriented group work. If I knew it was going to be a similar experience to the Prague group work, then I'd be more willing to take it."* (UGI6) Whilst they recognise that this project-oriented group work is different to more conventional forms of group work in terms of recognising their contributions, the influence of group work on grades continues to concern them: "To be honest, I'm here for the certificate. I don't want my grades to be affected based on other people's behaviour. I don't think it's fair."" (PEF3)
Efficiency	To what extent did the methods/approaches used in this pilot lead to improvements in efficiency (financial/staffing/resourcing etc)? What other approaches could be considered in light of the pilot - would these be more or less efficient? The pilot did not require any additional staffing in the teaching that was conducted using the PPL principles and the viva voce assessment. The pilot financed the rapid literature review and the data collection/analysis based on student analysis of the pedagogic approach. The pilot did encourage us as academics to review some of the content of the unit in order to encourage both the oral competencies (some of the seminar activities are outlined above) and to facilitate more participant control/group work activities. As a consequence, there was some loss of content (e.g., for EDUC70252, this meant that some of the international case studies related to social justice in education). For future consideration, despite the potential reduction in resourcing during the teaching activities (i.e. fewer guest speakers), there is a resourcing implication for the viva voce element of the assessment as the presentation and discussion extended the assessment timings from 10 -15 minutes to 30-40 minutes in total. This was not an issue for a small cohort size but would be a staffing/resource consideration if the pilot principles were to be applied at scale to larger cohorts.
Effectiveness	To what extent did the methods/approaches used in this pilot lead to improvements in effectiveness (learning/outcomes/experience/flexibility, etc)? What other approaches could be considered in light of the pilot - would these be more or less effective?

From the teacher perspective

The focus on developing oral competencies throughout the teaching period created opportunities to be both reflective and reflexive in our pedagogic practice. Scaffolded activities across both course units supported students in gradually building the skills needed to participate in discussion-based assessments. This approach benefited learners with a range of confidence levels and language backgrounds and helped to reduce barriers to speaking in academic settings.

Students appeared to engage positively with the viva voce style assessment, finding it a useful format to articulate their understanding and receive feedback in real time. The format allowed students to focus on areas of personal or disciplinary interest, contributing to a sense of ownership and depth. Attainment for the presentation and discussion elements in EDUC70252 was consistently high, supporting the conclusion that the structure was both accessible and challenging in appropriate ways.

The principles of participant control and group-based project work also informed a substantial redesign of learning resources. These included:
A student-facing guide to effective group work (Appendix B)
Co-developed marking criteria and prompts
Seminar activities that modelled equitable collaboration and self-direction
This redesign supported more consistent engagement across cohorts and provided space for students to lead discussion, reflect on group dynamics, and prepare for summative tasks.

From the student perspective

Students responded positively to the integration of oral tasks and group-based project learning. Many reported that the opportunity to rehearse, receive feedback, and share responsibility for communication improved their confidence and engagement.

Key areas of effectiveness included:

Collaborative learning and peer exchange: Students found value in hearing diverse perspectives and learning alongside others, especially when groups were thoughtfully composed.
  "Hearing from other people's perspectives really pushed me to think about the issues from multiple angles." (PEI4)
Improved speaking confidence: Group presentations and scaffolded discussions helped students feel more at ease with oral assessment.
  "Presenting on your own is always a bit more intimidating than doing it as a group… it showed the positives of group work pretty clearly." (UGI1)
Sense of progress and ownership: Students appreciated being able to see a project through from idea to delivery, particularly in the Prague fieldcourse setting.

	"It was really satisfying to see all of the stages, from initial brainstorming to completion of a project." (UGW2)
	Clarity and structure: Students responded well to shared planning tools, agreed roles, and regular check-ins from tutors, which supported more even participation and accountability.
	  "We got to plan in advance… having that structure really helped." (PEF3)
	
	Students in both postgraduate and undergraduate settings reported that this model enabled them to better articulate their ideas, collaborate more effectively, and feel a stronger sense of involvement in their learning.
	Inclusive and Respectful Environments
	Students frequently described feeling like equal peers in their groups — particularly notable among PGT respondents with prior experience. Respectful disagreement and compromise were seen as central to the learning process:
	  "Even when I was like, 'I wouldn't really do it like that,' it didn't matter because you're learning from each other." (PEF1)
	
	These improvements suggest strong potential for further development and adaptation of this approach in other programmes across undergraduate and postgraduate modules. A summary of key differences in student experience and expectations between undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts is provided in *Appendix C*.

[Outcome](#)	The pilot project achieved its intended aims in testing viva voce assessment within PPL-inspired pedagogic approaches. Students reported increased confidence in oral expression, a better understanding of group dynamics, and greater awareness of their own learning preferences. **Key outcomes include:** - **Improved student oral competency:** Students expressed increased confidence in discussion-based tasks, especially where scaffolded practice was included. - **Positive reception of project-based group work:** When implemented with sufficient structure and support, group projects led to high satisfaction and learning outcomes. This was especially evident in the Prague fieldcourse and EDUC70252. - **Differentiated student experience:** Undergraduate and postgraduate responses showed some divergence in attitudes to group work and assessment anxiety. PGT students were more likely to raise concerns around workload equity and summative grading;

