

2010 UNIVERSITY ANNUAL LEARNING & TEACHING CONFERENCE

Research and Teaching – correlated or co-related?

Wednesday 13th January 2010

Abstract Template

Peer Assessment of Group Work

Paul Chin, *HEA Physical Sciences Centre*

Theme: Institutional research to enhance the student experience

Type of contribution: Showcase

Abstract:

Peer assessment is a well established assessment method, enabling timely feedback as well as being able to support skills development and self reflection. Used in conjunction with group work it also provides students with opportunities to develop a range of transferable skills, such as critical thinking, communication skills and team working abilities.

Falchikov reports on the benefits of peer assessment and how it can promote student learning. Falchikov describes a peer as 'someone of equal social standing' and so peer assessment encourages students to provide constructive feedback to each other at an appropriate level. Indeed, students are well placed to evaluate their peers' work from their own perspective.

However, research on peer assessment is sometimes mixed and highlights a number of issues and potential problems. Tutors sometimes argue that students are not skilled or are not even mature enough to assess their peers objectively; and students often claim it is not their role to assess each other. They sometimes lack the confidence to assess their peers and feel it is the tutor's responsibility since they are the 'expert'. Furthermore, there is the risk that peer assessment is not seen as fair and even the logistics of the process may make peer assessment unworkable for large cohorts of students.

This presentation showcase will review peer assessment research to give the audience a background to the development of peer assessment. The author will also report on the support of technology to embed peer assessed group work in the curriculum. This was achieved by developing an effective peer assessed group work model which builds on previous research. This research informed practice addresses issues already outlined; and challenges arguments that peer assessment cannot be deployed as an assessment tool alongside other commonly used assessment tools.

Longitudinal research will be presented which demonstrates the successful development of a peer assessed group work model in the curriculum. Quantitative and qualitative research data will be presented to demonstrate how a research oriented approach to learning and teaching has informed the development of peer assessed group work. This assessment has applications across most, if not all disciplines.