

# [Developing trust and cohesiveness in multidisciplinary team](https://assignbuster.com/developing-trust-and-cohesiveness-in-multidisciplinary-team/)

XNB172 Nutrition and Physical Activity

Assessment item number 1 – Case Study Part B Reflection Template

1. Team Strength Identified: High Level of Cohesion, Communication & Trust

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| Reporting and responding  |
| Over the past semester, I have worked in a multi-disciplinary group to complete two case studies pertaining to nutrition and physical activity theory. Throughout the assessment period my group retained a high level of cohesion and trust, which can be attributed to open communication. Unfortunately, this was not an antecedent to productivity and while considered a strength, may have hindered our performance. As soon as the group formed in week two, we appreciated that the assigned task was underpinned by reciprocal interdependence. In order to be successful, we were aware that our meetings could not be ad hoc events and we needed to increase the electronic proximity between us. Consequently, we were quick to schedule weekly meetings outside of our tutorial time and set up a Facebook group. Despite our strong group drive, however, we were almost stopped in our tracks by our fifth member’s unexpected departure in week four. Nevertheless, due to the cohesive ties we had already built and the trust we had for each other, we were undaunted by this initial setback. This is why I consider cohesion and trust to be essential teamwork skills. I believe we exceeded in this area, yet in hindsight, perhaps we only remained unphased as we had produced very little content for the assignment. In theory, attending weekly meetings in addition to tutorial sessions seems productive and an effective means of tackling the assignment on hand. At least, this is what I believed at the time. In retrospect, the constant ‘ assignment catch ups’ were merely a safety blanket and at times, a complete disguise to the fact we were not making any decent progress.  |
| Relating  |
| Humans are not solitary beings and we have an innate ability to collaborate (Vosmer, 2012; Melis & Tomasello, 2013). When this is tapped into by just one or two members of a team, like in this experience, it becomes truly apparent how contagious enthusiasm in teamwork is. Up until now I have believed that high enthusiasm directly correlates to high productivity; however, this group experience was unlike any I have encountered before. In past groups, when absenteeism and accountability has been a problem, it could almost always be attributed to a lack of enthusiasm by a group member. In these scenarios, I would encourage members to express their ideas and try to form a collective group drive. Generally this would suffice as it would increase productivity. Nevertheless, the problem in this incident was characterised by low productivity level in the presence of enthusiasm and high group drive. This scenario was unique in that my team members were so dedicated to the task that they would attend a morning meeting every week, but then do very little work at the meeting and even less at home. Interesting, however, was the fact that meeting up once a week garnered a great deal of trust amongst one another. I admit I have a predisposition to look at things through rose-coloured glasses, but this reassured me that my group members did have good intentions at heart. Rather than brainstorm ideas on how to increase productivity, which I would have done in a group with less cohesion, we opted for enhancing interpersonal microskills such as rapport and honesty. I knew if a member had not completed a task they had been assigned, it was more beneficial for the group to know the truth and thus assist. As a result, we fostered an environment where communication was so open and there was such a high degree of trust among members that conflict never arose.  |
| Reasoning  |
| At a superficial level, it appears odd that group drive coupled with high cohesion and trust could impede on productivity. In fact, these very concepts have long been heralded as cornerstones to quality teamwork (Offermann & Rosh, 2012; Greene, 1989). Nonetheless, this phenomena has been found in a plethora of studies and is conducive with the process of groupthink, a concurrence-seeking tendency that impedes on group decision making (Erdem, 2003; Mullen et al, 1994; Stodgill, 1972; Tziner, 1982). After analysing the literature, it becomes apparent that my group experienced a mild form of groupthink. Despite our best intentions to create an environment in our meetings to efficiently bounce ideas off each other and trigger discussion, we created a task-stagnant environment. According to Bernthal and Insko, we unintentionally created a social-emotional group as opposed to a task-oriented group (1993). This was exacerbated by the fact we were a newly formed team with no previous experience together and thus tried to avoid conflict.  |
| Reconstructing  |
| They say too much of a good thing can be harmful and, as evident in my most recent group experience, cohesion and trust are no exception. My previous experience lead me to believe that if these qualities are rife, it would heighten our team’s success. So I helped foster this behaviour. Indeed, I now believe our group’s greatest strength eventuated into one of our greatest weaknesses. As a newly formed team, I knew we would need to grow organically as a working alliance; however, I did not realise our failure to mature in time. As a consequence of this, I plan to strike an optimal level of cohesion and trust among my next team. While team members should be trusted and have a right to express their views freely, they should also retain a degree of scepticism, inquiry and critique (Erdem, 2003). I have also become aware of the importance of conducting productive team meetings. It is not merely enough to schedule in days and then attend meetings, if those sessions have not been effectively planned (Weinstein, 2003). By learning from this experience, I aim to prevent groupthink in the future and thus, positively impact on future group performances.  |

