Student Tip Sheet
Stages of Team Development

There are four stages of team development; teams may proceed through all stages, get stuck in one stage, or sometimes move back to a previous stage (e.g., when there are new team members). Understanding these stages helps your team see how it's progressing and address potential barriers.

1. Forming

Work to be done
- Understand the purpose of the team
- Get to know the other team members

May involve
- Activities to assess the skills, knowledge, and work styles of the others
- Defining project goals

Behaviors and dynamics that may be observed
- Introductions
- Uncertainty regarding purpose and goals
- Uncertainty of one's roles
- Tentativeness or feelings of anxiety
- Testing each other's boundaries
- Enthusiasm

Questions to be answered
- Why are we here?
- Who are these people?

Problems that may need to be addressed
- Team members going in different directions
- Not recognizing resources within the team

2. Storming

Work to be done
- Identify what individuals expect from each other
- Identify how the team expects to work together

May involve
- Stating expectations
- Identifying differences

Behaviors and dynamics that may be observed
- Conflict, both within and outside the team
- Uncertainty about roles
- Resistance to team formation
- Frustration
- Discrepancy between hopes and reality
- Competition
- Possible formation of cliques

Questions to be answered
- What do I expect from others?
- What do they expect from me?

Problems that may need to be addressed
- Conflict due to failing to meet expectations
- Unbalanced workload between team members
- Some members may feel unimportant or not useful

3. Norming

Work to be done
- Resolve differences in what members expect of each other and how they will work together

May involve
- Establishing ground rules about how the team works together

Behaviors and dynamics that may be observed
- Negotiation
- Identifying commonly held purpose
- Team beginning to work together, oriented to accomplishing mutual goals
- Members supporting leadership and each other
- Cooperation
- Development of harmony, trust, and respect

Questions to be answered
- How are we going to work together?

Problems that may need to be addressed
- Team members not agreeing on how they will work together
- Team members working at cross-purposes with other team members

4. Performing

Work to be done
- Activities that lead the team to accomplishing its mandate

Behaviors and dynamics that may be observed
- Clear role definition and ability to flex between roles
- Collaboration and interdependence
- Consistent, excellent performance
- High satisfaction among members

Questions to be answered
- How will we know when we have been successful?

Problems that may need to be addressed
- Incomplete work
- Team unaware of shortcomings or errors

Model developed by Bruce W. Tuckman, 1965.
Weaver, R., & Farrell, J. (1997). Managers as facilitators: A practical guide to getting work done in a changing workplace. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.