

Considerations for Student Peer Reviews as an Assignment.

Student Peer Review Assignments are helpful pedagogical tools to include in your course. Students can gain practical skills and keep pace for completing long projects, while also getting a chance to interact with each other, and brainstorm and collaborate on projects. Peer Review assignments also help students gain familiarity with each other and the course content in a way that promotes engagement (Conrad and Donaldson, *Engaging the Online Learner*, 11). Having opportunities for interaction and engagement with their peers, **whether in-person or online**, helps build a sense of community among the students of a course, and helps improve student persistence (Nilson & Goodson, *Online Teaching at Its Best*, 140).

Students Learn Valuable Skills in doing Peer Reviews.

In addition to learning course content, students learn many skills by completing peer review assignments.

- Students improve their communication skills as they practice giving and receiving constructive feedback;
- Peer reviews help students develop critical thinking skills, especially if the instructor gives some guidance on specific things to look for in the review;
- Students get a chance to practice time management for larger projects if the peer review assignment is placed at the “first draft” stage of that larger project; and,
- Students practice revision and editing based on the feedback they receive from their peers.

Considerations When Using Canvas to Organize Peer Reviews.

Using Canvas makes it easier for students and instructors to keep track of peer review assignments **regardless of whether the course format is in-person or distance**.

- Within the Assignments Tool, there is an option to mark an assignment for peer review. Once clicked, instructors can then determine the number of reviews for each student to complete and can manually assign the reviews or let Canvas randomly assign reviews to each student.
- The instructor also has the option to make the reviews “anonymous,” meaning that students don’t know the names of their peer reviewers. This option is helpful to students as they may have some unease about hurting others’ feelings with feedback.

As with all assignments that involve student collaborations, some oversight by the instructor might be necessary to ensure civility among student peers. It is also important to have clear, concise instructions to communicate the purpose, the particulars of how to do the assignment, and the learning outcomes related to this type of assignment. Doing so will allow students to

learn valuable skills, while also staying on task for larger assignments and creating strong student-student interactions.

Resources

Canvas Community. "[How Do I Create a Peer Review Assignment?](#)"

Conrad, R. and Donaldson, A. (2011). *Engaging the Online Learner: Activities and Resources for Creative Instruction*. 2nd edition. Wiley/Jossey-Boss, 2011.

Moore, C. (2016). "[Frame Your Feedback: Making Peer Review Work in Class.](#)" *Faculty Focus*, 6 June 2016.

Nilson, Linda B. & Ludwika A. Goodson (2021). [Online Teaching at its Best: Merging Instructional Design with Teaching and Learning Research](#). 2nd edition. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2021.

Ojie-Ahamoijie, G. (2024). "[Using Collaborative Learning to Elevate Students' Educational Experiences.](#)" *Faculty Focus*, 16 October 2024.

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center by [email](#) or submit a [consultation request form](#).