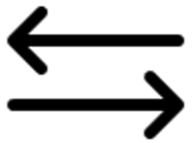


# Peer feedback

Peer feedback is when students provide one another with feedback on their work or performance. Engaging in peer feedback using the relevant assessment criteria provides students with opportunities to explore these criteria and standards in the context of a specific task. This can help students to understand better how assessors use assessment criteria to judge different standards of academic work. Peer feedback enables students to better self-assess themselves as well as exposing them to different ways of approaching a task.

This resource considers how to use peer feedback in your teaching, and offers some ideas to take into consideration when designing peer feedback activities.



## When might peer feedback be used?

- 1. As preparation:** Prior to a tutorial or class, students exchange their work and provide one (or more) of their peers with feedback, perhaps by responding to prompt questions provided by the tutor. This pre-class activity can enrich discussion during the face-to-face session and/or help promote more advanced discussions. The tutor may also wish to moderate the peer discussion, helping students to refine their judgements and to ensure their feedback is constructive.
- 2. With presentations:** When watching student presentations, the audience can be asked to give short written or verbal feedback on a specific focus – e.g. the use of statistics, presentation of data, structure, clarity of voice, use of body language etc. A quick format which encourages constructive feedback is to ask each member of the audience to highlight one thing that has been done well in each student's presentation, and one area which could be improved.
- 3. During revision or after collections:** Peer feedback can be used in a revision session to help students develop their understanding of the criteria and standards. For example, students might bring a practice exam answer to a revision class and exchange feedback with one another using these criteria, prior to the tutor answering questions and addressing concerns. College groups can participate in peer feedback of collections in advance of the tutor offering their feedback.
- 4. Peer editing:** Peer editing involves students making detailed comments on one another's draft written work to help refine arguments, structure and style of the work prior to final submission. The tutor provides guidance and some initial support and supervision, then students can support each other throughout the year. A case study from the English Faculty in Oxford is available: [Supporting Student Understanding of assessment criteria](#).

# Things to consider when planning peer feedback

## 1. Preparing students for peer feedback

Students produce better peer feedback – and enjoy the process more – when they have some training or guidance. This could be any of the following:

- Reading and discussing an example piece of work first
- Discussing and clarifying the criteria to use as the basis for feedback
- Providing students with a feedback pro-forma to help structure their feedback

It's worth discussing the benefits of peer feedback with students to dispel the idea that it is a replacement for tutor feedback. Peer feedback can feel risky to some students, so it's important to set expectations/ground rules. You may wish to negotiate these with students. A good way to do so is to ask students to think about and then discuss 'what makes good feedback?' Ask them to emulate this when they give feedback to their peers.

## 2. Comment-only feedback

Comment-only feedback (i.e. no indicative grading) directs students' efforts towards reviewing the work in depth, rather than agonising over which mark might be allocated. Marks can also distract from the content of the feedback, especially if the recipient feels the person marking – the peer – is not an 'expert'.

## 3. Written or verbal feedback?

Written feedback has benefits for both reader and recipient. Constructing written feedback requires the reader to think carefully about the points they wish to make and the recipient then has a record of the feedback to take away. Sometimes verbal feedback may be more practical or time efficient, and it can allow students to explain and qualify their comments in dialogue with one other. Students may need time to take notes during or after verbal feedback.

## 4. Feedback as a conversation

To promote a collaborative relationship between students, it's important that peer feedback involves dialogue rather than a monologue or directive message from one student to another.

You may wish to support students' feedback conversations by asking them to have the recipient start the dialogue with what they thought the strengths and limitations of their work were, and then have the reader respond to that. If written feedback is being provided, you may wish to first give students time to read these comments and think about what they would like to discuss further.

## 5. Multiple readers or reviewers?

Using two or three reviewers for each piece of work (instead of just one) has benefits for both the reader and the recipient. As reviewers, students get to see a wider range of work, and as recipients, they get more feedback on their work. If multiple reviewers make the same suggestion, a recipient may be more likely to take it on board. When using multiple reviewers, it can be helpful to discuss the value of different people seeing different things within a piece of work. Referring this process to your own experience of academic peer review can be helpful for students.

## 6. Anonymous?

There are benefits to making peer feedback with students anonymous. Particularly in larger groups where the tutor is not able to listen in on all discussions, students may feel able to be more honest in their feedback.

A downside is that it can be harder to build a sense of collaboration and community if feedback comments are anonymous. It's also not very practical in small cohorts, and may require additional work from the tutor to process and exchange work, as well as to ensure feedback is rendered anonymous.

## 7. How much time?

Allow enough time for students to read and comment on the work, whether in class or in preparation for a face-to-face session. Ensure that work is available to students in accessible formats.

## 8. An opportunity to reflect

Once students have read others' work and received some peer feedback themselves, it's good to make time for students to reflect on what they've learned and to think about how to improve their work. This could be 5-10 minutes towards the end of the session, or you could ask students to bring their reflections to the next session, or to share these with you in an email etc.

## 9. A plenary to wrap up what was learned

The end of the session presents a good opportunity to draw together what students have learned and dispel any misconceptions about peer feedback. Students could summarise what they have learned by making a group list of 'what makes good work?' You can also discuss strategies and next steps for improving their future work.

## Sample prompts for peer feedback

### Sample 1

- What are the key strengths of this piece of work?
- Pose one or two questions about the work. Your questions could ask for clarification for a point/section that was not clear; or could ask for more analysis/evaluation/working; or could make a broader query about the work, such as its structure, or logic of argument.
- Make one or two (max) suggestions for how the work could be improved in a redraft.

### Sample 2 (essay-based/written work)

- Summarise the main argument of your peer's work in 100 words.
- At what points was the argument particularly clear?
- Were there any points at which the argument was less clear?

### Sample 3 (presentations)

- Highlight one or two things that the presenter did well.
- Highlight one thing that could be improved and perhaps provide a suggestion for how this might be achieved in practice.