	UGTs emphasised group cohesion and agency. These contrasting perspectives are summarised in **Appendix C**, which highlights how students at different levels engage with group-based learning, oral assessment, and tutor support. This comparative insight can inform how group work and PPL approaches are scaffolded across levels. • **Concerns about fairness and accountability persist:** Despite improved design, some students remained anxious about unequal contributions. This was linked to workload disparities, leadership imbalances, and varied AI use. • **Staff reflection and course transformation:** Course leads restructured seminars and assessments, resulting in sustained pedagogic changes and improved alignment with inclusive and flexible learning principles. Respondents appreciated the difference in approach to the project-based group work in comparison to conventional group activities: *"I think because it's quite a different sort of activity in itself. You know, actually I've felt like I've never really or maybe a few times in school, but I haven't properly, like gone out into the field in a long time, you know, to actually collect the data. So I think just that in itself it gives you a very different like view on the work that you're actually doing is that kind of answering what you want to know… I think it was different because like we spent quite a lot of time together as a group, whereas usually like previous experiences, it would just be like we meet up, you know, one time before to discuss what we're doing, discuss what everyone else is doing and then meet up. Like once again, right once it's all done. So I think being able to spend all that time together and doing the actual work together, definitely made it like a quite smooth process of getting the actual project done, which was definitely like useful."* (UGI5)
Sustainability	To what extent has the pilot identified the potential for its activity to lead to the long-term behaviour/operational change? What would need to happen to make these changes happen? As detailed above, several key drivers to develop PPL principles in the units were implemented in order to encourage deep learning through group work and participant control. This required re-thinking the indicative syllabus for students to allow more time for student generated activities and (marginally) less emphasis on knowledge input with a more traditional teacher-student focus. From a teacher perspective, the slimmed down content did not impact on the critical thinking and theoretical discussion that are developed within the units, indeed, there were more opportunities for students to engage with some of the more academically challenging aspects of the unit through meaningful activities that generated debate and discussion. These activities also provided students opportunities to learn from each other in a socially constructive manner as well as draw on knowledge and past experiences prior to their Master's in Manchester. Therefore, if academics are able to see the benefits of more student-

	produced learning, including student to student learning and adoption of activities that promote competencies that are highly valued by employers through their authentic approaches, there is a real opportunity for long-term behavioural change from the pedagogical approaches that are deemed 'typical' in HEIs towards more authentic task-focused learning. Within this paradigm shift, academics are given more time to supervise, discuss and interrogate students' knowledge and skills in 'real time' classroom activities and therefore can provide formative feedback on a regular basis. This type of approach also mitigates against concerns related to the overuse of GAI as students are asked to respond in a spontaneous and interactive manner. To allow for this, University processes including programme reviews, e-learning training, Assessment Tool Kit, Cadmus and QSDE should include resources and testimonials related to group-work and oral activities. Whilst the viva voce activities were successful in terms of attainment for both units, more consideration needs to be given to how this approach could be scaled up for larger cohorts as, although academics may be keen to develop speaking components in final assessment, there are workload implications for this and may require more staff resourcing.
Financial	The project was delivered on budget, with all core activities supported within the allocated Flexible Learning Pilot funding. Staff time for both co-leads (Craig Thomas and Louisa Dawes) and two research assistants was accurately forecast, with research time staggered to cover the initial literature review and subsequent qualitative data collection. Consultant support for dissemination tasks was also accounted for. No significant overspend or underspend occurred, and costs were limited to directly deliverable elements of the pilot. The budget was thus aligned well with the project's scope and timeline.
Lessons Identified / Learned	**What were the successes and failures of the pilot project?** The project succeeded in developing a pedagogical model that supported oral competency, fostered collaborative learning, and tested the viability of viva voce assessments. Key successes included: **Increased student confidence in oral communication**, particularly where scaffolding and rehearsal were provided. **Meaningful engagement with real-world problems**, with students in both modules reporting satisfaction with the project-oriented structure. **Transferable student resource**: the creation and positive uptake of the *Mastering Group Work* guide shows that students benefit from practical tools to support collaboration.

- **Successful integration of PPL principles** in the revised seminar and assessment formats, especially in EDUC70252 and GEOG20072 (Prague).

However, challenges also emerged:

- **Group work anxiety** persisted, especially related to fairness in group assessment and accountability.
- **Use of generative AI (GAI)** as a workaround by disengaged group members caused frustration for others.
- **Assessment workload**: the viva voce format, while pedagogically valuable, added substantial time commitments to summative marking.
- **Variation across levels**: postgraduate and undergraduate students demonstrated differing expectations, motivations, and perceptions of group work.

What were the contributing factors to the success or failure?

- **Success factors:**
  - Strong alignment with PPL principles (e.g. participant control, real-world problem orientation).
  - Scaffolded teaching design, including peer-led seminar activities and co-created rubrics.
  - Staff visibility and responsiveness — students appreciated regular check-ins and formative feedback.
- **Challenges:**
  - The reliance on informal peer monitoring of contribution sometimes led to resentment and workload imbalance.
  - Limited time to build group rapport in a high-stakes assessment environment.
  - Some students lacked assessment literacy around oral assessments and group-based tasks.

What lessons were learned during the pilot project?

1. **Viva voce and group work can be highly effective**, but must be supported by inclusive design and clear expectations.
2. **Student autonomy increases engagement**, but requires active support structures — timelines, roles, conflict resolution mechanisms.
3. **Optionality in assessment format** may improve inclusivity and reduce anxiety, especially among students with different learning styles or access needs.
4. **Institutional tools like Cadmus or peer assessment frameworks** could be integrated to improve fairness in future iterations.
5. **The undergraduate cohort can engage deeply with viva-style group work** when the assessment is embedded in a field setting or experiential task.

How can the project be improved?

