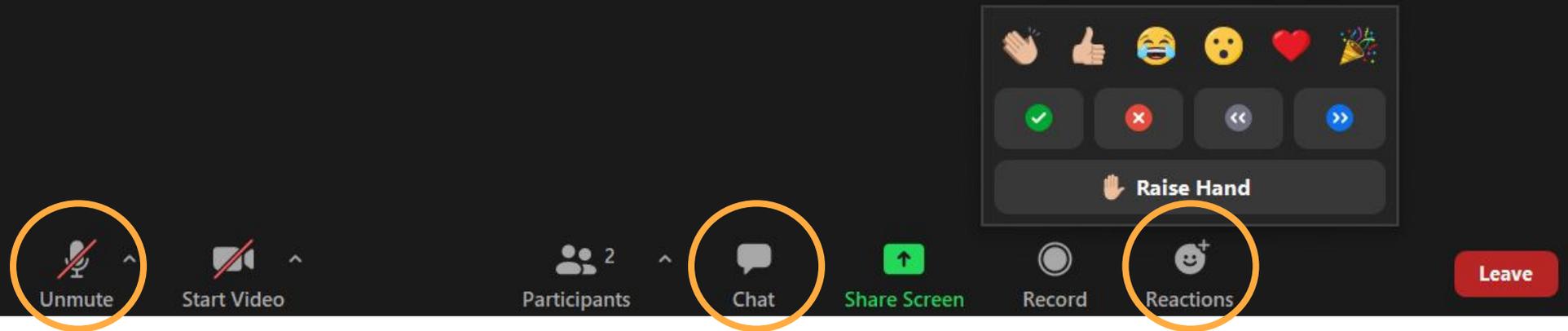


Housekeeping

- Please leave your microphone on **mute** unless you are not actively speaking
- This session will be **recorded**.
- Ask questions, or provide comment at any time by either typing in the **chat** or **raising your hand**. There will be Q & A session at the end.



Strengthening Formative Training in Group Writing Project Design



Xiaowen Xu, Assistant Professor of Teaching, The Department of Asian Studies

Trish Varao-Sousa, Evaluation & Research Consultant, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology

Bosung Kim, Educational Consultant, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology

CTLT Spring Institute, Monday June 7, 2021

Territorial Acknowledgement



We acknowledge that the land on which we have designed and delivered our project is the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam).

Photo Credit:
Hover Collective /
UBC Brand & Marketing

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the support for this project provided by UBC Vancouver students via the Scholarship of Teaching Learning Seed Program.



We also gratefully acknowledge the financial support for this project provided by UBC Vancouver students via the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund.

Warm-up activities

Please **type in chat or speak up about** the size of class you taught in 2020W and if you include group project in your assessment?



Agenda

We offer:

- Designs, strategies and reflections to deliver **formative components** in group writing assignments in a medium-size classroom

You could:

- list several benefits and challenges in group work
- design strategies for providing instructor feedback
- customize your work plan for group writing projects within your classroom/discipline context

Action to take:

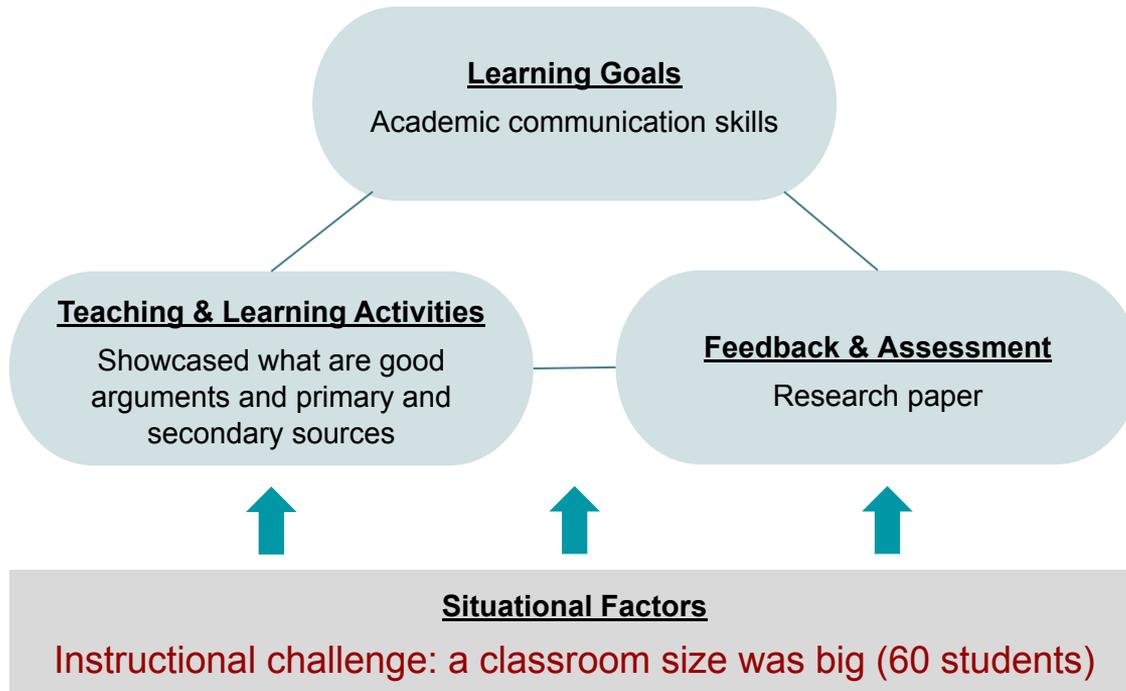
Revise our plans to help shape students' academic communication skills in September, 2021





