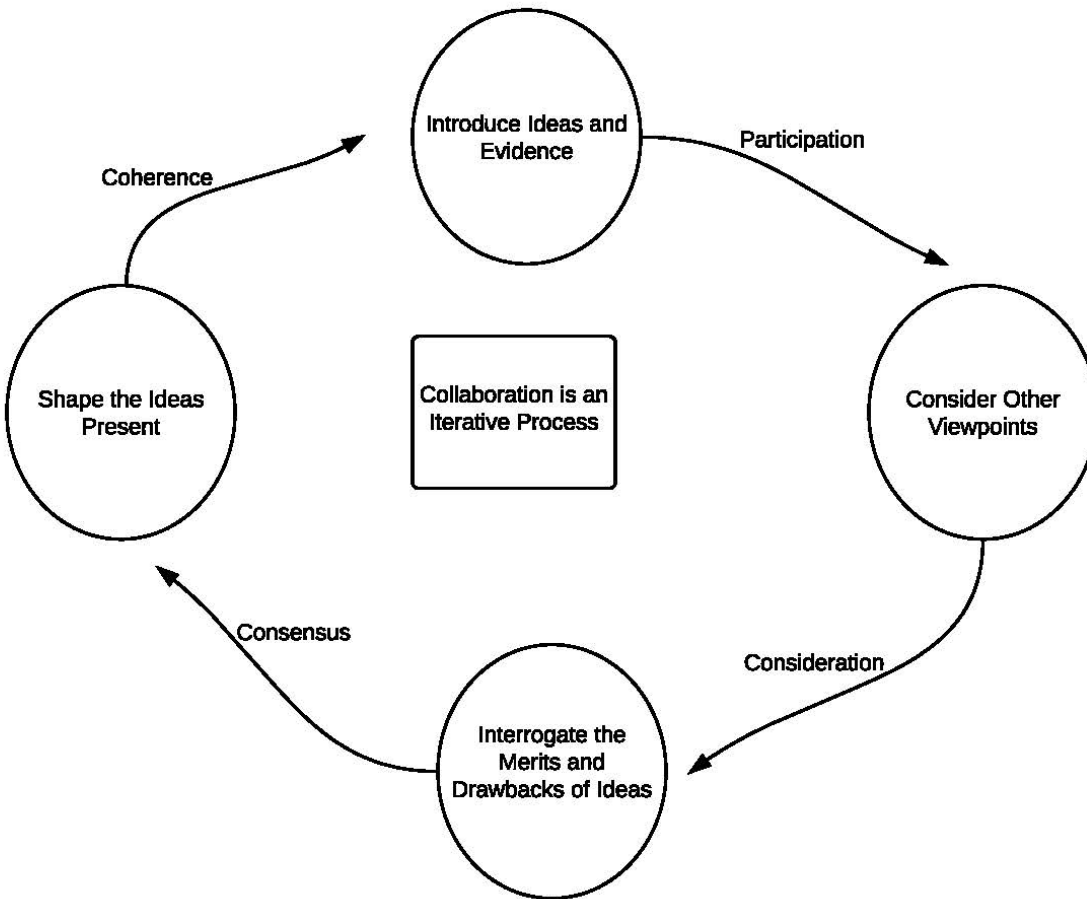


How We Collaborate: Guidance and Sample Systemsⁱ



The collaboration has process has four key stages that you will cycle through multiple times:

1. Introduce new ideas and evidence
2. Listen and consider other viewpoints
3. Interrogate the merits and drawbacks of ideas
4. Shape the existing ideas

Those steps are connected by four key products:

1. **Participation:** Everyone should produce and share ideas
2. **Consideration:** Everyone should listen actively to ideas
3. **Consensus:** The group must decide upon the best set of ideas
4. **Coherence:** The group must speak in one style and with one argument

Repeat and **Re-Envision**

Re-Envision should be your go-to stance when asked to revise. Revising is not copy editing, it's approaching the issue anew to make it better.

To see your work anew try to **give ample distance** (take a prolonged break from the document) or **have someone new read the document** with fresh, critical eyes (like your collaborators).

Models of Collaboration

Single-author writing: in this method, one person on the team is designated as primary writer for the entire report or designer for the deck of presentation slides. The method appears to be time saving: decisions are made by one person, and terminology and style remain consistent throughout. This method may lead to less rigor and complexity in the report or presentation.

Sequential writing: Here, one writer on the team completes a task and passes the document along to the next writer on the team. The organization and coordination of tasks is simplified as long as the team made a plan for version control and ordering of tasks ahead of time. As in the single-author writing method, there is a lack of team interaction and group consensus in this method, which may lead to coherence problems in the first draft that will have to be wrestled with eventually.

Parallel writing: This method calls for all members of the team to be writing in parallel. Each writer has more autonomy, and the draft report or slides get done more efficiently. Stylistic differences among writers persist, though, and the process requires more communication among team members around logistics.

Reactive writing: This may be the least ordered and centralized of the different methods of collaborative writing. In it, writers create one document that is continuously circulated, in which individual writers react and adjust to each other's incremental changes and additions without explicit coordination. If you use this method by circulating a common Word file, for example, it may lead to great 'conversation on the page' and enhanced consensus, but difficulty in version control. This can work more organically in a cloud-based document, like in Google Docs. The team will need to explicitly articulate expectations for individual participation in the writing tasks.

Role-based writing: In this method, teams assign the roles of author, reviewer, editor, and final editor. One student may be the author of the first draft and hand it to a student assigned as reviewer, who makes critical comments on the content, organization, and overall approach, and even possibly asks the difficult questions. After one revision (by the author), the draft can pass to an editor. This team member makes recommendations for structure and style and reviews the document sentence by sentence. At the end of the drafting and revision process, a final editor not only proofreads but makes sure the document design is appropriate, with no inconsistencies in visuals, fonts, widows/orphans, capitalization, or other language issues. This method gives all team members an opportunity to be responsible for a report's coherence. Plan ahead to allow sufficient time for the review, revision, and editing steps.

ⁱ Adapted from MITx module *Collaborative Writing and Presenting* by Jane Kokernak.