	• Incorporate **more robust participation tracking tools** to support accountability (e.g. peer review, shared logs). • **Pilot hybrid assessment formats** that allow students to select between individual or group viva formats. • Develop a **set of inclusive guidelines** for using GAI in group tasks. • Increase institutional support for viva-style assessments, particularly at scale (e.g. through timetabling, staffing models, and tech-enabled moderation).
Materials or publications	The FLP-ID73 project has generated a range of materials and outputs that contribute to the development and dissemination of inclusive and problem-oriented pedagogies, particularly through group-based learning and viva voce assessment. **1. Teaching Resources** • **Mastering Group Work for Student Projects** (Appendix B): A practical, student-facing guide co-developed during the pilot to support equitable and effective collaboration. It includes tools for group formation, communication, task planning, and conflict resolution. The guide has been adopted in both undergraduate and postgraduate modules and is being made available for wider programme use across SEED. • **Teaching materials integrating PPL principles**: Redesigned seminar activities and assessment rubrics were developed to support oral competency and participant-led learning. These included scaffolded discussions, rotating leadership roles, and peer-led workshops embedded across EDUC70252 and GEOG20072. **2. Review and Evaluation** • **Rapid Literature Review on Viva Voce in HE** (Manon Burbidge): Conducted in the early phase of the project, this review outlines the prevalence, challenges, and benefits of oral assessment, with a focus on its role in inclusive and authentic learning. It also situates the pilot within international pedagogic practice, drawing on examples from Roskilde and Maastricht (Appendix A). • **Qualitative Data from Student Focus Groups and Interviews**: A thematically coded analysis (see Appendix D) explores how students engaged with group-based projects and oral assessment, surfacing insights into peer learning, equity, workload distribution, and AI-related concerns. **3. Conference Presentation** • **Teaching and Learning Conference, University of Manchester (2025)**: Craig Thomas and Louisa Dawes presented findings from the pilot in a joint talk titled *"Developing Oral Skills and Critical Thinking through Problem-Oriented Group Work and Assessment."* The presentation showcased the pedagogic design, data insights, and reflections on student engagement and assessment innovation.

4. Forthcoming Publication

A research article is currently in preparation for submission to a peer-reviewed journal (e.g. *Teaching in Higher Education* or *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*), provisionally titled:

"*Thinking through group work: Embedding Viva Voce Assessment in Problem-Oriented Group Projects across Undergraduate and Postgraduate Contexts*"

The article will synthesise the design principles, student experience data, and comparative insights from both UGT and PGT cohorts, with a view to informing broader curriculum design and assessment strategy across disciplines.

Conclusion

This pilot project has shown that integrating oral assessment and PPL principles into course design can lead to more inclusive, engaged, and reflective learning. Across both modules, students demonstrated improved confidence in speaking, deeper collaboration, and stronger critical engagement with real-world problems. Importantly, the pilot revealed how such approaches can be effectively scaffolded across both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, with field-based and classroom-based formats alike supporting student learning when structure and tutor support are in place.

In line with the broader goals of the Flexible Learning Programme, the pilot demonstrated ways to:

- Embed student-centred, dialogic pedagogies that promote authentic learning
- Offer alternative assessment formats that develop communication, collaboration, and critical thinking
- Support staff in rethinking assessment design in light of evolving challenges (e.g. GAI, group equity)
- Create transferable tools and approaches that can be adapted across disciplines and course levels

By combining pedagogic experimentation with robust evaluation, the pilot has contributed to the wider institutional conversation about assessment, inclusion, and the future of flexible learning at Manchester.

Report approval and comments	*To be completed by a delegated person agreed by the workstream governance group.*

Roskilde's Problem-Oriented Project Learning (PPL) Model

Here's a summary of the key elements of the University's pedagogical approach. Several key principles guide teaching organization and methods, allowing flexibility while maintaining accountability.

1. Student-Managed Learning: Students are actively involved in designing and implementing their learning process, working collaboratively with lecturers. This is particularly evident in project work, but also extends to seminars and other activities.

2. Project Work: This forms the core of the learning experience. Students identify and investigate knowledge issues, often based on real-world problems, using scientific methods and both theoretical and empirical analysis. They provide feedback to each other and instructors.

4. Problem Orientation: Project work focuses on identifying, understanding, and solving problems from society or theory using various approaches (qualitative, quantitative, etc.). Collaboration with external actors is often involved.

5. Interdisciplinarity: Projects address complex problems requiring multiple disciplines and perspectives, fostering collaboration and dialogue between different fields.

6. Participant Control: Students and teachers share responsibility for organizing and implementing education. Students select problems, methods, and materials, with lecturers acting as mentors.

7. Exemplarity: Projects are not isolated; they serve as examples that connect to broader theoretical and methodological frameworks, leading to deeper understanding and application of knowledge.

8. Group Work: Most projects are conducted in groups, encouraging dialogue, negotiation, and diverse perspectives to enrich the learning process.

9. International Insight and Vision: The university emphasizes an international perspective in all programs, incorporating global issues and diverse viewpoints. This includes international collaboration and exposure.

The document highlights how these elements work together to create a unique and student-centred learning environment.

A Student's Guide to Success: Mastering Group Work for Postgraduate Projects

Introduction

Postgraduate group projects offer valuable opportunities to engage with real-world problems, develop interdisciplinary thinking, and build essential teamwork and research skills. Problem-Oriented Project Learning (PPL) encourages students to define a problem, critically investigate it, and propose solutions collaboratively.

This guide provides strategies to help you navigate group work effectively while aligning with the University of Manchester's policies, particularly those within the School of Environment, Education and Development (SEED).

Phase 1: Group Formation & Initial Planning

1. Understanding University Guidelines

- **Familiarise yourself with policies**: Read the University's Guidance for Assessed Student Group Working to understand expectations, assessment criteria, and marking rubrics.

