

Peer assessment of lab reports to increase student self-regulation and development

Teaching and Learning Case Study

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Coherent Curriculum themes:

- Assessment and feedback

Other keywords:

Blackboard, up to 75 students in a group

What did/do you do?

Peer feedback is used on Stage 1 lab reports to encourage students to recognise good and bad practice and to correct mistakes before the final submission of the assessment.

Who is involved?

Stage 1 students in the School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Involved staff include the module leaders and markers for Stage 1 modules.

How do you do it?

Lab reports are submitted electronically via Turnitin on Blackboard. During a time-tabled one hour session booked for a computer lab, each student is randomly assigned the reports of two other students to assess online. Students then write, at minimum, three positive comments about the structure, style, and/or content of each lab report as well as three suggestions for improvement. Students also assign a grade between 1 and 5 to each of the two reports that they assess. Peer feedback is submitted electronically.

At the conclusion of the session, each student receives two sets of peer feedback that he/she can review and use to improve the assessment before final submission approximately one week later. The objective is to encourage students both to better recognise good and bad practice in lab report writing and to reflect upon their own possibilities for improvement. Approximately 10% of the final mark is awarded for participation in the peer feedback session.

Why do you do it?

Module leaders and markers had long noted that students did not often enough act upon marks and feedback received on lab reports. The same errors reappeared repeatedly (e.g. poor graphs or the use of first-person), and students did not pick up on repeated suggestions for improvement.

Does it work?

A trial undertaken in Semester 2 had approximately 20 students (out of 60) who voluntarily participated. These students took the project quite seriously – judging from their peer feedback comments on others' reports, they took great care in outlining positive comments and suggestions for improvement and often included lengthier comments than had been required. Student responses also indicated that they found the session useful and that they appreciated the feedback from other students. Based on this trial, the School is thinking about making the exercise mandatory in one or two selected Stage 1 labs in the 2012/13 academic year.