1. Definition and Overview

According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) definition, Collaborative Assignments and Projects (CA&P) “combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one’s own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences” (https://www.aacu.org/leap/hips).

CA&P are:
- an active process whereby learners assimilate the information and relate this new knowledge to a framework of prior knowledge;
- a challenge that opens the door for the learner to actively engage his/her peers, and to process and synthesize information rather than simply memorize and regurgitate it;
- exposure to diverse viewpoints from people with varied backgrounds;
- a challenge both socially and emotionally as learners listen to different perspectives, are required to articulate and defend their own ideas, and create their own unique conceptual frameworks without relying solely on an expert's or a text's framework.

Collaborative learning processes can be incorporated into a course in a variety of ways. Some require substantial preparation, such as a long-term project, while others may occur as a guided activity within a single class meeting. However, collaborative learning goes beyond informal “group work” in that it is structured, intentional, and designed for ALL learners to benefit from the process. General strategies to promote learning and student satisfaction include:
- teach the skills that students need in order to succeed in doing group activities, for instance by using team-building exercises or introducing self-reflection techniques;
- introduce group work early in the semester to set clear student expectations;
- plan group work as a series of stages that you facilitate throughout the process;
- carefully explain to your students how groups will operate and how students will be graded;
- establish ground rules for roles, participation, and contributions, and consider using written contracts to set the agreement about who will do what;
- incorporate self and peer assessments for group members to evaluate their own and others' contributions.
Research shows that educational experiences that are active, social, contextual, engaging, and student-owned lead to deeper learning. The benefits of collaborative learning may include:

- development of higher-level thinking, oral communication, self-management, and leadership skills;
- promotion of student-faculty interaction;
- exposure to and an increase in understanding of diverse perspectives; and,
- increase in student retention, self-esteem, and responsibility;
- preparation for real life social and employment situations.

2. Best-Practices Guidelines

The minimum standard features of a CA&P course, based upon national best-practices, are these:

**Integrated** into the academic curriculum explicitly and thus represented in the course’s learning goals, assignments, and grades in the syllabus.

**Taught**, includes instruction concerning collaborative skills, behaviors, and principles.

**Active and applied**, involving interaction and "doing" designed to develop solutions to real-world problems.

**Graded**, such that teamwork behaviors, under the control of individual team members (e.g., effort in team tasks, manner of interacting with others, quantity and quality of contributions), must be assessed and contribute to the grade of the collaborative project(s), ideally including self and peer assessments.

3. Learning Outcomes for Collaborative Projects nd Assignments

National best practices recommend that CP&A courses deliver the learning summarized by the following AAC&U Essential Learning Outcome (ELO) **Teamwork**. CP&A course syllabi ideally should reference and use the VALUE rubric for the Teamwork ELO and integrate this general learning outcome into the discipline-specific learning outcomes for the course. The ELO should be expressed in the terms of that discipline or profession and serve the delivery of disciplinary knowledge and skills.

In addition, individual faculty may choose whether or not to incorporate one or more of the other ELOs, as appropriate to the discipline, and integrated into the disciplinary or professional content or used as vehicle for that content. Other ELOs that may be especially appropriate to CP&A courses include: **Oral Communication, Problem Solving, Intercultural Knowledge and Competence**, and **Integrative and Applied Learning**.

This concludes the abbreviated CA&P best-practices guidelines document. The complete version additionally includes a Suggested Resources or references section and a Sample Courses section.
4. References


Srinivas, Hari, Collaborative Learning: http://www.gdrc.org/kmgmt/c-learn/

5. Sample Collaborative Learning Courses at CU Denver

MKTG 4200: “International Marketing,” Studies in managerial marketing policies and practices of firms marketing their products in foreign countries. Analytical survey of institutions, functions, policies, and practices in international marketing. Relates marketing activities to market structure and environment.