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# Establishing a “safe” framework for the development of self and peer assessment.

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## *Abstract*

Although both peer and self-assessment are seen as beneficial in respect of student learning there can be some resistance from students. This paper adopts the position that self and peer assessment are positive strategies to employ with students but recognises that the introduction of either may cause anxieties for students. Personal experience has demonstrated that such anxiety tends to reflect a concern amongst students that they are not in a position to carry out either. This paper discusses the introduction of a strategy which establishes a safe framework for self and peer review and discusses the results of a small scale evaluation carried out with one student group. The evaluation demonstrates that although students may be wary of the use of such a strategy they do find it beneficial and would recommend it for others.

**Keywords:** Self-assessment, peer-assessment, marking, writing skills.

## 1. Introduction

This paper has two aspects to it. Firstly it is presented as an account of action research with the aim of enhancing my own practice with my students. Following from this it offers an explanation for, and assessment of, the use of a classroom-based exercise to facilitate self and peer assessment within a Higher Education (HE) setting. It takes the position that self and peer assessment are beneficial for developing student learning but it recognises that students have concerns about their ability to do this. Such anxieties may hold them back from attempting peer assessment in particular and may be an obstacle to attempting self-assessment. The aim of the assessment exercise is to make the assessment process more inclusive and to minimise student anxieties by engaging them in the practice of assessing their own and others' work in a “safe” manner. The assessment exercise achieves this by providing clear guidelines as to what is expected of students and by focusing the student's attention on the editing aspects of assessment, as will be discussed and illustrated within the paper. The exercise can also help to develop mutual support amongst students.

In respect of action research the paper details how I have developed the assessment exercise, how I have evaluated it and how it may be developed further as part of a structured approach to teaching. The findings draw on data from a short questionnaire that was used to gather student responses in relation to their experience of the exercise. In presenting the findings here my aim is to suggest that engaging students in such exercises designed to develop capacity for critical review in self and peer assessment can also provide a richer learning experience for students. This paper discusses how this has operated in practice, arguing that it provides a safe framework for establishing the practice of self and peer-assessment which seems also to reduce student anxieties and encourage critical dialogue amongst the student body. Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2011) argue that practitioner research needs to be ‘trustworthy, useable and accessible’. Overall, in providing evidence which supports my approach and offers details in a way that others may easily adopt the approach this paper meets that demand.

## 2. Background to the study

As is typical of action research the impetus for it arose out of reflections on my practice and an understanding that it was in my capacity to make changes (Elliott, 2011). Although the exercise to

be discussed is presented as a way to develop both self and peer assessment the origins of it lay in my own marking of student work. Over a number of years I became increasingly frustrated with making the same comments on student assignments. My original concern was focused on my own practice in that I wanted to be able to mark students' work more easily and quickly but I soon started to appreciate that if I was making the same comments repeatedly then certain aspects of my teaching were not being effective. In particular I realised that these were very often issues that concerned academic writing styles and conventions. Issues relating to writing have the capacity to undermine both the student's capacity to succeed and their self-confidence and as such I considered that it was evident that a more effective manner of teaching students about such issues was necessary. In addition to devising a way of marking student work more quickly and with greater effect I soon recognised that it provided the basis for facilitating self and peer assessment with the aim of improving the standard of written assignments. This study investigates the outcomes of using this exercise. In doing so it illustrates what Hiim (2011) means when arguing that action research should be meaningful to the teacher's own practice as well as to professional practice as a whole. In engaging students with the practice of assessment it may also be seen to contribute to Hiim's (2011) concern with democratising educational practice.

My initial approach to the matter of making marking easier and faster was the development of an aide to marking (this is detailed in appendix 1). In practice this was the development of a list of codes to be used when marking, which was intended to provide more detail and offer examples of what I meant in my comments to students. Students would have the list and would be able to see what was meant in an accompanying explanation provided for them. For Walker (2009) if students are to learn from the comments offered by staff marking their work it is necessary that students understand what is being said by those staff. For example, a comment indicating incorrect referencing will be ineffective unless the student understands what the correct format is. However the time constraint on marking assignments means that for the marker, writing examples on each assignment is impractical. The coding system offers examples or details of what is meant by the marker.

In practice I found that the marking code did enable me to mark student assignments more quickly though it should be pointed out that this tended to focus upon what Orrell (2006) defines as editing. Orrell places feedback into categories which she refers to as Teaching: wherein gaps or errors are identified; Editing: wherein work is corrected as in spelling or style of referencing; and Feedback: by which she means that staff enter into dialogue with the work. The marking codes were not intended to replace either teaching or feedback as this must inevitably be tailored to the points made in each assignment.

Reflecting on the success of the marking code for my own practice led me to consider that I might be able to use it to engage students in the marking process. By instructing students in the use of the marking code I considered that I would enhance their performance in assignments. This reflects a social constructivist approach to learning (Jarvis, Holford, & Griffin, 2003; Jordan, Carlile, & Stack, 2008; Pritchard & Woollard, 2010) which I hoped would also reduce my role in marking editorially. In turn this could be seen as providing for a richer learning experience overall. Typically, the process of assessing students within my institution is not explicitly linked to their learning opportunities apart from the provision of formative assessment at year one. Students are taught and an assignment is offered. I felt that I could address this by developing a class based exercise to involve the students to a much greater extent. As such this would provide another way in which I could scaffold student learning. I want the student to develop their writing (which reflects the focus of editorial marking) so as to make them more effective. This will mean that when marking, my time is spent on providing feedback on their understanding rather than editing their writing.

