An Introduction to

Self & Peer Assessment

Contributing Lecturer

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Notes:

Workbook

The aim of the this workbook is to provide a series of resources; contextual information, methods and approaches to the area of self and peer assessment.

The workbook is not exhaustive, but attempts to focus on core issues and needs. The added literary and web references provide further readings and activites if so required.

Key areas covered include:

- Defining Self and Peer Assessment
- Implementing Peer Assessment
- Devising Assessment Criteria.

Around each themed area you will find worksheets and activity lists, plus substantial references to original and core literarture.

Jennings, D, 2013. *An Introduction to Self and Peer Assessment.* UCD Teaching and Learning, UCD, Ireland.

Further workbooks are available, for information contact David.Jennings@ucd.ie

Please note the materials in this workbook are based on the contents of UCD Teaching and Learning' Open Educational Resources website, for further details and online activities visit:

www.ucdoer.ie

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Introducing Assessment[1]

Some of the key purposes of assessment are;

- to enable the communication of the achievement and subsequent status of students during their programme of learning;
- to provide a means of self-evaluation and information pertaining to such;
- to identify student placement within educational paths and/or programmes;
- to address the evaluation and effectiveness of instructional programmes;
- and to simply motivate the learner.

Core Assessment Types and their Rationale

Formative Assessment

Assessment for learning

This assessment provides feedback to learners in order to help them learn, and feedback to teachers to enable them to decide how a student's learning should be taken forward

Summative Assessment

Assessment of learning

This assessment provides overall and finite evidence of the achievement of students and of what they know, understand and can do, by assigning a value (often quantative) to what the student achieves

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[1] Jennings, D, McMahon, T and Surgenor, P. 2013. *Assessment in Practice.* UCD Teaching and Learning, UCD, Ireland.

[2] Massive Open Online Course

Self & Peer Assessment

Self Assessment is concerned with a learner making a judgment upon their own work, from essays to presentations, from grades to comments. It is the latter that is most productive – whereby an individual is able to reflect on a process (e.g. the design choice, compostion, that led to the construction of a paper) rather than simply an end product (e.g. a report)

Peer Assessment is the process by which learners will make assessment decisions upon other's work. This may be done anonymously, randomly, individually or by group. However it is most effectively done collectively whereby a peer group assess a given body of work or part thereof, and thus demonstrate a consistencey and validity of the marks awarded (or the contrary).

Each mode may be used either formatively or summatively, and may be best served in a mixed mode, with one often supporting the other. Thus a self assessment may inform an ipositive approach that is related to a group activity which is assessed communally, the latter may have milestones whereby feedback is provided that informs the individual and group direction… before a summative grade is produced and assigned.

Suffice to say, if a learner has become involved in the assessment process, there is an immediate benefit - their understanding of the assessment criteria and what it is to achieve these becomes that much clearer, deepening both their autonomy and learning experience. Whatever unfolds, one thing is certain there is a lot more potential for feedback (though it may not be from the 'expert') that enables an opportunity for reflection (individually) and action (collectively) to respond to the learning interventions in a postive manner (Elwood & Klenowski 2002; Shepard 2000; Tan 2008).

Advantages and Issues

Diversity of assessment approaches.

There is a drive to move the assessment protocol away from traditional assessment formats to engender choice and opportunity to excel and demonstrate potential of a wider array of skill sets – thus alleviating the premise that one may be adept at cramming and unseen exams!

Massification of classes.

The concept of a MOOC[2] and the assessment of potentially 1000's of students seems hard to fathom (and indeed validate!) However there are certain elements that support peer assessment very well. With well structured criteria and guidelines it may aid both the learner and facilitator. Providing the latter with information and time to focus on key issues.

However, the design and indeed induction into the mode of peer assessment takes careful consideration and is often time rich.

Reflective Poise

The ability for a learner to have both gathered peer feedback and reflected on their own understanding and postion provides an excellent launch pad for further discussion… facilated by the tutor.

Moderate moderation

Any self or peer assessment endavour requires careful management and control - too much tutor 'interference' may lead to a lack of engagment and a tendancy to rely on the tutor to 'correct' their less than objective commentaries.

