

# Peer Evaluation

Centre for Innovation in Education

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Date: February 2024

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Overview

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## Overview

Peer evaluation is defined as “a communication process through which learners enter into dialogues related to performance and standards” (Liu and Carless 2016), where Sadler (2010) argues that we should “Provide students with substantial evaluative experience not as an extra but as a strategic part of the teaching design”. In this guide we will explore the application of peer evaluation and review to support groupwork, including benefits, challenges and solutions for implementation.



Benefits

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## Benefits

Well-designed peer evaluation can be useful for several reasons. Here are a few points from the literature on peer feedback.

- Peer feedback enhances learner self-regulation.
- Composing peer feedback is often even more beneficial than receiving peer feedback.
- Peer feedback can profit from both written and oral elements.
- Students need training and coaching in carrying out peer feedback.

(Sadler 2010, Box 8.1 p. 141 – “Key research findings”)

Peer feedback may also allow for feedback on processes and contributions that you may not be able to observe as a tutor (Fellenz, 2006).

Using Peer Evaluation allows you and your students to gain more from groupwork, and provides opportunities to educate students around key skills, such as:

- The importance of reflection
- Giving good feedback
- Receiving feedback well
- Feedback literacy

Groupwork becomes more transparent and allows you to more accurately:

- See how students have individually contributed to the team’s work
- See how students interacted with each other
- Keep the teams on-track and carry out corrective interventions
- Highlight expected quality of work and interaction
- Assess student relative knowledge, skills and abilities

Finally, peer evaluation can be useful within summative assessment where the peer evaluation data can be used to moderate individual grades on group assignments. For example, rather than all students receiving the same mark, they can be given individualised marks based in part on peer reflection of their contribution to the task thereby making assessment fairer.

# Challenges with implementing groupwork and Peer Evaluation

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## Challenges with implementing groupwork and Peer Evaluation

“The promise of groupwork as a teaching and learning method can only be fully realized if perennial problems such as accurate and fair assessment of individual group-member performance, intragroup conflict, and free riding are successfully tackled.” (Fellenz, 2006)

However, Winstone and Carless (2020, p144-145) cite three barriers to the utilisation of peer feedback:

- Teachers’ beliefs – some teachers have doubts about students’ ability to provide feedback and, as such, do not want to learn about it.
- Time available – prioritising things other than peer feedback in the teaching schedule.
- Training of Students – Rushed implementation can result in ineffective feedback or mixed results.





Putting into practice

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## Putting into practice

### Buddycheck

Buddycheck is a tool, integrated into Canvas, that is aimed at streamlining peer evaluation. It can be used to support the assessment of group work tasks, where students are able to evaluate and feedback on their peers' contributions to tasks, and it can be used within assessment processes to generate peer-moderated individual grades from the groupwork.

Buddycheck includes default peer evaluation questions that are well rounded and ready to use, or you can create your own criteria and ratings. In addition to peer questions, Buddycheck has Team Questions which prompt students to reflect on the working of the team overall. Buddycheck has features to support the administration around peer evaluation such as auto-reminder emails to students, and results can be released to students as a personalised report, or data used within an assessment workflow synchronised with your course gradebook.

### Embedding Peer Evaluation

Here are some tips for implementing peer evaluation, based on the advice of current users of Peer Evaluation:

- Implement peer evaluation as a component within your overall course design – not as an after-thought or last-minute addition. Creation of [course map](#) can be a useful approach to plot out and communicate an integrated approach.

