

Stimulating reflective group feedback in a project-based learning setup

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Group Member Evaluation

Learner workload



Instructor workload



Class size

13

CONTEXT

Situated within a health psychology and digital interventions master program, this research and design course saw 13 students undertake a complex group project over the course of six weeks.

Using a project-based problem learning approach, students were split among four groups and tasked on addressing a real-life problem by designing a digital behaviour change intervention. In these projects, scientific and out-of-the-box thinking, and creativity were encouraged.

The Group Member Evaluation tool was used in the very last step of the course to give students an opportunity to evaluate their own professional behavior and performance, and the group process.

The instructor decided to start using this tool in order to give students a chance to have their individual contributions recognised in the group work context. It was also important to gain more oversight into the group dynamics in the new online course setup, where face-to-face interactions were not possible.

CONSTRUCTIVE ALIGNMENT

Learning objectives

- Students are able to critically evaluate the whole process, including the group-work aspect

Learning activities

Over the course of six weeks, four groups of students addressed a real-life problem by designing the concept of a digital behavior change intervention to tackle the problem. Based on theoretical insights, data and information on the determinants of the problem, and an iterative user-centered design process, they work together to design a possible solution. The instructor gave minimal instruction as to what design choices should be made, aiming to open the process up to maximum creativity and innovative ideas. After completing this project, group members gave anonymous feedback to each other based on a rubric, and carried out a self-assessment within the Group Member Evaluation tool. The rubric was based on several criteria: ability to communicate, accuracy of work, contribution, and attitude. On top of this, students were asked to leave specific feedback comments to their group peers. In an additional personal reflection, they evaluated what they had learned, how they felt about their own performance, what challenges they experienced, and how they responded to the feedback they received.

Learning activities, according to Bloom's Taxonomy, were mainly at the level of:

Understanding

domain knowledge throughout the design process

Applying

theories, models and methods in the formation of a project plan and carrying out of process-related activities

Analyzing

data and information gathered throughout the project

Evaluating

the relevance, feasibility and applicability of insights and scientific implications derived from the collected data, and the process of the group project

Creating

a solution to the original real-life scenario in the form of a concept prototype of digital behavior change intervention



Assessment of learning outcomes

Students were graded on a group portfolio which constituted 45% of their grade, of which 5% is based on the Group Member Evaluation activity. This grade is made up from mainly ratings received from group members, and the written self-reflection within the tool.

Quote from the instructor

“ I really saw genuine reflections about their learning process. To be honest, I was impressed.

Notable outcomes

- The instructor was impressed that, despite it not being a large part of their grade, students often wrote genuine and personal reflections about their learning process.
- Knowing that they were being graded was reported to have increased their motivation and stimulated higher performance.
- Students were happy to be able to do a peer assessment, and all but one completed the activity on time.

The role of the instructor

- The instructor put extra attention towards setting up the course in Canvas in a way which was clear and comprehensive for students to understand. The complete learning trajectory, with goals, content, assessment, and any other useful information was available to be looked up within the LMS.
- On the first day of the course, the instructor took 15 minutes to present the whole course and show students where they could find particular information. In this session students were told how, where, and when feedback moments would take place, including the use of Group Member Evaluation.
- The student activity was checked inside of the tool during the last week of the course.
- Groups or individuals who were seen to be struggling with the course were asked to stop and complete a reflection after the end of a tutorial, and every group was given the possibility to complete an informal group evaluation together with the instructor halfway through the course.

Added value of technology

Group dynamics can be harder to keep an eye on in online courses when compared to face-to-face sessions. As well as making available a digital overview of peers' grades and performance, Group Member Evaluation makes class management simpler for the instructor as every student's self-assessment and feedback comments are available in one interface.