# Measures against freeriding (FR) in group work

## General recommendations

1. Have FR prevention, early detection, and correction measures in place.
2. Communicate your measures to students; ensure that everyone understands all the possible forms that FR may take and knows how to respond to them.
3. Detection must happen EARLY on: the end of the project is too late!

## Prevention

### Project design

Design project tasks that must be solved collaboratively, i.e., which minimises division into compartmentalised tasks which can be performed independently of each other.

Allow students to choose or even formulate the project task themselves to leverage their interests and intrinsic motivation.

*Useful sources*

Steiner’s (1972) Taxonomy of Tasks may help you define to what extent your [project tasks promote collaboration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steiner%27s_Taxonomy_of_Tasks).

Brown (2000, Ch. 11) contains valuable considerations on [group dynamics](https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781315042183/500-tips-group-learning-phil-race-sally-brown) that are likely to occur at various group sizes.

### Assessment design

Assess both the individual and the group.

Assess not only the product but also the process.

*Useful sources*

This webpage from Carnegie Mellon University is an [excellent source for assessing group work](https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/design/instructionalstrategies/groupprojects/assess.html#:~:text=Process%20can%20be%20assessed%20according,resolve%20differences%2C%20and%20communicate%20effectively.).

Delaney et al (2016) review [possible methods for deriving individual grades](https://arrow.tudublin.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=ltcpgdprp) from group work.

### Group composition and dynamics

* Form small groups (max 4).
* Allow students to form their groups, if possible. Let students discuss expectations (e.g., grade and learning ambitions) and work styles (e.g., “sprinters” vs “stayers”) within the group on the first session. If these cannot be reconciled, the group should better split.
* In the first group session in the classroom, have students define a project plan, including milestones, deadlines, and individual responsibilities. Check with them at the beginning (and throughout the project) that tasks are fairly divided.
* In the first group session in class, let students set “rules” for group work, such as timely delivery, attendance at meetings, communication, etc. Have a ‘traffic light’ system in place so that, if a student violates one of the important rules of group work three times, s/he will be reported to the teacher.
* Ask students to write minutes for work meetings, to document what was discussed, update on progress, and record who attended the work sessions so that the teacher/tutor may regularly check the minutes and ask questions if anomalies are noticed (e.g., one student is never there or is late on deliveries).
* Make sure that the coordination load is fairly divided among group members. In the first group session in the classroom, let students assign coordination tasks such as organising meetings, writing minutes, moderating discussions, communicating with the project supervisor, etc.

*Useful sources*

Brown (2000, Ch. 11) contains valuable considerations on [group dynamics](https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781315042183/500-tips-group-learning-phil-race-sally-brown) that are likely to occur at various group sizes.

## Early detection

* In the first session, discuss with your students what is “freeriding” (see definition of BMS Examination Boards [here](https://www.utwente.nl/en/bms/examboard/for-teachers/types%20of%20academic%20misconduct%20for%20teachers/Free%20riding/)) and your measures against it. Reinforce the message whenever relevant.
* Monitor the work process and regularly ask if everyone is respecting the group rules. The team planning and minutes (see above) can be of help.
* During team meetings, make students individually accountable for their contribution asking each one of them how they progressed on the project.
* Plan various (anonymous) peer assessment moments at the early stage and throughout the project, in which students can evaluate each other’s contributions. Discuss the outcomes in the group meetings and have students agree on how they can improve their contribution.
* If FR behaviour is detected, immediately implement correction measures.

## Correction

* Choose clear correction measures, such as:
  + The student who is identified as a free rider must leave the group and fails the project.
  + The student who is identified as a free rider must leave the group and complete an alternative assignment.
  + The student who is identified as a free rider is reported to the Examination Board.