1. Team weakness identified: Lack of Goals & Collaboration

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| Reporting and responding  |
| As previously established, the strengths of my group lead to the groupthink phenomena and thus, decreased productivity. They also created a knock-on-effect, which impeded on our collaborative efforts and thwarted our personal opinions. It is ironic that we tried so hard to achieve high levels of communication and managed to form great cohesive ties, yet failed to work as a cohesive unit. We were well aware of the reciprocal interdependence the assessment piece demanded of us, yet produced a final case study that was merely a collation of different group members’ ideas. Unfortunately, I then struggled to raise my concerns regarding these discrepancies in the assessment as the group norm was not to disrupt the cohesion or create a hierarchy. This lack of consistency within our assessment piece could have easily been rectified if we had set goals and exploited the fact we were a multi-disciplinary team.  |
| Relating  |
| From past experience, I was aware of the importance of setting out priorities and establishing a shared goal early on. In my last group assignment, we managed to effectively build common ground, which allowed team members to set out goals, determine positions in the group and create a purpose. Unfortunately, despite utilising a group contract to iron out tasks, there was still confusion about the purpose and the desired outcomes within this group. These differences in goals became obvious in our assessment piece, with each individual section hinting at a different overall conclusion. Moreover, as a multi-disciplinary team of four, we had so much potential to merge our disciplines of Nutrition & Dietetics and Exercise Science into a collaborative branch. I do not believe each member’s strengths were effectively utilised and consequently, this group lacked the synergy and cross-fertilisation of skills I have experienced previously. In past groups, we adopted a similar ‘ divide and conquer’ approach but, unlike my group for this assessment, we took advantage of our differences and sources of weakness. In essence, we lacked any true leadership roles this semester, which should have been assigned at the start along with our goal setting – a process we completely ignored. In saying so, I should have expressed these opinions to my group members. While we had open communication, the groupthink mentality misguided us and as a result, I held back on fully expressing myself to keep the peace. This also relates to the fact I am the youngest in my family and among some very strong personalities, I tend to sit back and become a fence-sitter. There is no doubt this impacts on the way I communicate in groups and I believe it helped foster the groupthink mentality of ‘ keeping the peace’.  |
| Reasoning  |
| Multi-disciplinary groups are imperative among health care practitioners and are generally more effective at incorporating evidence-based care and considering all treatment options (Atwal & Jones, 2007; Ellis, 2012). They allow a comprehensive and holistic view of the scenario, which would have been particularly useful when completing the case studies for this assignment. Indeed, a collaborative approach like this allows the pooling of collective knowledge and forms the crux of effective team learning (Andersson & Liff, 2012; Nahrgang et al., 2013). Unfortunately, I believe goal setting was the underlying feature missing in this group. As no time was set aside for goal setting in group formation, information was not appropriately disseminated and thus effective collaboration could have not taken place. Understanding of other group members’ roles in addition to the provision of goals has been proven to significantly support group cooperation. Conversely, lack of management and leadership can hinder this process (Kleingeld, van Mierlo & Arends, 2011). Though we tried to lay out specific learning goals at the beginning, these were disregarded and towards the end of semester they had morphed into general “ do your best” learning goals. Nahrgang et al. found these general goals can restrict a group’s coordination and collaboration and I believe this is what occurred (2013).  |
| Reconstructing  |
| Rather than focus on building cohesion from the moment of group formation, my group should have outlined our aims and assigned a team leader. After all, research suggests that a group’s acceptance of organisational goals is antecedent to cohesion and productivity and this what we all essentially aimed for despite having never verbalised it (Greene, 1989). When I engage in similar experiences in the future, I will ensure time is set aside during group formation to set goals, discuss purpose and assign leadership roles. By approaching the assessment from the same angle, all group members will be able to effectively collaborate as a single unit. Furthermore, goal setting will ensure tasks are designated to members to specifically utilise their strengths and thus the diversity of knowledge seen in a multi-disciplinary group. Importantly, by setting out specific learning goals at the beginning, the group will decrease susceptibility to groupthink and consequently, improve productivity.  |

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Appendix

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| Evaluating teamwork processes rating scale  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Process Rank = 1  |  |  |  |  |  | Process Rank = 5  |
| Goals & objectives There is confusion about the purpose and the desired outcomes  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | Team members understand and agree on goals and objectives  |
| Trust and conflict There is little trust among members and conflict is evident  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | There is a high degree of trust among members and conflict is dealt with openly and worked through  |
| Expression of differences Disagreements produce defensive reactions  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | Disagreements do not arouse defensive reactions  |
| Leadership One person dominates and leadership roles are not shared  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | There is full participation in leadership; leadership roles are shared by members  |
| Control and procedures There is little control and there is a lack of procedures to guide team functioning  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | There are effective procedures to guide team functioning; team members support these procedures and regulate themselves  |
| Utilisation of resources All members are not recognised and/or utilised  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | Member resources are fully recognised and utilised  |
| Interpersonal communication Communications between members are closed and guarded  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | Communications between members are open participative  |
| Listening The team members do not listen to each other  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | The team members actively listen to each other  |
| Flow of communication The discussion required a great deal of backtracking and reorienting  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | The discussion moved forward with succeeding points built on previous ones  |
| Problem solving/Decision making The team has no agreed-on approaches to problem solving and decision making  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | The team has well-established and agreed-on approaches to problem solving and decision making  |
| Experimentation and creativity The team is rigid and does not experiment with how things are done  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | The team experiments with different ways of doing things and is creative in its approach  |
| Evaluation The team never evaluates its functioning or processes  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | The group often evaluates its functionality and processes  |
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(Reference: Southern Cross University Division of Teaching and Learning (2013) Southern Cross University Teamwork Guide. Downloaded from scu. edu. au/teachinglearning/download. php? doc\_id= 12945 on 18th February 2014)

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