Stage 3: During Semester

The purpose of this stage is to monitor the progress of students and teams, and to mentor where necessary to overcome any team dysfunction. Steps 1, 2 and 4 of Stage 3 are linked, and can be repeated at appropriate intervals.

STEP 1	Get students to reflect
STEP 2	Conduct mentor meeting(s)
STEP 3	Address social loafing
STEP 4	Provide formative assessment
STEP 5	Provide hurdle assessment

Stage 3, Step 1: Get students to reflect

In this step, students reflect on their progress prior to a mentor meeting. There are two outcomes here:

1. students take time to reflect on their progress and their team, and

2. mentors can diagnose dysfunction and prepare strategies for discussion in the meeting.

Appendix D has two types of forms that could be used here; as always you can edit these to cover the activities within your course. Remember also that GPA[10] can be used to automate this process. Whichever way you choose, the reflection should be:

- completed by the individual student with the knowledge that only the course mentors and lecturers will view its contents;

- completed prior to each mentor meeting (Stage 3 Step 2) with sufficient time to allow interpretation by the mentor and preparation for appropriate mentor meeting facilitation; and

- submitted formally, perhaps as a compulsory requirement of the subject, to ensure the students undertake the reflective process.

If you are calculating Peer Assessment Factors (see Stage 4, Step 2), students may need some in-class instruction about how the distribution of the 100 points among members of the team works. I include the following in documents that I distribute to students and run through the process quickly in class.

> *As a ready-reckoner of the Peer Assessment Factor (PAF) multiply the score that you are giving someone by the number of people in the team ... now have a look at the score. Is this the percentage of the team mark that you think they deserve?*

Another suggestion is to encourage students to have a team meeting to reflect the team's progress and any obstacles to working together prior to completing the form.

There are a couple of other things that you should be aware of:

- **You might turn up some very strange students** …
  I have found that the PETS process can expose those students with psychological problems very early in the course: usually through the process of individual reflection, both by the student in question and by their team mates. Very often these students require counselling that is not within our expertise and hence I refer them to the university's student support services.

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[10] GPA is an online peer assessment system. It is customisable in that you can set the categories for peer assessment and decide whether to use a Likert scale or divide 100 points. The system includes automated features such as emailing students who have yet to complete the assessment, and moderating scores.

- **All students must submit the forms.**
  There are two reasons why all students must submit the forms: i) calculated Peer Assessment Factors (PAF) can become skewed if based on the scores arising from only a couple of students' marks; and ii) if only a couple of students submit forms then the remainder of the team knows who to was responsible for their PAF – this can get nasty if they have received a low score.

Stage 3, Step 2: Conduct mentor meetings

The mechanism for making sure the team is on track is the mentor meeting. The number of mentor meetings is for you as the instructor to decide but we have found at least two, perhaps three to be a good number. You will need to determine the number of mentor meetings before the start of semester, and schedule these into the course.

Mentor meetings, if done correctly, are highly valued by the students for technical, time management, and team facilitation input. At these meetings, the mentor provides formative feedback to the team.

As previously mentioned, prior to the meeting, mentors should calculate the Peer Assessment Factor (PAF) for each student, and read all reflections to diagnose group dysfunction, and in particular, to identify any social loafers. The following should be considered when interpreting the form:

- **social loafing** may be indicated by:
  – specific comments to this effect by most team members;
  – most team members indicating that a student is not contributing and subsequently giving them very low marks when distributing the 100 points; and/ or
  – an individual reflection at odds with the rest of the team showing a complete lack of knowledge with respect to the team's progress and work;

- **personal conflict** may be indicated by:
  – specific directed comments about a team member made by one or more students; and/ or
  – a distribution of marks against a student at odds with the rest of the team's distributions made by one student;

- **poor team performance** may be indicated by:
  – specific comments about the team achievements (or lack thereof); and/ or
  – specific comments such as poor meeting procedure, poor communication.