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[2] Massive Open Online Course

Assessment Criteria

Reliabilty and Ownership

The development of specific assessment criteria removes the notion that only an 'expert' may fully understand the process of achievement and attainement. It enables the learner to chart their assessment process and removes the potential for misunderstanding, in effect it allows them to gain further insight into their own acquisition of feedback and the assessment activity itself.

For the academic, the presence of clear and transparent assessment criteria will enhance the consistency of the assessment protocol, both in what it purports to measure and how it is subsequently measured, thus ensuring fairness and objectivity.

The development of self and peer assessment may have a direct impact on the objectivity and reliability of the process – by the fact of removing the single assessor and enabling judgments and grades to be undertaken communinally. However this needs to be carefully moderated and managed in its deployment… the question arises how much moderation is requried to engage the students to take ownership and thus learn more in the process?

Is the assessment assessing what it is meant to assess?

Does the assessment method consistently assess what is being assessed?

Assessments should be both valid and reliable. Validity describes the extent to which assessment measures what it purports to measure, and reliability that it achieves this consistently (Gronlund and Linn, 1990)[3]

[3] Jennings, D, McMahon, T and Surgenor, P. 2013. *Assessment in Practice.* UCD Teaching and Learning, UCD, Ireland.

Orsmond (2004) provides a framework for enabling groups to develop and come to a consensus on the formation of criteria, these are *Structured written schedules* and *Structured group activities.* The core focus is to provide a means by which the collective cohort are able to take ownership and understand the process of devising a set of criteria. The structured activities allow the learners the opportunity to relect and review their 'assignments', individually, in pairs, triads etc. The impetus here is to ensure they are able to comment upon their and their peer's work constructively – in relation to the criteria – why they may have lost marks, and how they may do better.

The addition of a constructive commentary to any proposed criteria or rubric increases the objectivity and allows the marker to qualify and define why it may be that a certain grade/mark was given. In this way judgements are made in a more critically analytical manner and the active engagement in descriptive writing allays any overly subjective commentary.

The Boud and Falchikov (1989a & b) studies indicated that there is a direct correlation between what and how a student may mark and that of a staff member and this in turn may be dependant on the structured implemenation, and clear and transparent use of a set of criteria from which to work. An addendum to this point is the fact that the process of enagement is equally if not more important than the making of (assessment) judgments (Topping, 2003), herein lies the intregral value of self and peer assessment, learners invaribly improve there grades over time and perfom better in summative examinations (Falchikov, 1995 Walser, 2009).

Developing Group Criteria (3DAC)

Discussion

1. **Brainstorm:** Invite students to jot down individually a few key words in response to:
   What makes a really good poster? Identify some of the things you would look for in an excellent example of one.

2. **Bloom:** Divide the cohort into groups. Invite the groups to share and discuss their ideas for a good presentation.

Decision

1. **Prioritise:** Invite the groups to create a shortlist of:
   The five most important features of an excellent poster presentation

2. **Edit:** Get the groups to look carefully at the wording of each item on their shortlists – what does each point really mean!? *(think transparency, reliability, common language rather than pedagogic terminology)*

3. **Re-prioritise:** Ensure the groups have placed a hierarchy on the shortlist, with the most important to the top…

4. **Re-Edit:** Re-write the shortlist as a series of questions e.g. *Was the message clear? How well did it cover the research? Etc.*

Define

1. **Collation**: Gather each top criterion and note where two are similar - undertake this collectively so that all may see i.e. via the whiteboard or screen.

2. **Collation**(!): Continue gathering the 2nd criteria, making sure that the concurrence is visible to all, until all have been posted.

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[4] Based on Race, P. 2001, *The lecturers toolkit,* Kogan Page

3. **Additions & Amendments**: Invite any further ideas not yet represented, and edit, combine or amend those that appear similar.

4. **Order**: Produce one clear list and put a number to each of the criterion (i.e. as they were collected 1-10)

Assignation

1. **Weighting**: Invite students to weight each criterion, using an agreed total number of marks*.