Background

Special Instructional Challenge / Question and Solution



Question

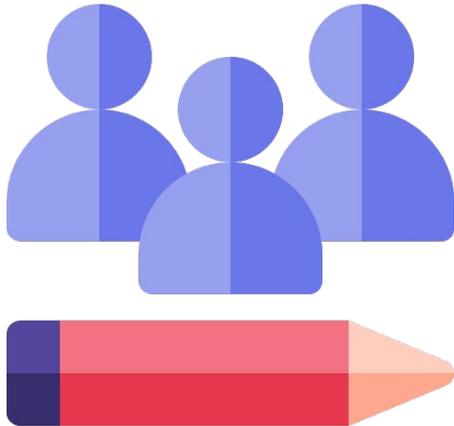


How can I (instructor) **scaffold** a research paper assignment and provide **feedback** on student work **without increasing** my workload significantly?

Solution

Convert the individual research paper assignment into a **group assignment** and **break it into** smaller steps.

Group Writing



Learning Opportunities

- Test their arguments to their peers first
- Learn to articulate thoughts better
- Exposed to multiple perspectives and writing styles
- Negotiate meanings through communication



To support group writing

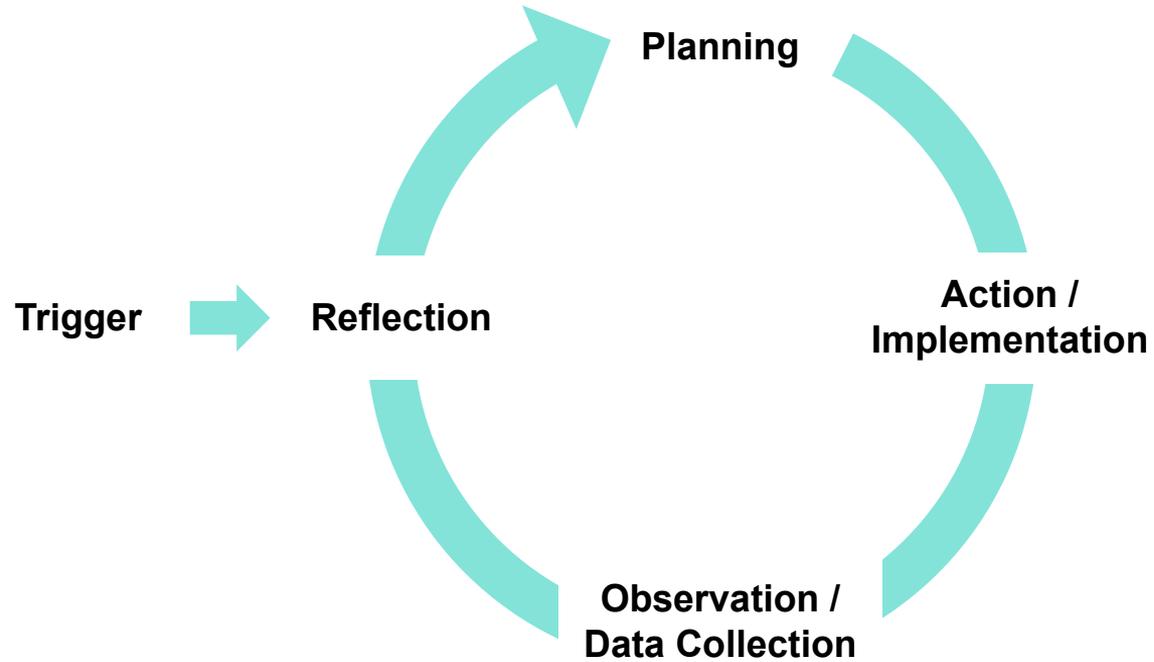
Instructor
facilitates
group work

Save class
time for group
work

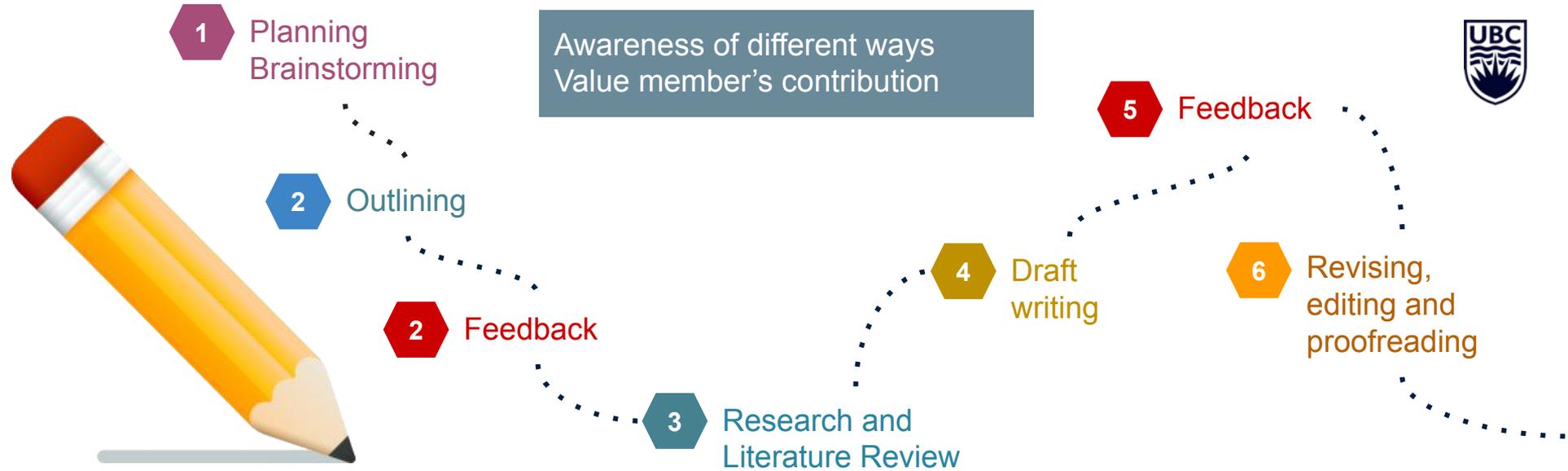
Provide clear
instructions,
rubrics and
handouts

Students
evaluate group
members'
contributions

Our Approach



Division of Labours and Individual Accountability in Group Writing



During this group writing journey, students will sometimes produce work collaboratively (e.g. brainstorming) or need to divide the tasks (e.g. literature review, feedback).

Question to the Audience

Please raise your hand to share your instructional strategy that you have been using to help students deal with individual accountability and division of labours in your course.





Presenting a Case

Strengthening Formative Training in Group
Writing Project in CHIN 463 2020W2

About CHIN 461/CHIN 463



Early Classical Chinese Poetry I and II (3 credits each)

Enrolment cap: 60 undergraduates from across disciplines

Course delivery mode: lecture + T/L activities (in-class session twice a week, 1.5 hours/session, 13 weeks)

Learning objective in academic communication skills training:

Develop and articulate arguments in standard Chinese in a research paper about the impact of specific poets/poems/poetic styles from the beginning to the 9th century on the pre-modern Chinese poetry tradition.

(My teaching philosophy: I am not the center in teaching and learning, my students are.)

History of Group Writing Project Design in CHIN461/CHIN463



