

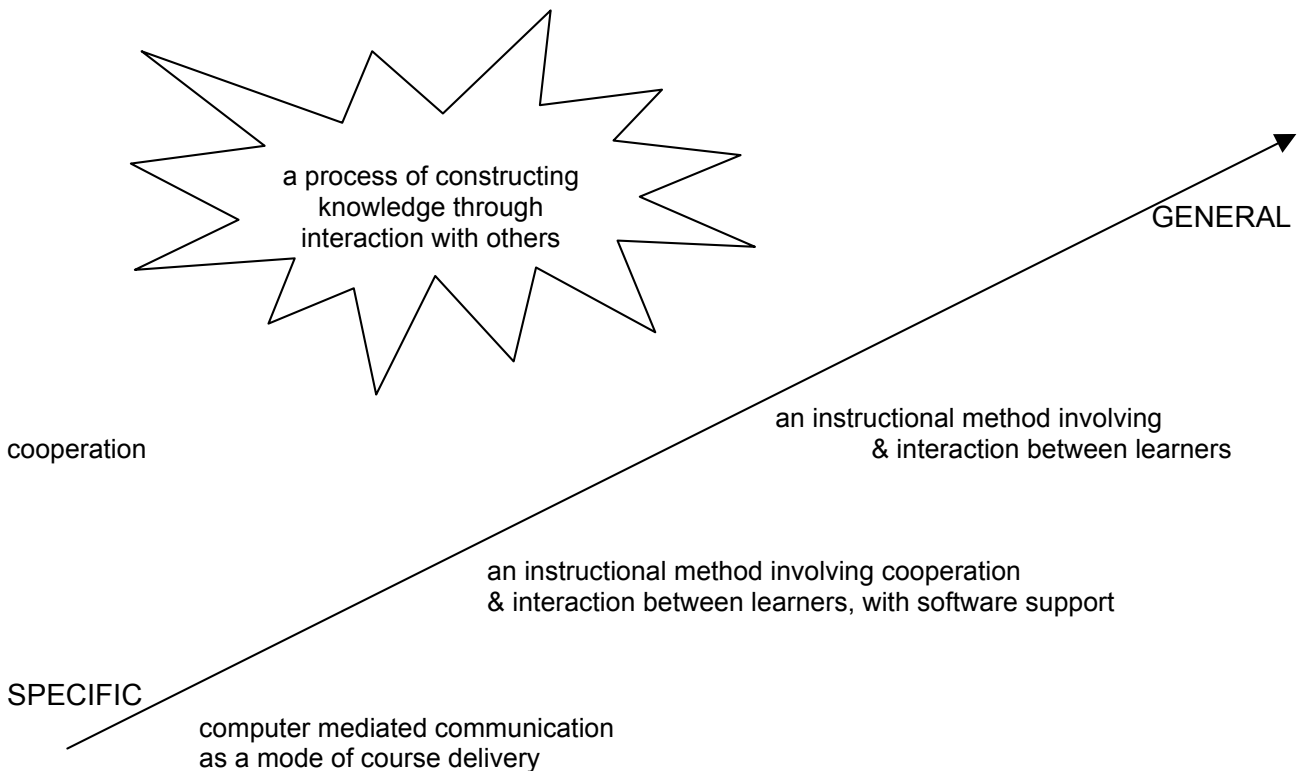
Orientation Lecture Series: LEARNING TO LEARN

Collaborative Learning: a strategy for success

Outline of lecture:

1. What is collaborative learning?
2. Types of collaborative learning.
3. Academic dishonesty, non-legitimate co-operation and other dangerous acts
4. University policies concerning rights and responsibilities.

1. WHAT IS COLLABORATIVE LEARNING?



What is different about behaving collaboratively?

