

# Module Overview: Working in Teams

When we think of journalists, we often imagine that stereotypical journalist who we see portrayed in film and television, working alone, pursuing leads, doing interviews and reporting on a story. And to a great degree the lone journalist serves as a mental model of what it means to be a journalist for many students as they start their education and training. The reality, however, is much different. Journalism requires teamwork. From the reporter to the photojournalist to the editor to the production staff and beyond, doing good journalism means collaborating with lots of different people. The challenge is to help journalists learn how to be not just ethical and effective journalists but ethical and effective team members.

The ubiquity of working in groups and teams means that we often misunderstand the nature of that work. Too often we are just put into a group and told “go make this thing happen” with little guidance and little experience to navigate the complexity of working with others. We don’t just want the groups we are a part of to be a small number of people working independently on the same project at the same time. We want our group work to be collaborative, productive, supportive and effective. This takes practice.

The focus of this module is on how to incorporate effective and ethical group and teamwork into already existing courses and assignments while simultaneously helping students learn to work in teams effectively.

## Module Content

### Case study

Gregory P. Perreault discusses the importance of teamwork for successful journalism and looks at very different cases of effective teamwork: the Covering Climate Now team founded by Columbia Journalism Review and The Nation magazine, and the college newspaper The Appalachian’s COVID-19 coverage.

### Teaching the Module: Working in Teams

This teaching note provides guidance for incorporating practices and processes that create and sustain effective teamwork into a course or assignment. It also offers suggestions for how to use the assignments and activities related to working in groups and teams.

### Working in Teams Assignments and Activities

“Previous Team Experience Discussion” is designed to give students an opportunity to reflect on their worst and best group work experiences and then to begin to articulate what they see as best practices for their team project.

The “Team Honor Code” activity is designed to facilitate conversation among group members before a team project begins. Students are prompted to have careful conversations related to how they will work together, how they will communicate with each other, and what happens if conflict arises. Students produce a team honor code contract that codifies how they plan on working successfully together.

The “Self-Evaluation of Team Leadership” activity is designed to give each student in a group or team the opportunity to serve as team leader. In this way, group leadership is shared across all team members. Additionally, students learn about their own leadership and followership as well as how to be effective group members working with different leaders.

“Team Work Plans and Team Reflection Responses” help teams function as effective, collaborative and successful teams as the team project unfolds. In groups, students are asked to set weekly goals for their project and individually reflect on how the work of the previous week has happened.

The “Team Member Evaluation” assignment asks students to evaluate themselves and their team members after a project has been completed.

### **Video**

Pulitzer Prize-winning editor Katrice Hardy speaks at the 2022 International Symposium on Online Journalism about teamwork.

### **Supplementary Materials**

This book has two chapters — one on working in teams and another on managing conflict — that instructors can draw from to illustrate some of the key concepts and frameworks related to working in teams and managing conflict. They can also be assigned reading for students.

Whetten, David A. and Kim S. Cameron, “Developing Management Skills,” 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston: Pearson, 2016. See Chapter 9, “Building Effective Teams and Teamwork,” (pp. 402-427) and Chapter 7, “Managing Conflict,” (pp. 305-332).

This book describes research on effective teams and offers insights about best practices for groups and teams.

LaFasto, Frank, Frank MJ LaFasto, and Carl Larson. “When Teams Work Best: 6,000 Team Members and Leaders Tell What It Takes to Succeed.” Sage, 2001.