

## Multilingual Support Services (MSS)

**Title:** Intercultural Group Work: Tips for Success

**Time:** Approx. 75 minutes

### Learning Objectives:

This workshop's goal is to equip learners with EIGHT practical tips for positively influencing intercultural groupwork. The tips are divided into two areas: (1) Team building; and (2) Effective communication. Participants will recognize the value and be prepared to...

#### Team Building

1. Understand the range of attitudes to group projects and why their instructor is using them
2. Take time to build rapport
3. Raise their self-awareness as a team member
4. Create a team contract
5. Use initial low-stakes assignments to improve group processes

#### Effective Communication

6. Not assume mutual understanding
7. Give/receive respectful peer feedback
8. Expect conflict and deal with it early and respectfully

### Pre-workshop preparation (attendees)

- (1) Before workshop: ask learners to complete [anonymous online survey](#) (MS Forms) (5-10 minutes) to activate ideas and share range of ideas/preferences for group work. App automatically turns results into visuals that instructor can share to generate discussion [slide 5]
- (2) Time permitting: Learners can pre-read/complete some tasks/linked resources from the slides: (a) Cultural dimensions [slide 7]; (b) Team-building discussion questions [slide 9]; (c) One personality survey [slide 12]; Team Contract template [slide 14]; Critical Situations [slide 17]

### Pre-workshop set up:

Confirm classroom location, access to computer/projector, check in with instructor to confirm date/time.

### Resources required:

- PPT Slides & results of pre-workshop [anonymous online survey](#) (MS Forms)
- Optional: linked document(s) from slides (icebreakers [slide 11], personality survey [slide 12], team contract [slide 14], intercultural groupwork self-evaluation & goal-setting [slide 21])

Time Frame	Procedures	Notes
1-2 Mins	<b>Slide 1 – Title Slide</b>	-Developing intercultural communication skills is an outcome in many Camosun courses. -Reflects the reality and needs of Canadian workplaces. -Intercultural group projects are an important way of developing those skills.
3-4 Mins	<b>Slide 2 – What is Intercultural Competence</b>	-Good to distinguish 'multicultural' (=describes many cultures together) from 'intercultural'

	<p>1. Before showing definitions, ask for definitions from group</p> <p>2. Show and explain definitions</p>	<p>(inter='between'; focuses on working in the space between cultures).</p> <p>-Helpful to shift focus from comprehensive cultural learning to, instead, a combination of <b>attitudes</b> (openness, empathy, flexibility) and <b>communicative skillfulness</b> to enhance shared work.</p>
<p>3-4 Mins</p>	<p><b>Slide 3 – Introduction</b></p> <p>1. Discuss the question about why intercultural groups have outperformed monocultural ones.</p>	<p>-In the de Vita study (2002), the multicultural groups earned higher grades. In Watson et al. (1993), the grades didn't differ, but the multicultural groups rated higher for 'generating alternatives' and 'approaching problems in multiple ways.'</p> <p>-Other commonly-cited advantages: variety of perspectives and problem-solving ideas, which helps to avoid 'groupthink'; the extra team- and communication-building work that typically goes into intercultural groups translates into effective work habits.</p> <p>-Three Principles: Can frame these as a mindset for intercultural work. These generalizations come up frequently in research on intercultural groups: 1) Best practices for intercultural groups are applicable to most if not all groups; 2) dealing with challenges of different communication styles, procedural expectations, etc. is work, but that work is precisely the source intercultural skills development; 3) Each person's interface with their cultural background is different. A great deal of individual variability exists within cultures. Be aware of the potential for culturally-rooted behaviours, but view members as individuals with complex identities first and foremost.</p>
<p>4-5 Mins.</p>	<p><b>Slide 4 – Workshop Goals</b></p> <p>1. Explain the four goals</p>	<p>-Can frame these goals as the foundation for applying the eight tips effectively.</p> <p>-<u>Culture Knowledge</u>: Helpful to think of culture as pervasive but latent (not always on display). But cultural values/assumptions may emerge in many aspects of groupwork, such as meetings, decision-making, managing conflict, time orientations.</p> <p>-<u>Other/Self-Awareness</u>: Effective intercultural group members bring a respectful/open-minded/curious attitude to the work and seek to get to know other members. Equally important is to reflect on their own</p>

