

## Benefits of using pair and small-group activities in VET classes



We recommend that all teachers try using short, structured pair and small group activities frequently within their vocational teaching classrooms. These have benefits for students on two levels. Apart from their benefits for student learning, they enhance the classroom environment by promoting positive interactions between learners.

### The social perspective: enhancing the learning environment

From the social perspective, pair and small group activities:

- promote interaction between students who might otherwise not mix together in class, eg local and international students
- allow students to share experiences that relate to the topic, and so learn more about each other as people
- lead to opportunities for sharing humour and create a more relaxed learning environment
- foster cooperation rather than competition in the class
- encourage peer cooperation that extends to other learning situations
- develop a sense of group identity amongst students
- create opportunities for input from less confident students – since they find it easier to speak in smaller groups than to the whole class
- help students develop confidence in expressing their ideas to others
- create a space for putting forward differing opinions in a non-threatening situation
- create gradual opportunities for students to develop generic skills, such as working in teams, active listening, expressing their ideas in a convincing manner
- encourage constructive discussion between students.



*Belonging builds  
group identity*



*Build confidence  
Foster cooperation  
→ generic skills  
development*

### The learning perspective

From the learning perspective, pair and small group activities:

- encourage constructive discussion between students that assist them to form their own understanding of the topic
- help students strengthen their understanding through listening to the ideas of others and putting their own ideas into words
- allow students to tackle more challenging learning tasks than they would do if working alone.
- Encourage students to complete tasks that they may have given up on individually
- Provide opportunities for clarifying ambiguities through input of different opinions

Build student confidence through peer support with tasks