



Discussion

The development of a rubric for peer assessment of individual teamwork skills in undergraduate midwifery students



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ABSTRACT

Background: Poor teamwork is cited as one of the major root causes of adverse events in healthcare. Bullying, resulting in illness for staff, is an expression of poor teamwork skills. Despite this knowledge, poor teamwork persists in healthcare and teamwork skills are rarely the focus of teaching and assessment in undergraduate health courses.

Aim: To develop and implement an assessment tool for use in facilitating midwifery students' learning of teamwork skills.

Methods: This paper describes how the TeamUP rubric tool was developed. A review of the literature found no research reports on how to teach and assess health students' teamwork skills in standing teams. The literature, however, gives guidance about how university educators should evaluate individual students using peer assessment. The developmental processes of the rubric were grounded in the theoretical literature and feminist collaborative conversations. The rubric incorporates five domains of teamwork skills: Fostering a Team Climate; Project Planning; Facilitating Teams; Managing Conflict and Quality Individual Contribution. The process and outcomes of student and academic content validation are described.

Conclusion: The TeamUP rubric is useful for articulating, teaching and assessing teamwork skills for health professional students. The TeamUP rubric is a robust, theoretically grounded model that defines and details effective teamwork skills and related behaviours. If these skills are mastered, we predict that graduates will be more effective in teams. Our assumption is that graduates, empowered by having these skills, are more likely to manage conflict effectively and less likely to engage in bullying behaviours.

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1. Introduction

This paper reports on the process of development, implementation and initial evaluation of the teamwork skills assessment tool: the TeamUP rubric. See [Table 1](#) for definition of key terms. Teamwork skills are based on the assumption that health professionals should relate respectfully to each other as peers instead of a model of domination and submission.¹ The development of the rubric is nested within a larger action research study that is concerned with the processes of teaching and assessing

teamwork skills in undergraduate health courses. There are many examples of tools to use to teach teamwork with emergency 'drill teams'.^{2,3} In contrast, the focus of TeamUP is on 'standing teams'.⁴ A search of the literature showed that there are no research reports on how to teach and assess health students in standing teams.

Poor teamwork is expensive; in both human and financial terms. Research and government enquiries consistently identify poor teamwork as one of the top modifiable causes of adverse health outcomes and avoidable suffering; not just for patients, but also for staff.^{5–10} Many of these adverse events result in death; in maternity care that most often means avoidable baby deaths.^{11–15} Bullying, a major contributor to adverse health outcomes for workers, is an expression of poor teamwork skills^{16–21} and a major cause of high staff turnover and absenteeism.^{6,17}

The National Competency Standards for the Midwife²² the Code of Professional Conduct for Midwives²³ and the Code of Ethics for

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Table 1
Definitions of key terms.

Assessment	Educational assessment practices serve three main purposes; to promote student learning, to certify achievement and for quality assurance. ⁴³
Assessment: formative	"Is forward looking seeking to shape or 'form' the students learning by setting them on the right learning path; it is more conversational in nature seeking "to engage the student in identifying ways in which performance can be improved" and then acting on that enhanced understanding" p. 12. ⁴³
Assessment: summative	Summative assessment is a retrospective summation of the student's achievement which results in grades and certifications ⁵⁸ ; it must be technically rigorous and have demonstrable validity and reliability. ⁴³
Behaviour	Behaviour is the internally coordinated responses (both actions and inactions) of the whole organism to internal and/or external stimuli; excluding responses more easily understood as developmental change. ⁵⁹
Learning	Learning is the process of changing behaviour as a result of experience. Consistent with constructivist learning theory, when students are facilitated to engage in teamwork assignments, individual learning occurs in communities of practice; with the aim of enhancing socialisation for all team members. ⁶⁰
Skill	The ability to do something well. A skill requires knowledge, attitude and practice; skills develop over time. ⁶¹
Teams	
1. Drill teams	1. In drill teams membership changes, the duration of the team is relatively short and the roles are usually clearly defined so that interactions are mostly limited to role functioning (e.g. emergency teams, surgical teams). ⁴
2. Standing teams	2. In 'standing teams' there is an expectation of ongoing relationships because membership is relatively stable and persist over time; interactions often exceed role functions. ⁴
Teamwork skills	A group of learned behaviours that provide the individual with the capability to maintain their own integrity whilst fostering the achievement of team goals.
Rubric	A scoring tool that divides an assignment into its component parts and objectives, and provides a detailed description of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable levels of performance for each part. ⁶²
Workplace bullying	"Is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards an employee or group of employees that creates a risk to health and safety... and includes actions of individuals or a group... including verbal abuse, excluding or isolating employees, and psychological harassment – intimidation, assigning meaningless tasks unrelated to the job and deliberately withholding information". ²¹
Validity	"Validity is the overall evaluative judgement of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations and actions on the basis of test scores or other modes of assessment" ²⁹ A.

