

LEARNING DEVELOPMENT

Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

Those Formative Peers

Improving First Year Academic Writing through Peer Assessment Groups



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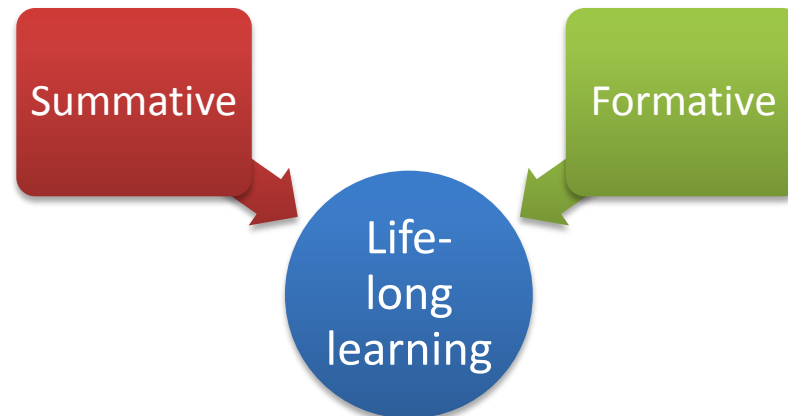
 **Learning
Development**
CENTRE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

UoN Learning Development Model

- Some course embedded Learning Development support (Education and Health)
- Assignment specific workshops
 - ✓ Targeted skills development
 - ✓ Structural advice
 - ✓ Scaffolds
 - ✓ Academic writing skills (research, referencing, synthesis)
 - ✓ Group discussion
- Individual consultations

Formative vs Summative Assessment

- Summative = grades for certification
 - ✓ Summative assessment places much focus on learning “outcomes” (Boud, 2000)
 - ✓ Can adversely impact learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2006)
- Formative = feedback for learning
 - ✓ Encourages self-monitoring to aid improvement (Sadler, 1989; Topping, 1998)
 - ✓ Leads to revision (Lipnevich, McCallen, Miles, & Smith, 2014)
- Sustainable assessment (Boud & Falchikov, 2006)



Understanding Peer Assessment

- “[p]eer review is understood to mean the educational arrangement in which students consider or evaluate the value, quality or success of work produced by their fellow students and provide each other with feedback” (Pearce, Mulder & Baik, 2009, p.3)
- Self and peer assessment work together to aid learning, because learning is inherently social (Falchikov, 2007)
- Peer learning is more about building skills rather than the acquisition of facts (Boud, Cohen & Sampson, 1999)

Benefits of Formative Peer Assessment

- Promotes higher order thinking (Bloom's taxonomy) (Boud, Cohen & Sampson, 2013; Ekahitanond, 2013; Ion, Barrera-Corominas, & Tomas-Folch, 2016; Li, Liu & Allen, 2010; Lynch, Mannix-MacNamara, & Seery, 2012; Pearce et al., 2009; Topping, 1998)
- Improves writing skills (Li et al., 2010)
- Improves confidence in academic ability (Falchikov, 2007)
- Facilitates active learning (Pearce et al., 2009)
- Enables problem solving, reflection, self-awareness and independent learning (Ion et al., 2016; Pearce et al., 2009)
- Highlights gaps in own knowledge (Liu & Carless, 2006; Topping, 1998)
- Better learning outcomes/summative assessment results (Ion et al., 2016; Lynch et al., 2012; Topping, 1998)
- Increases understanding of academic standards (van den Berg, Admiraal & Pilot, 2006)
- Leads to life-long learning (Boud et al., 2013; Boud & Falchikov, 2006)

Previous study findings

- The better the feedback they give, the better they perform (Li et al., 2010)
- While formative feedback promoted higher order thinking, lecturer guiding was essential (Lynch et al., 2012)
- Students work harder to produce good work because they know a peer will be looking at it (Ekahitond, 2013)
- Students want solutions as part of their feedback (Patchan, Schunn, & Correnti, 2016)
- Beginning writers struggle to independently identify problems in their own work (van den Berg et al., 2006)
- Some concern raised about the quality of review provided (Pearce et al., 2009)

Facilitating Peer Assessment

Problems:

- ✓ Overestimating commitment
- ✓ Fear/resistance
- ✓ Group dynamics

Solutions:

