

KEY DIMENSIONS OF GROUP-BASED LEARNING⁵

1. VENUE AND CLIMATE

Checking that venues are suitable in terms of heating, lighting, etc.

Trying to establish a congenial atmosphere in which students' viewpoints and experiences are valued

2. AIMS AND PURPOSES

Making sure that students understand:

- the aims of the session(s)
- how these relate to other parts of their course
- what they can expect to achieve from the session

3. GROUND RULES

Clarifying:

- what is expected of students by way of preparation
- when it is appropriate to raise or respond to question, or to challenge points made by others
- what the role of the tutor/group leader is

4. PLANNING TASKS

Devising tasks which:

- are appropriate to the aims of the session(s)
- offer an appropriate variety of learning experiences
- are preceded by adequate briefing and guidance where appropriate (e.g. when students are required to make presentations to the group)

5. STRUCTURING AND SEQUENCING TASKS

Ensuring that, where appropriate:

- there are tasks early in the session(s) which enable all to be involved
- the outcomes from one task lead into another
- realistic time allocations for tasks are set and kept

6. LISTENING

Being attentive to what is said by each member of the group

Displaying a readiness to listen, as reflected both through verbal responses and body language

7. QUESTIONING

Making use of a variety of questioning strategies (e.g. open, closed and reflective questions)

Deploying these questioning strategies sensitively and flexibly

8. EXPLAINING AND CLARIFYING

Giving students space to attempt tasks or problems before giving own explanations

Being clear and succinct in own explanations

Building students' ideas into own explanations when given

9. ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION

Encouraging all students in the group to contribute/ to talk to each other as well as to the tutor

Avoiding too dominant a role

Intervening appropriately, (e.g. to restrain the vociferous, encourage the silent, defuse conflict, refocus on the topic)

10. RESPONDING TO STUDENTS AS INDIVIDUALS

Addressing students by their preferred names

Showing sensitivity to students as individuals (i.e. taking into account their backgrounds and prior knowledge)

Providing constructive feedback to students who have made presentations to the group

11. CLOSING

Making provision for:

- summing up what has been achieved
- establishing what might be necessary to follow up the session and consolidate what has been learnt

12. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring what is going well in the sessions and what might be improved

Providing opportunities for the group to review its overall effectiveness

Evaluating the quality of work produced by individuals within the group or by the group as a whole (e.g. oral or poster presentations or written reports)

Figure 4.2