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The opportunities and challenges of self, peer and group assessment.

Since the 1970s a growing body of evidence is demonstrating the key role assessment plays in influencing student learning (Snyder 1971; Boud 1995; Black and William 1998; Ramsden 2003; Gibbs, Simpson and McDonald 2003). We now recognise and acknowledge that meeting assessment requirements is a major focus for students' energies and this has placed it in a central position as a mechanism to shape learning (assessment for learning) rather than simply as measurement of end result (Juwah et al. 2004). Indeed, Rayne (2004) has remarked that reconceptualising assessment in this way constitutes a paradigm shift in higher education.

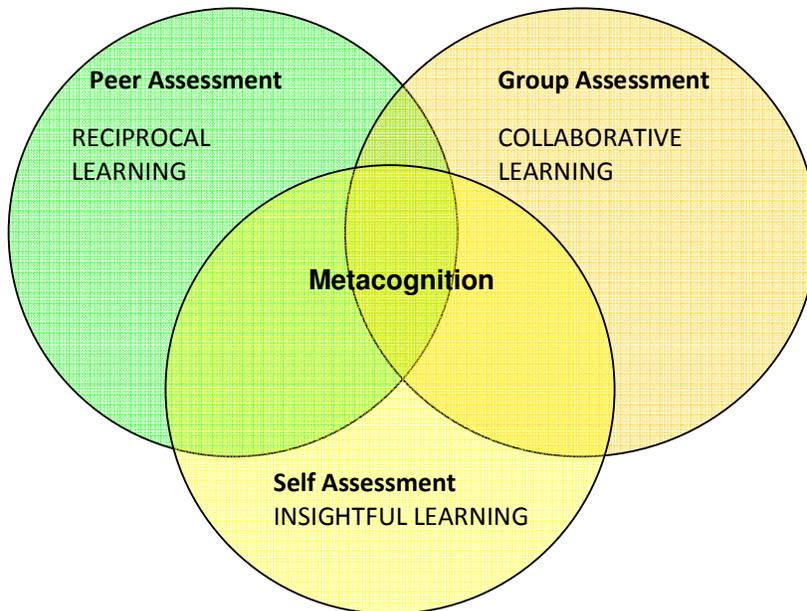
This appreciation of the role assessment has in enhancing – or inhibiting – learning has resulted in programmes using a range of more innovative approaches that offer an opportunity to deepen learning through the assessment process itself. Thus there is renewed interest in the exploration and evaluation of different approaches to assessment. In this chapter we explore self, peer and group assessment, which have the potential to strengthen assessment for learning, and equally to enhance student metacognition (see chapter 1). Although none of these three approaches are new, recognition of their potential advantages within the learning process is leading to an increased attention in what they can offer to augment learning. Equally, they also throw up specific challenges for both the students and lecturers, and this chapter will discuss different methods that have been adopted to meet these challenges.

In order to capture real-world innovative and effective self, peer and group assessment methods, the chapter draws on the experience of SIGFEST contributors who generously shared their expertise and experiences. The chapter starts by outlining the overall benefits of the three modes of assessment, and some of the challenges that emerged from the discussion. We then examine each of the modes in more detail, including clarification of the terms used, and illustrative examples of how they can be used effectively in practice. Each section will be supported by current literature in the specific area, and conclude with some tips for implementation.

Opportunities offered through Self, Peer and Group Assessment

The literature and evidence around effective assessment for learning and the promotion of employability (see earlier chapters) identifies a number of core characteristics that can be met through these different modes of assessment. For example: assessment should be part of the whole learning process and not just occurring at the end; there should be opportunity

for self reflection, for actively engaging with learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and developing the ability to make judgements; assessment tasks should be authentic and relevant; and there should be encouragement to understand learning processes and develop metacognition. All these characteristics are arguably developed through self, peer or group assessments to some degree, and therefore using one or more of these modes within a programme offers the students real opportunities for extending their learning. In particular self assessment offers an opportunity for insightful learning, peer assessment for reciprocal learning, and group assessment for collaborative learning. Making the most of these and other opportunities will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.



Challenges in using Self, Peer and Group Assessment

Emerging from the SIGFest discussions, we identified a number of challenges that have elements common to all three modes (see table 2.1). The main concerns identified are around adequate preparation of students in making judgments that are fair and based on the assessment criteria; acknowledgement of the emotional aspects that influence learning through assessment; strong facilitation and moderation by lecturers in supporting students in the process; and where there are peers and groups, support and facilitation in working collaboratively. These elements are not necessarily exclusive to these modes of learning, but are essential to consider and respond to when designing successful programmes.

