

Leading Group Projects with Emotional Intelligence

Academic Poster | Student leader in collaborative university group work

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Introduction

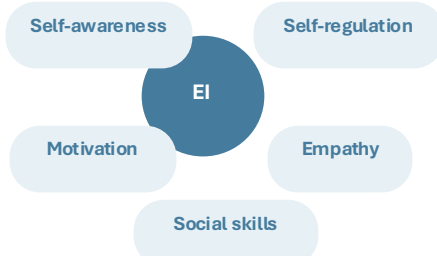
Why EI matters in university group work

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognise, understand and manage emotions in ourselves and others. In group projects, EI helps students stay calm under pressure, respond well to feedback and build trust.

Real-life challenges: unequal effort, missed deadlines, quiet members, conflict over ideas, and stress before submission.

EI Toolkit

Five skills used by an effective student leader



These skills help the leader notice emotions early, control reactions, and keep communication respectful.

Method / Reflection

To explain during the one-to-one presentation

Information was gathered from:

- Academic research on EI
- Class learning and lecture slides
- Personal experience of group projects
- Observation of how students react to pressure

Reflection: EI is useful because it turns emotional reactions into thoughtful responses. A good student leader does not ignore stress or conflict; they manage it through calm communication, fairness and support.

Presentation line: "I used both theory and real group-work experiences to show how EI improves teamwork."

1. EI in Teamwork

How EI helps students work effectively and handle challenges

EI improves teamwork because it helps students manage both the task and the relationships inside the group.

- Self-awareness: notice when stress or defensiveness is affecting behaviour.
- Self-regulation: pause before reacting to criticism or pressure.
- Motivation: keep the group focused when energy drops.
- Empathy: understand why someone may be withdrawn or frustrated.
- Social skills: organise meetings, give clear feedback and solve conflict.

Teamwork examples

- Conflict over ideas: listen first, then agree a fair decision.
- Deadlines: divide tasks clearly and check progress early.
- Feedback: focus on improving the work, not blaming the person.

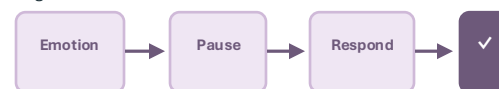
2. Managing Own Emotions

How students stay productive and reduce stress

A student can recognise emotions by noticing body signs, thoughts and behaviour: feeling tense, rushing, avoiding messages, or becoming defensive.

Useful strategies

- Mindfulness: take a short pause and breathe before replying.
- Reflection: ask "what emotion am I feeling and why?"
- Stress management: plan work in smaller tasks and take breaks.
- Balanced response: speak calmly and use evidence, not anger.



Better outcome: lower stress, clearer decisions, stronger teamwork.

3. Understanding Others' Emotions

How empathy improves communication, collaboration and success

Empathy means trying to understand another student's feelings and viewpoint before judging their behaviour. This supports psychological safety and makes it easier for students to contribute.

Empathetic behaviours

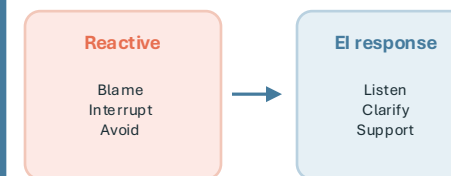
- Active listening: let people finish before responding.
- Perspective-taking: ask why a team member may be quiet, stressed or frustrated.
- Constructive feedback: explain what can improve and offer help.
- Inclusive communication: invite quieter members to share ideas.
- Respectful challenge: disagree with ideas, not with the person.

Mini-case: withdrawn team member

Instead of saying "you are not helping", an emotionally intelligent leader asks: "Is anything making it difficult to contribute? Let's agree one small task you can complete by Friday."

Communication Shift

From reactive to emotionally intelligent



Result: communication becomes calmer and more honest. The group can solve problems quicker because members feel respected and are more willing to take responsibility.

Example feedback sentence: "Your point is useful. To strengthen the report, can we add evidence and link it to the theory?"

Conclusion / Recommendations

Practical tips for successful group outcomes

Key takeaway: EI helps students manage emotions, communicate with respect and turn group pressure into organised action. It improves both the quality of the work and the working relationship.

Recommendations for students

1. Start with agreed roles, deadlines and group rules.
2. Use check-ins: "How is everyone finding the workload?"
3. Pause before replying to stressful messages.
4. Give feedback using facts and solutions.
5. Ask quieter members direct but supportive questions.
6. Reflect after meetings: what went well and what needs changing?

Final message

A successful student leader is not just organised; they are emotionally aware, calm and supportive.

References

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Mayer, J.D. and Salovey, P. (1997) "What is emotional intelligence?", in Salovey, P. and Sluyter, D.J. (eds.) Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence: Implications for Educators. New York: Basic Books, pp. 3-31.

Salovey, P. and Mayer, J.D. (1990) "Emotional intelligence", Imagination, Cognition and Personality, 9(3), pp. 185-211.

In-text sources used: (Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995; Mayer and Salovey, 1997).