

Leading Group Projects with Emotional Intelligence

Applying emotional intelligence to improve teamwork, manage conflict and support successful group outcomes

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MODULE
LCLM 5006

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Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognise, understand and manage emotions in yourself and in others (Goleman, 1995). Theorists frame it differently, as an **ability** to reason with emotional information (Mayer and Salovey, 1997) or as a wider **mix of traits and competencies** (Petrides and Furnham, 2001), but both explain how students cope in group projects.

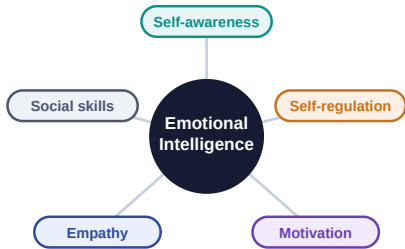
Why it matters in group work:

- Stops small tensions hardening into lasting conflict.
- Sustains motivation so the workload stays shared, not dumped on a few.
- Keeps thinking clear when deadlines raise stress.

Running example: midway through a group report, a teammate goes quiet after critical feedback and misses her section's deadline. Each section applies EI to this.

The five core EI skills

GOLEMAN'S MODEL, APPLIED TO TEAMS



Five interacting competencies that shape how a team works together.

Section 1 · EI in Teamwork

QUESTION A — EFFECTIVE GROUP WORK

How EI helps students collaborate and defuse challenges. Team-level EI predicts stronger performance and healthier conflict resolution (Jordan and Troth, 2004):

- **Self-awareness** — spotting your own irritation early, before it colours how you speak to the group.
- **Self-regulation** — responding, not reacting, so disagreement does not escalate into disengagement.
- **Motivation** — sustaining effort under pressure and modelling it for others.
- **Empathy** — reading why a teammate has withdrawn rather than assuming they do not care.
- **Social skills** — surfacing conflict openly and rebuilding trust.

Applied: instead of criticising the quiet teammate, the leader checks in privately, learns she found the feedback harsh, and reframes it around the work. Effective teams manage emotions this way to protect a shared goal (Druskat and Wolff, 2001).

Section 2 · Managing Own Emotions

QUESTION B — PRODUCTIVITY & STRESS

Regulating your own emotions when a project slips, so frustration does not drive the response:

- **Mindfulness** — noticing stress signals (tension, short replies) before they shape behaviour.
- **Reflection** — naming the trigger, e.g. resentment at carrying extra work.
- **Stress management** — breaks, breathing and time-blocking to keep output steady.
- **Pausing before reacting** — replacing a blaming message with a constructive one.

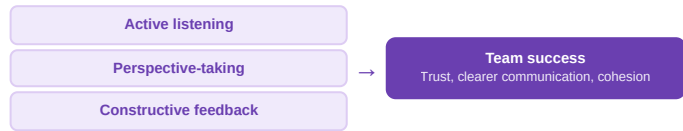


Managing the gap between feeling and action turns frustration into a recovery plan, not a fallout.

Section 3 · Understanding Others

QUESTION C — EMPATHY & COMMUNICATION

How empathy and reading others' emotions improve communication, collaboration and success:



Applied: active listening reveals the teammate feels overwhelmed, not lazy; a respectful, behaviour-focused conversation restores her involvement and the group's trust.

Method & Reflection

PRESENTED ONE-TO-ONE

- **Personal experience** of leading and contributing to group projects.
- **Academic research** on EI (see references).
- **Observation** of how teammates respond to feedback and pressure.

Conclusion & Recommendations

EI strengthens teamwork, reduces conflict and supports academic success. Handled well, emotions become information the team can use, not noise that derails it.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Reflect regularly to build self-awareness.
- Communicate calmly and respectfully in conflict.
- Check in with teammates; share the load fairly.
- Give and receive feedback constructively.

The EI framework: three influential models

Original diagrams — drawn from the cited sources

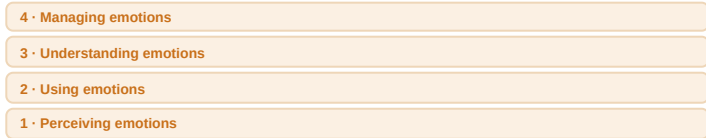
Mixed model

Goleman (1995) — competencies for performance



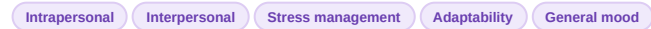
Ability model

Mayer & Salovey (1997) — four branches, bottom to top



EQ-i model

Bar-On (1997) — five composite scales



References (Harvard)

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2. Druskat, V.U. and Wolff, S.B. (2001) 'Building the emotional intelligence of groups', **Harvard Business Review**, 79(3), pp. 80–90.
3. Goleman, D. (1995) **Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ**. New York: Bantam Books.
4. Jordan, P.J. and Troth, A.C. (2004) 'Managing emotions during team problem solving: emotional intelligence and conflict resolution', **Human Performance**, 17(2), pp. 195–218.
5. Mayer, J.D. and Salovey, P. (1997) 'What is emotional intelligence?', in Salovey, P. and Sluyter, D.J. (eds.) **Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence**. New York: Basic Books, pp. 3–31.
6. Petrides, K.V. and Furnham, A. (2001) 'Trait emotional intelligence', **European Journal of Personality**, 15(6), pp. 425–448.

Section colour key

- Teal — EI in Teamwork (A)
- Amber — Managing Own Emotions (B)
- Violet — Understanding Others (C)