Implementation of Formative Training in Group Writing Project - Prior to the Project Release

Step by step

1. Describe it in syllabus (Appendix 1) [Appendix 1 Syllabus Description of Group Project](#)
2. List it in course schedule (Appendix 2) [Appendix 2 Group Project Reminder in Course Schedule](#)
3. Detailed instruction information on Canvas (Appendix 3) [Appendix 3 Group Project Information on Canvas](#)
4. **Class activities showcasing academic communication skills**
5. Short writing assignments to train students skills in review and revising (W3 to W5)
6. **W1 and W7 slides and questions illustrating group work mode (Appendix 4)** [Appendix 4 Relevant Lecture Slides and Polling Questions in W1 and W7](#)



Implementation of Formative Training in Group Writing Project - During the Project

Step by step

1. **Group plan instruction release in mid-term (submission and feedback) (Appendix 5)**
[Appendix 5 Group Project Part I Group Plan](#)
2. **Group outline to discuss with instructor (oral feedback “face to face”) (Appendix 6)**
[Appendix 6 Group Outline Draft for Discussion with Instructor](#)
3. **First draft submission and feedback (multiple feedback) (Appendix 7)** [Appendix 7 Group Project Part II First Draft](#)
4. **Extra meetings upon request (Appendix 7)** [Appendix 7 Group Project Part II First Draft](#)
5. **Final Summative Evaluations (Appendix 8, 9, 10)**



2018 vs. 2021



2018	2021
60 individual papers at the end of the term (Workload)	13 groups of 4 students completing 13 papers over 7 weeks Appreciating formative training and group communication Awarding summative evaluation of group work
Discrepancy between weekly learning activities and summative assessments (Effectiveness and alignment in T/L, LO and assessment)	Group formation starts from W1 Group work mode and writing skills training start from W4 Weekly academic communication skills practices
One way communication to students (Instructor's role)	Accompanying students at every stage (facilitator of learning) (Supervisor/consultant/temporary team member) <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Plan, proposal, outline, draft● Feedback, reflection, consultation, revising