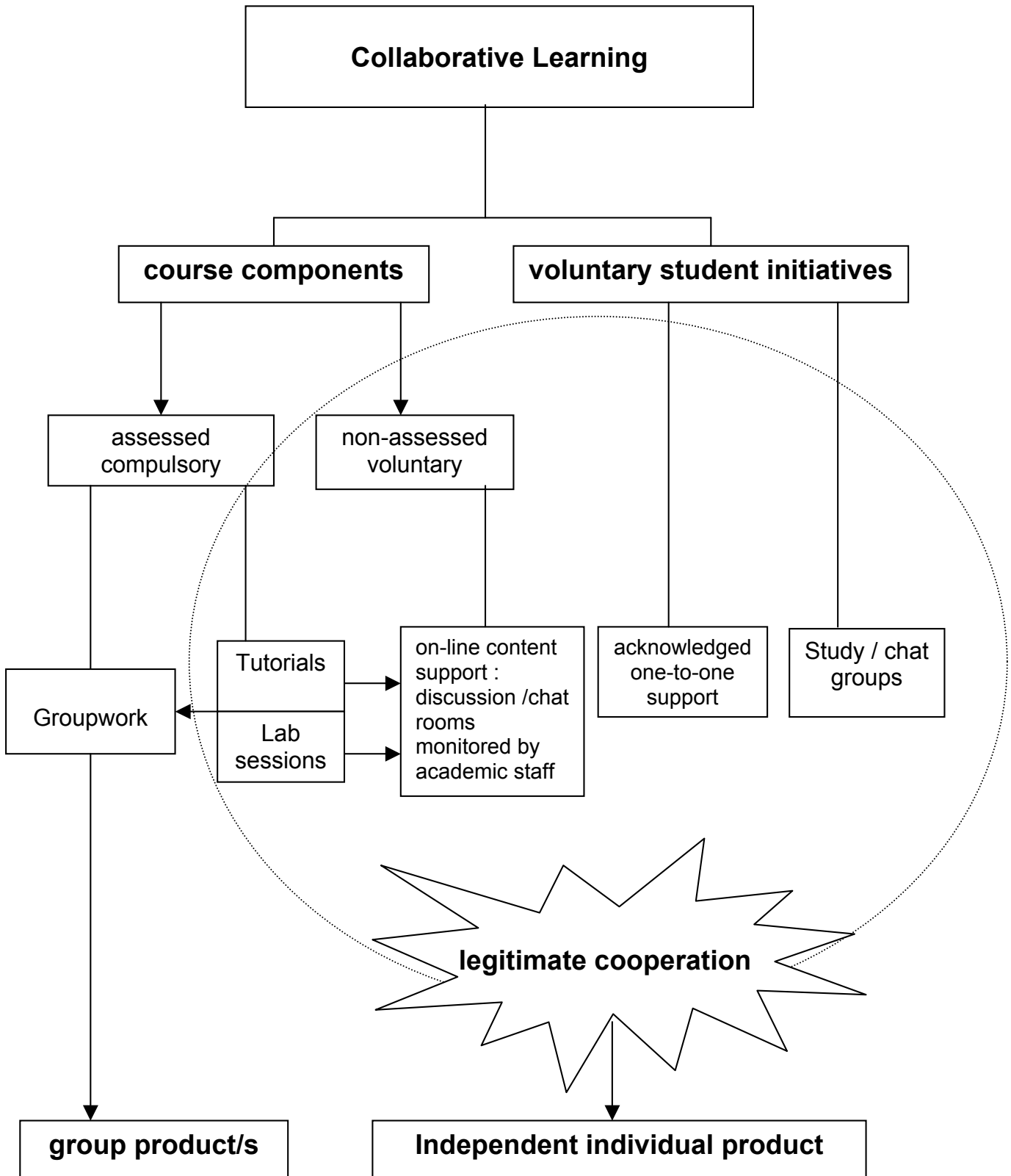
Sometimes types of behaviour that have been strategically useful in the past have to be unlearned in collaborative situations. For example, in order to do well in public examinations in competitive situations, “competitive’ behaviour strategies may work very well. But in collaborative learning situations these behaviours can mean that the products of the collaboration are of poor quality, and the learners are unhappy with the result.