Table 2.1: Emerging Challenges of Group, Peer and Self Assessment

Group Assessment	Peer Assessment	Self Assessment
Preparation of students for working interdependently is key to successful group assessment, as is preparation in giving formative and summative feedback to each other	Preparation of students required in how to assess including how to interpret criteria, to judge peers, and to give feedback sensitively in relation to those criteria	Requires preparation of students in reflection and self-awareness, plus identification of what the students need to learn about themselves and expected progression criteria
Some students like group work and some do not - need a balance within the overall programme, and a rationale for why a collaborative process has been chosen as assessment for a particular module	There must be recognition of the emotional aspects in assessing peers (including attribution of negative feelings that may be unrelated to the learning activity)	There must be recognition of the emotional aspects of learning, and the role this plays in realistic judgements and being self-critical
Individual contributions to group processes must be recognised - as they happen as well as at identified points through the activities	Need for transparent fairness and equity is paramount	Regular de-briefings are essential: on the individual learning process and for personal professional development
Care is needed in language used - there must be clear understandable criteria regarding individual contributions to the group process and end 'product'	Lecturer facilitation of PA process is needed to develop confidence and comfort in sharing honest feedback in relation to grading criteria	Understanding language of the assessment and desired learning outcomes of both the module and the programme as a whole is key to effective SA
Ethical issues around grading for individuals within the group should be acknowledged: Challenges associated with giving individual marks for a group process	Issues of accurate judgements: collusion can be a possibility in awarding high grades without appropriate rationale	Issues of accurate judgements - tendency to over or under assess ones own performance needs to be addressed
Levels of engagement, participation and contributions in the process and outcome need to be explicit: pass grade dependent on this	Moderation of process essential to ensure peer judgements balanced with that of lecturers, but not neutralised: needs training too	Issues of addressing performance in practice: often focus on what has 'gone wrong' in both formative and summative assessment
Differences in 'professional cultures' and therefore student engagement and contributions within GA in interprofessional assignment work	Influence of QA processes - is there a tension between assessment for accreditation and assessment for learning?	Capturing reflection as a form of self-assessment - and assisting reflection at deeper levels to enable synthesis of ideas
Group tensions may need to be mitigated or moderated by lecturer	Need for assessing contribution to process as well as final 'content' - use of formative peer feedback	Overcoming the potential fragmentation of modular assessment and recognition of development through the full length of a programme

Self Assessment

Self assessment can be viewed as assessing the actions one engages in, the success of which depends on our level of self awareness and ability to self monitor. Race (2001) regards self assessment as making judgements about one's own work, whilst Boud and Falchikov (1989), refer to it as the involvement of learners in making judgements about their own learning, particularly about the achievements and outcomes of their learning. Learners engaging in self assessment can be seen to be actively involved, promoting autonomous and independent learning, as Brown, Bull and Pendlebury (1997) proposed. Indeed, self assessment can be key to developing effective lifelong learning and to maintaining professional competence.

The long term uses of self assessment within the context of Higher Education are summarised by Boud et al (1995) who see its primary use in two ways:

1. For judgemental or development purposes, i.e. to get an idea of where one is at with a view to developing what one is doing.
2. To reflect upon one's actions or upon the process of learning itself.

This second point can be defined as learning to learn, described by Nisbet and Shanksmith (1984) as the capability to develop one's own cognitive processes so that one's learning is developed. It is sometimes viewed as developing a 'seventh sense' or metacognition, building upon the sixth sense of intuition. These cognitive and metacognitive processes are important and useful for everyday life, and, as argued in **chapter 1**, imperative for those practising within health care disciplines.

Hatton and Smith (1995) support this view and advocate that the route to metacognition is through a hierarchy of self assessment tasks which act as scaffolding for the learner across a curriculum that supports assessment as learning. Achievement of these tasks initially involves the development of strategies for planning, monitoring, checking and self testing; building on this the next stage is to develop an ability to analyse what one knows, what one needs to know and matching these together to achieve the task in hand. It also should include an ability to identify what new learning strategies need to be developed. To achieve these skills, the student must be exposed to opportunities to practice these skills within different contexts; to self assess their effectiveness in terms of outcomes achieved and receive feedback on their efforts in self assessment.

