



Dealing with Academic Dishonesty in Group Projects

Managing Student Teams as a Means to Prevent Free-Riding & Impart Collaborative Competence in College Students

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Teamwork Skills & Collaborative Competence

- Essential for the workplace
 - Organization of work in teams is typical in the workplace
 - Teamwork imparts transferrable ‘soft’ skills, e.g. communication, leadership, conflict resolution, etc.
 - Collaborative competence

- Pedagogy
 - Allows assignment of more complex tasks (e.g. business plan)
 - Experiential learning and student engagement
 - Peer learning

(see, for example, Davies, 2009; Hansen, 2006; Maiden & Perry, 2011; Peterson, 2012; Swaray, 2012, etc.)



Teamwork Challenges

- Typical teamwork ills
 - Interpersonal conflicts
 - Coordination or process losses
 - **Social loafing & free riding**

- In HE context, exacerbated by
 - Tendency of many faculty to use groupwork in order to reduce workload (Davies, 2009)
 - ‘Failure to instruct’ or manage the team process (e.g. Hansen, 2006; Peterson, 2012)



Social Loafing & Free Riding

- Social loafing: “A decrease in individual effort due to the social presence of other persons” (Latané et al., 1979: 823)

- Free riding: “An extreme form of social loafing, it describes individuals who consume more than a fair share of resources without taking on the costs of production” (Maiden & Perry, 2011: 452)
 - In education: “The problem of the non-performing group member who reaps the benefits of the accomplishments of the remaining group members with little or no cost to him/herself” (Morris & Hayes in Swaray, 2012: 287)



Free Riding vs. Social Loafing

- Confusion in theory about relationship of these concepts
- Many use terms interchangeably (e.g. Hansen, 2006) even when defining them differently (e.g. Maiden & Perry, 2011)
 - Free riding as one pole of a 'social loafing continuum'
- Fewer authors clearly distinguish terms (e.g. Davies, 2009)
- In all cases, agreement that extreme forms of free riding or social loafing are harmful



Free Riding as Academic Dishonesty

- Free riding does not seem to be (explicitly) addressed by many interpretations of academic dishonesty
 - e.g. “...the use or provision of unauthorized means of information in a setting where there are assessment consequences for the performance (Murdock & Beauchamp, 2008: 1)
- Often, it is not listed under ‘typical’ cheating behaviors
- However, several authors do consider free riding as a form of academic dishonesty (e.g. Happel & Jennings, 2008; Lim & See, 2001; Smith & Shen, 2013)



Free Riding as Academic Dishonesty – Cont'd

- “The use or provision of any unauthorized materials or assistance in academic work and/or activities that compromise the assessment process” (Athanasou & Olasehinde in Garavalia et al., 2007: 34).

- Free riders typically compromise the assessment process:
 - Present the outcome of group work as (also) their own
 - Mislead instructors in terms of their contribution
 - May receive an undeserved grade for work not performed
 - ⇒ Should be sanctioned, e.g. by ‘firing’ free rider (e.g. Abernethy & Lett, 2005)

- As often in AI, prevention is more effective than sanction

Preventing Free Riding through 'Managing Teams'

- The literature widely recognizes that team 'context' may have a positive or negative effect on social loafing (e.g. Simms & Nichols, 2014)
 - Team size
 - Nature of task (e.g. task complexity, attractiveness)
 - Intrinsic involvement with the task
 - Identifiability
 - Opportunity to make a unique contribution
 - Feedback on progress or project components
 - Etc.

- ⇒ *Managing* variables related to team context is key!