Mentor meetings should be formal with all team members present and can be anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes in duration depending on the detail involved in the project, and the check list of tasks to be evaluated. It is sometimes useful to have longer meetings but allowing 60 minutes per group becomes a large time commitment if you are mentoring more than a couple of teams. To formalise this procedure and to ensure that students understand the importance of the process, it is recommended that a mark be assigned to this aspect of group work.

At the mentor meetings:

- team members are asked individually to give an update of how the team is tracking in terms of the goals for the team and their cooperation to ensure group learning objectives are being achieved;

- the work detailed as requiring completion on the project check sheet, if you have decided to use one, is examined and technical feedback given;

- the mentor explores with the team any issues raised through student reflection and/ or peer assessment and discusses strategies for addressing these problems: where the team is, where it needs to be, and methods for proceeding; and

- the discussion can be directed to social loafing, personal conflict, and differing team expectations if necessary. Peer Assessment Factors (PAF) may be given back to the team and a team discussion initiated around how any individuals who have peer assessment factors lower than one, can be reintegrated into the team.

The level to which the mentor becomes involved with the team at these meetings needs to be agreed with the teaching team at the beginning of semester (see Stage 1 Step 3, Table 4).

Letting students know PAFs during semester, perhaps without implication on marks, is important to ensuring team success. Teams with dysfunction or poorly performing members can turn things around but the mentor must manage the session well. However, it is never easy - even after years of mentoring, I still find it very difficult. I open with why we are meeting and move on to strategies for moving forward, cutting short any discussions about blame. In any case, there is no right way to do this – you just must feel your way with each different situation. Discussing problems with the teaching team beforehand is also very helpful.

Some other things that you might be asking:

- **Why do the mentor meeting reflection forms need to be confidential?**
  To be truthful, students must believe that the other members of their team will not see what they have written. Your teaching team must be made aware of the sacrosanct nature of the student reflections or the tool no longer is of any use as reflected by a student:

  We were told peer assessment was confidential. However, in mentor meetings individuals who had given slack team members honest reviews were named and the problem discussed openly. This, in my opinion, encouraged teams to distribute marks evenly from this point on.

  Sometimes it is necessary to name students (see below) but this should be done in such a way that the other team members are not identified as having made the damning remark. I have found the phraseology "more than one team member has identified that …" to be very helpful.

- **What if I have a social loafer?** (see also the following step)
  The decision of whether to reveal PAFs and with them social loafers and team members who have caused conflict needs to be taken with great care.

  I tend only to name students who are in danger of failing due to social loafing as this usually causes the student to reassess their actions and reapply themselves to the team. There will always be ill-feeling associated with revealing students who the team have judged to be poor performers – skilful facilitation is required to ensure that these negative feelings are resolved at the mentor meeting. I often find the old trick of calling a break in proceedings if tempers are starting to fray to be very useful. Also the 'no blame' method where the team is asked to move forward rather than looking back.

  In most cases, I ask the students whether they would like to discuss the issue at the meeting or, now that they are aware that there is an issue, whether they would like to address it themselves at their next team meeting. This is a judgement call and often you will be able to tell whether the team can sort out issues on their own.

  The mentor must discuss with the team, opportunities for the social loafer to be brought back into the team as a useful member. This is often difficult for the team to facilitate but if left, the situation will generally continue with the social loafer left out of proceedings due to the team being unwilling to trust them. Try getting the team to set a time limit for the social loafer to produce the agreed work and in this way manage to gain the team's agreement in assigning work to the social loafer. Be warned that students, both "accused" and "accusers", will bear a grudge after the incident and hence the situation will need continued monitoring.

- **Is there a need to meet with individuals?**
  Individuals who are having trouble with teamwork often can be best counselled through individual meetings. These students may have fallen foul of a clique within the team, have insufficient confidence to address what they perceive to be a problem directly with the team, or have an issue that they would like to discuss with you rather than the team. In each case, I find that a one-on-one meeting can ameliorate the issue. During these meetings, the coordinator facilitates the frank discussion and delineation of the problem and then discusses and develops potential strategies for problem solution.

