# Buddycheck Explanation

**How your individual mark is calculated**

**Step 1. The group mark**

Your work will be marked by your project mentor. Your project mentor will assess your group’s work against the **marking rubric** (see the project marking rubric and presentation marking rubric in this folder). You should read the marking rubrics so that you and your group understand what qualities we are looking for and what level of performance across different criteria correspond to different levels of achievement. A sample of this work will be moderated by other academic staff to ensure consistency. This determines an **initial group mark** (between 0 and 100) which we will denote by *m*.

**Step 2. Peer evaluation and Buddycheck**

Buddycheck is a tool used at many universities around the world for fairly determining individual marks based on their contribution to group work tasks.

Each group member is asked to grade each member of group (including themselves) against three criteria: Teamwork, Contribution and Responsibility. Each team member awards a number of points, from 1 to 5, in each category to each team member. The criteria that you should be using to judge you and your group members’ performance are as follows:

**Teamwork.** Teamwork is how you and your group members have helped each other to achieve the group’s aims and objectives by completing the assigned tasks. Some elements of different levels of teamwork are described below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Rating** | **Description of criteria** |
| 5 | * Actively asks for and shows an interest in other group members ideas and contributions * Helps and supports other group members who are having difficulty * Proactively seeks and acts upon feedback from other group members |
| 4 | Demonstrates some behaviours described above and some behaviours described below |
| 3 | * Listens to other group members and respects their contributions * Offers some help to other group members, but only in limited circumstances * Accepts feedback from other group members |
| 2 | Demonstrates behaviours described above and below |
| 1 | * Does not listen to other group members and/or takes actions that affects the group without their input * Does not offer help or support to other group members * Does not accept help, advice or feedback from other group members |

**Contribution.** Contribution rates the quality of work that each group member has produced for the assigned task, taking into account each group member’s own knowledge and skills. Some elements of different levels of contribution are described below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Rating** | **Description of criteria** |
| 5 | * Makes important contributions that improves the group’s work * Acquires new skills or knowledge to improve the group’s performance * Able to perform the role of any group member, if necessary |
| 4 | Demonstrates some behaviours described above and some behaviours described below |
| 3 | * Contributes to the group’s work on the project and completes tasks that have been assigned to them to an acceptable standard * Uses their existing skills and knowledge to contribute to the assignment * Able to perform some tasks normally done by other group members |
| 2 | Demonstrates some behaviours described above and some behaviours described below |
| 1 | * Does not do a fair share of the work and/or does not complete tasks assigned to them by the group * Unwilling to use their skills and knowledge to contribute to the assignment * Unable to perform any roles or responsibilities of other group members |

**Responsibility.** Responsibility is how each group member has enabled the group to produce the assignment. It includes aspects of leadership roles within the group but also taking responsibility for one’s own contributions. Some elements of different levels of responsibility are described below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Rating** | **Description of criteria** |
| 5 | * Proactively monitors the group’s progress against the goals, ensuring that work is done on time and to a high standard * Motivates the group to produce excellent work * Ensures that the work they and other team members produce is on-time, coherent and relevant for the assignment. |
| 4 | Demonstrates some behaviours described above and some behaviours described below |
| 3 | * Is aware of the group’s progress and works towards enabling the group to complete the assignment on time and to an acceptable standard * Encourages the group to produce work that meets the required standard * Meets deadlines for their own tasks and that their work is relevant for the assignment |
| 2 | Demonstrates some behaviours described above and some behaviours described below |
| 1 | * Is unaware if the group is meeting its aims and objectives and/or is satisfied if the assignment is not completed on time or is of low quality * Is satisfied even if the work does not meet the required standard * Misses deadlines for their own tasks and/or works independently and uncoordinated with other group members |

**Step 3. Calculation of your individual mark**

Suppose a group comprises *n* group members. Suppose group member *i* awards marks to group member *j* for teamwork, contribution and responsibility, respectively.

The total number of points allocated to group member *i* is then . The average number of points allocated to group member *i* is then

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The group average is the average points awarded across the whole group:

The adjustment factor for group member *i* is then

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If the adjustment factor lies between 0.95 and 1 then it is replaced by 1. This is so that somebody who has contributed ‘about an average amount’ is not penalised by a quirk of small denominators in the Buddycheck algorithm.

