

From CHAPTER FOUR, “Assessing Learning in E-Groups and Communities” in the book:

**MCCONNELL, D. (2006) *E-Learning Groups and Communities*. Maidenhead, SRHE/OU Press (pp 209)**

***Components of Collaborative Assessment***

Over several years we have developed with our students a model for reviewing and assessing collaborative learning in e-learning contexts. In developing the model we were aware that any scheme aiming to assess collaborative learning has to be capable of assessing the wide variety of forms of participation that can take place in an e-learning environment, with the purpose of allowing students the opportunity to indicate how they contributed to group processes as well as to the group product.

There have been several iterations and evaluations of the model to refine and validate it, involving the views of both students and tutors. The construction of the model has involved a theoretical analysis of the literature, examination of the actual process of collaborative assessment as it takes place in the e-learning environment, and evaluations with students of their use of the model. The final model has four components that can be used by each student, their peers and the tutor to assess collaborative learning. These are: product achievement, communication skill, social relationships, and reflective skills (see Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2 Assessment of Collaborative Learning: Components and Indicators**

Component	Indicator
Product Achievement	1. Contributing to project ideas 2. Contributing to the research process 3. Contributing to the analysis of the research 4. Building on comments and on help received from others 5. Helping to produce the report, essay or other product 6. Meeting deadlines 7. Stating problems or goals 8. Taking initiatives
Communication Skill	1. Initiating dialogue and discussion 2. Seeking information from others in the group 3. Giving information to others in the group 4. Helping to clarify what is happening in the group 5. Summarising the work of the group 6. Seeking consensus 7. Describing one's own feelings 8. Observing others

	9. Being brief and concise
Social Relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Being sympathetic</li> <li>2. Encouraging members of the group</li> <li>3. Showing interest in the members of the group</li> <li>4. Praising others</li> <li>5. Expressing friendship</li> <li>6. Dealing with one's own emotions</li> <li>7. Sensing and dealing with other's emotions</li> <li>8. Coping with conflict and different opinions</li> <li>9. Acting dominant</li> <li>10. Being protective</li> <li>11. Competing with others</li> </ol>
Reflective Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analysing the group's behaviour</li> <li>2. Noting reaction to comments</li> <li>3. Summarising</li> <li>4. Learning about oneself</li> <li>5. Learning about others</li> <li>6. Sharing knowledge</li> </ol>

***Self Review and Assessment***

Developing a list of shared components and indicators of collaborative assessment is only one step in the overall process. It is important not to encourage a mechanistic use of the components and indicators: they need to be used as mainly a guide to what students might refer to in their reviews. There should be no requirement that students address all indicators, or that they should restrict their self-reviews only to these components and indicators. There may be other components and indicators that they wish to refer to, and this should be encouraged.

It is helpful to offer students some simple questions to address in writing their reviews. These questions relate to the components and are offered as a way of helping students draw on the indicators under each heading in their personal reviews. Table 4.3 presents the four components and the associated questions. Each student assesses them self under each heading, and is assessed by two peer learners and their tutor. The self, peer and tutor assessments are posted in the discussion forum, and a discussion of the assessment of each student then takes place.

**Table 4.3 Writing the Reviews**

Component	Questions for students to consider in writing their own review
Product Achievement	<p>What goals and products were agreed earlier with my peers and tutor that I should achieve?</p> <p>Did I achieve the goals and products that were agreed earlier with my tutor and peers?</p> <p><i>(please provide details)</i></p>
Communication Skills	<p>Did I understand the contributions made by both peers and tutors and did they understand me?</p> <p>What was the quality of my contributions?</p> <p><i>(Please provide evidence from the group discussions and group work to support this)</i></p>
Social Relationships	<p>On the whole, how do I feel I communicated in the social learning environment of my learning set?</p> <p>And how did I view the social relations generally in the set?</p>
Reflective Skill	<p>Is the collaborative process one in which I have 'learned' and enjoyed and have I contributed towards other's learning and enjoyment?</p> <p><i>(Please provide evidence from the group discussions and group work to support this)</i></p>