Best Practice Statement (BPS)

This BPS aims to help ensure consistent and effective practices in relation to online collaboration in writing for business and government. Adhering to the guidance put forth in this document will promote a cohesive approach to working on projects collaboratively.[1]

1. **Identify roles and responsibilities**. It is important that each member of the group clearly understand his or her individual role. It is also important that when assigning roles to a group member that the member have the requisite skills to complete tasks and/or a responsive support structure in her team members to ensure the member not only completes assigned tasks on schedule, but also develops within the role.
    a. Primary roles identified include:
        i. Team leader. The team leader should be "both task- and relationship-oriented."[2]
        ii. Lead writer, secondary researcher.
        iii. Lead researcher, secondary writer.
2. **Identify and agree on collaboration method(s)**.
    a. <u>Face-to-face, divided, layered</u>. The nature of each team member having a lead role suggests a **divided** approach to collaboration; however, the overarching collaborative method is **layered**;[3] Each team member will not only attend to the responsibilities of her lead role, but will also support any secondary role to which she is assigned.[4] This approach must be reflected on the task schedule for each respective project.
    b. <u>Share schedules and availability</u>. Sharing schedules, availability, best times to video-conference, most likely times to post to the discussion board, and the like will minimize conflict and help ensure the group meets assignment deadlines.
3. **Identify and agree on communication method(s)**.
    a. Agree on communication method
        i. <u>Primary method</u>: Blackboard group discussion board
        ii. <u>Secondary method</u>: Email (Nb. Be sure to always cc Dr. Barb)
        iii. <u>Alternative method</u>: Blackboard Collaborate
    b. Agree on communication ethos
        i. Make a conscious decision to be respectful, and always be aware of your tone and choice of words. If you are unsure or do not understand a message being conveyed, ask questions.
        ii. Put key decisions I writing.[5]
        iii. Distribute and act on information quickly.[6]
4. Plan the project.[7]
    a. Create a task schedule.[8] The task schedule is a project's road map; it breaks the larger project down into its component parts, or tasks. Equally important, it should also reflect any anticipated problems in getting a project completed.
    b. Break the project down into several smaller tasks.[9]
    c. Promptly update the task schedule to reflect the status of the project
5. Monitor the project. [10] [11]
6. Be accountable. Whatever your role, "it's important for your team to know what you're working on and that you're on track for an on-time delivery."[12]
7. Be flexible. Schedules and responsibilities may need to change. It is important to keep the project moving forward: If a task depends on an earlier task that is delayed, it may be necessary to rework the task schedule or revise responsibilities.[13]

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[1] This statement is based on relevant research conducted by Group 7 and the work experience of group members.

[2] "Eight Ways to Build Collaborative Teams," *Harvard Business Review*, accessed 28 Aug 2018, https://hbr.org/2007/11/eight-ways-to-build-collaborative-teams.

[3] Joanna Wolfe, "Understanding Collaborative Methods," in *Team Writing: A Guide to Working in Groups*, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010), 6.

[4] Wolfe, "Alternating Collaboration Methods," 9. Wolfe suggested the use of a task schedule that clearly states who is responsible for each task and the deadline for each task. The task schedule should be kept updated to reflect the status of the project.

[5] Wolfe, "Meeting Minutes: Building Accountability and Consensus," 16.

[6] Mike Markel, "Writing Collaboratively," in *Technical Communications*, 10th ed.(Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012), 60.

[7] Markel, "Writing Collaboratively," 60.

[8] Ibid., 60.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Wolfe, "Why Do You Need a Project Manager," 13. As Wolfe suggested, all teams should have a Project Manager or Team Leader; however, this is simply an individual whose role it is to keep the project on course. Each team member *is* a team leader and is, therefore, also accountable for keeping the project moving forward. All team members should be willing to contribute ideas, information, and suggestions on how to improve communication and collaborative efforts. In other words, the contributions of each team member are of value to the team.

[11] Markel, "Writing Collaboratively," 60.

[12] "7 Secrets to successful online collaboration," *Microsoft*, accessed 28 Aug 2018, https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/blog/2015/10/02/7-secrets-to-successful-online-collaboration/

[13] Markel, "Writing Collaboratively," 60.