

Case Study: Implementing Active Self-Feedback in Teaching

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Course information

In Autumn 2024, Alison Zimmer, a Lecturer in Accounting and Finance, taught a unit in Principles of Tax. This course was taught to around 150 undergraduate students in their first year of either the BSc Accounting or BSc Business Accounting courses.

On this course, students produced a research poster for display at a showcase, where students view their peers' work and use this to generate their own feedback. A very similar activity was incorporated into the course in 2022 and 2023.

The Task

Students, in groups, research a topical tax topic, guided by a given brief. They then produce a research poster displaying their findings. This research poster is marked summatively. The posters are printed and displayed at a 'showcase event'. Students attend this event to speak to classmates, academics and tax professionals about the topic, debate the issues, and answer and ask questions.

Students compare their work to at least three other posters, and are asked to identify the differences, the lessons they learned from these differences, and the work they think is best and why. The intention is for students to create their own 'internally generated' feedback to supplement formal feedback they will receive from their lecturer.

In previous years, completion of the Comparison, Reflection, and Active Feedback task contributed to students' overall grade. However, due to the risk of over-assessing, this was no longer compulsory in 2024; instead, students were given the option to submit their reflections for formative assessment.

Comparators

Students compare their research posters to those of their peers at a showcase event.

Reflections by teaching staff

"The insights students identified in the reflection documents were as good, if not better than the feedback I would have given. What I particularly liked was that students discussed (at the showcase event) their experiences of groupwork. And in the reflection document, they noted they had learned a lot from these conversations and would

approach groupwork differently in future. This highlights it's the dialogue that also matters, not just the comparison with their peers' work."

It is also noted that the recent change, making the reflective questions optional formative rather than contributing to the overall assessment, is a regrettable but necessary change due to the amount of assessment already incorporated into the unit. Students are less likely to take part in the active self-feedback activity if not incentivised by credits.

Reflections by students

Feedback from surveys of the previous years' students, who also took part in the activity (and had to submit their reflections for summative assessment), has been very positive.

Appendix: Worksheet

What are the two main differences between this poster and your groups? Explain.	
What did you learn from these differences? Give a reason.	
Overall, which is better, your poster or this one? Explain.	
Overall reflection	
What did you learn about your own poster from reviewing these posters?	
Can you rank the posters including your own from best to least good? Give a reason for your ranking.	
From reviewing all three posters name two things you can do to improve your approach to this type of assignment in the future.	
How did you feel about this process (of comparing, reflecting, and providing internal feedback)?	