Managing Student Projects in Practice

- Global Business Management – Level 5 (3rd year)
 - Includes major group project component

- Learning Outcome 5
 - *Demonstrate competence in collaboration, teamwork and presentation skills*

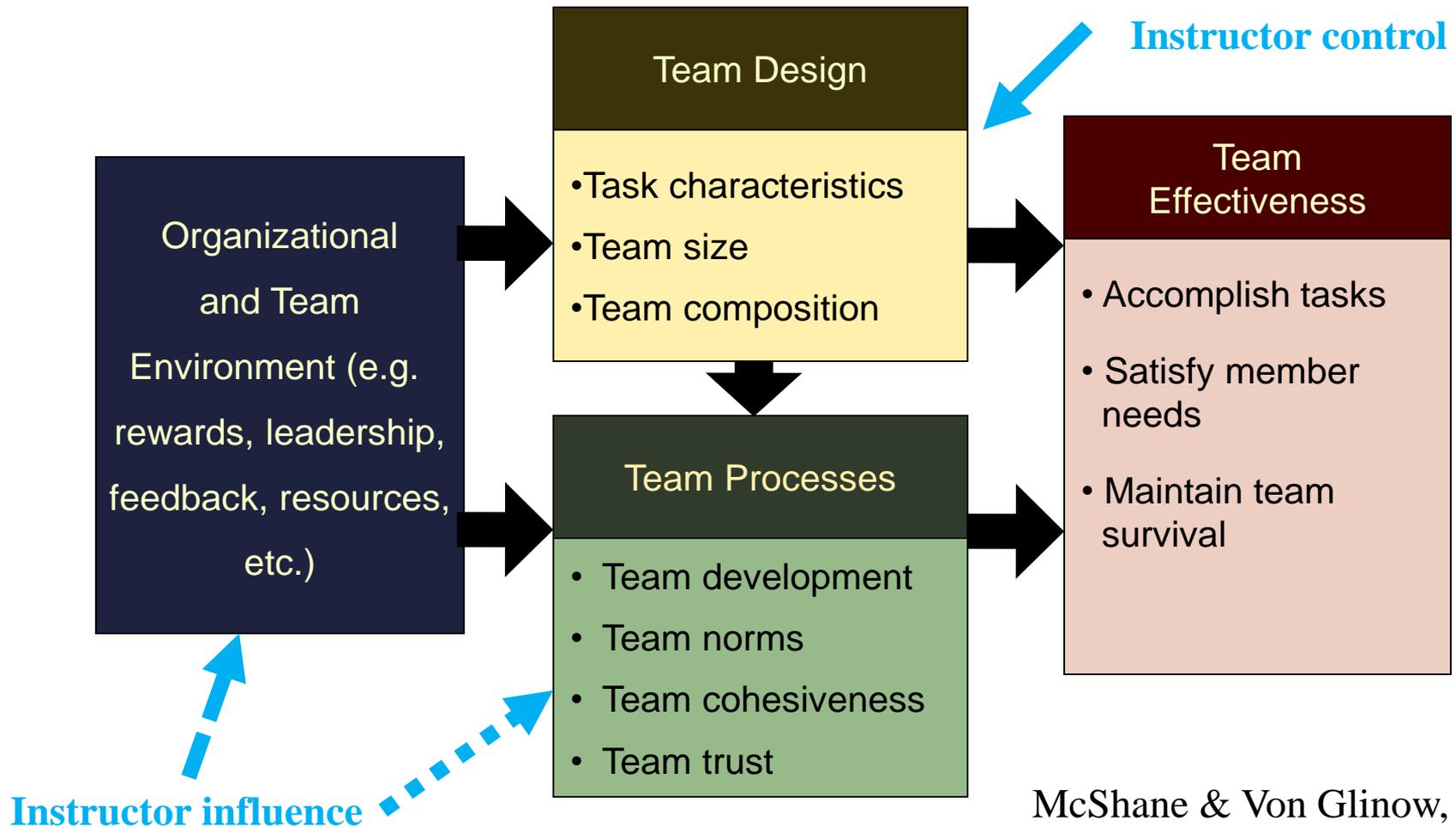
- ⇒ Needs to be taught (as skill)!



The Key Challenge

- *As an instructor (in business) how can I teach teamwork and collaborative competence?*
- *As a 'manager' of a team, what do I need to do to ensure team effectiveness?*

Team Effectiveness Model





Team Design

- Task should be appropriate for group work
 - e.g., development of international business strategy plan for a Greek company for foreign market entry

- Team size
 - Teams of 4 students

- Team composition
 - Instructor selection
 - Selection based on short bios (e.g., IB majors/minors/other majors, gender, etc.)



