

Peer Feedback

Peer feedback is a strategy to improve the quality of written assignments and foster discussion. Students read and respond to drafts of written assignments. Students then have the opportunity to make revisions prior to submitting the assignment to instructor.

Appropriate Student Level: Any

Suggested Class Size: 3 – 100+

Ease of Use Rating: Easy

Activity Description:

In an effort to help students improve their writing by reducing simple errors and increase concept clarity, thus reducing grading time, peer feedback can give students constructive information about their writing. When an assignment is complete, students exchange drafts for review and comment. Once the students get feedback, they are allowed ample time to make corrections, additions, and deletions prior to the time the assignment is turned into the instructor for a final grade.

In this method, the instructor receives all of the papers for final grading, thus not necessarily reducing a grading load, however, due to the improved quality of the papers due to critical feedback, the time spent grading should be reduced.

Students should be given some guidelines to know what he/she is looking for such as; spelling and grammatical errors, format, incomplete ideas, sentence clarity, citations and overall quality of the writing. See <http://www.psu.edu/dept/cew/writingcenter/wfaqs.htm> for some answers to some commonly asked questions about writing. An instructor may also choose to review some of the drafts and feedback provided to be sure that the information is useful to the writer.

Additional help is available from The Writing Center at <http://www.psu.edu/dept/cew/writingc.htm> or <http://nutsandbolts.washcoll.edu/>

There are a variety of ways to implement this learning strategy.

Instructors can integrate peer feedback for simple writing through complex research assignment. With more sophisticated assignments, instructors can integrate writing, critical thinking, and team-building skills into their curriculum. Such an assignment involves students researching scientific literature, synthesizing data, and evaluating the work of their peers. It allows teachers to overcome the heavy grading load associated with large classes and enhances students' learning opportunities.

Students can exchange work within their pre-assigned groups (see “*Some suggestions for forming groups*” for more information on groups). The exchange can happen in or out of class. Students can exchange with a neighbor in class or papers can be collected by the instructor and then re-distributed. An in-class review will allow students immediate feedback and the instructor can expect the finished assignments at the next class meeting time; however, the students may

not have the resources available to check facts, references and ideas presented in the report, that kind of in-depth review would require an out-of-class assignment with enough time given to complete the project well.

References:

Black, Janet (1999) “Example: Get them involved, keep them interested” Techniques [H.W. Wilson -EDUC]; 74(7); pg. 58

Boud, David (1999) “Peer learning assessment” Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 24(4); pg. 413

The Center for Excellence in Writing at Penn State University. <http://www.psu.edu/dept/cew/>

Harvey, Michael (2001) <http://nutsandbolts.washcoll.edu/>, The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing. Hackett Publishing.

Henderson, LaRhee (2000) “A peer-reviewed research assignment for large classes” Journal of College Science Teaching, 30(2); pg. 109

Sivan, Atara, (2000) “The implementation of peer assessment: An action research approach” Assessment in Education, 7(2); pg. 193

Topping, K.J. (2000) “Formative peer assessment of academic writing between postgraduate students”; Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 25(2); pg. 149

The Core Competencies are:

1. Writing, speaking and/or other forms of self-expression
2. Information gathering, such as the use of the library, computer/electronic resources, and experimentation or observation
3. Synthesis and analysis in problem solving and critical thinking, including, where appropriate, the application of reasoning and interpretive methods, and quantitative thinking
4. Collaborative learning and teamwork
5. Activities that promote and advance intercultural and/or international understanding
7. A significant alternative competency for active learning designed for and appropriate to a specific course