2. Group Formation

- **Selecting your group**: If you can choose your group members, aim for a mix of skills, disciplines, and perspectives to enhance collaboration.
- **Setting ground rules**: Agree on meeting attendance, work commitments, and communication expectations to establish a productive working environment.

3. Initial Planning

- **Define Roles and Responsibilities**: Assign initial tasks based on individual strengths but remain flexible to ensure an even workload.
- **Set Communication Protocols**: Decide on preferred platforms (e.g., email, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp) and establish response time expectations.
- **Create a Project Timeline**: Work backwards from the submission deadline, setting key milestones and ensuring sufficient time for review.
- **Draft a Team Agreement (Appendix A):** Outline expectations for attendance, participation, communication, and conflict resolution.

Phase 2: Research & Project Execution

1. Meeting Roles & Responsibilities

To ensure meetings are productive and well-organised, groups should assign specific roles for each meeting. These roles can rotate to ensure fairness and shared responsibility.

1. Facilitator

- Leads the meeting, keeping discussions focused and ensuring everyone has a chance to contribute.
- Summarises key points and decisions.
- Keeps track of time and ensures the agenda is followed.

2. Note-Taker

- Records key discussion points, action items, and deadlines.
- Shares meeting notes with the group afterward via a shared document (e.g., Google Docs or OneDrive).

2. Consistent Communication

- **Regular Meetings**: Set a schedule for discussing progress, addressing challenges, and keeping the team aligned.
- **Collaborative Tools**: Use shared documents (e.g., Google Docs, OneDrive) to manage contributions and maintain transparency.

3. Effective Collaboration

- **Flexibility in Roles**: While defined roles help, supporting each other ensures smooth progress if someone struggles.
- **Conflict Resolution**: Address issues early and focus on solutions rather than personal conflicts. If needed, seek guidance from your tutor.

4. Supervisor Engagement

- **Regular Check-ins**: Schedule meetings with your supervisor at key stages to discuss progress, get feedback, and clarify uncertainties.

Phase 3: Project Completion & Assessment

1. Final Review

- **Comprehensive Editing**: Ensure the final project is coherent, well-structured, and aligned with the marking criteria.

2. Individual Contribution Documentation

- **Reflective Statements**: If your module requires it, each member should document their contributions to support individual assessment and accountability.

3. Post-Project Reflection

- **Group Debrief**: Discuss what worked well, what could be improved, and key takeaways for future projects.

Key Considerations for Postgraduate Group Work

- **Higher Expectations**: Postgraduate-level work demands a greater degree of independent learning, critical thinking, and research depth.
- **Interdisciplinary Thinking**: Consider how different academic perspectives contribute to your project.
- **Professionalism**: Maintain a professional tone in all communications and teamwork interactions.
- **Inclusivity**: Be mindful of diverse backgrounds, ensuring everyone can participate equally.

Appendix A: Example Team Agreement

Each group should draft a short **Team Agreement** covering:

- **Attendance** – Minimum meeting attendance requirements; procedure for updating absent members.
- **Work Commitments** – Clear expectations for completing assigned tasks on time.
- **Communication** – Preferred contact methods and response expectations.
- **Flexibility & Accountability** – How workload will be adjusted if challenges arise.
- **Conflict Resolution** – Agreed strategies for resolving disagreements.

Having a signed agreement can help resolve disputes fairly if issues arise.

Final Thoughts

By following this guide, you can enhance teamwork, ensure project success, and align with SEED's academic expectations. Taking an active role in shaping your project will help you develop essential research, collaboration, and communication skills that will be valuable beyond university.

Appendix C: Prompts for T talk discussions

Prompts to help you develop your talk

When developing your discussion about your chosen theory, you may, as a group, decide to use some of these questions as a prompt. Remember, you only need to research ONE theory (Fraser OR Gorski) so no need to respond to all the questions and you can choose your own areas to focus on.

1. **Introduction to the theorists:**
    a) Who is Nancy Fraser, and what is her background in social justice theory?
    b) Who is Paul Gorski, and what is his background in equity literacy?

2. **Key concepts:**

    a) Outline the main components of Fraser's theory of social justice.
    b) Describe the core principles of Gorski's equity literacy framework.

3. **Historical context:**

    a) How have Fraser's ideas on social justice evolved over time?
    b) What societal factors influenced the development of Gorski's equity literacy approach?

4. **Strengths and limitations:**
    a) What are the strengths of Fraser's approach to social justice?
    b) What are the potential limitations or criticisms of Gorski's equity literacy framework?

5. **Intersectionality:**

    a) How does Fraser's theory address intersecting forms of oppression?

    b) In what ways does Gorski's framework consider multiple dimensions of identity and disadvantage?

6. **Power dynamics:**

a) How does Fraser conceptualize power relations in her theory of social justice?
b) How does Gorski's equity literacy approach address power imbalances in educational settings?

7. **Future directions:**

a) How might Fraser's theory of social justice evolve to address emerging educational challenges?
b) In what ways could Gorski's equity literacy framework be expanded or refined?

8. **Assumptions**

How does your chosen theory challenge your own assumptions about equity and justice in education?

