



Sheffield University Management School (SUMS) Student Peer Evaluation Principles for Group Work 23/24

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Summary of key principles

1. Peer Evaluation using the Buddycheck tool in Blackboard is compulsory for any group work assessment. (see section 1)
2. There must be a minimum of 2 measurements (ideally 3 or more) [see section 3] (see section 2, Part A)
3. You DO NOT need to use Buddycheck to differentiate grades (using it to support reflection is preferable, as a formative tool, supporting personal development).
4. If you do differentiate grades, this can only be done for a maximum of 20% of the final assessment grade. (see section 2, Part B,b and section "Example of Peer Evaluation using marking adjustment")

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1. Definitions

Peer Assessment ([Elevate](#))

While tools like Blackboard can be used to facilitate peer assessment exercises (in which group members allocate marks to their peers as part of an overall grade) this is not always their most effective use.

Though peer assessment has been shown to be relatively reliable, it is not always perceived as such by students, who may suspect friendship biases and inconsistency influence their grades. Likewise, inexperienced students should not be tasked with assessing criteria related to subject matter performance.

It is therefore advised that peer assessment always be conducted in addition and alongside supervisor grading, and that the latter constitute the majority share of grade outcome

Peer Evaluation ([Elevate](#))

In contrast to peer assessment, peer evaluation focuses less on grading contributions for summative purposes, and instead aims to prompt students to reflect on their practice; encouraging self-awareness and personal development.

In this approach, peers are used in a positive capacity: their role is not to 'reward' or 'punish' group members but to offer an outside perspective on peer strengths, roles and dynamics, as well as to reflect collectively on improving group practice.

2. SUMS Peer Evaluation Ethos/Principles (Group Work)

Key principles/values:

1. **Compulsory for group work (modules having group work must use BuddyCheck)**
2. **Formative, positive tool**
3. **Personal development (linking to MySkills)**

Peer evaluation is **compulsory** in all modules with group work, with the aim to support students in their personal development by prompting students to reflect on their team work practices, encouraging self-awareness and personal development.

Peer evaluation is a **formative tool**, used in a **positive** manner, to enable students to reflect on peer strengths, roles and dynamics and to reflect collectively on improving group practice.

This can be linked to the MySkills tool where possible. It is a good opportunity to help students see how they could use mySkills to better understand their competence/confidence level in terms of skills associated with group work and to utilise the pathways and resources available on mySkills to add to their learning and development about this set of attributes.

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Students could also use the 'my development experiences' section of mySkills to write up examples from their group work projects/assessments in order to get useful practice of writing up examples relating to team work using the STARR method that they could then use in applications/interviews with future employers.

[Using mySkills to support peer learning](#) (from Emma Parry, SUMS Employability Hub/Careers Services)

3. Key principles in using Peer Evaluation (BuddyCheck) in group work marking

Key principles:

1. Peer Evaluation is anonymous
2. 'By pass' in peer evaluation is considered (by pass all students are rating each other very highly, giving 5 to everyone).
3. Training for Students
4. Group work is assessed as group work, where one group coursework assignment is marked, and the group obtains one mark.
5. **No Penalty is imposed on the formative peer evaluation.** Where the peer evaluation is used in a **summative manner, students will be given a zero for each sampling point that students don't fill in.** For example, where a module leader uses the peer evaluation to adjust 20% of the mark, if a student fails to engage with the peer evaluation the final mark will be 80% of the group assignment mark.

A. Formative tool - The Recommended School Approach

Sometimes, if you use peer evaluation as just a formative, reflective tool, adjusting marks is necessary in individual situations, when a student demonstrates little or no contribution/engagement. The mark for that student can be as low as zero. However, to justify this adjustment, the module leader needs evidence from the group that the student has not contributed (this might be evident from the attendance register). In these situations the module leader would need to meet with the student and the other group members to obtain an understanding of the situation. Marking has to be fair, justified and transparent. This needs to be articulated at the beginning of the module.

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B. Summative assessment

- a. If Buddycheck is used to adjust the mark, this has to be communicated clearly to students in the beginning of the module. How the adjustment is made (the range) also needs to be clearly communicated and details placed on BlackBoard.
- b. Adjustment range to be maximum 20% of the group assessment mark. Students must raise any issues regarding group work and peer evaluation with their module leader as soon as possible during the semester (and not wait until marks are released). Module leaders must ensure that any issues are discussed and dealt with fairly and promptly.

