

## Session 8:

### Peer Review as a Pedagogy using Blackboard Collaborate

**Presenters: David Callaghan**

**Institution: Edge Hill University**

**Theme: Peer Interaction**

The intention is to have a round table discussion, using technology (Blackboard Collaborate) to bring leading authors (e.g., Honeychurch, Ferrell and Nicol), technologists and tutors into the discussion from their own locations. Peer review and feedback is generally perceived as an effective pedagogy (Zingaro & Porter, 2013; Mostert & Snowball, 2012; Nicol, 2010; Crouch, et al, 2007; Mitra, 2003). As stated by Nicol (2013:103):

Peer review is an important alternative to teacher feedback, as research indicates that both the production and the receipt of feedback reviews can enhance students learning without necessarily increasing teacher workload.

In written activities peer review facilitates ‘... improvement in writing style, an awareness of how to apply assessment criteria and an ability to self-assess future work ...’ (Mostert & Snowball, 2012:679). Nicol (2010) goes further, and states that:

... the act of giving feedback is cognitively more demanding; it engages students more activity in the process; they spend time thinking about the criteria and how the assignment is related to the criteria ...

Nicol (2010, in University of Strathclyde, 2010:3:06)

A recent online course at Edge Hill University (Callaghan, 2013), following Salmon’s five stage model (2004) evidenced the effectiveness of peer review. Here are some points from students’ perspectives:

- More timely, and a greater quantity of feedback available (no ‘one academic’ bottleneck);
- Several varied perspectives encourages deeper self-reflection;
- Peer language is better received / understood (Topping, 1998);

... and that the quality of the peer feedback became more useful as the course progressed - and peers’ became more confident and competent in their review and feedback skills.

More recently, Nicol et al. suggest that peer review closes “ ... the gap between receipt of feedback and its application” (2015:104), allowing opportunities to use the feedback in their current work, something that is “ ... quite rare after teacher feedback” (ibid). Some issues / barriers include:

- Students’ having a lack of confidence in their own work
- (Callaghan, 2015 & 2013; Mostert & Snowball, 2012)
- Students’ lack confidence in commenting on peers’ work (Callaghan, 2015 & 2013)
- Students not happy with others commenting on their work (Callaghan, 2015; Wilson et al., 2014)

- Quality of comments poor, in some part due to reluctance to offer areas for improvement (Callaghan, 2015)
- ‘... lack of confidence in assessors and/or assessments ...’ (Mostert & Snowball, 2012)
- Mostert & Snowball report 47% of students found ‘... the peer assessment exercise was not useful.’. [note though, this was assessment, not review / feedback]
- Students concerned about others using their work (Callaghan, 2015 & 2013; Mostert & Snowball, 2012)
- Evidence that instructor intervention is required to reap significant learning gains (Zingaro & Porter, 2014);

... and in an online ‘leveraged’ environment, where the the tutor's voice is amplified to 100s or 1000s of students, tutors will feel pressured to produce well polished interactions (Bair and Bair, 2011).

The session will be of interest to colleagues looking to get students more engaged with learning content - effectively: i.e., minimising interaction required from tutors. However, those looking to reduce their workloads should be warned that such motivation may not be a successful driver (Wilson et al., 2014). The focus will be on using technology to facilitate peer review, hopefully outlining a plan that colleagues can use to encourage a Community of Inquiry (Garrison & Anderson, 2003) and thus create a deeper and more engaging learning experience. Ideas such as Zhao et al.’s (2014) three strands of participation, interaction and social presence may inform the plan. We may also cover aspects such as the role of the tutor - encouraging colleagues to move away from being the source of knowledge or ‘Sage on the Stage’ (King, 1993) to be more of a learning facilitator, like a ‘Guide on the Side’ (Hertz-Lazarowitz & Shacher, 1990) or ‘Ghost in the Wings’ (Mazzolini and Maddison, 2007).

Delegates should leave having more confidence and knowledge about the peer review process and have ideas about how to embed effective online discussion into their curricula. We also anticipate the on-line discussion continuing for as long as delegates have the energy - and perhaps a follow up session might be scheduled.

## References

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