Theme	Undergraduate (GEOG20072)	Postgraduate (EDUC70252)	Evidence from Data
Attitudes to Group Work	Generally positive, especially when groups were self-selected; seen as manageable and creative	Mixed; more critical, with past negative experiences and greater concern about fairness and effort imbalance	UGI5, UGI6, UGW2 vs. PEF1, PEF3
Assessment Anxiety	Lower when assessments were experiential and authentic (e.g. Prague fieldwork); increased when work felt unbalanced	Higher, particularly regarding group-based grading and peer dependency	UGI6, UGF4 vs. PEF1, PEI4
Peer Learning	Valued for idea-sharing and collaborative exploration of themes	Valued when the environment was respectful and equal; important for building confidence and reflection	UGI5, UGW2 vs. PEF2, PEI4
AI Use and Concerns	Not explicitly mentioned; no significant data to show impact or concern	Raised concerns about peers using AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT) uncritically, diminishing learning and group engagement	PEF3, PEI4
Leadership and Roles	Natural leaders often emerged; leadership helped but wasn't always structured	Structured leadership (e.g. rotating facilitators) seen as a valuable scaffold to build participation and accountability	UGF3, UGW2 vs. PEF1, PEF2
Engagement Conditions	Strong engagement when tasks were authentic, applied, and field-based (e.g. Prague); peer choice was motivating	Strong engagement when the group was diverse and the project scaffolded and theory-informed	UGI1, UGF4 vs. PEI4, PEF1
Tutor Role and Feedback	Informal but regular tutor involvement helped with	Appreciated consistent support, feedback, and structured prompts	UGF3 vs. PEF1, PEF3

	motivation and direction	to scaffold their project development	

Appendix D Focus Group Analysis

A total of ten students, four from Education (EDUC70252) and six from Geography (GEOG20072)

Undergraduate ()	Postgraduate

n= 10 respondents

Education = 4 respondents; Geography = 6 respondents

Respondent signifiers

U/P: Undergraduate/ Postgraduate

E/G: Education/ Geography

I/W/F: Interview/ Written feedback/ Focus group (we used multiple methods to collect data, to manage the availability of students)

#: order of interview

Therefore, UGI1 would be an undergraduate geography respondent who was interviewed and assigned participant number 1; PEF3 would be a postgraduate education respondent who was in a focus group discussion and assigned participant number 3.

Summary of findings

Three of our respondents (two from geography and one from education), claimed to unequivocally enjoy group work prior to this class. Except for two participants (each from geography and education), who did not perceive a difference in this group work approach as compared to more conventional group work approaches, the remaining respondents felt that the approaches undertaken in this project-oriented group work approach helped

Merits of group work

- Sharing of workload and less onerous, as compared to essays, for instance.
  - "I think I've always viewed them as being easier than writing your own essay. The workload is usually half." (UGI1)
  - "I find that with everything that I've done, everyone does put in like an equal amount of effort as well. So it's a nice way to like split up like a big load of work." (UGI5)
- Ability to collective generate interesting ideas

- o "… especially when people are really engaged and throw out amazing ideas that I never would have thought of." (UGW2)
- o "I really enjoy, enjoy doing group work because I feel like you can have other opinions like with everyone in the group you know and they may bring up points, you know, which I might not have thought of myself. So, it's always been really positive." (UGI5)
- o Although some respondents felt that their previous experience with group work involved a lot of individual activity: "I would say at university doing group work same first year and maybe a bit in second year feels more individual so we kind of meet up and then we say who's doing which part and then they kind of do it and you just kind of do it by yourself. This field trip was different, it was a lot more collaborative." (UGF3)
- o This ability to collaborate also brings out the strengths of group work participants: "Although I'm not as as extroverted as [PEF1], but, like, I feel like I can bounce between ideas of the people. I I get easily inspired by others and build on that. I can develop further and also in the group work, I learned about this pattern about myself—I I am the kind of person who likes to run the logistics. Not necessarily Knowledge Input or research input at the at the very beginning, but like I will always find that like if I can manage for example the project timeline, I could easily engage the entire group. So I'm very happy to take on that role. So that is actually actually very helpful to [build] rapport with people as well. Yeah, I really like that." (PEF2)
- Build rapport with classmates
  - o "So that is actually actually very helpful to [build] rapport with people as well. Yeah, I really like that." (PEF2)

Challenges surrounding group work

- Unequal work distribution, owing to
  - o Poor motivation among peers
    - ♣ "Of course there is something to be said about sharing the workload, but in nearly all of my group projects from the past, I feel like I have ended up shouldering the majority of the content." (UGW2)
    - ♣ "For a lot of those course works, it was like a lot of people just like, weren't willing to engage a lot of the time. I was never in a group where there was anybody who wouldn't do anything, but it was a lot of, like, you know, we'd arranged to meet up and then people just wouldn't turn up. Or then people like wouldn't. People would like send stuff to like the group file that have been like clearly written, like quite rushed, and then people would like, you'd have to like kind of like, do other people's work sometimes or like really push people." (UGI6)

- ♣ "Because sometimes other people like, you know, they, they just don't do their part or they're not motivated or you feel like because it's group work at the end of the day, not one person is deciding everything and doing everything at the same time. But that tends to happen at times." (PEF3)
- ♣ Sometimes, the lack of motivation could clearly be attributed to a 'tragedy of commons' scenario, where respondents felt that teammates did not feel motivated to contribute, since everyone in the group would be administered the same grade—"... many of my teammates, they thought oh, if I didn't do this, who cares more about their marks. We will get the same marks, yes, so, I need to push them more." (PEI4)
- o Poor engagement from peers (this was not always connected to motivation, and could sometimes be lesser familiarity with the course content/ context or a group dynamic that is prone to conflict)
  - ♣ "The only time I don't like it is when the people I'm working with are not the sort of people that I can easily collaborate with." (PEF1)
  - ♣ "But if you end up working with people where there's conflict, you don't gel for whatever reason. You don't, may be, as a lack of respect, like so even if someone's putting in the effort. And maybe the efforts are coming from different places or you have different points of view or different ideas. I think that bit can also be very, very tricky to to manage and handle." (PEF1)
- o Difference in learning styles
  - ♣ "As I am a very independent learner and hold myself to a high standard, therefore I can find it difficult to work with people who perhaps aren't as motivated as I am, or who do not stick to deadlines." (UGW2), as opposed to respondents who learn more socially—" I love it for me, like I I'm an extrovert. I get a lot from other people. I love that I can bounce ideas off other people. So for me I find that actually, I'm more effective when I when I collaborate than when I work alone." (PEF1)
- o Inappropriate group size
  - ♣ "... we were only in a group of three, whereas in the past I've done groups of like 6 and stuff which I just don't think works at this level." (UGF4)
- o Inappropriate group activities and outputs corresponding to group size
  - ♣ "I think in that one there just like wasn't enough work almost for like the entire group to do was like we had to create this map. But really, that was just like it's just like simpler if just one person creates the map rather than lots of different people doing it. And then there's like a very small write up. It was really kind of more tailored probably to like two people. But we're in a group of about five, I think. So it wasn't even some