Team Environment

- Rewards: Group mark to encourage teamwork
 - Project report (40%) and presentation (10%) – group mark
 - Reflective essay – 10% (individual mark)

- Appointment of team leaders
 - Selection based on student ‘application’ and instructor evaluation

- Project supervision and feedback to each team
 - Three planned meetings with the entire team
 - One additional meeting with a team that faced challenges

- Library workshop (APA, databases)



Supporting Team Development

- **Take-home activities:** Engaging students in discussion about teamwork through **BB blogs**
 - **Class activities:** Teamwork ‘workshop’ using **clickers**
 - **Instructor support:** Repeated emphasis on ‘**need to learn to work in teams**’; why teamwork is important in business; engagement with the students
- ⇒ Aimed at:
- Metacognitive understanding of team processes
 - Modelling behavior and/or symbolic behavior
 - Supporting positive team dynamics



Formative activities through BB Blogs

- **Blog 1: Why do I hate group projects? (individual)**
 - ⇒ Deal directly with and discuss negative emotions
 - ⇒ Identification of challenges (in business terms)

- **Blog 2: Group projects in (business) education (individual)**
 - ⇒ Understanding of instructional value of groupwork

- **Blogs 3-6: Actions to address challenges identified in Blog 1 (group)**
 - Minimizing coordination losses
 - Minimizing motivation losses
 - Increasing team cohesiveness
 - Mitigating social loafing (free riding)

Blog 1: Why do I hate group projects? (individual entry)

□ Example of student entry (DP)

- “I am really sorry for missing the deadline for the blog entry, but I just found the strength to express my real feelings about group projects. Well, the truth is (as you might expect) that I am not in favor of this kind of assignment. Personally, I believe that group projects are definitely more time consuming compared to individual projects, because of the fact that you have to deal with the coordination and balance of 3 or 4 persons with different backgrounds, motivations and aspirations. So, the thought of ending up doing everything by myself because of my colleagues laziness or having someone with a bossy behavior over my head is something that really annoys me. Group projects are really challenging, especially when someone has other assignments to do during the same semester, which means no time and patience.”

□ Instructor comment

- “Thank you for your entry, Dimitris, and your honesty. As you probably have read, your concerns are shared by many students and they indeed reflect challenges in teamwork, not only in educational settings, but also in work settings. As discussed in several blog entries, the 'coordination losses' that you describe are typical in teamwork, as are differences in team member motivation and potential conflicts among team members. Your question then is indeed very logical: Why then insist on group projects in (business) education as an instructional/pedagogical approach? I would like to encourage you to find out yourself as required in the second blog. I look forward to reading your findings!”



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Blog 2: Group projects in (business) education (individual entry)

□ Example of student entry (DS)

- “Students may benefit from group projects by developing skills that will be important in their later career life. It is a preparation for possible circumstances that they might face in their work environment. So, by learning how to overcome difficulties of a group work, students gain experience that could be useful in their future business environment. Some of the advantages of group work are the time management, the development of organizational and research skills needed in order to complete a task and the development of communication skills by expressing their own perspective and opinions about the management of a particular project. Finally, by the process of a group project a student realizes more about himself by identifying his strengths and weaknesses. For example in a group someone may be good at coming up with “big ideas” but not so much on implementing them, or another student may be good at giving advice to others but not be suitable as a leader.”

□ Instructor comment

- “Thank you for your excellent entry Dimitris! You highlight important skills that team projects help students develop and as you rightly point out these skills are essential in the working environment in business. Especially insightful is your comment that group projects enable students to learn more about themselves by identifying their strengths and weaknesses, which is facilitated through their interaction with their peers.”



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Blog 5: Mitigating social loafing (group entry)

□ Example of student group entry (StarPacks)

- “Social loafing, as the theoretical term in which people devote less effort when working collectively on a task, is crucial when it comes to team projects as it negatively affects team spirit and collaboration. Three specific ways in which teams can mitigate social loafing are the following:
 - 1) Emphasizing the importance of teamwork, by making individuals feel that they are contributing to the end goal as an integral part of the team.
 - 2) Alternate group roles (i.e., leader, recorder, editor) in order to combat individuality.
 - 3) Provide opportunities to increase collaborative efforts (e.g. frequent team meetings and checks in order to monitor group and individual progress for the project).”