2. **Record** Weighting: Gather all marks from everyone and map to the clear list of criterion

3. **Discuss divergence**: Invite dialog about why one individual scored 'x' much higher than another… tease out these issues as a group.

4. **Common Average**: Define what grade percentage each criterion gets.

Confirmation

1. **Review**: Are there any criteria not now considered worthy!?

2. **Option**! Decide if subsets are required, e.g. structure vs content

3. **Asserting Ownership**: Get acknowledgement that this is 'collectively' okay to proceed with…

Self Assessment Prompts

Is the *'assignment'* clearly structured? Is is easy to understand and does it make sense? Is it presented in a logically manner?

Are arguments, opinions, assertions backed up with evidence (referenced)?

Are examples provided where necessary? Are these suitbly referenced?

What do you think is a fair score or grade for the work you have handed in?

What would you have done to improve your grade (by one point)?

What was the thing you think you did best in this assignment?

What was the thing that you think you did least well in this assignment?

What did you find the hardest part of this assignment?

What would you most like comments on? And why?

What was the most important thing you learned in doing this assignment?

Which elements in your *'assignment'* are you most confident about? And why?

If you had the chance to do this assignment again from scratch, how (if at all) might you decide to do it differently?

How has doing this assignment changed your opinions?

What do you think are the most important things I (the tutor) am looking for in this assignment?

How could I improve my approach?

Student Guidance

What is this self and peer assessment process?[5]

As a learner you will get a number of direct benefits by undertakng this method of assessment:

1. It will be an open marking system, therefore everything is transparent, you will see what is required and how you may improve your work

2. In seeing (and reviewing) your peers work, you may note potential mistakes to avoid, and ascertain the standard of your cohort and thus place your own work within that spectrum

3. In providing peer assessment you will gain practice and insight into how to make judgements and offer constructive commentary

4. The act of assessing peers will enable you to reflect upon your own work – in an objective and critical manner.

Example of a Peer Assessment Grid with Feedback:

Your Name:	Date:		Session:	
Example being assessed:	Mark:	Score:		Feedback/Comments:
Criterion 1	7			
Total	60			

Group Work

Advantages and Issues

It is important to manage how the groups are formed, one needs to ensure there is a range of individuals within a group* – a random selection is often the most effective approach… and do not keep them together for ever!

Groups should be convened that are particular to a given activity, an in-class group may involve 3-4 students and an out of class project c.6. It may be necessary to provide intital supports and guidance to the group structures, both in their activity and roles.

The key area of guidance revolves around the assessment protocol, it is essential to involve the students in the discussion re: marks/grades – addressing the issues of 'free-loaders', lack of acknowledgement for individual contribution/s and the potential of averaging the grade curve and thus disadvantaging some if not all!

There are three core ways that a group endeavour may be graded:
- **the group mark:** this is normally most effective when it is the end product being assessed, in effect it assumes that the group are working collectively.

- **division of activty:** this may be applied where there are a number of discrete elements to an assignment, enabling the individual/s to take responsibilty for a particular component. This may then be marked by a tutor or collectively, inviting peers to assess one another's successful completion of activities.

- **divison of mark:** in essence this is similar to the above, however the difference is that there is a mark for the product and the process. Thus the tutor may assess the product and the peers may assess one another on the

process – or decide how it is they wish to divide the remaining marks amongst the group.

The opportunity throughout that presents itself here, is the addition of a self-assessment element, by means of a diary of the process, a reflection on the outcomes, a meta analysis of the product etc.

Types of Assessment

There are four core types of assessment one may employ;

Diagnostic:

Used as a low stakes assessment early on this form may offer the learner an insight into their own needs and goals pertaining to a particular module/session and invoke a level of preparedness for activies and outcomes to be addressed.

Formative:

Used pro-actively as a means to assess learning, this form provides the ability to engage the learner throughout their pedagogical journey. Ideally espousing the concept of feed-forward: initiating the abilitity of the learner to being able to respond to their assessment feedback in a positve (learned) manner, preparing them for the next stage/phase of their programme.