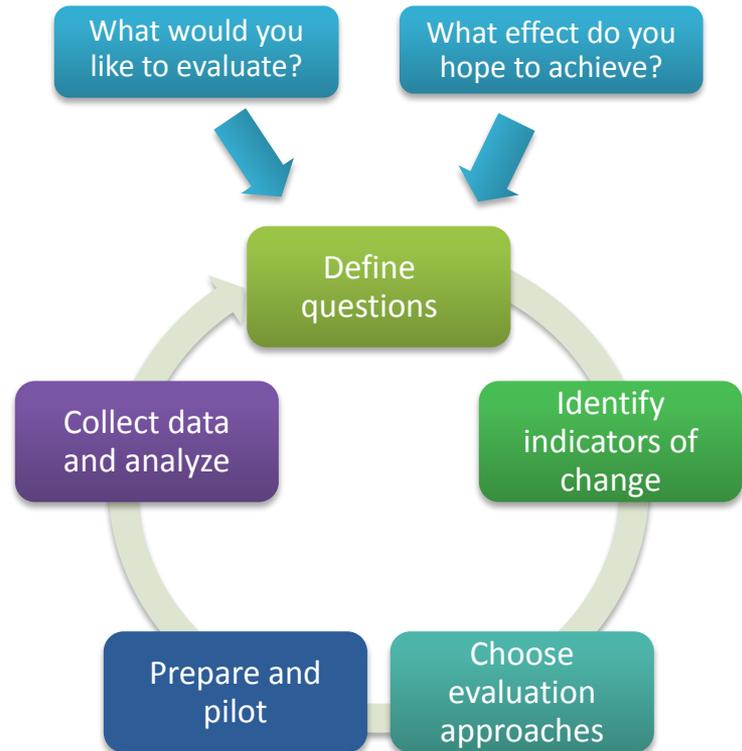
Evaluation

What is evaluation?

Evaluation is about making sure that your project outcomes are met, and your plan is working as intended.

Evaluation helps you:

- Determine if stated objectives/goals are being met
- Improve project design and implementation
- Make informed decisions



Evaluation process and timeline



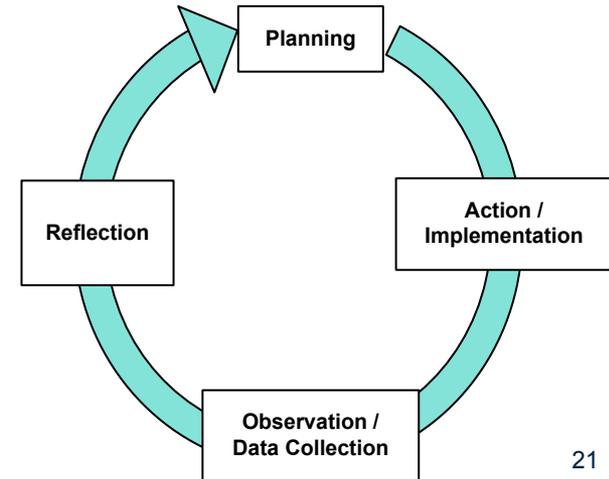
November 2019 (oral feedback from 4 student groups)

- Difficulties came in the form of encouraging participation from all members; finding time to meet; allocating equal workloads

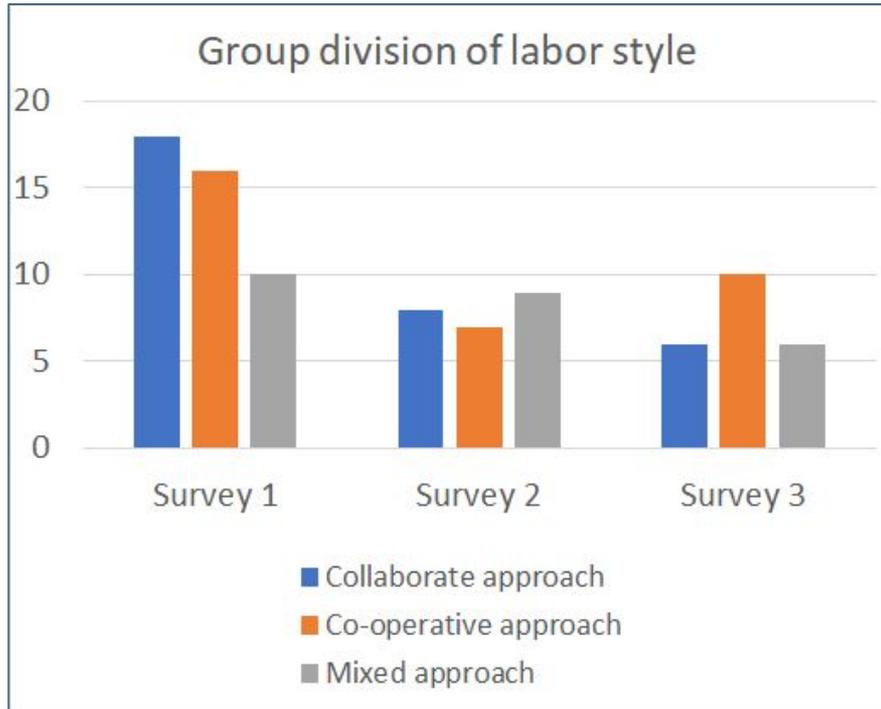
January-April 2020 (3 surveys: CHIN 463)

September-December 2020 (3 surveys: CHIN 461)

January-April 2021 (3 surveys: CHIN 463)



January-April, 2020: CHIN463



Mixed approach descriptions:

Using both collaborate and co-operative approaches.

- *“We cooperate with each other by assigning each person a part of the essay to finish. Then, we will collaborate to gather individual work and improve the essay together.”*
- *“we may work together instead of collaborate”*



Changes related to division of labour across the term

Many students reported that work needed to be redistributed more evenly as the paper progressed.