people couldn't really contribute, but it wasn't necessarily because they, like, didn't want to put in the effort, they just. It was just simpler for a couple people to do it." (UGI6)

- o Respondents were more concerned if the group work involved assessments, and felt the unequal contributions were not recognised by grades that tended to assess the group homogenously

  - ♣ "... maybe because there was a grade coming out of it, like when you do it for work, you're just like, well, this is my job. I'm just going to get on with it like, whatever. Whereas when you're getting a grade and just your masters and you know, if you were having to put way more work in than someone else and you're getting the same grade, that was the first time I'd ever experienced that. And I think that it has maybe, made me slightly wary of group work." (PEF1)

- Group dynamics and lack of familiarity or rapport between group members

  - o "I think group project is a task which should, which depends more on who you are working with." (PEI4)

  - o "When there's a group of people you know and you're the only person who's like, maybe not a friend or maybe from a different background, then it ends up being, you know, your, you know, your decisions, your thoughts, your suggestions or always pushed aside." (PEF3)

  - o "I suppose, to add on to [PEF3]'s part actually that the whole idea of how like whether you work well together or not, you know, sometimes when you can make that choice and you're choosing to work with someone that you know, you do work very effectively with, it can be a very valuable experience." (PEF1)

  - o

- Managing time and group schedules

  - o "... when you do give people when everyone kind of gets a section to do. I think getting it in at the same time like if we set a date, it's not always like that everyone gets it in at that time and I think that can be a challenge because obviously there's a reason why we've agreed on that day and it's like that we have enough time to go over and check it before the actual deadline. So I feel like that's probably the only challenge that I've really run into with group work." (UGI5)

- Being typecast into particular roles within the group, thereby not allowing for team members to explore diverse strengths, interests and capabilities

  - o "It's a generic concern. It's that not by like I have a specific experience into that but like there might be a tendency, in the next project like people expect you to do the same things without, you experiencing or or, probably realising your other capabilities as well, so." (PEF2)

Ingredients required for students to have a positive group work experience

- Group dynamics: It does not matter whether they know each other, but being able to communicate and having shared expectations informed their experience. Sometimes, having the choice to select their groups also informed whether they had an overall positive experience of the group exercise or not.
    - ο "Generally when when we were able to like, choose the people, we're in a group with that generally worked a lot better like I had a piece of group work at the start of this year where we made a group poster. For one of our modules in semester one and that worked really well because we we, yeah, we all went out to like a museum together and we all picked one made like a group decision, went around the museum, decided together, came to a group choice like discussed it before. We divided up the work quite nicely and everybody actually did did their bit and we kind of bounced ideas off each of us as well, like brought it together into one cohesive poster and that like, did work. So in that instance, when, like people actually did do the group work, it worked. It worked well." (UGI6)
    - ο Respectful interactions between teammates is crucial, especially but not limited to high conflict situations—"I think in terms a few things that I've mentioned, one in terms of the kind of conflict over wanting to maybe do things differently and having different opinions. And I think with that when, you are, you're respecting the person because you know you see that they are putting the work in. They're caring about, you know, the group work It's a lot easier to be able to manage that conflict." (PEF1)
    - ο Allowing scope, space and time for teammates to build rapport with each other—" Also just to reiterate [PEF3]'s point as well about the values and actually one person can't change that and we do these in such a short amount of time. You know, if we were a group right from the beginning of the year and we had a chance to actually bond and get to know each other, and find ways to build those values and share that. It would be fine, but we're having to do this within a couple of weeks and you can't. You can't change it in that amount of time." (PEF1)
- Group size: Having the appropriate group size for the intended activities and outcomes also has a bearing on informing the group dynamics, and how effectively work can be distributed between teammates
- Communication and setting expectations
    - ο This also involves clear planning of the roles and responsibilities that will be undertaken by every group member, as well as timelines to share with teammates: "So like when I know we're engaging in Group work, I can plan things in advance. I know what I'm going to do, what everybody else is going to

do, how that's going to work together. I really like to, you know, think ahead, you know, to just like to avoid any issues that might happen." (PEF3)

- o "... we've overcome them through... I mean it sounds like a bit formal, more formal than it actually was, but like setting expectations? Like, no, actually we want to do the work. We want to have it done before this. But it's never really like as formal as that. It's more just like the the way the fact that more people want to do it on their timetable." (UGI1)

- o "Actually I think we must communicate with them first. Because it's a group work, everyone should take their responsibility... Yeah, but communication is very important." (PEI4)

- Hands-on and consistent involvement of the course convenors reassured students of not just what needs to be done, but also that they knew how much effort their individual contributions led to

  - o "I don't want to say we were like managed by the instructors, but they were involved in the process and that kind of puts pressure on other students no matter how little work they're doing, they are putting in some effort, whereas if there wasn't any supervision, I don't think it would have been the same. Because imagine without having, you know, the instructor, [if] they weren't there. I know they weren't there, like recording everything, but they were there on like our shared drive. They know how we're communicating and they're asking us in the middle how things are going and why we're choosing certain, you know, making certain decisions and that kind of like, I feel like it makes people work more than they would work if they weren't supervised." (PEF3)

- Students more anxious and sceptical of group work if a significant portion of their assessment is tied to it. Many of the undergraduate respondents categorically mentioned that they are not too keen to select courses that involve a significant group work component that is tied to assessment, as grades appear to be a major consideration for them as they enter their third year.

