
Introducing peer-assessment and feedback for first year BA Social Work students

"I found the workshop so useful...I'm now feeling much more confident about future reflective diaries".

Area of Focus	Introducing peer assessment through flipped learning to improve student learning from feedback on assignments.
Context	The course team for BA Social Work reviewed student satisfaction data (EvaSys and NSS) regarding a perception that perceived assessment practices were unfair. Analysis of these data showed that it was largely Level 4 students from widening participation (WP) backgrounds who found summative assignments difficult to navigate, resulting in high levels of failure on first submission.
Approach	After a series of conversations within the course team and support from colleagues in CADQ it was decided that interventions would focus on a) increasing student literacy skills in assessment practice and b) engaging students in critical feedback exercises and an exploration of the concept of professional judgement. These interventions would support the students to better meet the requirements of the professional bodies associated with this course as well as address the students' perceptions that assessment mechanisms were unfair. Furthermore, these interventions also aimed to support transition for students from WP backgrounds who were likely to experience particular challenges in adapting to university education.
Interventions	The team designed a series of study skills workshops using a flipped learning approach, to help students understand how to give and receive feedback on their work. An example of this is the use of 'live' assignments that the students were working on and engaging in a student peer review process during the session. Students were asked to align their feedback to the requirements of the professional standards for this course. They were also asked to reflect on what it feels like to give and to receive feedback and to identify the qualities that make this process more effective. It was in the richness of this contextualised group work that the students began to recognise that professional judgement, although subjective, is structured by relevant criteria and therefore more measured than they had initially imagined.
Initial Outcomes	<p>The initial feedback from the students was extremely positive with comments such as: "I found the workshop so useful...I feel like it's finally clicked with me...I'm now feeling much more confident about future reflective diaries". Other comments from students showed that they were beginning to understand the importance of feedback and communities of practice:</p> <p><i>"It was really interesting to hear from the people I was sitting with. And it was reassuring actually. We learned from each other."</i></p> <p>Finally, another student showed how in turning to active learning, engagement in the learning dramatically increased:</p> <p><i>"I feel like I really learnt stuff today. A lot of the time in lectures I'm like, yawn, you know you get a lot of information thrown at you rather than stuff you can work with. But here we've been able to digest it in class – to think about what we've done and how we've done it."</i></p> <p>Further outcomes will be explored at the end of the 2018/2019 academic year.</p>

Challenges and next steps

Due to the use of a flipped learning approach for this intervention, the risk was that some students would not complete the required pre-session tasks, such as bringing in their reflective diary to discuss in the peer assessment activity. This indeed was the case: some students from WP backgrounds did not carry out this task and therefore struggled to use the time constructively. Therefore, for the next roll out of this initiative, the students will first review this year's sample of written reflective diaries in order to develop indicative assessment criteria. Their draft criteria will then be compared to the course assessment criteria with the similarities and differences explored. Further, to support engagement in a more structured and scaffolded way, students will be allocated strategic groups roles so that they know what is expected of them.

Contact details

Emma Reith-Hall, Course Leader.

emma.reith-hall@ntu.ac.uk