

Peer and self-assessment of peer-led tutorials to promote student engagement

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Peer and self-assessment of course and group work can promote sustainable assessment by encouraging students to develop evaluation skills that they can take beyond the classroom. This poster outlines how peer and self-assessment can be used in a tutorial setting as part of formal coursework assessment procedures. Weekly peer-led tutorials were introduced in a biology unit as part of a peer-assisted learning (PAL) program. Students worked in small groups to research and present weekly cases as interactive tutorials to the full-class cohort. The full-class cohort provided peer assessment and feedback to the small group, and members within the group undertook peer and self-assessment of member contributions. Student marks for peer assessment of the tutorials correlated well with staff marks. In self-assessment of the small group work, 52 per cent of students gave themselves a slightly lower mark than that received from their peers. An anonymous survey using a five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate student experiences of this peer and self-assessment regime. Analysis of survey responses revealed that peer assessment encouraged students to listen more attentively to their peers' tutorials and to be more conscientious in contributing to their own group's tutorial. In general, students thought peer assessment was valuable and considered that it gave them a greater sense of involvement and responsibility. Peer and self-assessment thus promoted student engagement in the PAL program and provided an opportunity for students to develop peer and self-evaluation skills.

Keywords: peer assessment; peer-assisted learning; self-assessment; sustainable assessment; tutorials

Theme: assessment for sustainable learning within and beyond the course

Introduction

Peer and self-assessment are important factors in engaging students with learning (Taras, 2010). In the design and structuring of assessment practices, academics have an opportunity to use assessment modalities that not only drive learning but also develop personal and professional skills. According to Boud (2000), sustainable assessment defines the development of the ability to assess learning throughout life in both formal and informal settings. It is assessment for the present without compromising the future learning needs for the student. Peer and self-assessment can contribute to developing these skills. Students who experience these forms of assessment develop skills that are transferable to the workplace and to other aspects of life. This study examines the student experience of peer and self-assessment used as part of a holistic approach to a peer-assisted learning (PAL) program as part of the unit Radiologic Biology.

Methodology

Weekly peer-led tutorials were introduced in the unit Radiologic Biology as part of a PAL program. Each student worked in a small group to research and present a weekly case as an interactive tutorial to the class. Students in the class (large PAL group) were asked to provide weekly peer assessment and feedback on their peers' (small PAL group) presentation of a case-based tutorial. Students within the small PAL group were asked to perform peer and self-assessment of the group work undertaken in preparing the case-based tutorial.

The peer and self-assessment marks were analysed and a survey was used to evaluate the student experience of the peer and self-assessment regime. All peer and self-assessments were performed according to a set of criteria. An

anonymous survey using a five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate the student experience of the peer and self-assessment regime.

Findings

Peer marks of the case-based tutorials

Over the 12 case-based tutorials, the average large PAL group marks for peer assessment correlated well with that provided by staff. It was not possible to perform statistical analysis due to the small number of staff (two to three) marking each tutorial.

Self-assessment in the small PAL group work

There was little difference between self- and peer assessment of the group work. In 52 per cent of cases students gave themselves a slightly lower mark than their peers gave them. In 48 per cent of cases the self-assessment mark was the same as or slightly higher than their peers' marks.

Effect of peer assessment on student engagement in the PAL program

Results from the survey revealed that peer assessment caused students to listen more attentively to their peers' tutorials (4.06 ± 0.70 , using a five-point Likert scale) and to be more conscientious in contributing to their own groups tutorial (4.06 ± 0.76). In general students thought that peer assessment was valuable (3.79 ± 0.78) and gave them a greater sense of involvement and responsibility (3.94 ± 0.70).

Conclusions and implications for practice

This study demonstrates that peer assessment can have a positive impact on the attitude of students to peer-led tutorials. It has been documented that in order for peer-assisted learning to be beneficial, the assessment practices must be aligned (Boud et al., 1999). The use of peer assessment for the tutorial presentation and the group work emphasised the role of the student in the learning process.

Self-assessment has an important role to play in reflection and self-awareness and in the goal of sustainable assessment. Papinczak et al. (2007) found that students were more accurate in peer assessment than they were in judging their own performance. Our results do not support this conclusion. We found that a small majority of students gave themselves a slightly lower mark than their peers in the self-assessment of their contribution to the group work, but that this difference was not significant. The self-assessment component of the assessment regime was a small but important one. It was not weighted highly for summative purposes but was important in ensuring that each student seriously considered their contribution to the group work.

The students in the present study will go on to become radiographers and in this role will be required to make judgements about their own performance and that of their peers in meeting the standards of the hospital unit in which they work. Encouraging the use of peer and self-assessment methods in other units undertaken in the course would further develop these skills and contribute to sustainable assessment in their undergraduate education.

The results reported here constitute the first phase of a study on peer learning. In the next phase the student experience of peer feedback will be explored.

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