

# OUTSTANDING TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

## TECHNICAL SKILLS NATIONAL PROGRAMME

**Beyond the knowledge – Conflict and Influencing Skills (Slide 5)**

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## Conflict and Influencing Skills

### Tuckman's stages of team development Activity (Slide 11)

#### Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing

##### Helping New Teams Perform Effectively, Quickly

Effective teamwork is essential in today's world, but as you'll know from the teams you have led or belonged to, you can't expect a new team to perform exceptionally from the very outset. Team formation takes time, and usually follows some easily recognizable stages, as the team journeys from being a group of strangers to becoming a united team with a common goal.

Whether your team is a temporary working group or a newly-formed, permanent team, by understanding these stages you will be able to help the team quickly become productive.

#### Understanding the Theory

Psychologist Bruce Tuckman first came up with the memorable words "forming, storming, norming and performing" back in 1965 to describe the path to high-performance that most teams follow. Later, he added a fifth stage that he called "adjourning" (and others often call "mourning" – it rhymes better!)

Teams initially go through a "**Forming**" stage in which members are positive and polite. Some members are anxious, as they haven't yet worked out exactly what work the team will involve. Others are simply excited about the task ahead. As leader, you play a dominant role at this stage: other members' roles and responsibilities are less clear.

This stage is usually fairly short, and may only last for a single meeting at which people are introduced to one-another. At this stage there may be discussions about how the team will work, which can be frustrating for some members who simply want to get on with the team task.

Soon, reality sets in and your team moves into a "**Storming**" phase. Your authority may be challenged as others jockey for position as their roles are clarified. The ways of working start to be defined, and as leader you must be aware that some members may feel overwhelmed by how much there is to do, or uncomfortable with the approach being used. Some react by questioning how worthwhile the goal of the team is and resist taking on tasks. This is the stage when many teams fail, and even those who stick with it feel that they are on an emotional roller coaster as they try to focus on the job in hand without the support of established processes or relationships with their colleagues.

Gradually, the team moves into a "**Norming**" stage, as a hierarchy is established. Team members come to respect your authority as leader, and others show leadership in specific areas.

Now the team members know each other better, they may be socializing together,

and they are able to ask each other for help and provide constructive criticism. The team is developing a strong commitment to the team goal, and you start to see good progress towards it.

There is often a prolonged overlap between storming and norming behaviour: As new tasks come up, the team may lapse back into typical storming stage behaviour, but this eventually dies out.

When the team reaches the "**Performing**" stage, hard work leads directly to progress towards the shared vision of their goal, supported by the structures and processes which have been set up. Individual team members may join or leave the team without affecting the performing culture.

As leader, you are able to delegate much of the work and can concentrate on developing team members. Being part of the team at this stage feels "easy" compared with earlier on.

Project teams exist only for a fixed period, and even permanent teams may be disbanded through organizational restructuring. As team leader, your concern is both for the team's goal and the team members. Breaking up a team can be stressful for all concerned and the "**Adjourning**" or "**Mourning**" stage is important in reaching both team goal and personal conclusions.

The break up of the team can be particularly hard for members who like routine or have developed close working relationships with other team members, particularly if their future roles or even jobs look uncertain.

### Using the Tool

As a team leader, your aim is to help your team reach and sustain high performance as soon as possible. To do this, you will need to change your approach at each stage. The steps below will help ensure you are doing the right thing at the right time.

1. Identify which stage of the team development your team is at from the descriptions above.
2. Now consider what needs to be done to move towards the Performing stage, and what you can do to help the team do that effectively. The table below (Figure 1) helps you understand your role at each stage and how to move the team forward.

**Figure 1: Leadership Activities at Different Group Formation Stages**

Stage	Activity
<b>Forming</b>	Direct the team clearly. Establish objectives clearly (perhaps with a team charter). How this team will operate/behave – ‘rules/groundrules’ etc.
<b>Storming</b>	<p>Establish process and structure, and work to smooth conflict and build good relationships between team members.</p> <p>Generally provide support, especially to those team members who are less secure.</p> <p>Remain positive and firm in the face of challenges to your leadership or the team’s goal.</p> <p>Perhaps explain the “forming, storming, norming and performing” idea so that people understand why conflict’s occurring, and understand that things will get better in the future.</p>
<b>Norming</b>	<p>Step back and help the team take responsibility for progress towards the goal.</p> <p>This is a good time to arrange a social or team-building event</p>
<b>Performing</b>	Delegate as far as you sensibly can. Once the team has achieved high performance, you should aim to have as “light a touch” as you can. You will now be able to start focusing on other goals and areas of work
<b>Adjourning</b>	When breaking up a team, take the time to celebrate its achievements. After all, you may work with some of these people again, and this will be much easier if people view past experiences positively.

3. Schedule regular reviews of where your teams are, and adjust your behaviour and leadership approach to suit the stage your team has reached.

**Tip 1:**

Make sure that you leave plenty of time in your schedule to coach team members through the “Forming”, “Storming” and “Norming” stages.

**Tip 2:**

Think about how much progress you should expect towards the goal and by when, and measure success against that. Remember that you’ve got to go through the “Forming”, “Storming” and “Norming” stages before the team starts “Performing”, and that there may not be much progress during this time. Communicating progress against appropriate targets is important if your team’s members are to feel that what they’re going through is worth while. Without such targets, they can feel that, “Three weeks have gone by and we’ve still not got anywhere”.

**Tip 3:**

Not all teams and situations will behave in this way, however many will – use this approach, but don’t try to force situations to fit it. And make sure that people don’t use knowledge of the “storming” stage as a license for boorish behaviour.

### Key points

Teams are formed because they can achieve far more than their individual members can on their own, and while being part of a high-performing team can be fun, it can take patience and professionalism to get to that stage.

Effective team leaders can accelerate that process and reduce the difficulties that team members experience by understanding what they need to do as their team moves through the stages from forming to storming, norming and, finally, performing.