		<p>communication styles, assumptions, and biases, and how they may affect others.</p> <p><u>-Intercultural Competence:</u> Effectively applying the tips in the workshop expresses and increases your intercultural competence and groupwork skills.</p> <p><u>-Commitment:</u> The flaw of workshops is their one-time occurrence. Real work for students is thinking about the skills, their current proficiency, and committing to future improvements.</p>
10-15 mins	<p><b>Slide 5 – Pre-workshop Survey</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remind learners about the anonymous online MS Forms survey they completed, focusing on ideas/preferences for group work</li> <li>2. Share some results from the MS Forms tool</li> <li>3. Discuss areas of sameness/difference</li> </ol>	<p>-Survey results can highlight areas of sameness/difference in terms of (a) relevant cultural dimensions; (b) educational experience with group projects; (c) attitudes towards group work and other members</p>
5-7 mins	<p><b>Slide 6 – Cultural Dimensions &amp; Groupwork</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain that there are a number of paired factors that can help to explain cultural differences. Read the descriptions.</li> <li>2. Ask learners to think about which factor in the pair that describes them best</li> </ol> <p>*May be helpful to point out that the dominant culture in Canada tends to be individualistic, low-context communicators, and monochronic.</p>	<p>Some group work preferences that may relate to these dimensions:</p> <p><u>-Individualism:</u> dividing the project and working on parts individually; not strong prioritization of consensus decision-making; emphasizing your work and grade over group success</p> <p><u>Collectivism:</u> more shared work; consensus decision-making; emphasizing group over individual results.</p> <p><u>High-context Communication:</u> ‘read’ the group’s feeling and adjust talk to situation/listeners; expects equitable turn taking; hesitant to say ‘no’ or be critical; may be reluctant to voice opinions; may be indirect in suggestions/requests</p> <p><u>Low-context Communication:</u> open with opinions across situations/listeners; direct in sharing opinions and offering suggestions; willing to say ‘no’ and be critical</p> <p><u>Monochronic:</u> organize work with detailed timelines/deadlines; impatient in decision-making; values getting to the point in meetings; submission deadlines are inflexible</p> <p><u>Polychronic:</u> comfortable with multitasking; many not adhere to strict deadlines; patient in</p>

		working on social connections as important part of work
7-10 mins	<p><b>Slide 7 – Cultural Dimensions &amp; Groupwork (cont.)</b></p> <p>1) Ask individuals to pick where they generally sit on the scales.  2) Report their choices to a partner/group.  3) In groups or whole-class, discuss how differences might affect group processes.</p>	<p>For #3: Some group work dynamics that may be affected by differences on these factors:</p> <p><u>-Individualism</u>: dividing the project and working on parts individually; not strong prioritization of consensus decision-making; emphasizing your work and grade over group success</p> <p><u>Collectivism</u>: more shared work; consensus decision-making; emphasizing group over individual results.</p> <p><u>High-context Communication</u>: ‘read’ the group’s feeling and adjust talk to situation/listeners; expects equitable turn taking; hesitant to say ‘no’ or be critical; may be reluctant to voice opinions; may be indirect in suggestions/requests</p> <p><u>Low-context Communication</u>: open with opinions across situations/listeners; direct in sharing opinions and offering suggestions; willing to say ‘no’ and be critical</p> <p><u>Monochronic</u>: organize work with detailed timelines/deadlines; impatient in decision-making; values getting to the point in meetings; submission deadlines are inflexible</p> <p><u>Polychronic</u>: comfortable with multitasking; many not adhere to strict deadlines; patient in working on social connections as important part of work</p>
1-2 mins	<p><b>Slide 8 – Part 1: Team-building Tips</b></p> <p>1) Introduce the first set of tips.</p>	<p>-Can explain that a lot of challenges in groups (whether intercultural or monocultural) relate to differences in expectations, communication style, decision making, role distribution, etc.</p> <p>-These challenges can be mitigated through attention to team building and planning.</p>
5-10 mins	<p><b>Slide 9 – Part 1: Team Building</b></p> <p>1) In pairs/small groups, give students time to discuss the questions, which activate ideas for the Part 1 tips</p>	<p>-Focus should be on activating ideas about these topics; later slides develop the topics in more detail.</p> <p>-#1: Group work not common in many educational cultures; tend to be a wide range of opinions about group work, related to personality (shy/outgoing), valuation of autonomous learning vs. learning from instructor; previous experience of group projects</p>