□ Instructor comment

- “Thank you for your entry StarPacks! I really like your approach in responding to the blog. First defining the concept and then specifying three actions as requested. Excellent!”

Blog 3: Minimizing Coordination Losses (group entry)

- Example of student group entry (Global Business Consultants)
 - “Make sure to create an electronic forum of communication where all will be able to communicate with each other without delays. The use of social media is preferable. (Student 1)
 - Post yesterday’s achievements (individual and public). This can help team members to see their individual effort against someone else's. In the end they can motivate themselves to work harder or even ask for help. All team members know what each other has done, hence coordination losses can easily be identified and avoided. (Student 2)
 - Have a weekly teleconference. A skype call can help teams that don't have face-to-face or daily interaction to coordinate their actions more effectively (Student 3)
 - As one of the two dimensions of the Ringelman effect (the other discussed in a following blog) coordination losses can be catastrophic for teams. Managers should form agile teams with a relative small amount of members that have a diverse skills and abilities. Large groups should be divided into subgroups to avoid coordination losses. (Student 4)”

- Instructor comment
 - “Thank you for your thoughtful comments Global Business Consultants! I would have preferred if you developed and discussed your suggestions as a team and then communicated the agreed actions collectively. My intention is that each team discusses these challenges, as you are likely to face these challenges in your team as well, and agree on actions to overcome these challenges. In essence, through this exercise you are developing 'norms of behaviours' that will guide your 'teamwork process'.”

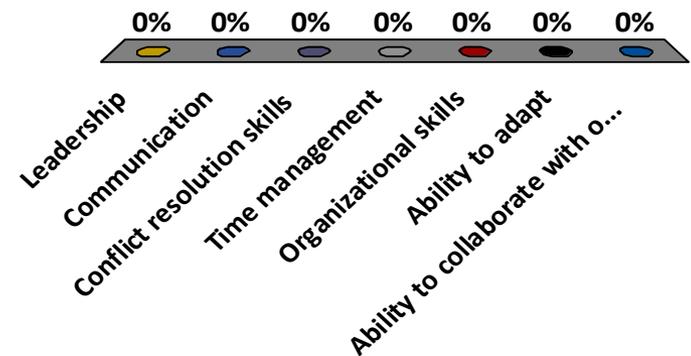


Class Activity: Teamwork Workshop

- Explained goal and rationale of blogs
- Used clickers to poll students on attitudes towards group work and (identified) actions to manage (identified) challenges
- In most cases, answers (multiple choice) were developed on the basis of blog entries
 - Discussion was complemented with teamwork theory
- Goal was to engage students in a discussion about teamwork and related issues in a 'fun' and novel way
- (Very positive overall response)

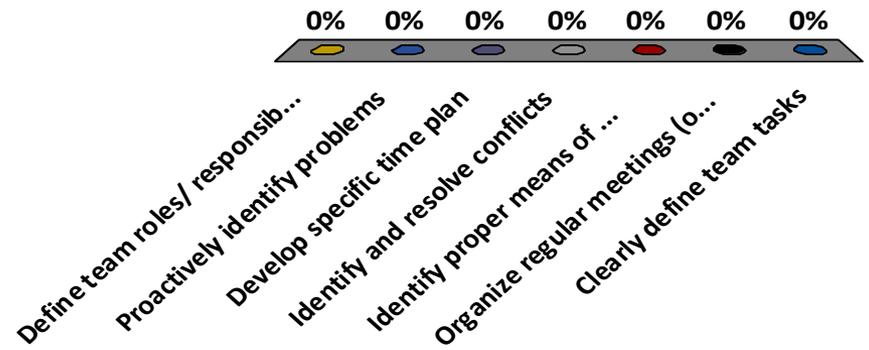
4. Which of the following 'competences' do you believe are enhanced through team projects? (2 choices)

