Streamlining presentation feedback with Peer Review

Context

This course introduced 200 first-year students to the foundational elements of public administration theory, over the course of 8 weeks. It focused on equipping learners with the necessary academic skills, such as reading, conducting research and writing legislative policy, but also interpersonal skills such as planning and carrying out interviews.

As another course which would normally have been given face-to-face but has had to be reformatted for a remote setup, the instructor sought to maintain students’ ability to view and respond to each other’s work. Consequently, Peer Review was used to allow students to upload recorded presentations and give feedback to each other digitally. This proved not only an effective replacement of the in-class presentation format, but also saved time for the instructor and students.

Constructive alignment

Learning objectives

- Students are able to carry out research and interviews, presenting their findings in a neutral manner.
- Students are able to evaluate the work of their peers and give constructive feedback.

Learning activities

This course saw students tackle a societal problem (e.g. poverty) through a structured investigation, pitching of ideas, and production of a final report summarising their findings. 17 groups of 12 students took part in this course, each being individually responsible for their investigation and the presentation of their findings. First, students had to think of a subject and elaborate on it by looking at literature and situating it within a policy domain. In week 4, halfway through the course, students record a short video of themselves pitching their ideas and planning so far, uploading this video to Peer Review. They then viewed the pitches of three randomly assigned peers and gave feedback comments, mentioning something that was done well and something that could be improved upon.

Learning activities, based on the Bloom taxonomy, are mainly at the level of:

- **Applying** domain knowledge in an investigation
- **Analysing** and **Evaluating** the content of peers’ work
- **Creating** a clip which summarises findings

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Assessment of learning outcomes

- This activity was not graded as it was a formative exercise to ensure students’ understanding of the course before iterating on their final deliverable, which was worth 100% of the overall grade.

Quote from the instructor

“I think if we ever go back to ‘normal’ teaching, I would prefer to keep the FeedbackFruits activity over the in-class pitches!”

Notable outcomes

- Students were reported to have enjoyed the activity and found it straightforward, despite it being their first time using FeedbackFruits tools. Peer Review was an effective way of giving students “a chance to play along even while they’re sitting at home”.
- In particular, students were positive about the ability to stop the video at any moment and give feedback linked to this moment, finding it familiar and intuitive.
- The instructor benefited from the ability to overview feedback comments, getting a taste of how students were encountering the assignment in general, as well as how they were evaluating their peers.
- It was noted that the previous in-class presentation format sometimes took two entire sessions to complete: after using Peer Review to asynchronously view presentations, both the instructor and students regained this time which could now be spent on content.
- Other instructors involved in teaching this course also reported that the tools worked well intuitively, and little extra instruction was needed.

The role of the instructor

- The instructor provided instructions for the students relating to the due date, content, number of reviews, and sort of feedback required. These instructions were also mentioned in the Peer Review activity itself.
- After students began uploading their pitches, the instructor was able to view these videos within the platform, as well as any feedback comments given and received.
- The ‘overall student progress’ overview module at the top of the assignment allowed for a quick overview of how students had encountered the assignment, including whether they’d handed in their video, how many feedback comments had been left, and how long had been spent on the activity.

Added value of technology

- Despite having to set up the tools for the first time in stressful, time-limited circumstances, the instructor was still able to design an effective and successful activity thanks to FeedbackFruits’ intuitive interface and quick-responding support team. Both students and the instructor saved time thanks to using Peer Review in this manner.