Effective Peer Review

When requiring your students to write essays, peer review provides your students with the opportunity to receive feedback from other readers familiar with the assignment, in addition to your feedback. This can provide students with more suggestions and ideas for revisions, potentially increasing the quality of their drafts. Peer review also allows students to identify strengths and weaknesses in their own papers after having reviewed their classmates' papers. By structuring peer review, you can maximize the usefulness of the feedback your students receive. The Writing Center can assist in the development of a peer review workshop and provide Consultants to help facilitate the workshop in class.

Advantages for the Instructor
- Minimizes workload for instructors by providing students with an additional set of feedback from others familiar with the assignment
- Creates additional opportunities for shy or quiet students to earn participation points
- Prompts students to think critically about the assignment, ask questions, and talk through areas of confusion before the paper is due
- Gives students time in class to review and revise their work with the instructor's guidance
- Produces better writing that accommodates the needs of real and anticipated readers, including the instructor
- Encourages students to formulate and communicate effective and constructive feedback, which will make peer review more successful with each iteration
- Demonstrates how peer review is part of the writing process, making it more likely that students will seek out additional feedback when drafting

Advantages for the Student
- Helps students identify strengths and weaknesses in their own writing and in their peers' work
- Gives students the opportunity to bounce ideas off of each other
- Provides students with additional perspectives on their writing
- Teaches students the vocabulary and terminology of writing
- Encourages students to see writing as process where feedback can help make their writing better
- Prompts students to write for and address the needs of a specific audience or reader (in this case, the instructor)
- Encourages students to read texts more critically, which can transfer to course readings
- Gives students more examples of how to write at the college level

- Teaches students how to respond to the concerns of others who have read their writing
- Models strategies for self-editing that students can use as they revise

Preparing for Peer Review

A successful peer review requires a bit of preparation by both instructors and students. Instructors shoud provide students with a rubric to follow during peer review (this should be the same rubric the instructor will use to grade the paper). Students should understand what is expected of them in terms of writing preparation, peer review feedback, and behavior.

Establish Criteria and Purpose
- Prioritize higher-order concerns such as:
    o Argument/thesis statement
    o Organization and paragraph structure
    o Analysis
    o Source usage and integration
- Provide a rubric for students to use as criteria for commentary
    o Include no more than eight reminders
    o Base the list on the assignment grading criteria
    o Use open-ended instead of yes/no questions
    o Involve participants in developing assessment criteria

Model Peer Review
- Provide examples of helpful comments
- Have students practice giving appropriate feedback
- Establish clear expectations for student roles and behavior

Implementing Peer Review

In order to have an effective peer review, students must be willing to participate. Student participation is most likely when they are given class time to complete peer review. Although instructors can require peer review outside of class, students are much less likely to participate and revise. In the classroom, peer review can be done on hardcopy or on Canvas or Google Drive in a computer lab classroom.

Peer Groups
- Put students in groups of about 5
    o Allows for students to discuss and even disagree without a large imbalance of power in the group
- Maintain the same writing groups through the semester

- o   Gives shy or insecure students a chance to get comfortable with the group
- o   Risks having students feel bad about providing constructive criticism
- Switch writing groups for each paper
  - o   Students feel less concerned with hurting others' feelings
  - o   Shy or insecure students may feel uncomfortable participating
- Give each group a different group's papers
  - o   Encourages honest feedback and stronger group discussion

Instructor's Role
- Monitor and coach during the reviews
  - o   Circulate and observe
  - o   Offer feedback and coaching as needed
- Examine the quality of peer feedback
- Moderate the reliability and validity of feedback
  - o   Provide feedback on the process and results to improve the quality of feedback given and received
- Grade the peer review to provide incentive for students to follow instructions and be accountable for the quality of their comments
- Provide a specific timeframe for the review
  - o   Consider dividing the review into specific increments of time in order to keep students on track
  - o   Give students time for reading, writing, and verbal discussion