The initial individual mark for group member *i* is then

(The factor of 0.8 is introduced to minimise possible wild fluctuations in initial individual marks.)

The individual mark is then capped at marks from the group mark. Hence the individual mark awarded to group member *i* is

**An example**

A group comprises Alex, Briar, Charlie and Dakota. Alex was a high performer throughout preparing this group’s project. Briar and Charlie were more average performers with different strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of the group, Dakota made only limited contributions.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Teamwork | | | | Contribution | | | | Responsibility | | | |
|  | Alex | Briar | Charlie | Dakota | Alex | Briar | Charlie | Dakota | Alex | Briar | Charlie | Dakota |
| Alex | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Briar | 5 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| Charlie | 5 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Dakota | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 |

The average number of points awarded to Alex is

Similarly, , and

The group average is The adjustment factor for Alex is then Similarly, the adjustment factors for Briar, Charlie and Dakota are 1.16, 0.96, 0.51. As Charlie’s adjustment factor is between 0.95 and 1, it is replaced by 1.

The Project Mentor assessed the project and awarded a mark of 60. Using the adjustment factors, this gives Alex, Briar, Charlie and Dakota initial individual marks of 77.6, 67.9, 60 and 36.3. As Dakota’s mark is more than 20 below the group mark, it is capped at the group mark minus 20. Hence the individual marks awarded to Alex, Briar, Charlie and Dakota and 77.6, 67.9, 60 and 40, respectively.

(Note that when calculating adjustment factors, Buddycheck works with exact fractions; decimals have been given above so that the example is easier to understand.)

**Frequently asked questions**

**Is this a fair way of assigning marks to group work?**

Yes. There is a lot of research in the pedagogical literature on fair ways to assign individual marks to group projects that reflects both the quality of the piece of work and the level of contribution each individual made. The method used in this course is one that has been used in many other universities around the world and many other places where individual marks for groupwork are needed.

**Who will know how I’ve awarded my points?**How you award points will not be revealed to other group members. The Project Mentor and other staff teaching on or associated with the course unit will know how you have allocated points.

**What happens if a group member doesn’t award any points?**

If a group member does not enter any points into Buddycheck then Buddycheck ignores the missing entries. For example, in the above example if Charlie had not entered any points into Buddycheck then the third row would be empty. Each group member (including Charlie) will still have an individual average and there will still be a group average; the adjustment factor can still be calculated.

However, in practice, the Project Mentor will contact the group member to enquire why they have not responded. If the group member still doesn’t respond, then the Project Mentor will decide how to proceed. For example, the Project Mentor could decide to use the adjustment factors calculated by Buddycheck as above, or they could consult the reflective logs to gain their own impression of how much work has been done by each individual and then decide an appropriate adjustment factor.

**What happens if one group member decides to game the system by awarded a mark of 5 to themselves but a mark of 1 to everybody else?**

Buddycheck has a number of statistical tests built into it to detect abuses like this. In addition, the Project Mentor will check the points awarded to ensure that they reflect their impression of the contribution of each group member. If a student has awarded points that are out-of-line with how others in the group have awarded points, then the Project Mentor will decide how to proceed. This could involve discussing with the student why they allocated the points in the way that they did and then resolving any conflict that has arisen, or it could involve the Project Mentor reallocating the points themselves.

**One of my team members is pressuring me into awarding points in a certain way.**

Allocating points is confidential. You should not feel under pressure by another group member to award points in a certain way. If this happens then you should raise this with your Project Mentor as soon as you can.

**Is it possible to get a mark of 0 or a mark of 100?**

Yes, both of these marks are possible (you can play with the above example to see how this can arise). Obviously, a mark of 0 can only happen if the piece of work has an initial mark of 20 or less (and so is already of poor quality) and the total points awarded to a group member is 0. This is extremely unlikely to happen in practice: the reason why you have meetings with your Project Mentor is to stop groups getting into this position.

**As a group we’ve decided that each group member contributed equally and we want each group member to get the same individual mark, is this possible?** Yes, if you have worked so well as a group that you feel everybody contributed equally and everybody deserves the same mark then this can be arranged. Your group should inform your Project Mentor about this.