



Adam Smith Business School

Subject: Economics

Class/ course: Economics of Poverty, Discrimination, and Development

Student numbers: 25

Technology: None

Learning Benefits:

- Students practice to critically evaluate work
- Students are able to observe alternative approaches to the question
- Research has found that the group answers tend to be better than the individual answers

Academic staff: Geethanjali Selvaretnam

The issue

- To build evaluative judgement
- To improve the ability to work in groups
- To reduce stress and anxiety

The method

The exam contained three questions, the first to be answered individually, the second to be answered in groups, and the third to be answered in a two-stage process. A two-stage process entails that students first answer the question individually, then discuss the question in groups and submit a single group answer. For research purposes the exam was also interjected with questionnaires. The exam took approximately 4 hours with some breaks. During classes students had been asked to answer questions alone and then in groups so they were used to the two-stage approach before the exam.

The results

Students enjoyed the assessment, they felt that the informal atmosphere reduced their anxiety. The two-stage approach also allowed students to reflect on their own preparation and their approach to questions. There appear to have been real learning benefits for students from such self-reflection. For example, when asked what they had learned students said that they realised that they should have read outside the core reading, included more

examples, or structured their answer differently. While theory predicts that student grades in the two-stage question should be higher, it is unclear whether the two-stage answers of students were significantly better than the individual answers.

What worked well?

- Students were eager to engage with the process: during classes students that were otherwise quiet found the courage to present their answers, and in the exam students organised themselves into groups without being prompted
- Some students internalised the two-stage process and first thought about the question on their own before engaging in group discussions even for the pure group work task (i.e. not the two-stage task)

What could have worked better?

- Due to the amount of questions asked, and also as students had been asked to complete questionnaires between questions for research purposes, the exam was very long. Reducing the number of questions and keeping the exam to two to three hours may be preferable.



This work is created by the Teaching Excellence Initiative and is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).