Students' Role
- Students should review both in writing and by providing verbal feedback to each other
- Participants should generate questions for their reviewers
  - o   Reader-based (reactions and emotions)
  - o   Criterion-based (objective, teacher-generated criteria)
- Avoid having students edit their classmates' papers
  - o   Editing does little to teach students and does not address higher-order concerns
  - o   Edits will probably be lost during the revision process
- Avoid having students focus on grammatical issues
  - o   Grammar instruction is not generally appropriate for a rough draft
  - o   Students are unable to transfer grammatical feedback to other writing

Sample Peer Reviews

The PQP Technique (Praise/Question/Polish)
1. Begin with Praise

      a. Give the student a genuine compliment on something done particularly well
2. Next, pose Questions to steer the writer toward clarification or explanation
      a. Use specific, purposeful questions to get the writer thinking about how to revise
3. Close with Polish (ways the writer may improve the essay)
      a. Prioritize the most important revisions the student should make
      b. Offer specific suggestions for what the student should do next and how to revise

The Critical Response Process (CRP)
1. Statements of Meaning – facilitator asks respondents to focus their feedback on their reactions to the paper
      a. This capitalizes on responders' genuine reactions and impressions of the writer's work
2. Artists' Questions – writer poses question to responders
      a. This ensures that the writer's concerns are prioritized and addressed by responders
3. Critical Response Process – responders ask the writer neutral questions
      a. This encourages responders to evaluate others' work strategically and objectively
4. Permissioned Options – responders express their opinions, first naming the topic and asking for permission to address it
      a. This gives writers a sense of authority, control, and autonomy over their own work because they can focus more on certain issues and critiques over others

Topics and Questions

ISSUE	GUIDED QUESTIONS
THESIS STATEMENT	- How is the thesis structured? Does it follow the teacher's instructions? - How can the thesis be more specific and complex? - How can the writer demonstrate why his/her argument is significant? - Does the thesis provide an outline of where the paper goes?

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ISSUE	GUIDED QUESTIONS
ORGANIZATION	- How do the ideas in the paper progress? - How does the writer transition between points and/or paragraphs? - Does the writer use paragraphs that are too short? How can the writer develop the paragraph more or integrate this information somewhere else? - Does the writer use paragraphs that are too long? How can the writer condense these paragraphs or split them up?
EVIDENCE/ANALYSIS	- Is every piece of evidence followed by analysis? - Where can the analysis better explain the evidence? - How often does the writer use quotations? Where can the writer paraphrase instead? - Is it clear how examples support the argument and connect to the thesis statement? - Does the writer make any leaps in judgment that are questionable or illogical? - Where can the writer incorporate a counterargument?
CITATION	- What citation style should the writer be using? Is the writer following this style? - Does the writer cite everything that comes from an outside source? Are any in-text citations missing?
INTRODUCTION	- How does the introduction hook the reader? - Does the introduction provide enough context on the topic covered in the paper? - Does the introduction use cliches (like rhetorical questions or dictionary definitions)?
CONCLUSION	- Does the conclusion introduce new information? - How can the conclusion restate the thesis in a more complex way? - Does the conclusion summarize the main points of the paper? - How does the conclusion reinforce the significance of the writer's argument?

For online classes, peer review will parallel onsite strategies and outcomes but may take other forms:

Message-board based peer review (Canvas)
- Require students to provide/receive feedback from any or all classmates
- Allow students to see other posts and the corresponding feedback
    - Can model how to complete the assignment and how to provide effective feedback
- Encourage follow-up questions and helpful, specific suggestions in mandatory response posts (writers respond to the feedback their peers give them)
    - Provides shy or uninvolved students with opportunities to voice their opinions and interact with their peers in a different environment

Assignment-based peer review (Canvas)
- When creating an assignment, check the "Require Peer Reviews" option
- Select "Automatically Assign Peer Reviews"
- Assign a specific number of reviews to each student
- Students will have the same feedback options as you (rubric, in-text comments, end comments, etc.) when providing feedback to their classmates