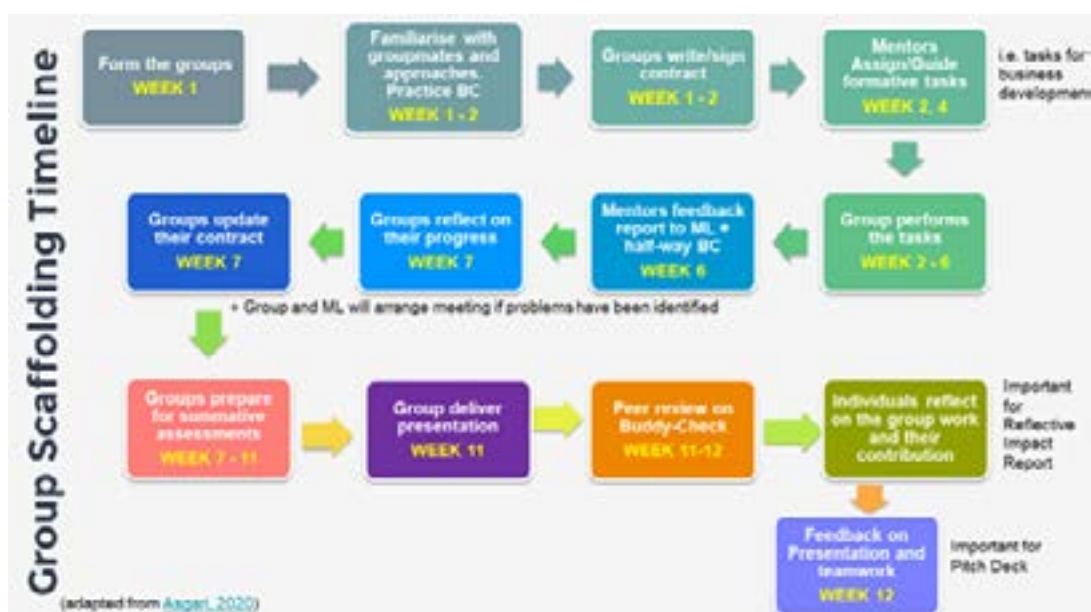


Figure 1 Course Map Dr Giulia Rampone, School of Psychology 'ULMS252 Entrepreneurship'

- Student buy-in – explain why you believe it will be beneficial to their learning. Provide reassurance that you will always be on hand during the peer evaluation process, and that tools (such as Buddycheck) just inform your academic judgement. See section Advice from users of Peer Evaluation.
- Be transparent about how peer evaluation will be used, and how results impact grading (if applicable, and ideally keep things as simple as possible). Outline the process you will use if things go wrong.
- Provide support for students on how to approach peer evaluation and to give constructive feedback to their peers. Provide links to the student support materials that CIE have created.
- Open Questions (where answers are confidential between student and tutor) can be used to prompt deeper reflection, and some users have reported that students greatly value this opportunity to give feedback or share thoughts about the process (both positive and negative) in a way that is more proximate to the group assessment/evaluation.
- Avoid the 'free-text' peer commenting feature unless this is a feature of your curriculum for which your students have been trained and supported.
- Set students on the right-path as they enter their groupwork, for example asking groups to complete a '[Groupwork Contract](#)'.
- Consider a 'low stakes' use of Buddycheck to enable students (and you) to become familiar with the process and the tool. Consider using '[Team Questions](#)' to gain insight into how the groups are working and direct interventions.
- Use academic judgment in response to non-contributors (i.e. those that receive low peer review scores), considering reasons why there may have been different levels of engagement. Where there is disharmony, aim to encourage the group to come to an agreement of how they should proceed, for example if used summatively remove the Peer Evaluation component.
- Use peer evaluation to drive and improve performance – help the team to achieve its goals and objectives. Provide an opportunity for students to reflect and learn from the experience.

## Resources to share with your students

CIE have produced student support materials around Buddycheck and Peer Evaluation that you can share with your students. These are available from the CIE website for you to reuse, or for student to access through the KnowHow 'Study for Success' Canvas courses.

Please see our Peer Evaluation and Buddycheck resources page for more details: [Peer Evaluation with Buddycheck](#).

Additional KnowHow Tutorials which may be useful to share with your students are:

- [Working in a Group](#)
- [Making the Most of your Feedback](#)
- [Overcoming Anxiety Around Online Learning](#)

## Creating and running a Buddycheck Evaluation

The typical process of creating and running an evaluation is as follows:

1. Preparation: Create Group Sets in Canvas Course
2. Create Buddycheck Evaluation: Please consult Create a Peer Evaluation within Buddycheck (IT Services) or CIE's DigiGuide available here Peer Evaluation with Buddycheck.
3. Evaluation opens: Students complete evaluation (Complete evaluation as a student). Tutor carries out further admin: monitoring, reminder emails etc. (Again see CIE's resources DigiGuide.)
4. Evaluation closes: Students receive feedback report. Tutor evaluates data. Review results as Instructor
5. Use Peer Evaluation data in assessment (Optional): Use data to apply weighting to group grades (Grading with Buddycheck). See CIE's DigiGuide on use of calculations.