Competitive and collaborative behaviours can be contrasted in the following ways:

EFFECTIVE COMPETITIVE BEHAVIOUR	EFFECTIVE COLLABORATIVE BEHAVIOUR
Directed toward achieving personal goals	Directed towards goals held in common
Secrecy	Openness
Accurate personal understanding of own needs but hidden / misrepresented.	Accurate personal understanding of own needs and accurate representation of them
Unpredictable mixed strategies utilising the element of surprise	Predictable. May be flexible but not designed to take the other party by surprise
Threats and bluffs	Threats and bluffs are not used
Logical, non rational and irrational arguments used to defend a position to which you are strategically committed	Logical and innovative processes are used to defend your views or to find solutions to problems
Where teams, committees etc are involved, communicating bad stereotypes of the other, ignoring her logic, impugning her motives and arousing ingroup hostility.	Dropping stereotypes, giving consideration to ideas on their merits, maintaining good working relationships.

(adapted from Walton, R, How to choose between strategies of conflict and collaboration, in Golembrewsky & Blumberg (ed) *Sensitivity Training and the Laboratory Approach* , Peacock Publishers Inc 1970.)

2. TYPES OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING: A TAXONOMY



Claims made for collaborative learning:

- enhances critical thinking
- helps learners retain information longer
- helps learners achieve higher levels of thought
- encourages development of autonomous learning skills

2.1 Course components: Group work with an assessed group product

Definition:

Groupwork is defined as

“ a formally established project to be done by a number of students in common, resulting in a single piece of assessment or a number of associated pieces of assessment.”

Ref: University of Sydney Academic Policy: Academic Honesty (2002)

in a

Exercise: Past experiences

Work with the person sitting next to you.. Ask your partner the following questions:

- have you worked in a group to produce a group report/presentation etc?

if yes:

- was the experience generally positive or generally negative?
- why? (*compare reasons here*)

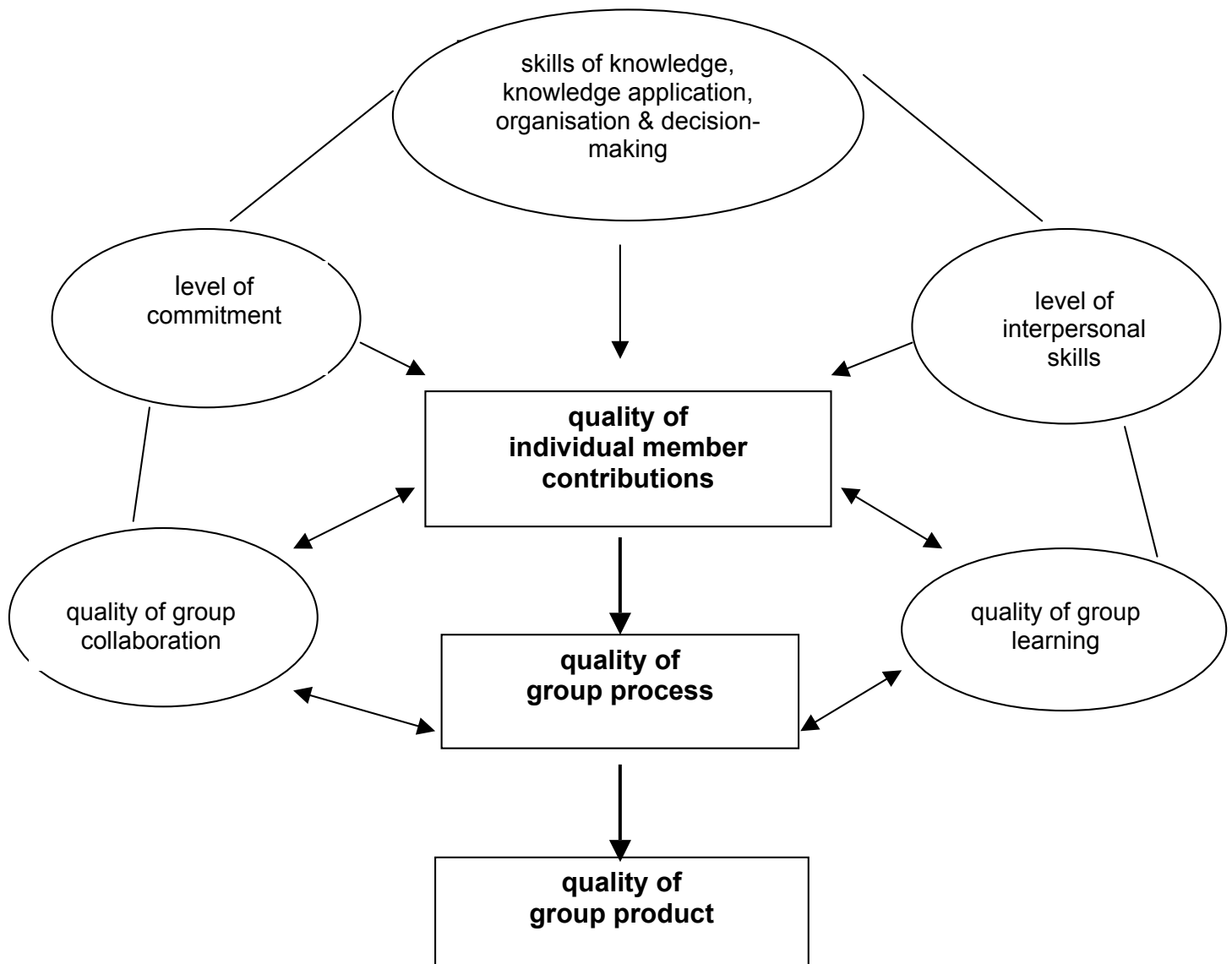
In order to be positive the result of the groupwork needs to be **as good or better** than you can produce by yourself.

