



WAGENINGEN  
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

## BC TOOLBOX

# Identification of your own and others' expertise

This learning activity is meant to identify available and lacking expertise, skills and attitudes in a project team. Preferably, the activity is carried out when a team just started to collaborate and has a bit of an impression of what the project and or project assignment is about. Students put as many as possible knowledge aspects, skills and attitudes they master on separate post-its. They collect and categorise their findings and discuss overlap and gaps in their project teams' expertise/portfolio. The assignment ends with the development of an action plan for dealing with any of the identified teams' limitations/risks.

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### Link to BC/place on taxonomy

BC competence development / Learning materials / Learning Mechanisms / Identification

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Title activity	Identification of your own and other's expertise
<b>Short description of activity</b>	This learning activity is meant to identify available and lacking expertise, skills and attitudes in a project team. Preferably, the activity is carried out when a team just started to collaborate and has a bit of an impression of what the project and or project assignment is about. Students put as many as possible knowledge aspects, skills and attitudes they master on separate post-its. They collect and categorise their findings and discuss overlap and gaps in their project teams' expertise/portfolio. The assignment ends with the development of an action plan for dealing with any of the identified teams' limitations/risks.
<b>Specific boundaries for which the activity is applicable</b>	Any boundary as present when working on the respective project (e.g. disciplinary; cultural; university-society)
<b>What does the boundary to be crossed look like? Please describe</b>	Actually, not the boundaries as such are key here, neither the crossing, though explicating knowledge, skills and attitudes from different practices as available/present and absent in the project team.
<b>Learning mechanism(s) to be addressed in activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Identification</b></li> <li>• <i>Coordination</i></li> <li>• <i>Reflection (Perspective making and taking)</i></li> </ul> <p>Explanation: This exercise support students in <i>identifying</i> their own and other's expertise. It makes them aware of their own expertise, the competencies they may use in the project, the expertise of team members and also what they will not be able to contribute and what expertise lacks at the team level.</p> <p>The exercise appears to often also trigger the learning mechanism <i>Coordination</i> since students start discussing how to arrange the involvement of lacking expertise. Moreover, the learning mechanism <i>Reflection (perspective making and taking)</i> may already be triggered, when students help to understand each other and/or expand other's investigation (for example: 'You just mentioned two of your skills; I know you from a previous project. In that project you also showed to master accounting skills. You may want to add that skill to the flip').</p>
<b>Assumed knowledge</b>	A preliminary idea of what the project and/or assignment is about and what is expected from the student(s)
<b>Target audience</b>	Bachelor, Master, PhD students and/or professionals when working in a team.
<b>Intended learning outcomes</b>	<p>After finalisation of the activity, the student is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• able to list knowledge, skills and expertise useful for carrying out a certain project;</li> <li>• aware of the competence profiles of project team mates;</li> <li>• able to discuss a competence profile at the project team level;</li> <li>• able to identify gaps in the competence profile of the project team;</li> <li>• able to define actions to deal with the absence of some required competencies.</li> </ul>

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**Detailed description of activity:**

What are the students doing?  
For teacher instruction see below.

**Introduction**

The first learning mechanism from the boundary crossing theory is *Identification*. It is regarded to be important when working across boundaries to know who you are, what you can contribute to the project and what not. Knowing this, enables to also identify which knowledge is not directly available (for you as an individual and in this case for you as a project team) and as such needs to be arranged by involving others (knowledge and skills) from outside the project team.

**Exercise**

You at least have a bit of an idea of the problem you are expected to work on during the next ... weeks.

- Write down all kinds of knowledge, skills, attitudes, personal traits, pitfalls that you can bring into the project. Write down each contribution on a separate post-it (10 min.)
- Find your (sub)group members. Divide your flip sheet into four clusters: Knowledge; Skills; Attitudes and Lacking expertise
- Organise (group) all post-its on the flip sheet in the clusters Knowledge; Skills; and Attitudes (15 min.)
- Celebrate your rich team profile (1 min.)
- Identify gaps in knowledge, skills, attitudes...and write them on the sheet (fourth cluster) (10 min.)
- Define actions to overcome the gaps and write them somewhere on the flip (10 min.)
- Prepare yourselves to plenary share available and lacking expertise, and actions (10 min.)

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**Assessment**

- What to be assessed?
- How to assess?  
Assessment materials used
- Grading

Plenary discussion on profiles of the various sub-groups, eventually preceded by a walk-along-the-posters.

Stimulate students to actively evaluate and accomplish other sub-groups' profiles. E.g. by asking students to formulate at least one critical question for one other sub-group, and discuss this in the plenary. Another idea (if applicable) is to combine sub-group competence profiles into one bigger group profile e.g. by filling a table.

After having finalised the discussion, you may want to end with an evaluative question on how students perceived this Identification assignment. E.g. by asking them to write down two tops and two tips on this exercise in the light of the following steps in the project process.

No grading (at least we do not have experiences with grading).

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**Teacher instructions**  
**Detailed manual for teachers enabling them to independently carry out the activity including:**

- Step-by-step activities
- Time planning
- Role and task division
- Physical requirements
- Materials needed

**Planning and time needed**

This exercise is useful at the beginning of a project/assignment as soon as the students have a preliminary idea of what is expected from them. Estimated time needed: 1 hour for group exercise and 30 minutes for plenary reflection. See description of activity for time required per part of the exercise.

**Setting**

This activity is in principle carried out at the project team level, so in groups of 4-6 students. However, the activity could also be used in individual settings as long as the individual results can be shared with other peers.

**On campus settings**

Students sit around a table in front of a big flip sheet that they collaboratively fill based on their individual contributions.

*Space*

Classroom with movable furniture. Walls available for sticking flip sheets.

*Materials needed*

- Post-its (about 20 per participant)
- Flip sheets (one sheet per sub group)
- Markers (two different colours per sub-group)
- Tape (to stick the flip sheets on the wall)
- Prints of the assignment and/or projection via beamer

**Online settings**

Students meet their teammates in any online platform (e.g. MS TEAMS) and share their thoughts on a collaborative board (e.g. MIRO; Google Jamboard; Padlet)

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**Exemplary application**  
**Description of own experiences**

- How used?
- Where used?
- Student quotes

This exercise is used in week 1 of an 8-week Master transdisciplinary consultancy project (*ESA-60312 European Workshop Environmental Sciences & Management*) and was used before in various Regional Learning Environment projects in planning education at both universities and universities of applied education.

Students report:

"I did not realise that we cover so much expertise in our own group."

"We would never ever have been aware of our team knowledge if we would not have done this assignment."

"Now I know what we don't know yet."

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**Do's and don'ts**  
**Key recommendations when applying this activity**

- Students tend to sometimes find this exercise un-useful or too obvious when starting. Be patient, stimulate them to start working and tell them to trust that they will collect helpful insights.
  - You may want to leave the four clusters of categorisation open (knowledge, skills etc). However, this requires more time of the students to discuss how to cluster their findings, which is not necessarily the ultimate goal of this assignment.
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Identification of your own and others' expertise

**Boundary crossing illustrations**

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