**SHARON SMITH**

Hello. My name is Sharon Smith and I work as a lecturer at the University of Worcester. I’ve been one of the project team workers throughout the beginning of the project. Part of my teaching includes working in groups and the purpose of this little video is just to explore a little bit more about some of the resources available and to highlight the importance of group working and the challenges of group working to you. Obviously, you can look further at the case studies and the resources available on the SCALE website to enhance your understanding further.

So, there are many benefits of group working; one of the obvious ones is that students are able to share their knowledge and their experience and that co-collaboration helps them to develop a much deeper understanding of a given area. Group working you can see probably more in activities like sports, where group working is essential, but also group working can be used in elements of assessment. There are great benefits to that because there is shared knowledge, shared research and students can co-contribute to that and enhance their learning with presentation skills. By presentation skills, we can see that in a broader term, such as posters or PowerPoint or it could be a role play of some sort. So, it’s not just about presenting to a group, face to face. Some of the challenges to that can be seen more for students maybe with autism. They may find that collaboration is quite difficult, that social interaction could be a barrier and for some of them there may even find it quite daunting. So it is really important, if you are developing group working either as an activity within the classroom or as an assessment, that you consider your learners’ needs. Hopefully you have got to know your learners, that you know that some of them may need additional support.

One of the examples I can give you of my particular teaching is when the students were asked to do a group presentation and a student contacted me via email and said, ‘I’m really struggling with this. I don’t think I can do it to the group and I don’t think I can do it in a group of four. Could I do it with this person?’ So the importance that came through there was enabling a flexible and approachable means for this student to complete the task. So, what we did, we said to the student ‘that’s fine. If you and your partner would like to do this, then that’s OK’, and they actually chose to video it rather than do it to the group face to face. So, there was still the presentation produced, the students still learnt from each other but in adapting it, that student was able to complete the task and feel comfortable about the task.

Another thing that’s really important, I think, is when you think about your sessions, think about if there’s a student in that group that you know might struggle, and sometimes students don’t always tell us they’re struggling, that you might want to think about pre-empting the task. Tell the students that next week we’ll be doing this as a group work within the session. That will enable the student to maybe think something through because for some students, who may have processing difficulties – some students may have dyslexia – they might find that they need a little bit more time to process and to structure what it is that they want to do.

If we don’t take these things into account, what we will find is that the student will find the session difficult, or the assessment difficult or they may even not turn up. So really take time to think about those individual needs and think about what those students are going to benefit from in that group presentation, that group working. These are all part of their employability skills so they are really important for us to develop. Group working sometimes needs you to put some boundaries down. There is always a person in the group that can be more vocal, or somebody in the group who can be more quiet so think about that too. Think about the boundaries or the expectations that you have when you start setting that task about.

I hope you found this useful and that the very simple examples I’ve shared with you are giving you a little bit more insight into group working and group working as an assessment but I am sure you’ll find that the resources on the website will deepen your understanding and knowledge.