		-#3. Establishing procedures and protocols for many reasons including preventing future trouble; 4. Importance of early-stage tasks to 'work out the kinks' in group's processes.
3-4 mins	<p><b>Slide 10 – Tip 1: Understand the Range...</b></p> <p>1) Go through the graphic with learners.</p>	<p>-Good to acknowledge that many students don't expect/have experience with/want group projects.</p> <p>-Some issues: Group work not common in many educational cultures; tend to be a wide range of opinions about group work, related to personality (shy/outgoing), valuation of autonomous learning vs. instructor-centred learning; previous positive/negative experience with group projects.</p> <p>- For above reasons, getting buy-in from students is critical. Important to justify group work beyond its option as a teaching method: that it's a widespread course outcomes, which reflects the high valuation of teamwork skills for employers</p> <p>-Similarly, important to justify intercultural groups as a reflection of diversity at Camosun and workplaces; that intercultural competence is valuable and sought-after set of skills</p>
7-10	<p><b>Slide 11 – Tip 2: Take Time to Build Rapport</b></p> <p>1) Go through four components of team building</p> <p>2) Time permitting, can try out ice breaker activity and/or discussion about what good/bad groups look like</p>	<p>-Team-building time can increase rapport, trust, clarity of expectations, understanding of communication styles and skills/weaknesses.</p> <p>-A common student complaint in intercultural groups is that not enough time was spent getting to know each other and clarifying roles and expectations. In other words, too much focus on the product and not enough on the process.</p> <p>-Good to shift perception of team-building from a 'warm up' to an essential component of the project.</p> <p>-Unrealistic/unadvisable to frame the work as one-time effort at project's beginning. Rather, stress the value of ongoing team-building work as the project continues.</p>
2-3 mins	<p><b>Slide 12 – Tip 3: Raise Your Self-Awareness as a Team Member</b></p> <p>1) Explain the value of psychological surveys as part of</p>	<p>-Surveys often designed with group role selection in mind; the results can help guide groups in establishing roles.</p> <p>-We all have blind spots in terms of self-awareness. From a cultural perspective, many</p>