Facts: how small groups work

Three key elements are involved in group dynamics:

- product
- process
- contributions from members

Links between key elements in group dynamics



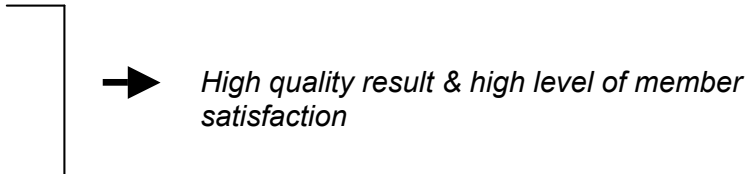
KEY QUESTION:
What is a
“contribution”?

✠ **Exercise 2. Reflection:**


Ask yourself the following questions:

- What are your strengths as a group member?
- What sort of contributions could you offer to a group?

Characteristics of groups that work effectively:

- *equal contributions*
 - *full discussion of issues*
 - *member support*
- 
- High quality result & high level of member satisfaction

Common problems that prevent groups working effectively:

- *problems with logistics*
 - *problems with allocation of tasks*
 - *coordination of member contributions*
 - *lack of commitment from some group members*
- 
- Quality of group product lower than individual product, & high level of stress and dissatisfaction

2.2 Legitimate cooperation: Course components Tutorials etc contributing to an independent individual product

Legitimate cooperation is defined as

“...any constructive educational and intellectual practice that aims to facilitate optimal learning outcomes **through interaction between students.**”

“Legitimate cooperation is based on the principle that **producing the work remains the independent responsibility of the student** (or group of students where a joint project is undertaken), while recognising the educational value of interaction between students.”

Ref: University of Sydney Academic Board: Academic Honesty (2002)

- tutorials, workshops and variations
- computer mediations in tutorials
- chat groups discussion boards etc

KEY QUESTION
What does
'participation'
mean?