An example of the use of self assessment is within the context of the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education, where the programme participants follow the parallel paths of both student and lecturer simultaneously. Submission of their first formative essay includes a self assessment section in the form of a questionnaire where students address perceptions of their own performance and what they needed to know from the marker. Detailed tutor feedback is provided electronically within 24-72 hours, and this comments on the self assessment as well as the original piece of work.

With the increasing popularity of self assessment in higher education it is essential that lecturers provide regular opportunities for student self assessment, and offer feedback that is empathetic, meaningful, and constructive. This promotes recognition and valuing of the student contribution to the assessment process by encouraging students to articulate how the process has made them feel, to recognise their responsibilities within it, and to provide 'feed-forward' responses to guide their future assessments. It can encourage and boost the confidence of learners who underestimate the worth of their own work, and gently guide (explanatory not accusatory), those who might overestimate their performance. Making the most of feedback offers a high learning pay off for learners. The opportunity for self assessment is further supported by Brown et al (1997) who argue that to enhance the development of self assessment, the answer is apparently simple: practise.

Self assessment allows for a wide range of new approaches to learning. Brown et al. (1997), suggest that there appears to be two distinctive emphases in the use of these approaches.

1. The competency approach, with detailed objectives or learning outcomes and structure, emphasises instrumentality.
2. The second approach with emphasis on personal development through reflection and joint exploration of draft and finished assessments with lecturers.

The first approach uses self assessment as a preparation for employment. It is used effectively in Work Based Learning approaches to learning where assessing the technical-rational components of knowledge is fundamental to health care professions. The second approach advocates that knowledge and understanding are created by the learner, from experiences. Essentially this is the development of metacognition which encourages personal learning and development of the self. Examples of this are seen in reflective logs and diaries and presentations. These aspects of student work can make students think and reflect more deeply on what they think are the strengths and weaknesses of their approach and performance.

The immediate tensions for assessment inherent in these approaches are clear, as is the opportunity within both these approaches, for developing health professionals that are effective, competent practitioners engaging in life long learning. Vignette 2.1 illustrates how both approaches can be used in pre-registration programmes for all health professions.

Vignette 2.1: Using an electronic Professional Development Portfolio (e-PDP)

Students undertaking pre-registration programmes that lead to professional accreditation have to demonstrate proficiency in a range of threshold competences. One faculty requires all its students to build a professional e-portfolio that demonstrates how they achieve this competence over the duration of the whole programme.

The e-PDP is a personal learning system in which the students can record personal reflections, share these with their peers and tutors, keep a cumulative reflective log of significant events, and build a competence profile. All the student assignment work, with feedback attached, is kept in the e-portfolio, and action plans based on feedback are required in preparation for subsequent work. E-PDPs are very flexible, and can demonstrate progressive skill in self-assessment by the individual student.

Students are scheduled to meet with their personal tutors a minimum of three occasions in the year, and the e-PDP is used by students to demonstrate their progress and forward planning. This requires regular reflection and self-assessment, culminating in a detailed record of their learning journey. It is also an opportunity for personal tutors to maintain a dialogue with individual students on the precision of their self-assessment skills in relation to the judgements of others through a range of artefacts such as placement reports, written assessment feedback, grade profiles, and mentor and peer feedback comments.

Over the period of a 3 year programme, these regular PDP meetings and building the portfolio offer students a valuable opportunity to practise and refine self-assessment skills and to self-reference their judgements in relation to the feedback of others who work with them.

Discussion at the SIGFEST included questions in relation to managing validity, reliability and moderation by external examiners and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Boud (1995) suggests that the development of clear criteria with the student and their application to a particular task is vital to ensure they can make the required judgements accurately. Brown

and Knight (1994) also showed that students can judge themselves more responsibly than might have been expected. In these discussions, one lecturer shared how she was struck by the honesty of her students' self assessment and these often chimed with the lecturer's own feedback to the student. Boud and Falchikov (1989), however, found that high achievers were prone to under rate themselves, where low achievers tended to do the opposite. This was supported by Langendyk (2006) in a study of third year medical students. Here, low achieving medical students were overgenerous self assessors, whilst students who achieve a satisfactory result were accurate to harsh self assessors who underestimated their performance. No consistent pattern of over-or under- estimation of one's own work compared to the tutor's assessment is apparent from the literature within this study.

