Syndicates

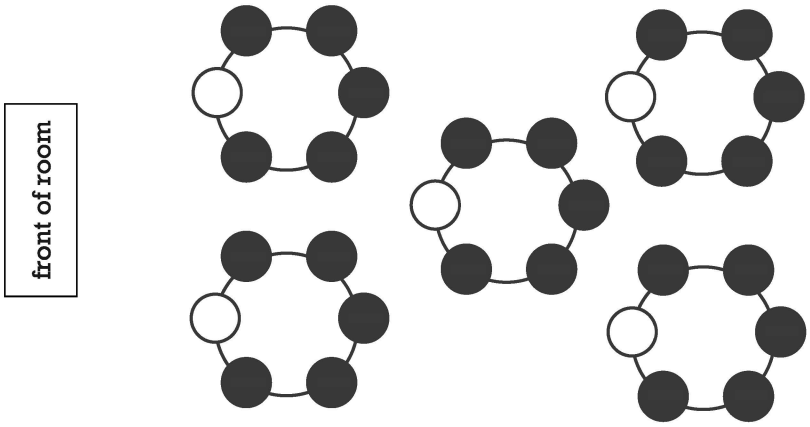
How?

Syndicates are when teams of students are working in parallel (and sometimes in competition with one another) on the same task: analyzing a case, studying an artifact, preparing a proposal, and so on.

At the end, teams usually present the outcome of their work to the whole group. A competitive element to completion and presentation of the groups' work may increase some students' motivation and engagement with the activity.

Your role is to design suitable tasks for students to work on in teams of up to eight (four to six is more ideal), and to brief the teams clearly. Your students may need additional materials or resources to complete the task, so have those ready, too.

Ensure that there is one empty chair at the board end of each table (the empty circles in the figure below) so that you can easily join each group without disrupting them and so that the group can see the board more easily. You then circulate around the room and join a group as needed.



Presentations at the end can be a risk. To avoid a dull sequence of samey or poor oral reports when teams present their conclusions/ analyses/designs, etc., consider a different format (such as poster presentations or a pecha kucha limited to 5 or 6 slides), or use another active learning technique for sharing the groups' output, such as a fishbowl or a jigsaw/cross-over.

When?

- Typically this will take a full class session. A syndicate might be a good practice run for an assessed group task or individual assignment.

Why?

- Syndicates allow students to work on complex problems in groups with a degree of assistance from the instructor.
- They can be a good way to promote students' higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills.

Source: Gibbs, G. (1995). *Discussion with more students*. Oxford Centre for Staff Development.