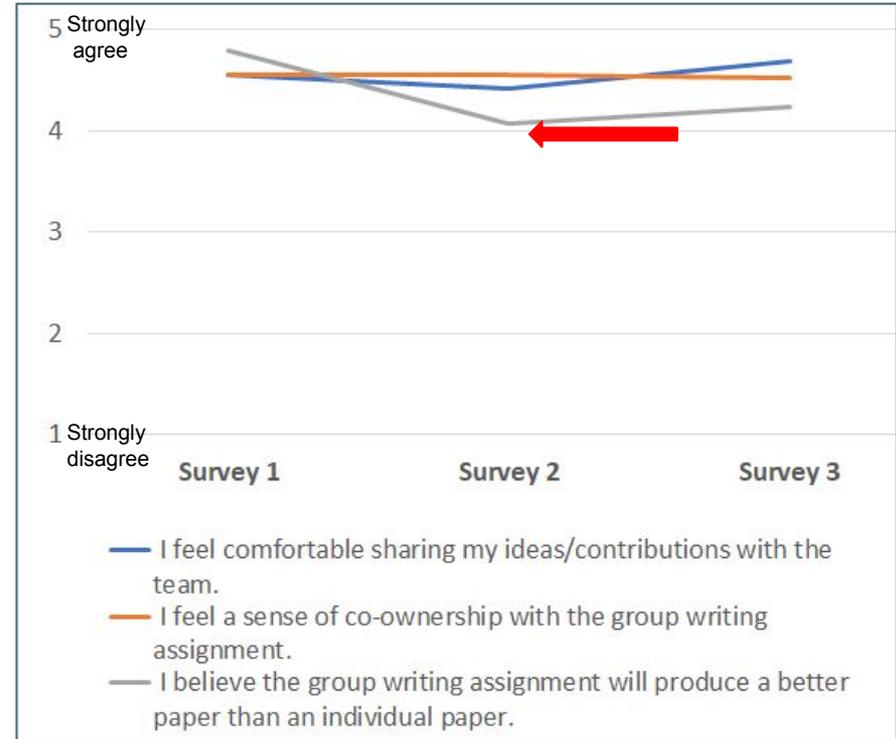
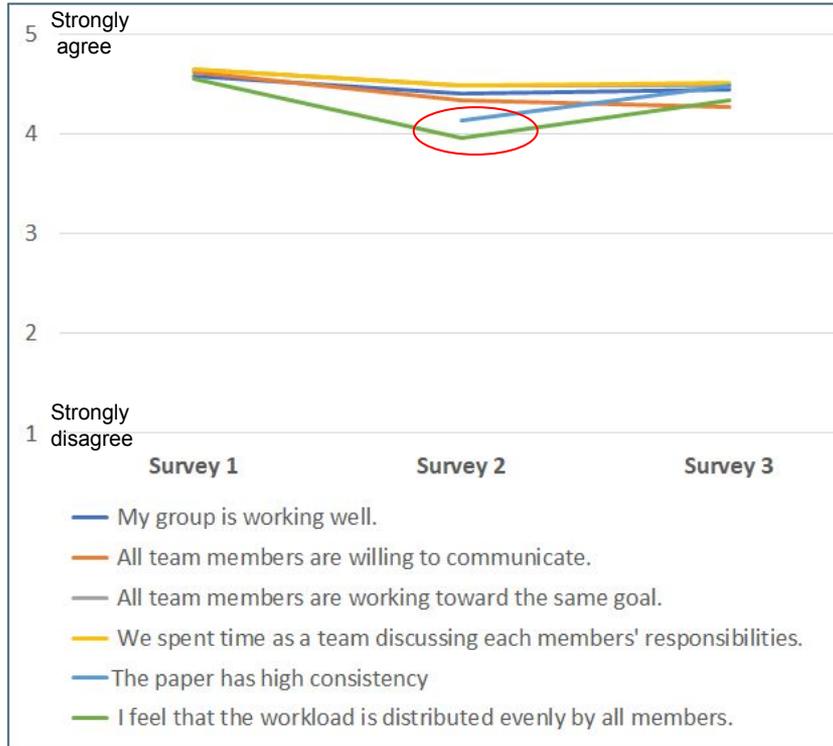
- *“It was originally planned that one person was responsible for a part. In order to better ensure the unity of the paper, it was later decided that two should be responsible”*
- *“At first, we split work to everyone. During the processing, we found some parts that need everyone's opinion.”*

Instructional changes made based on feedback

- Provide more guidance to students around the differences between collaboration and co-operation
 - Provide students with a worksheet highlighting differences between the two types, have the groups come to consensus as a team on what method they want to use
- Provide guidelines for dealing with difficult situations (e.g., creating coherency from different writing styles, reducing duplicated text/work across team members)