However, it could be strongly argued that there is a need for early and frequent opportunities for supported self assessment (as in vignette 2,1) and a need for academic staff to work with low achieving students who lack insight into the quality of their own performance. This could be rationalised as low achieving students are in a paradoxical situation of not knowing, and not knowing that they do not know. Fazey ((1993) argues that without the ability to judge their own competence accurately, such students, would find it difficult to set the appropriate goals, adopt strategies for attaining those goals; and evaluate their success. Members of health care professions are expected to direct their own professional development competence, of which self assessment is an integral component. Hence, developing appropriate skills in self assessment is vital in preparation for the demands of professional life.

Whilst self assessment has been advocated so far, it is important to be mindful of some of the risks that could be associated with this assessment strategy:

- reliability of the assessment should not be compromised and requires good moderation processes to ensure a reasonable level of reliability without undermining student effort
- involvement of external examiners in the design and development of the process prior to its implementation is crucial so that they support the approach and its benefits
- adequate preparation of lecturers and students regarding the purpose of self assessment is vital to its successful implementation

- clarity on how assessment criteria link with learning outcomes is necessary for students to understand what exactly is being assessed
- the active involvement of students in the setting of criteria will assist them in understanding what is required of them in the process
- feedback should be given in a manner that opens up a dialogue between student and lecturer
- feedback should encourage the student to celebrate their achievements yet guides empathetically when insight into their own performance is lacking.

There are considerable dividends from well planned implementation of involving students in their own assessment: these skills of self assessment are invaluable in developing reflective practitioners with metacognition and truthful insight into personal strengths and weaknesses, and the understanding of the importance of lifelong learning

Top Tips for effective Self Assessment

For self-assessment to be most effective we need to:

- 👉 *engage the students in actively interpreting the assessment criteria*
- 👉 *build in regular opportunities for dialogue and reference to others judgements throughout the programme*
- 👉 *support realistic insights into individual abilities through dialogue with lecturers*

Peer Assessment

Falchikov (2001) acknowledges some of the complexity around terminology related to peer assessment and in particular that the breadth of different possible practices is not acknowledged. In this section we look at the concept of peer assessment broadly and establish some of the underlying precepts most closely associated with the term.

Brown and Dove (1990) assert that peer assessment is where students are involved in assessing other students, providing feedback opportunities for their colleagues and developing comparative evaluative facilities for themselves. Wilson (2002) clarifies that peer

assessment is the assessment of the work of others with equal status, with usually an element of mutuality involved.

Across the range of definitions of peer assessment, the *active*, i.e. participatory, part students play in their learning and in the learning of others is central. The two-way process of critical/reflective feedback – both given and received – is another key element of peer assessment. Notions of co-operation and reciprocal learning underlay the rationale for using peer assessment and the giving and receiving of feedback has been conceptualised as involving a 'gift relationship' (Birch, 2009).

Whilst some of the literature on peer assessment concentrates on pragmatic and practical considerations that impact on its use, other commentators explicitly address notions of power sharing which conceptually underpin peer assessment processes. Issues of power in the academic context must be considered for any activity involving students and faculty members. Brown and Glaser (2003: 157) argue that 'assessment is ... an exercise of power'. Viewing assessment in this way offers a broader framework where the loci of power are highlighted in relation to the different interests and actors involved. Brew (2003) notes that to assess is to have power over someone and sees the increased use of peer assessment as arising in part because the scepticism about traditional teacher- student power relationships. She identifies peer assessment as being a mechanism for power sharing where students assess their own and each other's work.

During the SIGFEST discussions many issues were discussed in relation to the power sharing aspects of peer assessment including some of the unintended consequences. For example, ethical anxieties were voiced in relation to giving students the power to attach marks to each other's work. Concern was expressed that this could cause difficulties such as a lack of objectivity resulting in the award of lower marks for reasons other than academic worth. There were also concerns that students may award each other inflated grades, possibly as part of a reciprocal agreement.

In an example shared by one institution that used formative peer assessment, all physiotherapy students had agreed beforehand to award each other an A grade. Although this was an unexpected outcome the lecturer was able to use this as a learning experience for the students. Discussions with students took place around whether they felt they had collectively acted fairly in this process by awarding the same grades to work of varying standards evidencing varying amounts of effort and achievement. The role of formative assessment as a learning experience was also stressed.

