

Case Study: Implementing Active Self-Feedback in Teaching

Sarah Hatherill, Academic writing in Physiology

Course information

During the 2024/25 academic year, Sarah Hatherill, a Lecturer in Physiology, co-ordinated part of the Biosciences Foundation Year. This course is primarily taught at a local sixth form college but includes a portion of teaching on university campus to prepare students for their future learning in a higher education setting.

The focus of this unit is on practical laboratory work and other academic skills and was taught to around 65 foundation year students. On this course, active self feedback was implemented to improve students' academic writing skills.

The task

Students were asked to write a two page draft essay to be reviewed in class. This essay would later be submitted for summative assessment. To prepare students to generate their own feedback, students completed a peer-review exercise.

Having completed a peer review exercise, students were asked to then compare the essays that they reviewed to their own submission. They were then asked to generate their own feedback and action plan on how to improve their draft submission, in advance of the summative deadline.

In particular, students were asked to identify two differences between their own work and their peers' essays and then explain what they had learned from the comparisons. Finally, students were asked to rank their peers' essays alongside their own and explain why they thought one was better than another.

Comparators

A selection of peer essays was used for comparators. This was achieved using Peer Scholar, which automatically and anonymously supplies students with a number of peer essays, and allows students to anonymously feedback on their peers' work.

Reflections by teaching staff

"I think that the students found the activity quite challenging. They completed it synchronously in a seminar session, in week 8 of teaching. The students are still very much at the beginning of their course and are getting to grips with teaching and assessments and having to generate their own feedback was perhaps a step to far. If I ran this again, I would give more structure/support with the activity and maybe allow

students to work on it asynchronously and then review in a tutorial session rather than in a larger setting. I would also use different comparator sources, so that all students were using the same comparisons, rather than the ones they were randomly assigned in peer scholar, as the quality of the peer submissions was quite variable.”

Appendix: Worksheet

What are the two main differences between this essay and yours? Explain.	
Your essay	Example essay
What did you learn from these differences? Give a reason.	
Your essay	Example essay
Overall, which is better, your essay or this one? Explain.	