- **How do I calculate a TEAM ASSESSMENT MARK (TAM)?**
  The team assessment mark (TAM) can be included in the final assessment (Stage 4 Step 4) if improving teamwork skills is an assessable learning objective. It can be used to encourage students to fill out the necessary individual reflections prior to mentor meetings, attend mentor meetings, and achieve the tasks outlined on project check sheets.

  The TAM can be generated through several different assessments. I often generate it though two parts: i) evaluation of individuals at mentor meetings: submission of forms, attendance and participation at mentor meetings, team learning etc. (Table 10), and ii) an overall team mark (Table 11) or grade based on the mentor's observations of team success and team functionality. The inclusion of an overall team dimension score encourages teams to communicate well, solve any conflicts, share learning, and meet deadlines in addition to emphasising the importance of teamwork.

Table 10:   TAM Rubric (For use during mentor meeting, Max mark 15)

MENTOR MEETING No. #		
	Student A Student B etc.	SCORING
Individual items		
Reflection submitted		0=No 3=Yes
Present		0=No 3=Yes
Active participation		0=None 1=Avg 2=Outstanding
Group items		
Milestones complete		0=None 1=Few 2=Most 3=All
Team meeting logs		0=Poor 1=Avg 2=Comprehensive
Shared learning		0=Poor 1=Avg 2=Excellent

Table 11:   TAM Rubric (For use at end of semester, Max mark 50)

Team's purpose:	Uncertain	1 2 3 4 5	Clear
Team structure:	Cliques and individuals	1 2 3 4 5	All in
Communication:	Very guarded	1 2 3 4 5	Very open
Goals:	Set from above	1 2 3 4 5	Through team interaction
Use of team members' skills:	Poor use	1 2 3 4 5	Good use
Support:	Little help for individual	1 2 3 4 5	High support for individuals
Conflict:	Difficult issues avoided	1 2 3 4 5	Problems discussed openly
Influence on decisions:	By few members	1 2 3 4 5	By all members
Risk taking:	Not encouraged	1 2 3 4 5	Encouraged/ supported
Working on relationships:	Little effort	1 2 3 4 5	High level of effort

The elements in Table 10 and 11 can be used in isolation or combined – it is up to you. Indeed, a less detailed rubric for giving an overall team dimension score, based on a 1 (lowest) to 7 (highest) grade system, may be as follows:

7   All team members contributed effectively and equally to setting and achieving the project goals, and shared all internal team communication, learning and skills development in the project work. There may have been obstacles but the team overcame them through open discussion.

6   All team members contributed effectively to setting and achieving project goals and shared most internal team communication, learning and skills development in the project work. Obstacles overcome for the most part.

5   All team members contributed reasonably to achieving project goals but the effort was not equitable and there was limited internal team communication and sharing of learning and skills development in the project work. Some obstacles were unresolved.

4   All team members contributed reasonably to achieving project goals but the effort was far from equitable and there was erratic internal team communication, and little or no sharing of learning and skills development in the project work. Most obstacles were unresolved.

<4   Not all team members contributed their fair share, internal team communication was poor, and there was no sharing of learning and skills development in the project work.

The value of this segment of assessment has been up to 20% in courses I have taught where developing team skills has been one of the learning objectives. In other courses, I have neglected this factor altogether; these courses tend to be 4th year ones where team work skills are well honed and students are familiar with the processes need to maintain functional teams.

- **What are the attributes of a good mentor?**
  The qualities of a good mentor are (Rowley, 1999): commitment to the role of mentoring; acceptance of the student; skill at providing instructional support; effectiveness in different interpersonal contexts; a model of a continuous learner; and communication of hope and optimism.

  And the big one … required during all mentor meetings and ad-hoc meetings with teams, is that of listening. "*A good mentor is a good listener. Hear exactly what the student is trying to tell you—without first interpreting or judging. Pay attention to the "subtext" and undertones of the student's words, including tone, attitude, and body language. When you think you have understood a point, it might be helpful to repeat it to the student and ask whether you have understood correctly. Through careful listening, you convey your empathy for the student and your understanding of a student's challenges. When a student feels this empathy, the way is open for clear communication and more-effective mentoring*" (National Academy of Science, 1997). This last – a good listener – is critical.