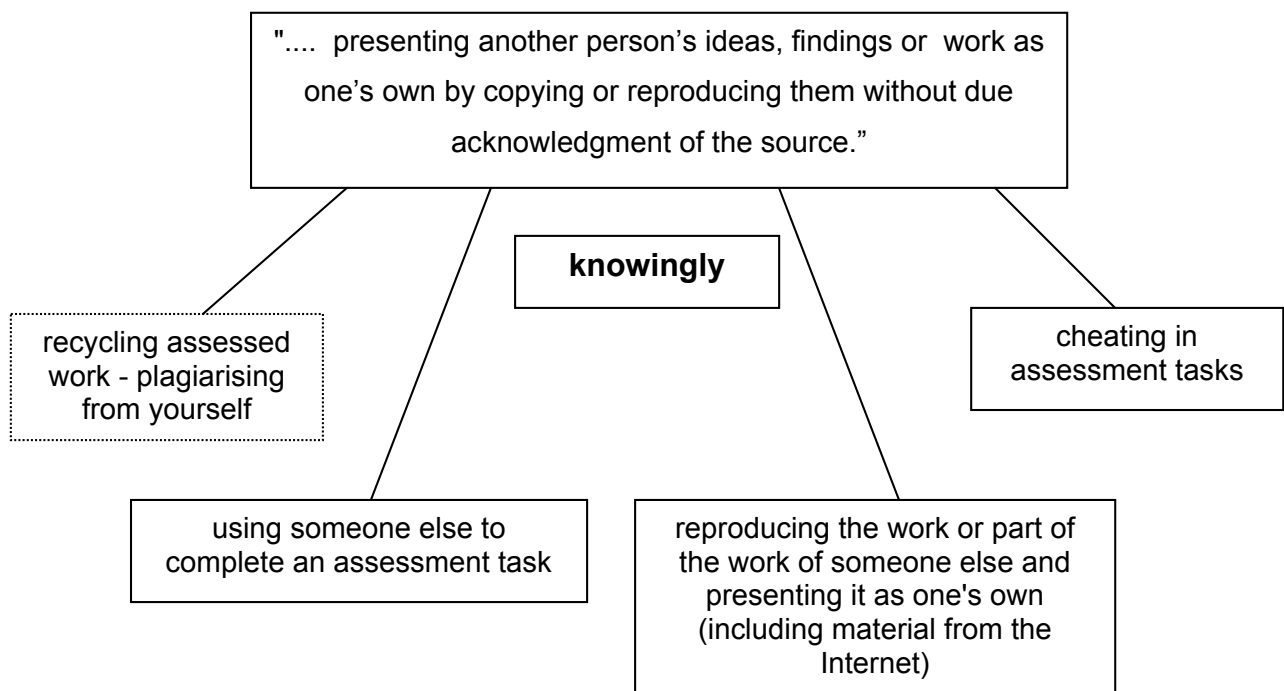
2.3 Legitimate cooperation Voluntary student initiatives contributing to an independent individual product

- Study groups: to discuss readings, to revise for exams, to have initial discussions on assignments
- Acknowledged one-on-one arrangements
e.g. editing/proofreading (use someone doing a different subject)

3. ACADEMIC DISHONESTY, NON-LEGITIMATE COOPERATION AND OTHER DANGEROUS ACTS

3.1 Academic dishonesty

Definition of Plagiarism (University of Sydney Academic Board: Academic Honesty (2002))



All these are very serious

However, in first year a common form of academic dishonesty is **plagiarism by mistake**, due usually to ignorance or poor referencing practices