- A. Leadership
- B. Communication
- C. Conflict resolution skills
- D. Time management
- E. Organizational skills
- F. Ability to adapt
- G. Ability to collaborate with others



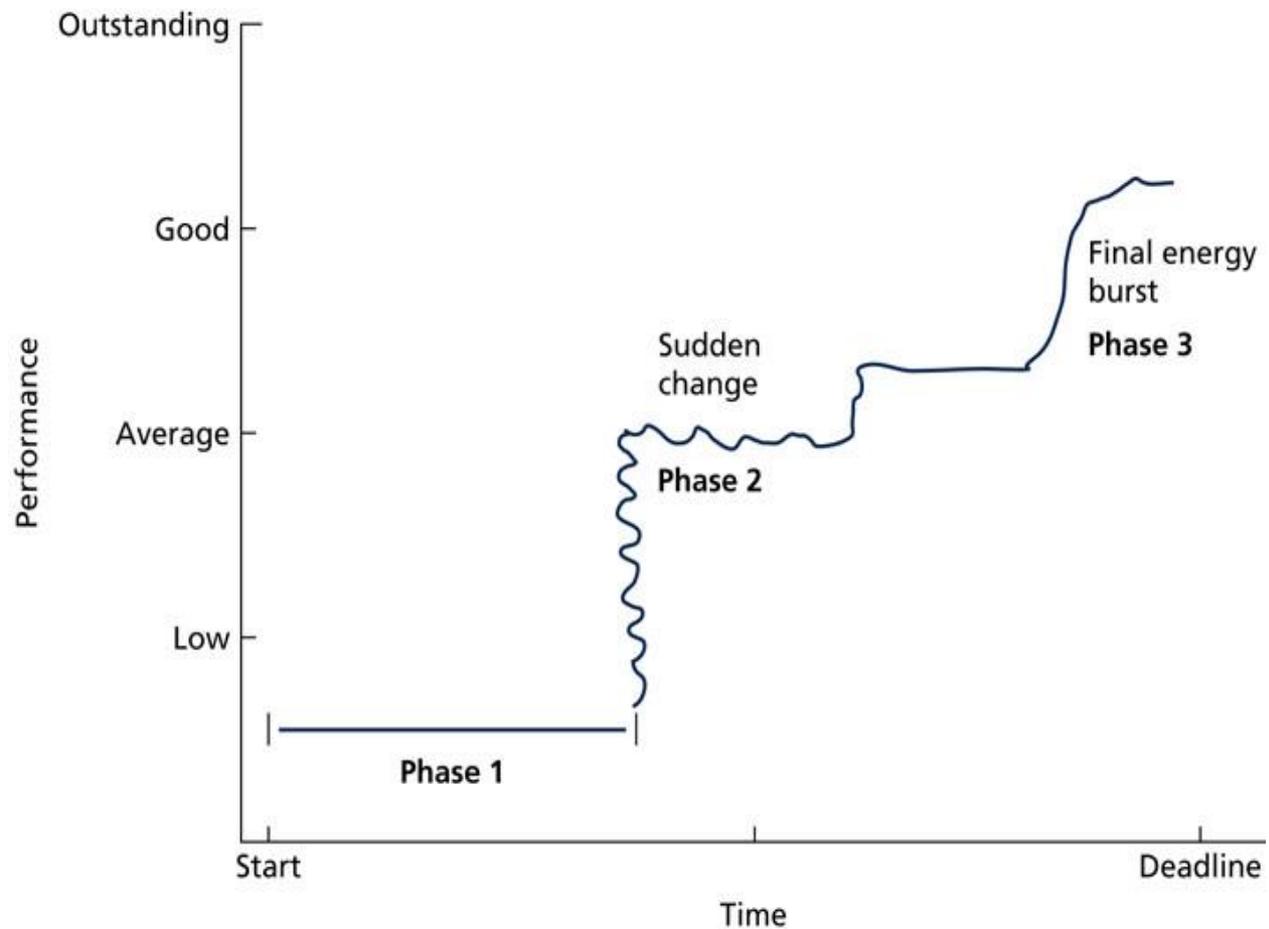
7. Which actions do you consider most effective to minimize coordination losses? (2 choices)