Advance Preparation to Encourage Criticality and Inclusivity

This example above shows how students can fundamentally misunderstand the purpose of a formative assessment exercise and highlights potential tensions between promoting assessment as learning and relying on the outcome of peer assessment for accreditation purposes. During the SIGFEST discussion colleagues drew attention to:

- the need to fully prepare students and staff in advance of implementing peer assessment
- the importance of stressing the learning and value of feedback rather than the grade – focusing on assessment as process and not simply outcome
- highlighting the importance of giving honest, sensitive and critical feedback to aid learning within an open and transparent process
- addressing how engagement is assessed in on-line assessments – students may not be contributing actively to on-line work discussions but may be fully engaged
- openly discussing issues involved in sharing written work where English is not the student's first language and/or where students have dyslexia
- the need to attend to the emotional components of peer learning. Many studies have drawn attention to the anxieties some students experience when asked to give critical feedback to peers, e.g. Falchikov (2002), Xiao and Lucking (2008), Cartney (2010).

With sensitive handling and adequate preparation, however, these issues are not insurmountable.

Vignette 2.2

On a Post graduate Certificate in Higher Education (PgCHE) programme in one particular institution, the emotional aspects of using a peer assessment method are explicitly acknowledged and preparation of students addressed. One formative assessment for this programme is a 2000 word essay which is used as an opportunity for students, who are lecturers in higher education, to engage with the dual experience of assessing their peers and their peers assessing them.

Students submit their work and are immediately allocated another students' work to mark. Initially, anonymity was sought for those whose essays were being marked and those who were doing the marking. There was a sense that this would render markers more objective, those receiving feedback would feel less judged and group dynamics would remain unaltered. Over time it became apparent that it was easy to identify individuals as the assignments involved them talking explicitly about their subject areas and often related to discussions which took place in class. Thus, anonymity was abandoned and students began to take ownership for their feedback. It was important to discuss openly candidates' fears and hopes around the exercise and talk about strategies for managing them. The linchpin of the PgCHE is developing an increasing ability to reflect deeply on practice and to consider the role of emotions in our professional role. To encourage candidates to articulate their thoughts and feelings, they are required to complete a self-assessment sheet when submitting a copy of their feedback where they articulate their experience of peer assessment and in particular, what they found challenging about it and why.

They then receive detailed feedback from the lecturer on their feedback which introduces another layer to the experience. The most recent group took the exercise one step further and decided they wanted give face to face feedback along with the written feedback. This proved highly successful not only in encouraging individuals to consider the language they used in giving feedback but how they felt receiving it.

With their final portfolios students are required to write a narrative overview of the key learning points throughout the programme. The experience of undertaking the peer assessment exercise regularly features as a critical point in their learning journey. It is seen as particularly powerful because of the empathy it enables them to develop for their own students, the skill and knowledge in feedback giving and developing robust, transparent marking criteria.

Vignette 2.2 is an example of a planned and sensitive approach to helping students to engage fully with peer assessment. In discussions at the SIGFEST colleagues also drew attention to the importance of preparing students at all stages of the assessment process.

Examples were shared highlighting the need to address issues around the role of the lecturer in peer assessment and ambivalence that can result from a dichotomy of ownership

of the final product for assessment. Where tutors are involved in the assessment their role needs to be clearly defined. SIGFEST colleagues debated questions such as:

- do tutors have a quality monitoring role where they oversee the feedback students give to each other and intervene in this process or is responsibility devolved totally to students? Such issues were discussed particularly in relation to electronic feedback where tutors are able to see discussions that take place electronically on line.
- are tutors adopting the role of External Examiner – the final arbiter in the decision making process or are peer assessors seen as joint –markers with equal status where a consensus view needs to be reached between lecturers and students in their marking?

Whilst each approach has pros and cons decisions need to be made and issues discussed *before* the peer assessment exercise is undertaken to ensure transparency in the process. Discussion about the importance of moderation and the specification of roles in marking can be an important way of inducting students into university assessment processes.

Top Tips for effective Peer Assessment

For peer assessment to be most effective we need to:

☞ *plan carefully in advance and prepare students for the emotional as well as the cognitive components involved in this process*

☞ *encourage a sense of reciprocal responsibilities and benefits in the process* ☞ *be clear about all stages of the assessment process, including the role of the lecturer and the moderation processes involved.*

Group Assessment

For the most part group learning activities and assessments are included in higher education programme design to develop skills and understanding in the processes of collaborative working. These group skills are particularly significant for students who aspire to work in health care science settings where team work is likely to be an essential requirement. Group assessments that require communication and cooperative contribution to an agreed end-goal provide an authentic opportunity to develop these; additionally these often incorporate

self and peer assessment activities as either an implicit or explicit part of the process and the final outcome.

