

Peer assessment – using the Moodle workshop

Architecture & Civil Engineering

Background context

Andrew Heath (Professor in Geomaterials and Academic Director for the Centre for Learning and Teaching) shares his experience of setting up a peer assessment activity using the Moodle workshop. The aim was to improve formative feedback opportunities for students.

Soil Mechanics, Year 2

120 students

Students submit a lab report for a soil classifications lab. Students assess each others' work for formative feedback. Later they submit a second report for summative assessment.

Purpose

For the first time in their university experience, students submit a full lab report. Often they have no pre-university experience to prepare them for this type of assessment. Students were not sure if they understood the requirements for the assessment. They asked for a formative feedback opportunity before the first formal assessment.

The unit had good evaluation scores for all questions, but there was still a little room for improvement in some key areas

- clarity of assessment criteria at the outset
- clarity of the type of feedback at the outset
- timeliness of feedback
- advice and support for the unit

Approach

Students give feedback and marks to their peers using a simple rubric. They give a score and comments for each assessment criteria, and general comments. The exercise is formative. Students have a chance to review two reports from previous years (from both ends of the marking spectrum) before marking their peers' coursework.

Using the **Moodle workshop** tool, students receive a random allocation of submissions by four other students. They are also allocated their own work for self-assessment. The workshop is set up so students receive 70% of the mark for the peer marks received and 30% for the accuracy of marks they give to others.



Students submit a second lab report for summative assessment after the peer assessment activity. The assessment criteria for both submissions are similar.

Outcomes

Pros

- Students can see different approaches to the assessment. This helps them get more familiar with how to approach it
- Students can view exemplars before they complete the peer assessment activity. Staff encourage students to self-assess their work
- When students submitted their second lab report (their first summative assessment) the quality of submissions had significantly improved
- Unit evaluation showed that students' understanding of the assessment criteria and types of feedback had improved. The timeliness of feedback also improved.
- The workshop tool enables anonymous peer assessment, and has flexible settings. Students find it easy to use the tool

It takes time to set up the workshop first time around.



Subsequently, the total marking process is much quicker than before.

Previously it took 10-15 minutes to assess individual submissions. With the peer assessment activity, it takes **around 30 minutes per class to manage the workshop**. This includes time to review student feedback and give generic feedback in class to highlight common mistakes.

Cons

- Students have to submit work within strict timescales, and it's difficult to manage deadline extensions. You need to manually manage the phases of the workshop
- It's difficult to replicate the student view of the workshop activity

Recommendations

1. Provide students with guidance about peer assessment, and how long they will spend on the activity.
2. If it's a formative assessment, make the links to the summative assessment very clear, to maximise student engagement. In this case, around 80% of students engaged with the formative peer assessment activity.
3. Provide advanced information about the timescales. Plan to send out plenty of reminders during the assessment phase and monitor the workshop as it progresses. You can take part in assessment if there aren't enough submissions allocated to a student.
4. Design your activity in advance, and do a trial run. You can enrol yourself as a student or use a dummy student account to test out all the workshop settings.

Further reading: Vogel, M., 2015. [An even better peer feedback experience with the Moodle Workshop activity](#) [online]. London: UCL. [Accessed 22 May 2017]