

Structured Peer Review for Online Projects

Peer review activities help students develop skills that will benefit them in their future including skills in analysis and collaboration - learning with and from their peers. In addition, the work deepens their understanding of assignment requirements and foster community building which can effectively mitigate the isolation online learners sometimes feel. Below is a step-by-step process for effectively integrating peer- review activities into your online course assignments and activities (see an example of a peer- review process at the end of this document).

1. **Choose an appropriate assignment.** Projects and papers are often the best assignments for peer review, because they typically include multiple stages for development and carry a fair amount of weight toward a final grade. For example, a project proposal is typically the first assignment in a semester-long project and is therefore an ideal assignment for students to obtain feedback from their peers. Getting feedback early can help to ensure that students are on the right track.
2. **Include the peer review process in the assignment rubric.** It is important to include the peer- review process in the assignment rubric including the amount of feedback expected, with the number of points students earn, as a result of offering and using peer feedback. It is also important to help students understand why you are having them engage in this process and the important skills they will gain as a result.
3. **Prepare a rubric for the specific part of the assignment students will be reviewing.** Peer review is best supported by having assignment-or activity-specific rubric. Complex assignments, such as projects, can be broken up into smaller parts with a rubric for each part to help peer reviewers offer more specific and therefore effective feedback. For example, a course project might start with a project proposal and include a rubric that highlights the key elements of a successful project proposal.
4. **Be intentional about the peer-review teams you create .** Assigning peer review to teams of two to five students that stay together for longer multiphase assignments, such as projects, can be helpful for students to get to know one another and more easily schedule ongoing reviews. For single-submission assignments, it can be beneficial to have peer-review teams (two to five students) change throughout the course so that students are exposed to multiple perspectives on their work and can offer feedback on different peers' work.
5. **Offer specific assistance to help peer-review teams get organized.** The process of identifying how and when students will communicate with each other offers students an opportunity to build skills in communicating and working with others. It's helpful to recognize this organizing step by including it in your instructions to peer groups (see example below). If your learning management system (LMS) has the option to facilitate collaborative work, you can create a wiki or private discussion area for each peer-review team. Learners can also choose to use email, text, Skype, phone, or a host of other communication platforms to meet and share feedback.

6. **Clarify what students should do with peer review.** Let students know that they are expected to consider and evaluate all the feedback they receive, then decide if it would be most beneficial to integrate all, some, or none of the feedback into the final draft.
7. **Help learners reflect on the peer-review process.** In order for students to improve their ability to offer each other effective feedback, it is helpful to have them reflect on the peer-review process itself. To do this you may assign the questions below to be completed in 1) students' peer-review team, 2) in a small group discussion with other students, or 3) in a private reflection journal. The format for this reflection activity should be determined by your observations of how the peer-review process is progressing. For example, if you observe a lack of honesty and specific helpful feedback in the peer-review process, it may indicate that the students are struggling with the work and would be better served reflecting on the process in a private journal. Instructors can then offer individual support in response. If the peer-review process seems to work well for most students, the reflective discussion questions below could reinforce their learning and encourage continuous improvement.
 - What worked well in the peer-review process?
 - What challenges did your peer-review group encounter? How did your group address those challenges?
 - What individual feedback was most helpful to you? Least helpful?
 - Did you receive feedback with which you disagreed? If so, what did you do about it?
 - What was it like for you to give feedback to your peer(s)? Was the assignment rubric helpful? Did you feel comfortable and able to offer feedback? What would make you feel more comfortable or more able to provide effective feedback?
 - What could you do next time to ensure the peer-review process is more effective and/or enjoyable?

Creating a Peer Review Assignment Checklist

Task	Reminders	Instructor Notes:
Assignment	Choose an appropriate assignment (e.g., projects and papers)	
Assignment rubric	Include the peer review process in the assignment rubric and offer points.	
Peer feedback rubric	Prepare a rubric for the specific part of the assignment students will be reviewing.	
Create peer review teams of 2-5 students	Consider keeping same teams for longer multi-step projects and using	

	different teams for single-submission assignments.	
Organize peer review teams	Offer specific assistance to help peer-review teams get organized including creating a private space on Learning Management System and encouraging teams to discuss their preferred mode of communication with each other.	
Clarify expectations for feedback and revisions	Clarify when peer feedback is due and what students should do with peer review.	
Peer review reflection	Help learners reflect on the peer-review process through a discussion, feedback form, or reflection journal.	

Example Peer-Review Assignment: Peer-Review or Project Groups

Many careers and community organizations require people to work together in teams to solve complex problems or complete large projects. In these situations, it becomes necessary for team members to offer one another constructive feedback—both positive and negative. Giving and receiving thoughtful feedback helps everyone improve their work and become more aware of their strengths as well as areas for improvement. To help you build this skill set and prepare for the future, you will use the following structured format to provide feedback to your peers.

1. You will be assigned to a peer review team of two to five students. You will provide feedback to each other on each phase or deliverable of the major project assignment.
2. Your group will be assigned a discussion board for each phase of the project in order to leave feedback for each other. Additional communication with your peers will be needed, so your group should begin with a discussion about how and when you prefer to communicate (by text, by chat, on FaceTime, in the evenings, in the mornings, etc.). In each group, the person with the last name that starts with the letter closest to “A” in the alphabet is in charge of starting the discussion via email.
3. Post your first draft of Phase 1 Project Assignment by Wednesday, February 28.

4. Each group member will provide feedback using the assignment rubric to at least two peers. This will ensure that everyone in the group receives feedback from at least two different people. It is important for your peers to receive timely feedback in order to improve their work by the due date, so peer review feedback is due by March 3.
5. You will receive five points for each completed peer review. A completed peer review includes the following:
 - a. a description of two or three aspects of your peer's work that you think meets the assignment rubric criteria and why you think it meets the criteria;
 - b. a description of two or three aspects of the work that you think could be strengthened, based on the rubric criteria, and why you think making adjustments will be helpful to meeting the assignment goal; and
 - c. notation of any grammatical, spelling, or formatting errors you find (although you are not responsible for copyediting each other's work).
6. Once you have received feedback from each peer, consider the feedback and revise your work accordingly. Please remember, you are not required to implement all of the suggested changes.