  We have found mentoring to be something that we get better at the more we practice it.

Stage 3, Step 3: Address social loafing

One of the outcomes of Mentor Meetings and anonymous student reflection is that students who are social loafing will be identified through a low PAF score, other team member comments, and your observations.

You will have made it clear at the beginning of semester (Stage 2 Step 1), that the penalty for social loafing may be to be re-assigned to a newly created team which comprises social loafers who have been excluded from their teams for poor participation and performance. The point at which this re-assignment takes place is up to you but I usually do this after the second mentor meeting based on two poor PAFs. I have found that I also need to specify a significant decrease in PAF scores between mentor meetings as a criterion because, unfortunately, there are those students who will work the system doing as little as possible whilst managing to keep just below the radar.

It is important that:

- social loafers are given written advice that they face re-assignment unless their performance improves after the first poor PAF assessment. Depending on comments from teammates on the anonymous reflection sheets, this is usually a score of 0.7 or less but sometimes 0.8 can trigger reassignment if this score is not due to other circumstances such as sickness (See Stage 4, Step 2 for an overview of PAF interpretation);

- social loafers have the opportunity to redeem themselves, so reassignment should only take place after a second negative PAF assessment; and

- re-assignment is by the course coordinator on the advice and recommendation of the affected team and mentor. An alternative course of action to reassigning a social loafer is open discussion with the team, wherein the social loafer is named. This course of action is supported if members of the teams with social loafers have not expressed a desire for the removal of the social loafer but rather a wish for their remediation within the team.

If a new team of reassigned members is to be made, then consideration needs to be given to:

- the scope of the project(s) that this team shall work on;

- the information the reassigned members can take with them to the new team; and

- whether the team that is losing a member needs to be compensated for the loss of a member by, for example, a project modification which lessens their workload but still allows the learning objectives to be achieved.

There is no right answer to the problem of dealing with social loafers; each answer will be situation specific.

> *I have never had to reassign a student due to a second poor PAF assessment; I have come close but at the final moment the existing team has stepped up and 'claimed' the social loafer. I have had to reassign students due to irreconcilable team dysfunction however. And I currently put teams of known social loafers together at the beginning of semester rather than 'sharing' them around other teams. This team is always told of the basis of their selection: "You remember how last semester, the rest of the team seemed always to be way ahead of you ...", and given extra mentoring to ensure that they meet submittable assessment deadlines."*

Over the years, I have found that social loafers come in several different flavours, or combinations of flavours. I see them so regularly that I have developed names for them:

- **The informed reformer**: This is the student that misses the first important lectures of the semester where the PETS process is outlined, along with its strategy for coping with social loafers. The informed reformer will drift along unaware of the peer assessment process and the disgruntlement of their fellow team mates until it is pointed out to them in a mentor meeting with the team. These students will often be astonished to learn they have been loafing and will usually reform.

- **The non-team player**: This student is often a high achiever who gets excellent marks in all subjects but believes all work done by anyone other than themselves is inferior and needs to be redone. Often, they score low marks in peer assessment as the other members of their team penalise them for poor communication, creating extra work and failing to resolve any team problems. On occasion, they will produce a final deliverable on their own. They are most 'dangerous' when they take over leadership, complete the task before the other students have had a chance to read the assignment, and hence do not allow the rest of the team to achieve learning objectives. I have found that fixing this problem is difficult and requires much monitoring and mentoring often to the intense frustration of the non-team player.

- **The quick learner**: This student receives one bad peer assessment and an accompanying warning email and reforms to become a valuable member of the team. A subset of this type of social loafer will go on to try the same behaviour in subsequent teams but will immediately reform if the team penalises them. There are also some students whose PAFs get steadily worse but not bad enough to warrant a warning email. It is almost as if they are testing the limits of the team's patience and finding the level at which they will be penalised by their peers.