Group activities and assessment can assist students in seeking and co-constructing new knowledge through a process of interactions with each other; knowledge that leads to new viewpoints (Vygotsky, 1978). This does not happen automatically, and as with self and peer assessment techniques, only works effectively when students and lecturers are fully prepared. It is essential for the lecturer to facilitate effective group working, to coach students in developing critical thinking skills within their group discussions, and to work to each participant's strengths and interests.

Problem-based Learning (PBL) is an example of one educational model that uses group work as a fundamental element of its approach to learning, with the aim of fostering independent and interdependent learners who take a degree of responsibility for their own learning. This group-initiated learning can provide an authentic experience that promotes active learning, supports knowledge construction, and naturally integrates campus-based learning with real life (Savin-Baden 2000). PBL uses case studies, frequently drawn from professional practice, that invariably highlight the inherent ambiguities, tensions and complexity of that practice that is difficult to invent. Students can be asked to adopt specific roles and perspectives within the group, and provision of client and carer narratives can emphasize the range of opinions and standpoints that may be held by the various stakeholders. PBL is only one example of group work, and many lecturers use group activities as a general teaching strategy for stimulating discussion, situational analysis, critical evaluation and promoting synthesis of ideas. Whatever the situation, however, group tasks and expected outcomes or products are generally most effective when constructed to mirror authentic professional activity, and when there is clarity of the expected processes the students should undertake in order to develop the desired end result.

Successful group activities can be work-based as well as campus-based, and the opportunity for students to consult with practitioners in the field can be a valuable resource. Technology now offers the opportunity for full communication and collaboration through the use of applications such as discussion boards, blogs or wikis, and electronic data bases facilitate ease of research into current literature. If the desired learning outcomes of the group work include developing positive team-working skills, these need to be part of the assessment too, and tracking of electronic conversations can be a valuable form of evidence in this process.

The size of groups and choice of membership depend on the overall numbers of students in the cohort, and the type of tasks to be undertaken. Five or six is generally regarded as an optimal number for effective collaborative working; this is small enough to enable coordination of meetings and involvement of the individual members in active discussion. Larger group sizes can result in factions forming, or freeloaders who do not contribute fully to the activities. There is a difference of opinion on whether groups should be self-selecting, randomly allocated, or carefully shaped to balance representation of the diverse nature of the whole student group. If the group work requires contributions from different perspectives (as in Vignette 2.3) then clearly some engineering of the selection is required, however students could still self-select in this situation if given specific criteria to fulfil. Mixed ability groups and mixed cultural groups present some additional challenges. However Falchikov (2005) offers evidence that in mixed ability groups containing high ability students the standard of work is generally raised and Strauss & U (2007) suggest that given appropriate time mixed cultural groups can break down barriers of misunderstanding that are rooted in stereotypes. It is useful to remember that most teams in a work context are not chosen by the individual members and a realistic approach may be to opt for random allocation.

Assessing individuals or the whole group

Students who gain an understanding of collaborative working will be at an advantage in a society that purports to value cooperative work and communities of practice: including these experiences in pre-registration programmes that prepare our students for professional life is valuable.. However it is important to recognise that collaborative working may not always be valued. Falchikov (2007:139) identifies the tension between co-operation and competition and suggests that employers are likely to value cooperation by their workers within the organisation, but perceive a competitive approach positively when focused towards external rivals. We need to recognise and acknowledge this tension, and help students to find a balance of these two conflicting modes of working. One method of shaping the emphasis is through the approach to grading student work: if norm-referencing is used in grading assignments (where student performances are judged against each other) then competition is emphasised; however if a criterion-referencing approach is adopted (where the performance is judged against a set of criteria) then all students have an opportunity to do equally well, and cooperative working can be rewarded. So the design of group assessments and the grading approach needs to be carefully considered if collaborative group work is the desired outcome.