	<p>team building and identifying group roles</p> <p>2) Time permitting, show learners one or more surveys; can do a survey as part of workshop or ask learners to complete on before</p>	<p>values, assumptions, biases related to groupwork will be 'normal,' unexamined, and so largely invisible to us. Even short surveys can tap into preferences and strengths/weaknesses that we might not recognize. Beyond role-selection, that self-awareness is useful in its own right (i.e., monitoring own behaviours)</p>
3-4 mins	<p><b>Slide 13 – Tip 3: Raise Your Self-Awareness as a Team Member</b></p> <p>1) Explain that while all group members share some responsibilities (e.g., research, writing), detailed roles can help group dynamics and rapport.</p> <p>2) Time permitting, can ask learners to identify a preferred role from the list</p>	<p>-Psychological surveys can help identify roles</p> <p>-While detailed roles may not be mandatory, they can facilitate group dynamics like meetings dealing with conflict, etc.</p> <p>-For some learners, roles allow for participation and group involvement when they may otherwise feel ignored; in other cases, roles can empower members who are less confident with speaking/writing skills</p>
5-7 mins	<p><b>Slide 14 – Tip 4: Create a Team Contract</b></p> <p>1) Introduce team contracts and the recommended components on the slide</p> <p>2) Can first ask learners (a) how a contract can be valuable; (b) what components they would include</p> <p>3) Time permitting, can compare linked templates (or others) and discuss which is best for your project.</p>	<p>-Research endorses the efficacy of signed team contracts to enhance individuals' commitment to the group processes. Among other benefits, a contract (a) focuses attention on common trouble areas; (b) establishes processes that reduce the chances of future conflict; (c) when conflicts do happen, the contract is a reference point for resolution and depersonalizes the dispute. As with other initial procedures, it is a good idea to revisit the contract periodically to add/edit details.</p> <p>-Note on teacher intervention: there will likely be a range of attitudes to reaching out to the instructor to intervene, as well as being complained about to the instructor by other members. A good practice is for groups (a) to discuss issue and include in contract; (b) to raise problems internally first before coming to the instructor. For instructors it's valuable to reassure groups that your interventions are not punitive but to help mediate and improve group processes.</p>
2-3 mins	<p><b>Slide 15 – Tip 5: Use Initial Stages to Improve Group Processes</b></p> <p>1) Go through slide</p>	<p>-The main point here is that building groups' effectiveness is an ongoing process. Assuming that the project is divided into multiple assignments, it is valuable for groups to use low-</p>

		marks initial assignments to ‘work out the kinks’ in processes and dynamics.
1-2 mins	<p><b>Slide 16 – Part 2: Effective Communication Tips</b></p> <p>1) Briefly introduce the tips from part 2 of the workshop</p>	-Part 1 (Team Building) focused on taking time to establish resilient group processes. Part 2 provides communication strategies for three situations: meetings, giving feedback, and resolving conflict.
7-10 mins	<p><b>Slide 17 – Part 2: Effective Communication Tips</b></p> <p>1) In pairs or small groups, ask learners to read the situations, think without judgment about both sides, and share their ideas about why the individuals acted as they did. Can do the situations one by one or as a set.</p> <p>2) As a follow-up, ask learners to address the question at the bottom of the slide: what (if anything) the groups could have done to prevent or mitigate the trouble.</p>	<p>-The three situations are real examples from a group project. Push students to consider the underlying values/assumptions that drove the individuals’ actions.</p> <p>-There are no ‘correct’ answers; the focus should be on empathy, or not taking sides but understanding the motivations on both side.</p> <p>-Possible processes that could have minimized the trouble: #1. If communication was the issue, being systematic in including all members in discussions, since turn-taking conventions differ across cultures; and/or speaking slower, monitoring language complexity; checking understanding; creating an agenda with topics to structure the meeting: informal meetings are difficult for many students to follow. #2. Discussing the value of peer feedback in a previous meeting; . Asking if feedback was okay before providing it; following the tips for giving feedback (slide 19). #3. In team-building stages, agreeing on when/how to approach instructor with problems; the instructor can help establish a climate of trust that their interventions are to help teams and aren’t connected to evaluations</p>
3-5 mins	<p><b>Slide 18 – Tip 6: Don’t Assume Mutual Understanding</b></p> <p>1) Go through before/during/after stages for maximizing comprehension</p> <p>2) Can elicit ideas from learners BEFORE going through each part, and/or ask for any other clear-communication tips from the class</p>	<p>-A cultural/linguistic challenge is group meetings or discussions. Not just the language but also the structure. Many Canadians communicate informally, and the frequent shifts between professional and informal talk are tricky to follow and join.</p> <p>-Pre-empting that trouble with an agenda and meeting leader/note-taker is helpful.</p> <p>-Turn-taking conventions vary cross-culturally, so students expecting a structured ordering of turns can be frustrated by more competitive styles. The leader or another role can include ensuring everyone gets a chance to speak.</p> <p>-In terms of accommodating various speaking/listening abilities, four simple</p>

