

## The building blocks for successful group-work experiences in intensive learning environments

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The rapid pace of intensive learning programs creates challenges for students to establish effective cooperative learning strategies that facilitate learning in group-work scenarios (Vreven et al., 2007). 235 first-year university students completed surveys following the same group-work task (inquiry-based learning assessment) implemented for three different topics (one week apart). Five key elements of cooperative learning (positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal skills, and group/self-evaluation) and students' perceived learning (rating of competency and challenge) were evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale. Skilling's Mack test evaluated if repetition of the same group task influenced ratings of cooperative learning. Further, multiple linear regression assessed the relationship between students' perceived learning and cooperative learning elements. Interpersonal skills and group/self-evaluation rated higher than positive interdependence (both  $p < 0.001$ ), accountability (both  $p < 0.001$ ) and face-to-face interaction (both  $p < 0.001$ ) and was not influenced by task repetition ( $p > 0.05$ ). Students perceived competency increased when group/self-evaluation was higher ( $\beta = 1.15$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and students perceived challenge was lower when accountability was higher ( $\beta = -0.87$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Educators who incorporate group-work activities in intensive learning programs should implement targeted strategies for increasing student accountability and group/self-evaluation to maximize learning potential.

### References

- Vreven, D., & McFadden, S. (2007). An empirical assessment of cooperative groups in large, time-compressed, introductory courses. *Innovative Higher Education*, 32, 85-92.