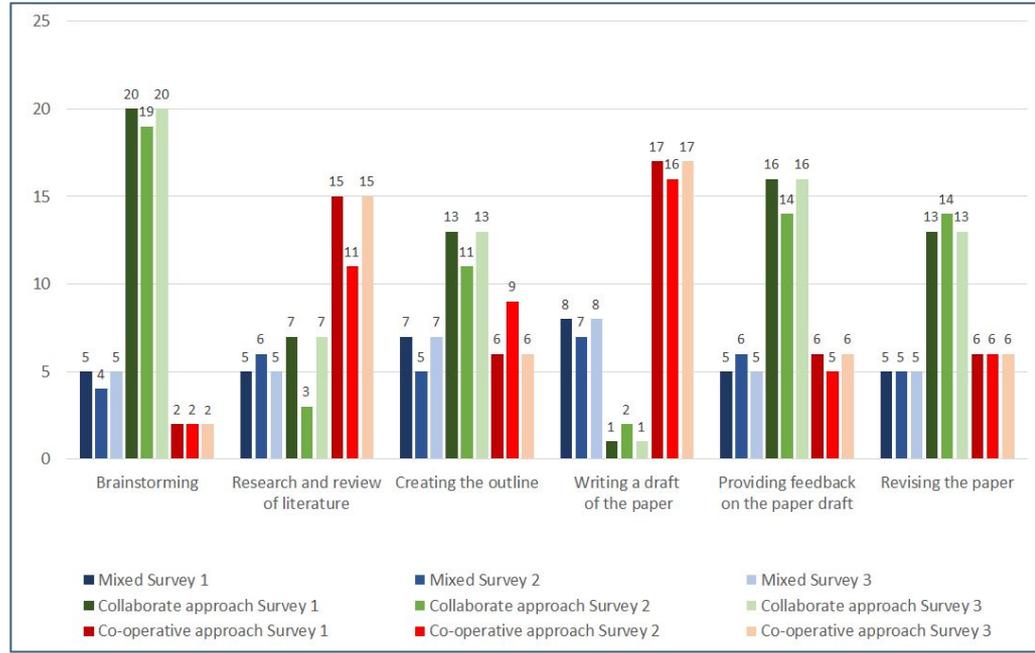
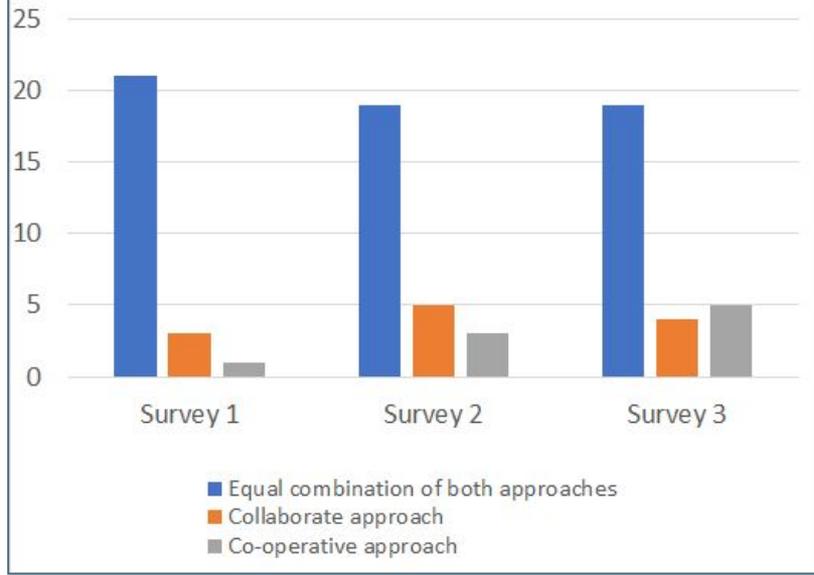


September-December, 2020: CHIN461



September-December, 2020: CHIN461

Primary work style



September-December, 2020: CHIN461

62% of students felt that the group and individual writing assignments improved their skills equally.



Negative/Constructive feedback

- 5 people were too many for one group
- Inconsistency in writing styles, difficulty with distributing workload evenly, not having the same end goal (grade/product).

“I think we really need to know everyone's writing style/skills before group formation.”

“Each group member has different skill sets, so individual workload cannot be strictly even.”

Positive feedback

Many students reported that things worked really well in their group, most common themes were:

- Having responsible and hardworking teammates
- Brainstorming together
- Effective communication and cooperation
- Having dedicated meeting times to discuss

“we read people's responses in the course discussion sections (mandatory), and try to see through the words they wrote who is committed, thoughtful, and showing a strong will to share and receive ideas, which in our perspective would make great group mates. We then get in touch with these people, ... and finally formed our group with people who are willing to.”