		<p>guidelines are to (a) monitor your pace (slow down); (b) monitor word choice (see examples below); (c) give speakers time to formulate ideas (don't jump in and steal their turn or put words in their mouth); (d) everyone take initiative to double-check comprehension (ask clarification questions and check that your talk was understood).</p> <p>-Finally, summarize main ideas in a different form (writing, audio recording, and/or diagrams/charts) so individuals can go back to check understanding.</p> <p>*Here are some examples of abstract/challenging <u>phrasal verbs</u> that are common in meetings: 'pick up where we left off,' 'come up with ideas,' 'catch up on our work,' 'go over something' 'look into something,' 'work something out,' 'set this up,' 'look up some information,' 'follow up with,' etc. And similarly challenging <u>idioms</u>: 'touch base with someone,' 'not going to fly,' 'by the book,' 'a long shot,' 'no brainer,' 'on the same page,' 'safe bet,' 'rock the boat,' 'keep s.o. in the loop,' 'the big picture,' etc.</p>
<p>5-7 mins</p>	<p><b>Slide 19 – Tip 7: Give/Receive Respectful Peer Feedback</b></p> <p>1) Can ask group how they feel about getting peer feedback on their writing</p> <p>2) Before going through the feedback tips, acknowledge the range of attitudes/familiarity with peer feedback, that asking before giving is a good practice, and framing feedback as 'helping to improve' is critical</p> <p>3) Can elicit ideas from group – or they can discuss in pairs – what constitutes respectful and effective feedback</p>	<p>-Not all members will welcome peer feedback (e.g., on their writing). In many educational cultures, the instructor expert is the expected source of learning, not your peers. So it's important to establish your group's level of comfort.</p> <p>-For resistant members, suggest sharing drafts with the instructor/Writing Centre.</p> <p>-For those who are willing but sensitive, follow the guidelines for effective feedback here.</p> <p>-A valuable addition to the slide: don't bury the writer under a mountain of negative comments. Be aware of the draft's 'roughness' and focus on content, organization, coherence. A single comment reminding to check correctness (spelling, capitals, punctuation, word final -s, etc.) may be sufficient.</p>
<p>5-7 mins</p>	<p><b>Slide 20 – Tip 8: Expect Conflict and Deal with It Early and Respectfully</b></p> <p>1) A good way in is to ask learners to think of a time when they were</p>	<p>-Two important facets of conflict management in groups is withholding judgment and acquiring more information.</p> <p>-Diffuse tension by focusing on the issue/problem, not on the person.</p>



	<p>'sure' someone was at fault but they weren't. As instructors we also make assumptions (e.g., why a student didn't complete an assignment) which are often wrong.</p> <p>2) Can ask learners to suggest/discuss effective ways of dealing with conflict, before going through the slide content</p>	<p>-Agreeing on conflict-resolving steps in the Team Contract can ease and depersonalize the process.</p> <p>-And once the group has enough information to understand the problem, move beyond the trouble and into finding solutions that work for everyone.</p>
<p>15-20 mins</p>	<p><b>Slide 21 – Conclusion</b></p> <p>1) Ask learners to take time to self-evaluate on the intercultural competence skills that the workshop introduced</p> <p>2) Ask learners to create SMART goals for each or some of the categories</p> <p>3) The self-evaluation and goals can be submitted in another form as an assignment so instructors can track learner progress toward goals and gains; the class can then revisit at the midpoint and/or end of a team project</p>	<p>-Good to acknowledge that a single workshop is not a panacea: groupwork is complex and some aspects will be out of their control. Instead, ask students to focus on the process, not just the product, and be a positive influence in the areas they can control.</p> <p>-The short self-evaluation survey reminds students of key points from the workshop; it pushes them to reflect on their current skillfulness; and it pushes them to set SMART goals for improving their skillfulness in that area.</p> <p>-The aim of the survey/goal-setting is to look forward beyond the workshop and commit to putting some tips into practice</p>