## Using Buddycheck and Peer Evaluation within a summative assessment workflow

Many users will look to use peer evaluation within a summative assessment workflow, using the evaluation data to 'moderate' an individual grade from a shared group mark. Buddycheck will generate an 'adjustment factor' for each student and this can then be either automatically applied to a group mark to generate an individual grade, or staff can export the raw data and carry out the adjustment manually with more control. Please see CIE's Buddycheck DigiGuide for further information, which may also be of value to those who are using different systems.

Going Further: Advice from users of Peer Evaluation

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## Going Further: Advice from users of Peer Evaluation

The University of Liverpool has been using peer evaluation for a number of years. Here is collected wisdom intended to help new users go further and implement evaluations with confidence.

### Getting Student buy-in:

*"I would recommend that lecturers shouldn't be too dogmatic when issues arise. Peer moderation needs buy-in and confidence from students, and knowing that there's an understanding lecturer ready to step in and use academic judgement if things go wrong can help with that."*

### Getting Student buy-in:

*"I would recommend that lecturers shouldn't be too dogmatic when issues arise. Peer moderation needs buy-in and confidence from students, and knowing that there's an understanding lecturer ready to step in and use academic judgement if things go wrong can help with that."*

### Transparency and the benefit of a thought-through approach:

*"it's really important to tell students up front how it's going to work, [including] how disagreements will be resolved."*

### Supporting groups through conflict:

*"The default is that the peer moderation prevails but I will investigate as the Module Coordinator and ultimately exercise 'academic judgement'."*

*"I usually resolve things with a face-to-face discussion, explaining why I think the scoring has happened that way and how the student could improve the next time."*

*“The default is that the peer moderation prevails but I will investigate as the Module Coordinator and ultimately exercise ‘academic judgement’.”*

*“I usually resolve things with a face-to-face discussion, explaining why I think the scoring has happened that way and how the student could improve the next time.”*

*“I have a meeting with the unhappy student to understand their concerns and explain the process by which they will need to put their concerns in writing, and that I will then raise this with the group and be eliciting a response from them also. Usually encouraging a professional and developmental attitude resolves things at this stage, particularly if the student was unhappy but can otherwise see the peer evaluation is fair. But if after meeting and you have the concerns in writing, and after meeting the wider group who substantiate their peer moderation (also in writing), then it is over to you to apply your academic judgement.”*

Options when applying academic judgement:

*“Either. the peer moderated mark stands; the individual(s) get the original group mark (presumably higher than the mark they got via peer evaluation; the group does the moderation process again; or all group members get the original group mark, i.e. no peer moderation occurs, etc.. I also do a quick discussion with the module moderator to agree the decision.”*

## Video Case Studies

*Dr Denise Preece has developed an effective strategy using the analogy of football cards, to allow students to communicate to each other and then flag-up problems to the tutor throughout the groupwork process: [Approaches for using Peer Review for Evaluation of Groupwork on large cohort modules](#) (video)*

*In this video, Dr Andy Bates shares how he uses Buddycheck to prompt students to feedback and reflect upon contribution towards groupwork tasks by themselves and their peers, to make assessment fairer, increase engagement, and develop teamwork skills: [Peer evaluation of groupwork with Canvas and Buddycheck on a practical Life Sciences module](#)*



## References & Further Resources and Links

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## References

Fellenz, M. R. (2006) 'Toward Fairness in Assessing Student Groupwork: A Protocol for Peer Evaluation of Individual Contributions', *Journal of Management Education*, 30(4), pp. 570–591. doi: [10.1177/1052562906286713](https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562906286713).

Liu, N. F., & Carless, D. (2006) Peer feedback: The learning element of peer assessment. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 11(3), 279–290

Sadler, D. R. (2010). Beyond feedback: Developing student capability in complex appraisal. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(5), 535–550.

Winstone, N., & Carless, D. (2020). *Designing effective feedback processes in Higher Education: A Learning-focussed approach*, Routledge.

## Further Resources and Links

[CIE DigiGuide: Online group work](#):

[CIE DIY Toolkit 'Peer evaluation with Buddycheck'](#);

[How to activate Buddycheck in a course](#):

[How to create a Buddycheck evaluation](#):

[Code of Practice of Assessment \(CoPA\): Appendix G 'Policy on Assessment of Group-Work for Taught Provision, Guidelines for Staff'](#)

Example Groupwork Contract: Asgari, T. (2020): [Group work contract](#). figshare.

Templats for model of groupwork design: Asgari, T. (2020). [Online group work design process](#) (Version 2.). figshare.



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