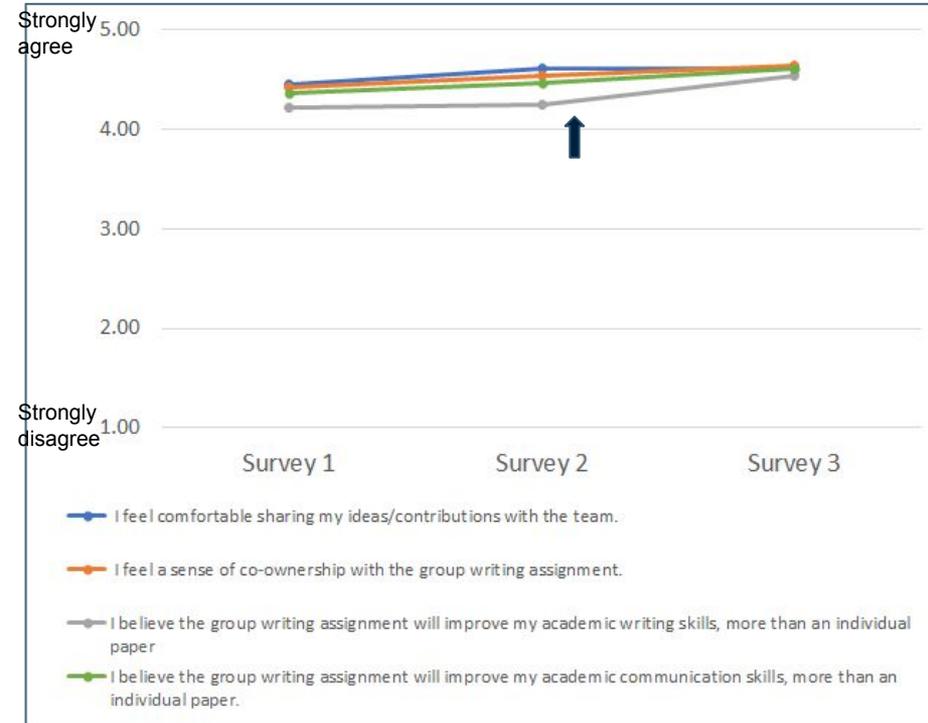
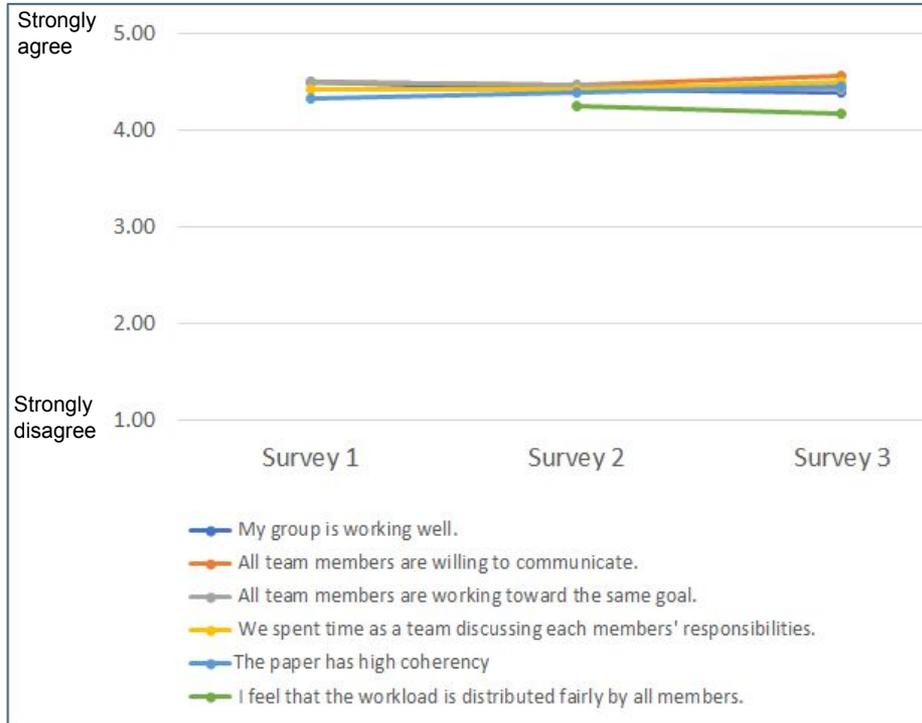
“I see that each group member not only helps divide and breakdown the workload but also provides their own unique perspectives and creativeness. The group paper turns out to be including far more ideas than I could possibly think of on my own”

