Peer Assessment Q & A

1. What is Peer Assessment at UoPeople?

Peer assessment at UoPeople is a process where students assess chosen work of their peers through a pre-planned assignment and Discussion Forum activities. Peer Assessment is done under the monitoring and supervision of course instructors. It forms an integral part of the design, development, and academic facilitation of all UoPeople courses. Peer Assessment helps students to apply their knowledge by going over peer work and providing assessing feedback. It helps Instructors to raise the level of academic monitoring and facilitation to further benefit all involved.

2. Why do it? Why not use traditional methods?

Peer Assessment allows instructors to spend more time on academic facilitation and less time on summative assessments. This benefits all the students directly. Instructors still spend time on evaluation but do so in a way that includes collaboration and development of leadership skills among all the students. Peer Assessment at UoPeople does not just happen; it is done in a structured and strategic way. Students benefit from using this method as they practice what they learn and end up being better prepared for business, academic and even private milieus.

3. Is there a difference between evaluation and assessment? Is it an important distinction?

Yes, there is a difference and it is important. . While students are involved in the **assessments** of assignments and Discussion Fora as part of the **formative** (one of many, with the purpose to learn as you advance) assessments to help all students learn and apply their knowledge. **The evaluation process is done in a summative way (to give the final mark) with the full involvement of the Instructors**. This means that students re-learn through assessing others **while the responsibility of evaluation is carried out by the Instructor and the University.** These is a reason why Instructors monitor all the assessments and why you have quizzes and exams in every course at the UoPeople. The sum of all assessments, plus possible interventions of your Instructor make up the final grade. Refer to the curriculum of your present course for specific break out numbers.

4. Does Peer Assessment ***really*** help in the academic process? Why can I not see the value right now?

Peer Assessment helps students develop leadership skills and course application knowledge by re-using the objectives of the course in a more pragmatic way. Application of knowledge is emphasized in Peer Assessment and thus, helps all involved to deepen their knowledge and apply it. As part of peer assessment, students learn and improve on how to give and accept constructive criticism as well as construct and provide feedback. The latter is a valuable leadership tool that students are encouraged to use not only in any academic environment, but also in their private lives and in all business situations.

Peer assessment is a new process to a lot of students. It takes a while to get used to something so new and so different to so many. The growing pains that are sometimes felt are worth the investment as assessing peers helps develop leadership skills of the future and retain more material from courses.

5. Why does UoPeople use peer assessment?

It is cost effective and provides leadership lessons to all involved. Peer assessment engages the students with assessment criteria and involves the students in self-reflection and provision of useful feedback while they compare their assignment with their peers

6. How many assignments do I have to assess?
   Usually three assignments and at least three discussion forum posts.

7. What are the steps in Peer Assessment in the university?
   i) Read the rubrics and the marks allocated for each criteria
   ii) Read through the essay.
   iii) Assign the marks
   iv) Make sure to include the justification on the assignment to the peer as this helps the recipient understand their shortcomings and improve.
   v) Value added: learn about assessments, feedback and its application of learning in the modern world.
8. What happens if you tried everything but you are not satisfied with the assessment of your assignment?
   i) Reflect on your assignment with the comments
   ii) Think about possibilities to improve rather than that it is a reflection of who you are (it is not, you are much more than one assignment or one Discussion Forum entry). The point is to understand any shortcomings or possibilities to improve and dwell on these-rather than anything else.
   Check-is there a solid introduction, body, and conclusion?
   APA style of organizing a paper?
   Citation, Paraphrasing and Quote with References
   If in doubt, ask a trusted friend or mentor.
   Keep an open mind. Do not exclude the possibility of making your work better next time.
   Reflect some more and try to view your work from a more neutral stance by imagining that this is someone else's work, etc.
   iii) Request the instructor's intervention
   iv) If your instructor does not respond contact academic.affairs@uopeople.edu
   v) Tips: value peer assessment for what it is: an opportunity plan and allocate 10-15 minutes to this academic task--don't do it last minute. Take advantage of the learnings afforded to you. Same applies to planning to have some time devoted to reflect on the assessments and scores as well as comments and feedback received. Manage your expectations. Think about the future improvements rather than past done deals.
   vi) Do not evaluate the work of another peer as a way of dealing with frustration. Apply healthy ways listed above to deal with this process and emotions surrounding it.
9. Are the any tools to improve my feedback awareness ?
   Use PAO tools and discussions.
   Suggest other tools.
   Visit:

w3.unisa.edu.au/staffdev/guides/good_practice_guide_to_providing_quality_feedback.pdf
http://www.fastcompany.com/48238/how-give-feedback

10. Don't students lack the knowledge or experience to carry out the task?
    Students might not feel confident or trust the process at first. However, students are supported and the process is progressive—the more you experience it, the more you will learn. Students learn through effective training and practice as well as following the peer assessment process as described above. Tasks-related confidence grows as a result and the peer assessment skills keep growing. Don't we all want it and need it?

References:

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Falchikov, 2005 and Sivan, 2000 found that peer assessment deepens students' understanding of their own learning and empowers students to become more actively engaged and self-directed in their learning processes .Pupils act as critical friends, critiquing the work of others in a way that both supports and challenges them and facilitates their future success (NREF, n.d.).

This is grounded in theories of active learning (Piaget, '71), adult learning (Cross, '81) and social constructionism (Vygotsky, '62). Modern theories of learning emphasize the active role of learners in constructing meaning from their experiences in order to develop understanding, and the active participation of learners in the processes of learning.

In peer assessment, student no longer learn by doing what to do and how to do it, rather it changes the goal of the education to match the changes of the society that prepares these new generation of leaders to continue learning thorough their lives .Students learn these things through reflection and meta cognitive development (Hattie *et al*., 1996, cited in Black and Wiliam, 1998b).It also makes students take ownership of their learning.