STUDENT PEER ASSESSMENT: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

To ensure students benefit from peer aassessment, instructors need to plan their approach carefully and guide students through the process.

Key points to think about as you design your course:

- What are my reasons for implementing student peer assessment? What do I hope to achieve?

- How will I integrate peer assessment into my course?

- How will I help students acquire the necessary skills before they conduct peer assessment?

- What technology and/or platform might be needed in this process? How can I use it effectively?

Questions to consider

- What product will peers assess? Will it be an essay, multimedia, group participation, or other?

- Where does the activity take place (e.g., online or in person)?

- How many peers will students give feedback to and receive feedback from?

- What is the reviewing arrangement? Will students randomly be assigned to peers or will the instructor form the review groups?

- Is the feedback anonymous?

- How is the peer assessment assignment graded?

- What assessment criteria (e.g., rubrics, questions) will be given to students to aid them?

- Will students have the opportunity to revise and resubmit their work after receiving peer feedback?

Strategies for success*

Set expectations and clarify goals. Students are often apprehensive about peer assessment, especially about peer grading and giving and receiving feedback. When you explain your goals for using this approach and clarify your expectations, this helps students understand your rationale for using this process (and may increase their buy-in) (McLaughlin & Simpson, 2004).

> Student peer assessment is an approach to teaching and learning in which students assess the quality of their peers' performance and give feedback to one another. It has been defined as the "quantitative or qualitative evaluation of a learner's performance by another learner of the same status." (Patchan & Schunn, 2015, p. 592).

Model assessment and feedback. Model the act of assessing and giving feedback for your students by guiding them through the process using sample assignments. Examples of assessed work will also depict varying levels of performance and indicate common challenges faced by students. Modelling can be done through online modules or as in-class activities.

Provide training for students. Especially for novice students, it is important to provide training activities to teach students how to assess their peers' work and provide constructive feedback. This can help increase their ability to conduct peer assessments and can improve students' confidence and trust in the process (van Zundert, Sluijsmans, & van Merriënboer, 2010).

Emphasize written feedback. Studies show that, compared to any other peer review activity, students' writing improves the most when they provide written feedback to peers (Lu & Law, 2012; Wooley, Was, Schunn, & Dalton, 2008). While rating peers' texts using rubrics and scoring criteria can improve students' writing skills in certain contexts, it is the act of giving feedback that most enhances the students' writing.

Encourage elaborated feedback. Novice peer reviewers tend to focus on surface level feedback and revisions, such as grammar or error corrections, rather than meaning-level changes. Giving specific instructions, training and guided feedback prompts can help to raise the quality of their feedback (and, consequently, of the overall learning). Studies show students benefit most from constructing feedback when they identify strengths and weaknesses and offer suggestions and strategies for improvement (Patchan & Schun, 2015).

Allow opportunities to apply feedback. Feedback is most useful when learners act on it. Provide opportunities for students to make revisions to their work and to reflect on how the feedback they received influenced their revisions (Orsmond, Maw, Park, Gomez, & Crook, 2013). Some questions you might ask them include: Why did you accept or reject suggestions? How did you modify your work after receiving feedback? How did evaluating the work of your peers change the way you saw your own work?

Allow adequate time and spacing for the process. In order to encourage a deeper level of engagement, begin the peer assessment process early in the term so that there is adequate time for students to reflect on the feedback they receive and apply it to their learning, either through revisions or on subsequent assignments. Studies have shown that revisions early in the process focussed on substantial, content-based changes, while revisions close to the due date resulted in polishing edits focussed on grammar, word substitution, and spelling (Baker, 2016; Cho & MacArthur, 2010).

Align peer assessment to key learning goals. Make sure the peer assessment activities are aligned with course learning goals so students can clearly see how these benefit their learning. In this way, the activities are less likely to be perceived as an add-on with little value. Peer assessment activities take considerable time and effort from students, but when positioned strategically, they can help focus student effort and deepen critical engagement around key learning goals.

Though we recognize that evaluating peers' contributions to group work is a type of peer assessment, the suggestions above focus mostly on other forms of peer assessment.

The following technologies can help support student peer assessment:

- Canvas Peer Review Assignment
- Canvas Peer Review Discussion
- peerScholar
- ComPAIR
- Turnitin
- Peerwise
- edX Edge Open Response Assessments
- Collaborative Learning Annotation System (CLAS)
- UBC Blogs
- iPeer

Visit the Learning Technology Hub to learn more.

lthub.ubc.ca

Want to learn more about student peer assessment and/or seek support? Read the **Student Peer Assessment** resource or contact the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology.

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References

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