There is a tendency to believe (by both lecturers and students) that group submissions can be unfair in that they do not recognise and reward individual contributions to the end product. However a group assignment that culminates in individual submissions can undermine the whole basis of collaboration and team work on which it is built (Raeside & Goldfinch 1990). One approach to this challenge is to implement peer assessment of the group process in addition to assessment of the product or outcome,

Vignette 2.3: An Interprofessional Learning (IPL) level 6 (honours level) module

The module 'Leadership and Management in Healthcare Settings' is designed to help students on different professional programmes to join together in a critical reflection on leadership and management issues and how to deal with these in their future professional roles. The module runs over a single week and consists of timetabled group work sessions, daily keynote lectures, and unstructured time for individual research and informal group meetings. Each group is allocated a lecturer to facilitate and support them, although there is an expectation that they will drive the work themselves. Students are randomly allocated to groups of eight members by the module team and have professional backgrounds in nursing, diagnostic radiography, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy.

On day 1, the students are presented with a scenario where the NHS trust they are working for is undergoing a restructuring review. Groups are required to consider different management and leadership issues related to this review, and to develop a conference-style poster by the end of the week that focuses on a chosen related topic and how this may influence the eventual restructure. Additionally, they write a critical reflection on the group process.

The poster is given an overall mark, multiplied by the number of students within that group eg. Overall mark of 64% x 8 students = 512. The groups are asked to peer assess the contributions and engagement of each group member, and then allocate each individual marks from the total mark. If the group view is that one individual has contributed more than the others, each student could donate marks from their total as recognition for this extra contribution as a type of performance-related pay. Thus they could divide 512 equally, then each donate 1 mark, resulting in 7 group members each having 63% and the hard-working student receiving 71%.

Most students agree to split the marks evenly, although some distribute the marks according to engagement and contribution. Tutor facilitators are asked to support the process of a small number of groups where it is felt that an individual had under-contributed. In instances

where students' performance was affected by illness, they are removed from the aggregate mark and offered a different assessment at a later point on the programme.

One suggested improvement in this process is to build in formative peer feedback during the week so individuals have more opportunity to improve their performance.

As illustrated in vignette 2.3, individual students within a group should be encouraged to recognise what they contribute to both the group process as well as the end product, in order to emphasize the value of these skills and help them accurately appraise their strengths and weaknesses as a team member.

Formative self assessment plus peer and tutor feedback of teamwork can assist in developing and refining a range of group-working skills, although Falchikov (2007:139) warns that this could also undermine cooperation if not handled sensitively. Jaques (2000) and Bloxham & Boyd (2007) offer a range of assessment criteria for process skills and engagement which include clear information on what to assess.

Jaques (2000) and Bloxham & Boyd (2007) offer a range of assessment criteria for process skills and engagement, which include is clear information on what to assess.

These criteria are often based on statements on a scale of 1 - 5 such as

criteria	5	4	3	2	1	criteria
regular attendance at group meetings						poor/non attendance at team meetings
active contribution to the discussion						finds it difficult to contribute
works amicably with other members of the team						has difficulty working with others
Shows excellent ability to plan and complete own work						has not yet shown they can organise their own work effectively
Is good at solving problems						has difficulty in suggesting solutions
Responds well to advice						resents criticism and is reluctant to accept advice

Peer assessment against these or similar criteria can be undertaken at agreed intervals during the group work; this will offer each student formative feedback and a chance to improve in areas of weakness. Equally, if technological methods are used to communicate and contribute to group discussions, this offers further evidence of the quality and frequency of engagement and interaction with the group. As with self and peer assessment, the need to be mindful of quality assurance issues such as validity and inter-rater reliability (where different assessors judge the same piece of work as deserving of the same grade or mark using the same criteria) is vital.

Top Tips for effective Group Assessment

For group assessment to be most effective we need to:

- ☞ ensure group size and membership are correct for effective working and lecturers facilitate appropriate dynamics and contributions*
- ☞ utilise appropriate technologies to facilitate a range of communication methods between group members*
- ☞ allocate group marks to foster a sense of collaborative output*

Conclusion

In this chapter practice examples shared at the SIG Fest have been drawn upon to offer a deeper understanding of the issues involved in self, peer and group assessment. We have explored some of the conceptual issues surrounding the use of these assessment modes and located their use within current thinking. Furthermore, the sections above highlight some key considerations for practitioners when using these modes of assessment as a way of seeking to build on the opportunities and meet some of the challenges. For all three assessment modes the participatory nature and the need to prepare and engage students fully in these processes is vital. In the end our choice of which assessment method to choose should be guided by what we want students to know and to be able to do – and to combine these different forms of assessment for learning should ultimately enhance the ability these students have to become reflective professional practitioners.

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