

Implementing Peer Review and Feedback in Your Classes

Overview

While instructor feedback is highly valued, the usefulness of peer and self feedback should not be underestimated. Peer feedback allows additional opportunities for students to learn from each other, visualize different perspectives, and engage in higher level cognitive processing.

Tips for Implementation

Peer feedback can be adapted for use to fit almost any need. It is important that you consider the overall goals and purposes of your course and the assignment/activity when designing peer feedback opportunities. Here are some suggestions to help you get started:

1. Model the feedback process and define what is quality feedback.

Before students can provide quality feedback to each other, they need to know (a) what is quality feedback?, (b) what does quality feedback look like?, (c) what are the expectations for this assignment/activity?, and (d) what are the expectations of my peer review?

Make sure you have clearly articulated the assignment's/activity's instructions (using transparent assignment design can help facilitate this process) so students are aware of what they are being asked to do. Spend time during class discussing the assignment/activity *prior* to students beginning any work on the assignment.

Before having students provide feedback to each other, spend some time teaching them about effective feedback. A useful way to do this is through Q&A, discussion, and examples. To illustrate, you may have students answer the question, "What does useful feedback look like to you?" They could then discuss their responses in pairs or small groups, reporting their results back to the whole class. As the facilitator, you can record their responses to generate a whole class list that is expanded. Once students are primed to think about quality feedback, ask them to examine a model of student work and provide feedback as a class (you may decide to have them work in pairs or small groups and then report back). Note: your example of student work could be student work from a previous semester (used with permission and name removed), work you've created/adapted based on submissions you've seen in the past,

examples from the web, or even a volunteered student submission from the class.

From the discussion, model feedback and the feedback process in the way you are asking students to conduct it. It helps to have a structured process (see next tip).

2. Have a structured process for students to use (i.e., templates, rubrics).

Since many students are new to providing feedback, scaffolding through a structured process helps them understand how to provide feedback and enhances the quality of their feedback.

Consider using a rubric or a structured set of questions for students to answer. The following are some example questions that you can consider adapting to fit your needs:

- Find a paragraph (or multiple paragraphs) that work well in the document. Identify the paragraph(s) and explain why.
- After reviewing and providing feedback on this submission, are there things you would edit about your own work? What and why?
- Find 2-3 sentences that are poorly worded or grammatically incorrect. Provide suggestions for improvement.
- Has appropriate _____ (e.g., APA style, mathematical notation, scientific terminology) been used and is it consistent?
- Is the document's format/layout correct? If not, what needs to be done?
- Are you able to tell where information from other sources (a) begins and ends throughout the document, and (b) where the information comes from? That is, are the in-text citations clear and correctly used?

As you utilize feedback throughout the semester and students progress in their abilities, you may find that you can scale back some of the earlier scaffolding. Importantly, keep the focus on feedback regarding strengths and areas for improvement, and do not ask students to score or grade each other.

3. Consider the implications of anonymous and non-anonymous feedback.

Several researchers have found that allowing students to provide anonymous feedback removes some interpersonal beliefs that can create barriers to quality feedback (see Li, 2017, and/or Rotsaert, Panadero, & Schellens, 2018 for a discussion on some of these studies). These beliefs may cause some students to feel as if they cannot provide honest feedback to their peers. By removing

students' identities from each other, the anonymity can reduce peer pressure and improve the learners' comfort level. However, in cases when anonymity cannot be provided or does not meet the goals/needs of the curriculum, providing students with training (see Li, 2017) or utilizing a transitional scaffold (i.e., moving from anonymous to identified, see Rotsaert et al., 2018) can assist the process and alleviate students' concerns. Of note, most students' concerns seem to center around grading and how their feedback may affect others' grades.

4. Incorporate reflective components by asking for responses.

To promote reflection, critical thinking, and metacognitive skills, ask students to read and respond to their peer feedback. Some ideas for implementation are asking students to make a table with the reviewer's feedback and their own responses, writing a short paragraph in regards to what they will change about their work based on the feedback, or creating a brief video or audio clip explaining the edits they will make based on the feedback.

As an additional item, you may ask students to reflect on (a) what they learned, or realized, from completing the peer feedback process about their own work and (b) what they are considering editing after reviewing their peers' work.

5. Scaffold the process (i.e., start small and grow).

As reflected in the previous suggestions, scaffolding the process is important in aiding students' learning of feedback skills. To scaffold the process, remember to model quality feedback, provide low stakes opportunities for practice, and structure how feedback is given. Over the course of the semester, you can remove some of these scaffolds as students develop their feedback skills.

References

Li, L. (2017). The role of anonymity in peer assessment. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(4), 645-656. doi:10.1080/02602938.2016.1174766

Rotsaert, T., Panadero, E., & Schellens, T. (2018). Anonymity as an instructional scaffold in peer assessment: its effects on peer feedback quality and evolution in students' perceptions about peer assessment skills. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 33, 75-99. doi:10.1007/s10212-017-0339-8