

Peer Review for Active Learning

Purpose: Peer review assignments help students learn to give and receive constructive feedback, reflect on their own work, and deepen their understanding of course content. They can also create a more active and supportive online classroom, creating community and providing students with valuable new perspectives.

Steps for Implementation

They can be very valuable to you as an instructor, if you embed peer review of a draft, followed by revision, before the assignment comes to you. As long as you give students clear criteria, they can provide each other with a first round of feedback, ensuring that the papers that come to you are stronger.

DCE offers digital tools to support peer review, including the Canvas Peer Review function and Feedback Fruits.

1. Choose the Right Tool for Your Assignment

- a. **Canvas Peer Review:** Canvas allows you to set up peer review for discussions, papers, or projects. You can assign reviews manually or automatically. Students can leave comments and, if you choose, annotated feedback on submissions.
- b. **Feedback Fruits:** This integrated tool provides a more robust peer review experience with customizable rubrics, comment spaces, self-assessment options, and detailed analytics for instructors.

2. Design Clear, Specific Peer Review Prompts

- a. Peer review will be as good as the instructions you provide. Students don't know what to look for without your guidance, but with it, they can learn to engage critically and specifically with the work. This will help them both with the peer review exercise and, following it, to see their own work through this lens.

- b. Avoid simple yes/no checklist questions. Instead, ask open-ended questions. For example:
 - i. “What is the author's main argument? Copy and paste one sentence that clearly states it.”
 - ii. “Where is the evidence strongest? Where could the author better support their point?”
 - iii. “How is the piece currently organized? Is there another organization that the author should consider?”
 - iv. “What suggestion would you give to make the conclusion clearer or more persuasive?”
- c. **Use Targeted Rubrics:** Using Feedback Fruits, you can create custom criteria that guide students to focus on key areas (e.g., clarity of thesis, organization, use of sources).

3. Set Expectations and Support Quality Feedback

- a. **Grade the Feedback:** This shows that you value it as an important part of the class contribution. You can even create a rubric to evaluate their feedback.
- b. **Show Good Feedback:** Show examples of ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ comments, and explain what makes the former ones good.
- c. **Clarify Tone:** Encourage students to be constructive and respectful. Feedback should focus on the work, not the writer.
- d. **Require Evidence:** Ask reviewers to point to specific sections (“Highlight the paragraph where the topic sentence is unclear”), or to quote directly from the draft.

4. Integrate Peer and Self-Assessment

- a. Allow students to reflect on feedback received and plan revisions.
- b. Feedback Fruits and Canvas both support self-evaluation prompts to help students internalize strengths and areas for improvement.
- c. **Close the Loop:** After peer review, require students to submit a short reflection: “Which piece of feedback will you use when revising? What surprised you about the peer review process?”

Instructor Planning Guide

1. Assignment Integration

What assignment will include peer review, and how will revision be part of the process?

2. Tool Selection

What platform will you use to manage peer review (e.g., Canvas or Feedback Fruits)?

3. Review Prompts and Rubric

What questions or rubrics will guide students in giving meaningful feedback?

4. Expectations for Feedback

How will you help students understand what effective feedback looks like?

5. Tone and Constructiveness

How will you set expectations for respectful and constructive peer comments?

6. Closing the Loop

How will students reflect on and apply the feedback they receive?

7. Timing and Workflow

What is the timeline for submission, review, revision, and reflection?

Instructor Checklist

- ☐ I've selected an assignment that will benefit from peer review and revision.
- ☐ I've chosen the appropriate tool (Canvas or Feedback Fruits) and set it up.
- ☐ I've created clear, open-ended review prompts and/or a rubric.
- ☐ I've provided guidance and examples of strong peer feedback.
- ☐ I've established expectations for tone, specificity, and evidence-based comments.
- ☐ I've decided whether and how to grade the peer feedback itself.
- ☐ I've built in time for students to revise based on peer feedback.
- ☐ I've included a reflection or revision plan to close the feedback loop.
- ☐ I've reviewed the timeline and communicated it clearly to students.

Resource: [Frame Your Feedback: Making Peer Review Work in Class](#) (Faculty Focus)