- **The un-confident**: This student is sure that they are not as clever as the rest of their teammates and hence let them make all the decisions and do the work. They are afraid of getting it wrong and their perceived lack of intelligence being exposed. They may have made a previous mistake and feel that they have lost some of the team's trust. These students are hard to recognise but respond well to a one-on-one pep talk around the fact that they have passed the same exams that everyone else has and have earnt their place at university.

- **The laid-back**: This student is quite happy to let more motivated students take on tasks as this will give them more time to concentrate on other subjects. It is quite possible that this student is also an **informed reformer** or **quick learner**, in which cases they can become valuable members of the team.

- **The recidivist**: You can email, talk to, penalise, and finally fail this student with no effect. This is the true social loafer and I have yet to find a method of changing this student's behaviour and it is with heavy hearts that I note they have re-enrolled in my courses as I know that without monitoring they will negatively impact on the other members of their team.

I have not presented all methods/ successes here mostly as they are situation/individual specific but I do know that as you get more experience, you get better at diagnosing, reforming and curing dysfunction.

Stage 3, Step 4: Provide formative assessment

Mentor meetings provide the ideal situation for formative assessment allowing the student to receive feedback on technical issues, time-management, and team processes. This is particularly important if the team project is heavily weighted. As previously mentioned, it helps to stage mentor meetings around deliverables thus allowing mentoring to cover all the issues mentioned above.

An example of how to manage the relationship between mentor meetings, formative and summative assessment taken from a third-year communication course, is given in Table 12 and the following bullet points. The final deliverable is a report evaluating the effectiveness of a public communication campaign the students have run throughout the semester.

Table 12:   Overall Team Mark Calculation

Task	Deliverable	Due	Weight	Affected by PAF
1	Written Proposal	Week 3	10%	No
2	Oral Presentation	Week 9	30%	Yes
3	Written Report	Week 13	60%	Yes

The mentor meetings for this course are:

- Mentor meeting 1 (Week 4):

    – feedback on the written proposal;

    – questions and answers around the project brief;

    – discussion of project aims, schedule, and team approach;

    – team evaluation – perhaps based on a Tuckman evaluation (Appendix E); and

    – preliminary diagnostic work on group dynamics.

- Mentor Meeting 2 (Week 8, Peer assessment required):

    – feedback on a 'draft' of the oral presentation;

    – questions and answers around the final deliverable; and

    – feedback of 'peer assessment factor' and 'self-assessment over peer assessment' scores to facilitate improved performance of those students with a PAF less than one.

- Mentor Meeting 3 (Week 12):

    – ensure the team is on track to produce their final deliverable;

    – assist in the resolution of any unresolved issues relating to task or team – including follow up from Mentor Meeting 2; and

    – provide feedback on the draft report.

Stage 3, Step 5: Hurdle assessment

The other suggestion we have for keeping the team, and individuals within the team, on track is to use a hurdle assessment task. This gives students feedback about their progress in relation to knowledge outcomes of the course and ensures that all students are engaging with learning objectives.

Hurdle assessment is a summative assessment task which must be successfully completed before the student can receive a mark for subsequent summative assessment or pass the course. Hurdle assessment should always be applied with care, and some institutions have policies which place limits on the nature and extent of hurdle assessment. Check your policy manual for details.

Hurdle assessment can be in the form of a PASS/FAIL test. It need not be onerous or lengthy and you can often facilitate these tests using a LMS function. However, you will need to ensure that the system has safeguards against collusion.

Alternatively, you may wish to use an in-class multiple choice test which can be computer marked.

For example, in one course, the hurdle assessment takes the form of a session using the computer program which forms the backbone of one of the projects and is essential for learning objectives. The student is asked to simulate a basic process, run the simulation, and interpret answers. Students have been given six 2-hour tutorial sessions about the operation of this program previously and are generally given a second chance at passing the quiz should they fail the first time.