

Guidance for Instructors: Integrating Dynamic Project Charters into Team-Based Assignments

This guide provides practical examples for integrating dynamic project charters and the accompanying training video into project-based team assignments to support student-led coordination, communication, accountability, and collaboration while minimizing additional instructor workload.

Implementation Philosophy

Principle	Implementation Approach
Student-Led Coordination	Teams are expected to collaboratively manage and maintain their own charter throughout the project lifecycle.
Training Video as Onboarding	The training video serves as the primary onboarding and facilitation mechanism for student teams.
Minimal Instructor Burden	Instructors provide lightweight structure, accountability, and class time rather than ongoing facilitation or monitoring.
Living Coordination Tool (on a shared drive accessible by all team members and potentially the instructor)	The charter should function as a practical coordination tool integrated into normal project workflow rather than a standalone compliance assignment.

Recommended Project Kickoff Session

During a scheduled class session, student teams work together in their own group spaces within the classroom to complete the initial project charter setup and coordination activities. The instructor primarily serves as a lightweight facilitator while teams independently engage in discussion, planning, and coordination.

- Teams sit together as project teams and watch the training video together to establish a shared understanding of collaboration, coordination, and charter expectations.
- Teams may create a shared MSU OneDrive folder for project coordination and upload the project charter to the shared workspace.
 - Teams can provide instructor access if the instructor chooses to use this lightweight visibility option.
 - The shared workspace supports collaborative document management, ongoing charter updates, and shared access throughout the project lifecycle.

- Teams collaboratively complete the charter together during class to encourage shared discussion rather than dividing sections among members.
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- Milestones on the project charter:
 - Teams begin adding assignment milestones to the charter to help align project planning with course expectations.
 - Teams add additional milestones and coordination practices that fit their project to personalize the charter based on project needs and workflows.
- Teams establish communication norms, responsibilities, and meeting expectations to support stronger accountability and coordination early in the project lifecycle.

Example Assignment Description Language

Student teams will collaboratively complete and maintain a project charter throughout the duration of the project using the provided charter template and training video. During the kickoff session, teams should sit down together, watch the training video as a group, and collaboratively complete the charter together. Teams should begin incorporating assignment milestones into the charter while also adding additional milestones, coordination strategies, workflows, and communication practices that fit the specific needs of their project. Teams are expected to revisit and revise the charter periodically as project needs, communication strategies, responsibilities, and workflows evolve.

Example Grading Structure (100 Points Total)

Category	Points	Individual / Team	Purpose
Final Project Outcome	50	Team	Quality of final deliverable
Technical / Content Contribution	20	Individual	Quality and reliability of individual work
Team Process & Collaboration	10	Individual	Participation, communication, accountability
Project Charter Development & Use	10	Team + Individual	Meaningful use of charter throughout project
Reflection & Process Learning	5	Individual	Learning from team experience
Professionalism & Responsiveness	5	Individual	Reliability, timeliness, preparedness

Connecting Grading, Accountability, and Implementation

The grading structure above provides one example of how project outcome, collaboration, and charter use may be incorporated into a team-based assignment. The following sections provide lightweight implementation strategies instructors may use to support and evaluate these areas without creating substantial additional grading workload. Instructors may select and adapt only the approaches that best fit the size, duration, and structure of their course projects.

Lightweight Grading and Rubric Integration: These lightweight grading touchpoints provide examples of how instructors may operationalize and reinforce team coordination, accountability, reflection, and charter use throughout the project lifecycle.

Example Integration	Purpose
Completion of initial charter setup	Encourages teams to establish coordination expectations early
Midpoint charter update	Encourages ongoing use and adaptation of the charter
Inclusion of updated charter in milestone deliverables	Integrates the charter into normal project workflow
Brief reflection on teamwork and coordination	Encourages process learning and reflection
Lightweight peer evaluation	Supports accountability and participation

Menu of Low-Burden Implementation Options for Supporting and Evaluating Team

Process: These implementation options provide practical ways instructors can support the grading and accountability approaches described above while maintaining a primarily student-led coordination process.

Evaluation Method	What It Looks Like	Example of Implementation	Faculty Burden
Shared OneDrive Charter with Version History	Teams collaboratively maintain a shared evolving charter document throughout the semester.	Teams create and maintain a shared folder with instructor access while continuously updating the charter throughout the project lifecycle.	Low

Periodic Charter Checkpoints	Teams periodically revisit and update their project charter throughout the semester.	Teams review and revise the charter during major project milestones or deliverable phases.	Low
Peer Evaluation	Students evaluate teammate participation and collaboration.	Students complete short peer evaluations related to communication, accountability, responsiveness, preparedness, and contribution quality.	Moderate
Team Reflection Memos	Students reflect on team process and lessons learned.	Students submit a brief reflection discussing communication strategies, adaptations, and lessons learned.	Low

Ideas for Limited In-Class Collaboration Time

Example Activity	Purpose
Project kickoff session with training video and charter co-creation	Helps teams establish shared expectations and begin project planning together
Short team coordination work sessions	Allows teams to revisit communication plans, responsibilities, and workflows
Milestone-based charter review sessions	Encourages ongoing adaptation of the charter as the project evolves
Final reflection discussions	Supports lessons learned related to teamwork and collaboration

Best Practices

- Works best for projects lasting four or more weeks
- Particularly effective for teams of four or more students
- Use the training video as the primary onboarding mechanism
- Encourage teams to:
 - Collaboratively complete the charter together during the kick-off session;
 - Personalize the charter by incorporating assignment milestones and project-specific coordination practices.

- Keep implementation lightweight and practical
- Align charter updates with project milestones
- Integrate lightweight accountability mechanisms rather than extensive process grading
- Maintain a primarily student-led implementation approach

Closing Perspective

The broader goal is not simply to evaluate teamwork, but to help students intentionally develop collaborative skills that transfer to professional practice. When implemented thoughtfully, project charters can support stronger communication, coordination, accountability, and ultimately stronger project outcomes while maintaining a lightweight implementation model for instructors.