  - o "You know sometimes when I'm having a bad experience with group work, I wonder like what's the real value of, you know, group work in a masters when it's graded, because I feel like unless you know as a as a university, generally you are putting in, you have all the tools to make sure that I am not being you know. You know, my grades are not at risk, then maybe group work shouldn't be a thing because. I feel like it might be very difficult to prove some things that are happening if you're not. If you don't already have the tools." (PEF3)

  - o "I did struggle with my pressures because I think, oh, maybe I have done something not so good that may have influence on our final assessments and on our final marks because my I think my teammates was so excellent, so I felt—Oh. I'm worried that if my contributions wasn't good enough, it was negatively affect our group's overall score. And while collaboration itself was

good for learning the assessment aspect sometimes create anxiety for me."
(PEI4)

- Stakes of students' outputs inform their interest
    o "Maybe we took it more seriously because we were actually going to interview
       people outside of university, whereas usually if it's just like, make a poster, no
       one really cares." (UGF4)
- Strong leadership to hold teammates accountable
    o "I kind of did just become a bit of a control freak at the end. The stuff that
       everyone put into the document to submit, I wasn't really happy with. So they
       let me edit it. So I think sometimes it rides on someone just being, "oh, my God.
       I'll just do it."" (UGF4)
    o "I think well, sometimes it's just like persistence, just like keep messaging
       people keep kind of badgering people until they do do stuff. There was one,
       there was one group work where it worked quite well because we had
       somebody in our group who was like kind of like a very kind of eager key and
       confident personality, who was like very good at kind of delegating roles and
       stuff to people. And that one worked quite well. But again that was a group
       work where there was like allotted times that the university had made. So we go
       to a designated computer lab to actually do it as opposed to one where we had
       to organise our own times." (UGI6)
    o "Actually one of the things that [PEF3] did that was brilliant was to get every
       meeting we had, everyone took on the leading that meeting and it forced the
       other people in the group to actually have to step up. So that was actually a
       really valuable strategy that did help. And we were able to like model it initially.
       And then when the others who weren't maybe as confident or as interested
       when it was their turn. Yeah, that that definitely was a strategy that did did
       help." (PEF1)
    o "I think it helped that UGF3 and UGW2 would really organise, so it made it easy
       to, I don't know, get along with it. I guess also you need kind of people who can
       take control. Of a group, I'd say I'm not a person. That would be like lest you,
       whereas other people are. So it's always handy to have someone who's happy
       to, like, organise it or I don't know, kind of like a leader in a way." (UGF3). "it's a
       shame for you that UGW2 isn't in this call because I really think that <they> sort
       of led us. <They were> very good at communicating with the people we spoke
       to and stuff. So, yeah, I agree that it It was good to have like a leader. I think that
       what the research that we did in Prague to me felt exactly the same as group
       projects in the past, just we just got lucky with the people that we did it with. I
       don't know if I necessarily felt like I approached it differently. I just the people I
       was approaching it with also they wanted to do well." (UGF4)
    o "... if the group was well managed and also determines on on determined by
       who is managing the group. I mean, if the managers are sort of the organiser of

the group or the core member of the group is a knowledgeable person on the topic." (PEF2)

Students' experience with project-oriented group work

- Collaborative learning environment
  - "... this group projects was designed by Louisa and Carl, and they also divided us into different group according to our levels, and even according to our diverse backgrounds. So I really learned many from my teammates. Especially the the discussion[s] we had as a group were really helpful hearing from other people's perspectives and thoughts really pushed me to think about the issues from multi angles and in much deep greater depths." (PEI4)
  - "Yeah, I had similar feelings or similar experience with [PEF1] where I felt how to say like felt like probably other teammates needs more support, but I also had opposite experience. Where in a group so, where my team mates were really, really experienced in researching and in the field and I was the one who was being supported." (PEF2)
  - "We like created a project and then presented it as a group, was also a like of a positive way of doing it because I mean. Just like the overall workload was a bit lower and presenting on your own is always like a bit more intimidating than doing it as a group. So, it kind of showed the the positives of group work, pretty clearly." (UGI1)
  - "To be honest, I think this project is the best projects in my my studying and the biggest benefit was how much I learned through this project because I I can get diverse perspective[s] from my teammates just as mentioned before and I think Lisa was really powerful for, for this subject, like social justice, where understanding diverse viewpoints viewpoint is very important." (PEI4)
- Opportunity to learn a lot from each other in a short amount of time
  - "For this course, I feel like I learnt a lot more than I would have learned if I did my research alone because you know, you get people they're interested in different things, researching different aspects of, you know, whatever it is we're looking at then and at the same time, it's a very short amount of time. So you learn a lot. You learn a way more, but at the same time I feel like. With this course it was different because it was managed and everybody had to do the work." (PEF3)
- Peer learning in a more equal environment
  - "... but here I feel like we are here or equal peers. We are all learners in a field, especially in a field that I'm not familiar with. So I feel like I learned a lot more here when everybody works as an equal instead of like the previous dominant role that I was taking in my job. So I would say it was really, it was a really new experience for me, but I quite like it." (PEF2)

