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Building Peer Support: Developing Peer Feedback Opportunities with Level 4 Students

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HEA believes that attention to the methods of assessment and feedback, and the use of self-assessment and peer-assessment . . . is fundamental to student learning. HEA (2016)
My action research project

Four formative assessments

Peer review and feedback

Paired portfolio summative assessment
Why conduct this research project?
I wanted to encourage a bit of this.....

‘Peer assessment is an important component in the design of learning environments implementing a more participatory culture of learning.’

(Kollar & Fischer, 2010: 345)
As we all know and appreciate …

Improves the learning process

Black & William (1998)

Hattie & Timperley (2007)
Benefits to the homework tasks

- Encourages involvement with research
- Promotes academic reading
- Furthers engagement and understanding of ILO’s
- Gathers evidence required for summative assessment
Benefits to providing peer feedback and interpreting the work of others

- Improves proof-reading skills
- Develops the ability to recognizing areas for improvement
- Identifying examples of good academic practice
- Encourages peer relationships in a safe environment
- Nurtures constructive critical feedback skills
Benefits to receiving peer feedback

Potential Participant Problems

- Insecurity
- Anxiety
- Awkward
- Uncertainty
- Lack of Self-Confidence
- Resistance
- Conflict
Initial student response

• “I really did not like the idea of this, but having gone though the process it was actually not as bad as I thought.”

• “I understand now what it is you are trying to do. It makes sense and I think it is going to really help with the portfolio.”

• “This is a good idea as it is easier to see where to develop your work once someone points it out. But I felt awkward pointing out errors on someone else’s work. I don’t want them to hate me for being critical.”

• “I do not feel confident in my own ability and so do not feel as though I should be commenting on people’s work.”

• “I know what you mean. I am not very confident either, but I think if we help each other it will get easier. She wouldn’t ask us to do it if she thought it wouldn’t help.”

• “We need to keep doing this as I think it will get better and easier, but the feedback template needs changing.”
Tweaking here and there ....

- At student request, the following ‘tweaks’ were made:
  
  1. The feedback template was amended.
  2. Additional tutor input to feedback.
  3. Individual feedback was discussed to whole group.

Black & Wiliam (1998) strongly advocate the benefits of student involvement in the assessment process.
Final Official Results

• In the meantime ......
Adapting teaching practice further for 2017/18: Sustainable Assessment (Boud & Sloer, 2015)

• So I asked myself ‘Is my current teaching practice effectively preparing students for life in the workplace?’

• ‘As lifelong learning is becoming an aspect of work, there is a need for education to align assessment practice to the requirements for learning in the workplace.’ Dysthe (2008: 30)
Next steps ..... How are students using their feedback?

- A study by Walker (2015) suggests that more research is required into how students are actually using their feedback, rather than how students give feedback to their peers.

- This is also a question raised from my own study.
Reference List