

Professional collaboration

Guide for group collaboration in higher education

Goal of the collaboration grid

In their jobs, university graduates often collaborate with others in project teams. They are expected to be able to deliberately shape and adjust the collaboration. During their education, students also work together on group assignments, practising their collaboration skills. In order to consciously develop these collaboration skills, the collaboration grid was developed. This tool can help students to consciously manage the collaboration process. It offers questions for the individual and the group which prompt a conversation on effective collaboration.

Explanation of the grid

In the first column of the grid, four focus points important for collaboration are listed; namely the task, the working method, the working atmosphere, and the management. The top row lists the different actions that can be taken in the collaboration: create an overview, reflect, communicate, adjust. questions are given for each combination of focus point and action. The questions are not a comprehensive list of all possible questions but indicate the kind of questions that can be asked in a group collaboration. Students are invited to add questions of their own.

Actions in collaboration

Create an overview

Map the current and the desired situation.

Reflect

Think about how the collaboration influences you and the group.

Communicate

Maintain contact with each other, discussing and expressing thoughts and expectations.

Adjust

Adjust to the current situation, this is done continuously throughout the collaboration.

Focus points in the collaboration



The task

The goal of the collaboration.
» *end product*



The working method

The work process leading to the end product.
» *division of tasks, planning*



The working atmosphere

The interpersonal atmosphere during the collaboration.
» *trust, constructive attitude*



Management

Shaping the management of the team
» *expectations and alignment*

The actions are often used in conjunction with each other, for instance, if it becomes apparent that something is not yet clear about the end product, adjustments will have to be made.

Equally, the four focus points on collaboration will usually need attention simultaneously.

Note: The questions in the matrix are non-exhaustive. We happily receive additions and responses to the matrix. This includes the availability of resources such as workshops for the introduction of the matrix. Contact: [Danielle Vlaanderen](#) en [Anne Geesink](#)

Collaboration Grid

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	Create an overview	Reflect	Communicate	Adjust
TASK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we have to deliver? • What are we asked to do? • When does it have to be finished? • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What information is missing? • What don't we understand yet? • What is already clear? • What does each person contribute to the task? • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has everybody shared their ideas? • What is our shared idea? • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we want to adjust the task? • If so, how do we want to adjust it? • ...
WORKING METHOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is our action plan? • What agreements do we make? • How do we distribute the tasks? • How and when will we meet? • ... • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does our working method result in the end product we agreed on? • Are we satisfied with our working method? • What is each person's contribution to our working method? • What does everyone need to do their tasks? • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we think is important in our working method? (Where do we aim for and what does this entail for our working method?) • What do you want to, and what can you deliver? • How and about what do we inform each other with regards to progress and agreements? • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we want to adjust our working method? • If so, how do we want to adjust it? • ...
WORKING ATMOSPHERE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we focus on? • What is important to us? • Which qualities do we bring to the collaboration?  • (How) do we compliment each other? • Do we help each other? • What are our learning objectives? • How do we create a constructive atmosphere? • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is good about our working atmosphere, and what has bothered us? • Do we trust each other? • Do we feel safe enough to be able to say everything? • What is each person's contribution to the working atmosphere? • Has everyone indicated what they need? • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we talk about the atmosphere and how do we experience it? For example: How do we give feedback to each other? • How do we talk about our working attitude? • What has been left unsaid? • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we want to change / improve in our working atmosphere? • How do we want to adjust our working atmosphere? • ...
MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we expect of each other? • How much management is needed / available? • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is good about the management? • What (more) do we need? • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we want to discuss? • How do we discuss the progression and the collaboration? • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we want/need from the management? • What we would like to change?