- o Respondents also observed that an equal environment was a respectful environment—" I feel like in this group work, there was a lot of respect which that meant. But yeah, even when at times I was like, oh, I wouldn't really do it like that. It didn't matter because I think it was easy enough to kind of have that backwards and forwards to, to come to an agreement and and to be OK with doing something, maybe not the way I do it. Because again, like you're learning from each other, aren't you?" (PEF1)
- Collaborative work but appropriate assessment
  - o "I think this class has definitely put a more positive spin on groupwork for me - especially as it is the type of groupwork that you conduct together, but are assessed on differently." (UGW2)
- Opportunity to be well organised
  - o "Yeah, but what I liked about, you know, this, this group work was that it worked well because we got to plan in advance." (PEF3)
  - o "I think it helped that UGF3 and UGW2 would really organise, so it made it easy to, I don't know, get along with it. I guess also you need kind of people who can take control. Of a group, I'd say I'm not a person. That would be like lest you, whereas other people are. So it's always handy to have someone who's happy to, like, organise it or I don't know, kind of like a leader in a way." (UGF3)
  - o And have necessary tools like a shared folder to organise and keep track of teammates' contributions—" in this course, for example, I really liked it because they were there on the shared folder so they can see who added what. What did you write in the document? When did you add that? So if something comes up there is a tool. There's like a managing tool that they can use to go and look back and see what actually happened." (PEF3)
- Involvement of course coordinators
  - o "I remember Craig saying stuff or like saying you should plan to meet before and I think we kind of just did those things. But him kind of initiating it or instigating those ideas to meet kind of helped us follow through. So I suppose if he was maybe more strict or said you guys have to plan this before and maybe it would have more people would have met and been a bit more organised." (UGF3)
  - o "You know the instructors involvement as well within it and that they were very hands on, they're always sitting and chatting to us, checking in. They wanted to see how like you know, someone was saying about, you know, Google Drive and our documents, they wanted to really see what we were doing. So actually as an overall experience, I'm I was very satisfied with it and I found it a very valuable experience." (PEF1)
- Ability to choose teammates (especially those with a similar 'work ethic' and shared interests

- o "... we picked the group ourselves and I think that's pretty helpful because I feel like as as a course geography, everybody knows each other. So you know what you're getting into. If you're placed with certain people and like in positive and negative ways. So being able to pick that for ourself is quite useful." (UGI1)
- o "I would say with Prague it was probably my most, probably most positive piece of group work. My most positive experience so far. Again, I think because we could like we could choose our groups with that. That was definitely a positive because I got on really well with my over two group makes. I knew that they'd like be willing to put in the effort." (UGI6)
- The project oriented nature of the group work allowed respondents to see through a project from inception until completion, which some pointed out as a satisfying experience
  - o "I think having a project that you design with a group from scratch, then actually being able to implement it in the field and have a completed write-up afterwards can be said to be satisfactory. It's nice to see all of the stages, from initial brainstorming to completion of a project." (UGW2)
- Ability to build rapport with teammates
  - o "Like I really for me that is my learning style like small class is very relational you you have a chance actually build a relationship with the lecturers and so that when you're getting into that I'm actually with your classmates as well. So you know it's not just yes, you've got your smaller group that you're collaborating with, but they're still, you know, moments where you're able to collaborate with different people in the group." (PEF1)
- For respondents from geography, the location of the group work significantly influenced their experience
  - o "I think it was good that all of us in our group had to do it all together while we were there and then the write up being like separate things, it was like, well, if you don't do it, it's not on anyone else. It's just on you. So I think that that was definitely good." (UGI5)
  - o "I think I found it more satisfactory in a sense because it was like you actually go out and do it rather than just like researching stuff and then like putting it into an essay. So I think in that sense, you know, because everyone really did have to get involved, there wasn't really, like, any shying away from, you know, collecting the data and stuff, so I think it was a really good like trip and really satisfying work that we got out of it." (UGI5)
- Despite an overwhelmingly positive experience with group work, some of the respondents found certain experiences challenging
  - o The poor motivation among peers persisted, and this impacted the amount of effort and time that they had to invest in the group work activities—"In the meetings, you're the one that is, you know, leading it. You're the ones that you know you're trying to get other people involved, and they've got cameras off.

They're not speaking. You don't even know if they are actually there. Then when you set tasks, they come back and all they've done is put it through ChatGPT, and they come back and like, well, you don't really understand this. They've brought or they've done something that's not at all what we were discussing. So that was the bit that was a real struggle... I felt like that was it was a bit of a waste of my time, like, you know. In my Group, me and the other person who were working together, I think at times we were like, it was just the two of us. We probably could have done the whole thing within about 1/3 of the hours we actually spent on it because we were spent a lot of time trying to guide and support the others" (PEF1)

o Group members continued to use AI for their group tasks, as a way to minimise their engagement in group interactions. These AI-generated outputs did not necessarily support the objectives of the group task—"...everybody just copy pasted from ChatGPT and when I would ask questions because I'm trying to understand the context they're like, "I don't really know the background, I don't really know. Yeah, I just used ChatGPT." So I feel like, you know, it's the lack of engagement and like the availability of these tools that you know people can use, you can use it in an ethical way, and you can also use it this way. But at the same time, there's nothing I can do about it because our timeline was already very short." (PEF3)

o Given the limited amount of time allocated for the group activity, participants felt more anxious about making mistakes—" And so if you don't get it right, get it like perfectly right on the 1st attempt when you divide it all up, it can...obviously it's a a small project, but I would imagine it can spiral if you if you can't pick up the slack." (UGI1)