

STUDENT PEER ASSESSMENT

Overview

Peer assessment is the broad term for a range of activities that engage students in the act of evaluating and providing feedback on the work of other students. Peer assessment can be formative, such as when students give feedback on their peers' drafts, or it can be summative, for example, when students use a rubric to grade final submissions. Student peer assessment can be used with various assignment types, including written, oral, group, or individual projects.

Student peer assessment often involves a rich communication process among learners about performance and standards. It is supported by the notion that student-student interaction can lead to enhanced understandings and improved learning experiences (Huisman, Saab, van Driel, & van den Broek, 2017; Moore & Teather, 2013). The foundation of this practice is that it enables students to take an active role in the management of their own learning as they monitor their work using internal and external feedback (Carless, Salter, Yang, & Lam, 2011). By commenting on or ranking the work of peers, students identify standards which can then be transferred to their own work, and they construct an evolving understanding of discipline-specific content matter.

There is evidence that peer feedback enhances student learning as students are actively engaged in articulating evolving understandings of the subject matter. (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000)

The existing literature on peer assessment indicates that students:

- Are able to make reasonably reliable judgments when compared to those of instructors (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000; Hamer, Purchase, Luxton-Reilly, & Denny, 2015; Paré & Joordens, 2008); and
- Find the processes fair and honest, especially when they have received training on peer assessment and have been given multiple opportunities to practice (van Zundert, Sluijsmans, & van Merriënboer, 2010).

Benefits & Challenges

Student peer assessment has been employed in higher education contexts across disciplines and in classes of varying size and level. It can be a reliable and valid method of assessment when properly implemented.

The following is a summary of what researchers and instructors across disciplines have reported about the use of student peer assessment in different post-secondary teaching and learning contexts.

"Expert markers and peer markers have a tendency to agree on the quality of written pieces being marked." (Paré & Joordens, 2008, p. 535)

"A further practical reason for peer feedback is that students would receive more feedback from peers and more quickly than when academics are providing comments." (Liu & Carless, 2006, p. 4)

Want to learn more about student peer assessment and/or seek support? Read the [Student Peer Assessment: Strategies for Success](#) resource or contact the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology.

604 827 0360 | ctlit.info@ubc.ca



Benefits

- Boost the role of students from passive to active learners
- Develop students' evaluative skills
- Enhance student learning and understanding of subject matter and improve performance on exams and tests
- Allow students to better realize the nuances between well- and poorly-written products by exposing learners to each other's work
- Foster collaboration among students
- Improve student writing skills and final products
- Model the academic writing process
- Promote the development of critical thinking and reflection skills
- Feedback can be provided to numerous students rapidly
- Formative assessment helps monitor student learning and progress
- May reduce marking load for instructors

Challenges

- Can elicit unfair/biased results due to friendship/collusion/peer pressure
- Consistency in quality of student feedback varies
- Dysfunctional group behaviour may negatively impact learning and student experience
- Students may not understand that the process is similar to formal academic writing
- Students may be reluctant to make judgments regarding their peers
- Time commitment is needed on the part of students
- Useful and constructive peer feedback requires training and experience
- Additional briefing time can increase instructors' workload

References

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