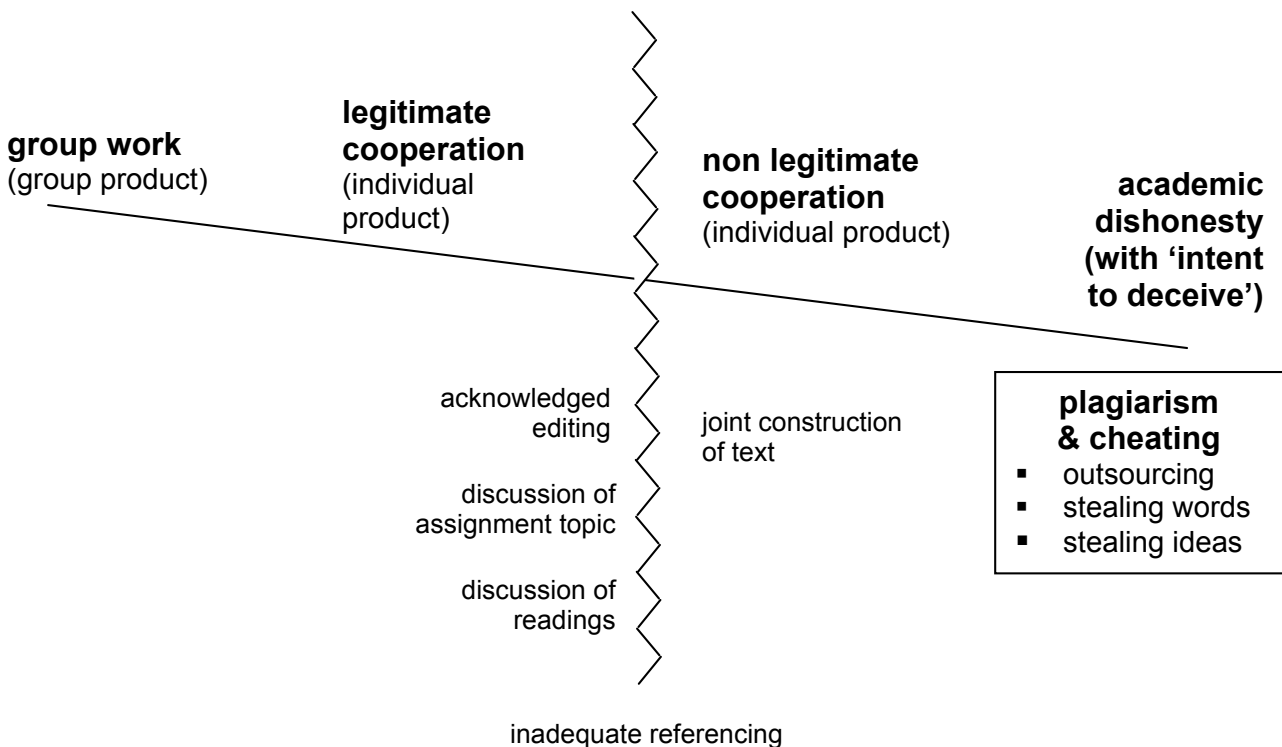
This is not regarded as VERY serious the first time, BUT DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT URGENTLY:

e.g. attend some Learning Centre workshops:

- Language strategies for referring to evidence
- Quoting, summarising and paraphrasing evidence
- Developing and supporting an argument
- Working in Groups*
- Discussion skills*
- Grammar for editing and proofreading*

* these workshops are timetabled for International Postgraduate Students as part of our PIPS workshops, but they can be provided for any group by arrangement.

3.2 Non-legitimate co-operation and dangerous acts:



4. UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY - RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities and obligations of the university include:

- to ensure that academic staff and students understand clearly the different dimensions of academic honesty.

Responsibilities and obligations of departments include:

- to provide support for students in improving their skills in the preparation and presentation of all assignments
- to provide clear guidelines on group work, especially concerning assessment and division of tasks among group members
- to provide clear policy guidelines outlining where legitimate cooperation is encouraged and where it is prohibited
- to provide clear procedures for monitoring group work by academic staff

YOUR Rights and Responsibilities

Rights include

- to expect clear guidelines relating to all aspects of group work
- to be provided with guidelines on academic styles required in each department
- to expect clear assessment information in each course outline, especially concerning which components are individual and which are collective.
- to expect clear procedures for monitoring group work by academic staff, to ensure fair assessment
- to expect clear written instructions on the level of co-operation permitted within each assessment component

Responsibilities include

- to become familiar with the academic writing expectations in your subjects
- to seek assistance from appropriate sources with any academic writing areas where you are aware you need more knowledge and skills.

More information on this university policy can be found at

http://db.usyd.edu.au/policy/policy_index.stm

Notes from this lecture series and details of workshop blocks and program

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/lc>