- A. Define team roles/ responsibilities
- B. Proactively identify problems
- C. Develop specific time plan
- D. Identify and resolve conflicts
- E. Identify proper means of communication
- F. Organize regular meetings (online or face-to-face)
- G. Clearly define team tasks



The Punctuated Equilibrium Model

FIGURE 8.1
Approximation of
the Punctuated
Equilibrium Model z





Team Project Outcomes

- Performance of task
 - Project grades: 2As, 1A-, 1B
 - Development of a 'benchmark' project
 - **Students' own perceptions**

- Student satisfaction with teamwork experience

- Team survival

Student Evaluation of Team Performance

	Count	Percent
Very effective	5	38,46%
Effective	7	53,85%
Neutral	1	7,69%
Not effective	0	0%
Not effective at all	0	0%
Total	13	13

Question: How would you rate the effectiveness of your team in meeting its goals?

Note: Marks were not communicated yet.

Satisfaction with Team Project Experience (1)

	Workshop	Final class
Strongly agree	1 (8%)	2 (15%)
Agree	3 (23%)	9 (69%)
Neutral	7 (54%)	1 (8%)
Disagree	1 (8%)	1 (8%)
Strongly disagree	1 (8%)	0
Total	13	13

A green bracket on the right side of the table groups the 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree' rows, with a blue '84%' label pointing to it. A green circle highlights the '7 (54%)' value in the 'Neutral' row for the 'Workshop' column. A red circle highlights the '1 (8%)' value in the 'Disagree' row for the 'Final class' column.

Question: Working in teams is a positive experience.

Satisfaction with Team Project Experience (2)

	Count	Percent
Very satisfied	3	23,08%
Satisfied	9	69,23%
Neutral	1	7,69%
Frustrated	0	0%
Very frustrated	0	0%
Total	13	13

Question: Overall, how satisfied or frustrated are you with this group project experience?



Team Survival

	Count	Percent
Very capable	3	23,08%
Capable	10	79,92%
Neutral	0	0%
Not capable	0	0%
Not capable at all	0	0%
Total	13	13

Question: How would you rate the capability of your team to work together again in a future team project?

Learning Impact

	Count	Percent
Leadership	3	12,5%
Communication	4	16,67%
Conflict resolution skills	3	12,5%
Time management	2	8,33%
Organizational skills	2	8,33%
Ability to adapt	2	8,33%
Ability to collaborate with others	8	33,33%

Question: Which of the following ‘competences’ did you enhance the most through this team project? (2 choices)

Attitudes Towards Team Projects

	Workshop	Final class
Strongly agree	5 (38,5%)	6 (46%)
Agree	7 (54%)	5 (38,5%)
Neutral	1 (7,7%)	1 (7,7%)
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	1 (7,7%)
Total	13	13

Question: Team projects should be used in business education

Attitudes Towards Team Rewards

	Workshop	Final class
Rewards for team performance only	11 (84,6%)	9 (69,2%)
Rewards for individual performance only	2 (15,4%)	4 (30,8%)
Total	13	13

Question: Should teams be assigned group-based or individual-based rewards?

Challenges Faced in Team Project

	Count	Final class
It takes time to coordinate work	8	61,5%
Free riding of some team members	1	7,7%
Personal conflicts among team members	0	0%
Working with people you don't know	1	7,7%
Not all team members are equally motivated	3	23,1%
Total	13	13

Question: Which of the following challenges did you experience the most in this team project?



Propositions

- Free riding should be distinguished from social loafing
 - SL is associated with human nature
 - FR is (intentional) dishonest behavior toward peers and instructor and compromises assessment process
 - ⇒ Should be listed under breaches of AI and sanctioned

- In AI (as in learning) *...it takes two to tango!*

- When learning outcomes involve imparting teamwork skills and collaborative competence then:
 - A group mark is more appropriate
 - The instructor should form the groups (*not* randomly!)



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QUESTIONS?