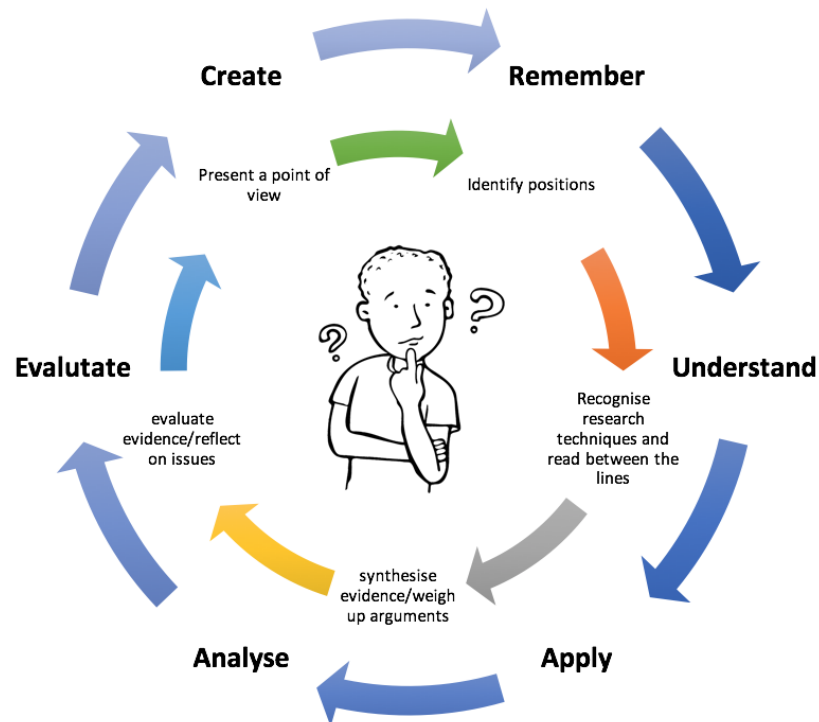
- ✓ Reducing commitment
- ✓ Positive reinforcement
- ✓ Appropriate group allocations

The Process



The Model

- Academic writing myths
- What makes a good essay?
- Review of exemplar paragraph from previous student. What good/not-so-good about it?
- Discussion of critical analysis /Bloom's taxonomy



Self Assessment Questions

- Self assessment questions:
 - What do you think you did best in this assignment and why?
 - What do you think is the weakest aspects of this assignment and why?
 - What was the hardest part of this assignment?
 - How easy or difficult did you find this assignment?

The Feedback Template

How good is the introduction? Does it provide a thorough and concise outline of how the essay will address the question?	How readable and fluent is the essay? Does the meaning of each idea come across clearly	How well structured are the paragraphs? Do they clearly incorporate evidence and explanation to explicitly address a certain aspect of the question?	How well written each paragraph? Do they show good evidence of reading and research?
How well are sources referenced? Are sufficient sources used? Have the sources been appropriately chosen?	Are arguments presented convincingly and persuasively?	How well does the essay conclude? Does it return to the question and summarise the findings/views presented?	How well, overall, does the essay address the question?
How good is the grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, etc.	Additional comments:		

Reflection Questions

- Do you think your assessors' comments are fair? Why/why not?
- Based on your assessors' comments, what could you change about your assignment prior to submitting it?
- What other changes could you now make, to ensure your assignment aligns closely with the marking rubric?

Group Discussion

- Individual paragraph projected for group peer-assessment

The Feedback – On the day

Question	Response
The class discussion in the workshop helped me to better understand elements of a good essay	65% strongly agree 35 % agree
The feedback my assessor provided was sensitive but constructive	65% strongly agree 29% agree 6% somewhat agree
The feedback my assessor provided aligned closely with my own perceptions of my assignment	53% strongly agree 41% agree 6% somewhat
The feedback my assessor provided me helped me to understand where and how I can improve my response	71% strongly agree 29% agree
Reviewing my assessee's response has enabled me to reflect on the quality of my own writing	65% strongly agree 35% agree
Additional group discussion has also enabled me to reflect on my own writing	71% strongly agree 29% agree
I now feel I can align my response with the rubric and achieve a better result	59% strongly agree 29% agree 12% somewhat agree

The Feedback – On the day

Loved this workshop!

These sessions are really valuable and helpful for understanding uni essays. I would never do as well without them.

Great workshop. Definitely coming again!



I feel much more confident now!

It was great to be supported by others in a supportive environment and to help others while they helped me. It was great to see examples and be reassured and led in the right direction.

This workshop has helped me to gain a deeper understanding

Retrospective Feedback

Question	Response
Were you happy with the grade you received for the essay	75% YES 25% NO
Do you feel the feedback you received in the peer writing session contributed to your grade?	75% YES 25% NO
Do you feel the feedback you gave and received during the peer writing session helped you develop skills necessary for future assignments?	100% YES



I understand why you talk about paragraph structure every time but I would like to spend more time talking with peers about issues relating to the assignment and common areas of concern in terms of topic etc. this is because I know I can write well and I attend for the responsive and conversation between peers

But we don't teach content...



I feel I was sufficiently supported and gained a deepened understanding of the task requirements



Having a sample paragraph of your work on the screen is probably a good idea because everyone can comment. In a small group, unfortunately if you are in with some dodo's you're not going to get great feedback.



The Verdict

- Commitment should be limited to one event
- Draft submission should be compulsory
- Allocation crucial – problematic with drop-ins
- More focus on group discussion of individual paragraphs
- Discussion of rubric could heighten engagement
- Participation needs to be encouraged/expanded
- Feedback suggests summative assessment results are improved by participation – therefore Peer Writing groups will continue.

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THANK YOU

Questions?



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