

Peer Assessment

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Advantages

Student learning is enhanced by

- more thorough and deeper level of reflection results (students can gain more from assessing and providing feedback to others than by simply submitting their own work). Size of the group is important because of the ability to give useful feedback to more than a few others.
- increased feedback
- increased reflection on their own learning and their progress than otherwise
- assisting students in thinking more critically
- ability to modify and improve as a result of group work
- developing self assessment skills and constructive criticism techniques
- requiring students to justify marks given to peers with brief comments related to the criteria
- devolving power and responsibility for learning to students
- students learning from each others' successes and weaknesses (particularly when students mark work that exceeds their efforts)
- reinforcing material when students review the same material several times
- increasing students' awareness of what they need to know about a subject.

Lecturers

- increases depth and quality of student thinking
- improves assessment practices
- assists in differentiating between students working together in groups
- saves marking times in large groups
- allows adequate feedback to be provided to **all** students in a large class

Disadvantages

- student resistance
Overcome by providing rationale for the activity, explicit procedures, an appeal process. Assessment criteria need to be provided, or developed by the students.
 - Disputes
 - lack of exposure to the technique
 - non-participants and equity
 - dominating students
 - time consuming

Refer back to the earlier explanations to deal with these negative aspects of teamwork.

Some general points to keep in mind when using peer assessment

- Make sure contributions are short enough for you to mark comfortably
- Set deadlines for posting assessable items
- Give clear guidance on the task and the marking criteria
- award marks for content and process, and for individual and team contribution
- allocating marks for sub-tasks assists in equity issues and will allow for differing levels of knowledge and ability amongst students
- clear criteria helps students focus on the work done rather than personalities etc.
- allowing students to help develop criteria gives them greater ownership
- provide model answers with notations (insufficient, adequate and good examples)

- provide rationale of educational benefits of self and peer assessment
- students must justify peer mark given with brief comments related to the criteria. Where comments are negative students must emphasise constructive aspects to assist in improvement
- a portion of assessment can be allocated as a lecturer's discretionary mark.

Examples of teamwork process criteria

1. Working together as a group
2. Commitment to the group's goals
3. Effectiveness of group meetings
4. Communication among group members
5. Members getting their work done on time
6. All members participating equally
7. Quality of work produced by the group
8. Members being motivated for the group's task
9. All members sharing the workload

Examples of assessment criteria specifically for online discussions

- The number of questions and responses each student's postings elicits from others.
- Responses show student basically has a sound grasp of the subject although details may need correction or their knowledge is incomplete.
- complete contributions with additional information or perceptions
- Evidence of critical thinking.
- Relevance
- Accurate expression
- Use of evidence to support opinion
- Correct information
- Correct use of terminology
- Providing new information on topic
- Providing examples of application of principles
- Ability to solve a problem.