Using and publishing results. The Student Experience Office needs the original mark, the adjustment, the adjustment criteria and the final mark. We need to be able to trace all this back in case of an appeal. So the adjustment should be clearly communicated in the Excel Marksheet you receive from SEO. You can, for example, download data from Buddycheck into Excel to make adjustments to specific cases. If you are using the grade centre, ensure that the original grade column remains intact and the adjusted mark is on a new column.

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/apse/digital/buddycheck/results>

4. SUMS Template and Peer Evaluation Questions

See the question bank at the end of this document

Principles

- A minimum two sampling points during the semester to allow comparison between the two points (as this is aimed as a developmental tool). Up to ML to choose more sampling points.
 - MLs to decide whether one of the sampling points is formative and other points summative.
- A minimum of two peer questions is necessary to flag any issues in the group
- At UG level to consider whether some questions can be similar to allow students see development in skills from L1 to L2 and L3
- ML can choose module specific questions
- A way to link it to MySkills

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5. Key principles for Module Leaders

1. Communication:

- **Motivation: Explaining to students why you are using peer evaluation in group work, and what are the principles.** Most careers involve collaborative skills and, as a result, group work is an increasingly important part of a university qualification, i.e. peer evaluation is a transferable skill. It is important to state from the beginning, referring to the [Student Code of Conduct](#), that all students are expected to work together in a collegial, collaborative, inclusive manner and [no bullying](#) will be tolerated.
- Clear communication around why, when and how peer evaluation is used in the module. If it impacts the mark, this needs to be clearly outlined from the first lecture.
- Clear communication around how to deal with group work problems, free riders and non engagement.

2. Feedback - learning, personal development

BuddyCheck Report and ML Feedback session, reports together with a short, cohort wide summary of the cohort wide progression to help students in their learning journey.

Group work resources

[Group Work and Collaboration - Communication - Study Skills - 301 - SSiD - The University of Sheffield](#)

[Group Work and Collaboration - Group Work and Collaboration \(shef.ac.uk\)](#)

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SUMS Template - Proposed Questions

Sets and Questions of the SUMS Template

These are the key features of the proposed question sets:

1. The assessment body is designed to be as **brief** as possible, to maximise engagement and minimise fatigue as it is designed to be deployed more than once per module.
2. The questions are grouped by **theme**. This renders the assessment navigable, and makes the meaningfulness of the questions clear.
3. A **single** Likert scale set has been used (agreement) to maintain cognitive coherence during the sampling.
4. At least **two** peer questions in Buddycheck need to be present for the algorithm to detect whether members of a group are attempting to Bypass the evaluation.

SUMS Early Engagement (Four Questions) (Optional)

Questions on: Participation and Engagement | How has your group engaged during the early stages of the project?

Likert Scale Set:

1. Strongly Disagree | 2. Disagree | 3. Neither Agree Nor Disagree | 4. Agree | 5. Strongly Agree

- It has been easy to engage with all the members of the group.
- All the group members are collaborating actively in the coursework.
- The group members started discussing the coursework in a timely manner.
- The group started working promptly to ensure timely delivery of the project.

Group Dynamics (Five Questions)

Questions on: Conflict Management | Improvement Culture | Interpersonal Support | Group Performance | Group Satisfaction

Likert Scale Set:

1. Strongly Disagree | 2. Disagree | 3. Neither Agree Nor Disagree | 4. Agree | 5. Strongly Agree

- Our group manages disagreements well
- I am comfortable giving constructive feedback to my peers
- Someone in my group would help me if I needed it
- Our group performs well
- I am very happy to be working in our group

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Individual Accountability (Three Questions x No. of Group Members)

Questions on: Work Contribution | Reliability | Accountability

Likert Scale Set:

1. Strongly Disagree | 2. Disagree | 3. Neither Agree Nor Disagree | 4. Agree | 5. Strongly Agree

- Contributes more and/or higher-quality work to the group
- Is very reliable (attendance, deadlines)
- Exercises personal responsibility (communicates absences, catches up if absent)

Teamwork Skills (Four Questions x No. of Group Members)

Questions on: Group Awareness | Motivation | Collaboration | Leadership

Likert Scale Set:

1. Strongly Disagree | 2. Disagree | 3. Neither Agree Nor Disagree | 4. Agree | 5. Strongly Agree

- Watches conditions affecting the team and monitors the team's progress
- Motivates the group to do excellent work
- Asks for and shows interest in colleagues' ideas and contributions
- Exercises initiative

Free-text Questions (optional)

Paragraph questions about the state of the group and a potential direction of improvement.

- Thinking about how your group is working, please write one positive comment
- If there is one thing you would like the group to do differently, what would it be?

Module-specific aspects of Group-work (optional)

Questions as determined by the Module Leader.

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