Midwives²⁴ refer to the midwife's duty to collaborate with colleagues in respectful ways. A review²⁵ found no examples of any Australian university who assures that their Bachelor's degree graduates meet the Australian Quality Framework²⁶ requirement to be able to communicate and collaborate: that is, teamwork skills.

Our first attempt to assess individual student teamwork skills involved students working together on a team project and then giving anonymised (that is, not anonymous to the lecturer) peer feedback. In this first attempt, students used a set of criteria

(without definitions) to provide numerical marks and comments to each other. We did not provide any education about what constituted teamwork skills neither did we provide information on how to give and receive such feedback. Although the students' evaluations of this peer making process were primarily positive, they did say that they wanted "more guidance, more specific teaching about teamwork, more teacher involvement, mid-session peer feedback" and "an improved ability to meet face to face" in their teams.²⁷ Based on this feedback, we decided that a systematic, whole of curriculum approach was needed – this decision led directly to the action research study and the development of the TeamUP rubric.

2. Review of related literature

As discussed above, there are no published individual teamwork assessment tools for 'standing teams' in the field of health. Broadening the focus to include any university discipline, only one teamwork assessment tool for use with students was found: the Comprehensive Assessment of Team Member Effectiveness (CATME) (see <http://www.catme.org>). The CATME tool has been widely adopted for use in Universities. CATME was developed from 180 items extracted from a literature search and tested on university students to identify what students thought were critical team-member behaviours.²⁸ In its most recent form, CATME is a five-item tool which is centrally administered from the CATME website.

Following our own review of the literature and our analysis of the CATME tool, we had a Skype meeting with Matthew Ohland, one of the chief authors of CATME to discuss how the CATME tool could be refined to suit our purposes. We eventually decided not to use the CATME tool because of the limitations we found that include;

1. The assessment process is all under the control of the CATME team in the USA allowing no opportunity for change or the addition of qualitative feedback,
2. The CATME items are ill-defined which reduces their usefulness in helping students to know exactly what is required and,
3. The lack of definition undermines validity of the students' ratings because different words mean different things to different raters.²⁹

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU)³⁰ developed a generic rubric for use at the institutional level (available from <http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/pdf/teamwork.pdf>). The AACU rubric, like the CATME tool, did not have the detail required to be useful as a guide to students and teachers about what teamwork skills actually are.

Hugh and Jones,³¹ in their critical review of the teamwork teaching and assessment literature, highlighted the paucity of existing tools for use by university educators and made the following recommendations:

- 1) *Modify the AACU teamwork rubric* and use the rubric to give students formative and summative feedback from their peers within subjects.
- 2) *Commit to the Development of Teamwork*; this means teaching students how to be effective teammates and giving them opportunities to practise and get feedback on their developing teamwork skills.
- 3) *Design Assignments that Elicit Teamwork*
- 4) *Focus on the Teamwork Process*; not just the end product
- 5) *Provide Meaningful Feedback* by giving students the opportunity to practise, receive feedback, and then try again before any marks are assigned to teamwork skills.

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