

How Frankfurt School of Finance and Management improved the quality of education for students



 Peer Review

 Skill Review

Class format

Online

Class duration

1 semester

Class size

55 students

CONTEXT

In this fully online, self-paced programme “Master of Leadership in Sustainable Finance”, an international cohort of students develop their academic research and analysis skills through written assignments and peer feedback exercises. The aim is to prepare students for writing a thesis later in the program.

In order to promote self-motivated research and deeper reflection, as well as critical thinking and evaluation, the tutor uses FeedbackFruits Peer Review and Skill Review tools, allowing the submission and reviewing of work within the Canvas LMS. According to the tutor, *“the tool really helped to give much more profound, deep feedback than what was done before”*.

CONSTRUCTIVE ALIGNMENT

Learning objectives

- Students can practice researching and writing an academic paper
- Students can demonstrate understanding of subject-area knowledge

Learning activities

Throughout the course, students produce two written assignments and give feedback to their peers on their submitted work. These assignments consist of analysing a company strategy, writing a topic proposal, and carrying out research to inform the contents of the paper.

After writing and submitting assignments with Peer Review, each student is allocated two peers’ papers to review, according to a 3-section rubric (structure, content, and style). Each of these sections contained detailed subsections, requiring students to score each criterion on a scale of 1-10 as well as leave comments where applicable.

All peer reviews are anonymous, meaning submitters’ and recipients’ names were hidden when processing feedback. In addition to allowing the processing of feedback according to the given rubric, the tools afforded a flexible interface for giving feedback on particular sections of text through selecting and highlighting.

This gave students a clear and comprehensive overview of feedback on their written work, allowing them to read through comments in their own time to make changes for the final version.

As well as this peer feedback, students also receive feedback from the teacher inside Skill Review. Here, the tutor gives feedback on the students’ given feedback; evaluating whether the feedback was constructive, critical, and relevant.

Understanding

domain-specific course content

Evaluating

own and peers’ written submissions according to a given rubric



Assessment of learning outcomes

Students’ final grades are derived from the average of the scores received in Peer Review and Skill Review. These scores are broken down according to the rubric so that students can see how each criterion is evaluated. The sum of these peer- and teacher grades within Peer Review come to 75% of the total grade.

Students are also assessed on the quality of their peer reviews, with this Skill Review component making up the remaining 25% of the total grade.

Helmut Grossmann - Frankfurt School of Finance and Management

“It gave me and the students the opportunity to give more profound feedback on written documents, thanks to the functions within the tools.”

Notable outcomes

- Using feedback tools within the Canvas LMS was found to be a streamlined and effective way of processing detailed feedback for a larger student cohort. *“I really gave a lot more feedback than I used to - before, it was too cumbersome, so my feedback was much shorter”*.
- Peer Review was used with anonymity enabled, mitigating biases and helping students give more authentic feedback among the group. For the tutor, student reviews and names are always visible, making the entire activity transparent for faculty.
- As a course with almost zero face-to-face interaction, it was advantageous to use a platform where the teacher and students could directly communicate about feedback, with the option to dispute as necessary.

The role of the instructor

- The FeedbackFruits activities were set up by the central instructional design team for the tutor, who was responsible for communicating to students how and when to use the tools.
- The tutor used the tools to give feedback on students’ assignments, assess the quality of students’ peer reviews, and to check that papers had been handed in using the analytics overview.

Added value of technology

Teachers’ time is often the limiting factor in the depth and personalisation of designing a learning experience. Especially in larger cohorts, there simply isn’t enough room to give each student tailored feedback. FeedbackFruits tools address this directly by reducing the biggest time-sinks of the feedback process. With elements like work allocation, grading, and reviews being automated or centralised, the work done by students and teachers alike is more centered on the processing of feedback instead of navigating various softwares and technologies. *“The big difference for me now was really this dimension of time. Before, it was a little bit cumbersome to give specific feedback so I often didn’t do it; my feedback was much shorter. Now that I can go into the essay and highlight parts of it, and give direct feedback on that part, I think I give a lot more feedback to students.”*