Summative:

Used towards the end of a learning period, these assessments are collated to determine wether a learner has fulfilled the specified learning outcomes and consequently achieve accreditation.

Integrative[6]:

This form enables the learner to embrace their reflexive nature and captures the capabilities associated with lifelong learning skills. A core component is that a learner is rewarded for their meta-cognitive abilites rather than their declartive knowledge.

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6 Crisp. (2012).

Evaluating A Rubric[7]

Criteria	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Exemplary
Clarity of purpose	Assessment criteria unclear and/or have significant overlap	Assessment criteria identifiable, but not clearly defined or are inappropriate	Criteria are clear, appropriate and distinct	Each criteria is distinct, clearly articulated and fully appropriate for the assignment/s, session/s or module
Distinction between levels	Little or no distinction can be made between levels of achievement	Some distinction made, but not clear how	Distinction between levels is apparent	Each level is distinct and progresses in a clear and logical manner
Reliabilty	Cross-scoring among faculty and/or learners often results in significant differences	Cross-scoring among faculty and/or learners occasionally produces inconsistent results	There is general agreement between different scorers when using the rubric	Cross-scoring of assignments using the rubric results in consistent agreement amongst scorers
Transparent Guidance	Rubric is not available to learners	Rubric shared and provides some idea of assignment / expectations	Rubric clearly referenced, used to introduce an assignment and/or guide learners	Rubric serves as primary reference point for discussion and guidance for assignments as well as evaluation of assignment/s
Support of Meta-cognition (Awareness of learning)	Rubric is not available to learners	Rubric shared but not discussed as part of what is being learned through the assignment / course	Rubric is shared and identified as a tool for aiding learners to understand what they are learning through the assignment/course	Rubric regularly referenced and used to help learners identify the skills / competencies / knowledge they are developing throughout the course (and assignment/s)
Engaging Learners	Learners not party to the development or use of the rubric/s	Learners offered the rubric and may 'choose' to use it for self reflection / assessment	Learners discuss the design of rubric and offer feedback / input and are responsible for the use of rubrics in peer and/or self evaluation	Faculty and learners jointly responsible for the design of rubric/s and learners use them in peer and/or self evaluation
Scoring	0-10 = needs improvement	11-15 = Workable	16-20 = Good	21-24 = Exemplary

7 Based on Mullinix, B (2003) Rubric for Rubrics: A Tool for Assessing the Quality and Use of Rubrics in Education, Monmouth University

Ten Guiding Principals for Assessment in the Modular System

Modular programmes can promote open, active and flexible learning by allowing (within an appropriate framework of support) students to take increasing responsibility for their learning (Blackwell and Williamson 1999, McMahon & O'Riordan 2006). One way to support this is to adopt peer and self-assessment approaches within your curriculum.

1	Assessment should align with the learning outcomes and the teaching / learning methods used (Biggs, 2003a; Biggs, 2003b).
2	Use the principle of "backwash" (the tendency for students to let what they perceive to be what the assessment regime will reward) to prompt higher order learning and the development of autonomous learning skills. (Biggs 2003a)
3	Give students clear and easy to understand details of the assessment criteria used (McMahon & O'Riordan 2006)
4	Be aware of assessment and learning outcomes of other modules (Blackwell and Williamson, 1999)
5	Allow students choices and preferences in their learning (Elton 1988)

6	Use a number of shorter assessments, with a mixture of formative (feedback) and summative assessments, particularly in the first semester to ease students into the higher education learning experience. (Yorke, 2003)
7	Avoid overemphasis on the unseen written examination (Brown, Bull, and Pendlebury, 1997)
8	Use a variety of assessment types to support the principles of inclusive learning (O'Neill G, Huntley-Moore S, Race P (Editors).
9	Don't over-assess (Blackwell and Williamson, 1999; Association of Law Teachers, 1996)
10	Don't cluster student assessments too close together (Blackwell and Williamson, 1999)

Task :

- Go to the UCDOER
- http://www.ucdoer.ie/index.php/Ten_Guiding_Principles/Introduction
- Undertake the series of exercises to help review, evaluate and address your assessment practice…

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End of Workbook