Instructional changes made based on feedback

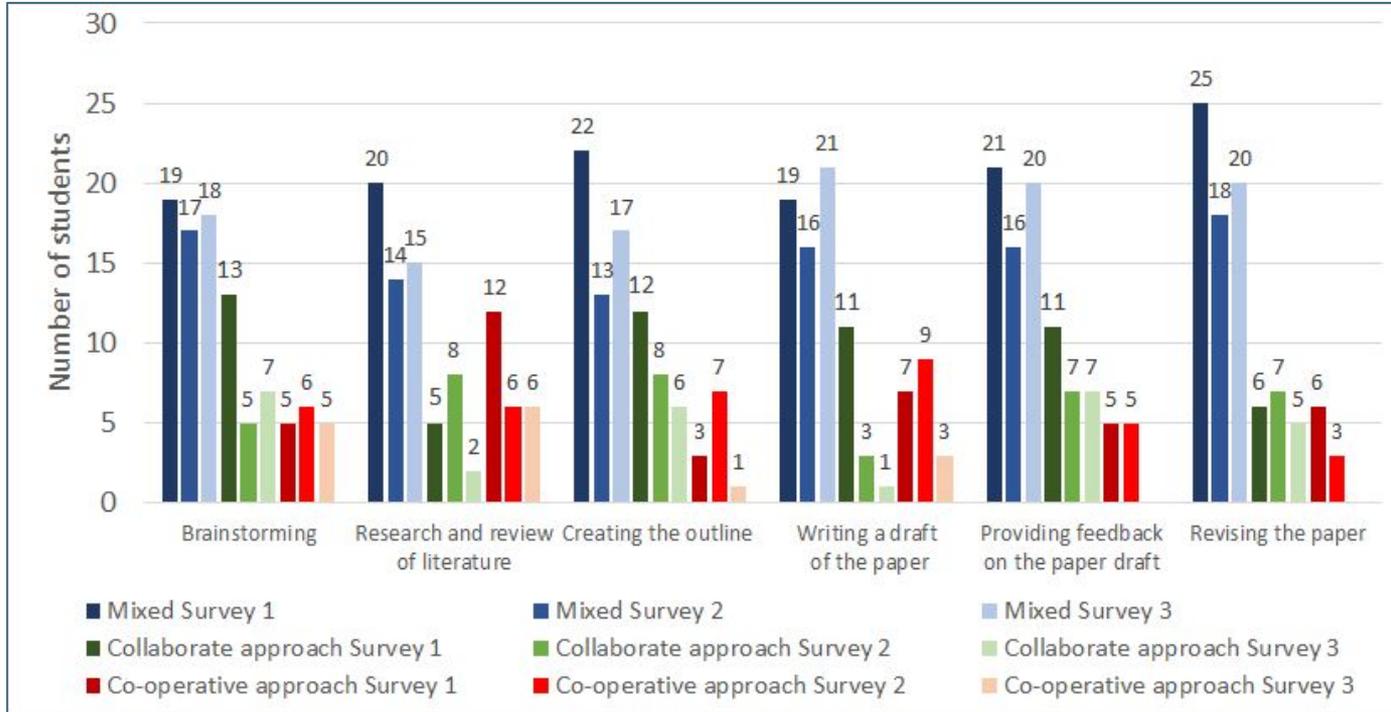


- Further reduced group size from 5 members to 4
- Require a group consultation with the instructor
- Added oral component to help students feel their individual contribution was valued
- Modified grading to system of formative components to offer complete/incomplete “grade” with feedback instead of grade percentage
 - *“It makes me want to improve not just because of marks.”*

January-April, 2021: CHIN463



January-April, 2021: CHIN463



This figure highlights that across surveys, the workstyle reported tended to stay stable (**mixed approach**) across the various tasks. Some tasks had different workstyles as the project stage changed.

January-April, 2021: CHIN463

75% of students felt that the group and individual writing assignments improved their skills equally.



Negative/Constructive feedback

- Struggles with distributing workload equally/active contribution
 - *“My team members [do] not really like to communicate with each other, they prefer someone distribute work for them”*
 - *“Once I asked their ideas, they just ignore or says “I agree with you” or “all good” in the chat. I don’t know what’s their ideas toward this topic.”*
- Difficulty with developing coherency within the paper despite good team communication

Positive feedback

Majority of students reported that everything worked well in their group, the most common theme was **willingness to communicate frequently**.

- *“Our team have [split] the essay into different section and have done it cooperatively in the beginning. However, we take sometimes before the deadline to work on the essay collaboratively. This could make the essay become more [fluent], and everyone can get an idea of what everyone else is doing.”*
- *“our team took time to reflect on what worked well and what don’t. And we found a better way to work together.”*
- *“After we finish our part asynchronously, we read each other’s part and comment on it. This would improve my communications skills, because I need to convince others to accept my opinion. Through communication and revise my writing, I can improve my writing skills as well.”*
- *“Through this paper, I know more about views from my classmates’ 30 perspectives and learn from their mistakes and strengths.”*

How did you deal with the conflict during the peer writing assignment?



Conflict	Suggested solutions (provided by students)
Agreeing on topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hear out everyone's opinion - Receive feedback from professor - Have a discussion to see if ideas can be combined
Different writing styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the whole paper as a team - <i>"We have one team member who is responsible for finalizing the paper and make the writing style is consistent."</i> - <i>"We try to discuss which styles are better to reach consensus."</i> - <i>"We have different writing styles, we will try to follow the outline..."</i>
Time conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use online tools to chat (Canvas, google docs, WeChat) - If one person cannot attend, have the meeting and provide a message/update for the missing member - <i>"Put comments beside their writing, so they can do corrections of their writing when they have time."</i>
General communication issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have a shared google doc - Listen to team members concerns and provide constructive feedback - Use a video call to avoid misunderstanding - Use WeChat to post questions, so everyone could respond
Dealing with lazy group members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nothing, no one wants to confront them / Harder working members take on more work - Provide a deadline to the team member and which part to complete

Feedback

Based on what we've done, what other questions would you be curious to ask students about their division of labor experience?



Connect with the research and evaluation team for support!

<https://ctlit.ubc.ca/what-we-do/strategic-curriculum-services/>

<https://ctlit.ubc.ca/about/contact-us/>

Lessons learned

- Engage help early!
 - design documents with expertise mentors
- Action Research means endless journey
 - group size, oral components, formative vs. summative, ect.
- Self-reflection on teaching philosophy
 - what is an instructor in a group project?
- Sharing and learning
 - fellow faculty members
 - students

Please:

- list several benefits and challenges in group work
- design strategies for providing instructor feedback
- customize your work plan for group writing projects within your classroom/discipline context



Q & A



Please connect with us if you have further questions:

Xiaowen Xu: Assistant Professor of Teaching: xiaowen.xu@ubc.ca

Trish Varao-Sousa, Evaluation and Research consultant: trish.varao-sousa@ubc.ca

Bosung Kim, Learning Designer: bosung.kim@ubc.ca