Although self and peer-assessment is becoming established in HE contexts within the UK (Bloxham & Boyd 2007) it can create anxieties amongst students which centre on their own perceived inability to carry out assessment adequately. The requirement that they carry out assessment on others may be seen as creating an anxiety in respect of revealing their own

limitations. This means that the value of such exercises can be undermined because of the anxieties created. This may also lead to partial or full disengagement from the task. An advantage of the exercise which I used, and which will be described below, is that by using it in the first instance to focus on writing styles or referencing it is possible to establish a safe framework within which self and peer-assessment can be employed.

For Young (2000) the anxieties demonstrated by mature students in particular originate in the levels of self-esteem that they hold. Young's study of mature students returning to study reflects the type of students that I teach and she demonstrates how important it is to provide a safe learning environment. For many mature students, entering HE is a major event and the process of grading and giving feedback on work can have a significant effect upon how they engage with their studies. It should be recognised, however, that older students who are returning to education are not the only persons to experience anxiety from the experience. Entering HE is a major step for all students and therefore this exercise can be seen as useful for all. Developing the student's engagement with writing for assessment can be seen as demystifying and democratising the process by demonstrating how the marker approaches the work.

### **3. Theoretical frameworks**

In addition to making the process of marking assignments and providing feedback easier there are pedagogical benefits to be gained from this exercise as will be demonstrated in this following section. Bloxham and West (2007) recognise the relationship between writing as part of the assessment process and student learning. They draw upon ideas about communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) which reflect a social constructionist approach to learning and development. The idea that students learn how to write academically is developed further by the academic literacies approach (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007). This draws attention to the particular styles of writing relating to different disciplines. It acknowledges that teaching staff play a part in how a student's writing develops by fostering particular approaches to writing academically. Underpinning this is the argument that students come into HE with different literary backgrounds and abilities but that all need to become proficient in academic literacy to succeed.

In adopting this position as a starting point I have drawn upon the neo-Vygotskian approach reflected in Rogoff's (1990) use of the term "guided participation" and in Bruner's use of the term "scaffolding". For Rogoff, novices (in any discipline) can be introduced to knowledge and practice by a "more knowledgeable other". Bruner identifies how the more knowledgeable other acts in a way to scaffold the learning of others. Underpinning this idea is Vygotsky's basic premise that we can learn within social relationships through social activities. As will be seen the exercise that was developed sits firmly within a social constructivist framework. Students are engaged in the practice of developing knowledge of academic literacy which is scaffolded by both the marking codes and by the peer and self-assessment exercise. The outcomes of this approach are presented as contributing to developing independence within students. Ramsden (2003) argues that one aspect of good teaching is the encouragement of independent learning arguing that assessment should be concerned with helping students to learn rather than simply acting as a means to rank them.

For Ramsden the assessment process should be an essential part of learning. For this to happen it has to be integrated within the overall learning experience. He does however recognise that assessment as a process is something that can create anxieties for students because of previous experiences and current expectations. Improving the experience of assessment then involves reducing anxiety wherever possible.

### **4. Justifying self and peer assessment**

Many educationalists argue that the practice of providing feedback is relatively under-researched (Bloxham, 2009; Carless, 2006; Chanock, 2000; Crisp, 2007; Orrell, 2006; Read, Francis, &

Robson, 2005; Walker, 2009). Importantly however, studies have noted that we cannot assume that the provision of feedback *per se* will lead to improvement even within a system employing formative assessment (Crisp, 2007; Whittington, Glover, & Hartley, 2004). What a number of contemporary researchers have demonstrated is that issues surrounding both the quantity and quality of feedback may mean that it fails to move the students' development forward. A concern with finding an effective way to develop students learning to enhance achievement was a significant factor in deciding to undertake this research.

For Orrell (2006) the provision of feedback constitutes an essential element within the teaching process because of its ability to improve the learning behaviours of student. Other commentators note that approaches to assessment can foster two different approaches towards work from the student, usually characterised as "deep" or "surface" approaches (Biggs 2003; Ramsden 2003; Light and Cox 2001). Surface learning or surface approaches to assessment are recognised as being preoccupied with rote learning and repeating information rather than with the development of knowledge and understanding. As such it is knowledge and understanding that reflects "deep" learning. For Light and Cox (2001) getting students to consider the demands of assessment to foster deeper understanding is a challenge but it is something that most teachers would see as desirable. This exercise enables this to be achieved by involving students in the assessment process. This reflects arguments offered by Schon (1983) and Argyris and Schon (1992) in respect of single and double loop learning.

However, irrespective of the learning that a student has undertaken, for many students assessment rests upon an ability to perform effectively in written assignments. Therefore it is essential that students master academic writing if they are to perform strongly within assessment tasks. This reflects the importance of academic literacies that was raised earlier.

Norton (2002) asserts that feedback is designed to improve learning. In asserting this however she makes a distinction between assessment of learning and assessment for learning. Assessment of learning can be seen as reflecting a traditionalist approach in which assessment is summative and where it could be argued that feedback is provided too late to enable development. My exercise to engage students in self and peer-assessment reflects assessment for learning and is bound up with formative approaches to assessment. In this approach feedback can be seen to occupy the interface between staff and students concerning the role of assessment within learning. My exercise for facilitating peer-marking within class draws the student into the process of marking by putting them in the position of the marker. The intention is that they should develop the ability to self-assess.

As argued earlier my exercise adopts a position influenced by constructivist theories of learning wherein students are seen as active participants who construct meanings within the learning. For such as Biggs (2003) this promotes deep learning rather than surface learning. In addition to this the self and peer assessment exercise when following on from other exercises which consider academic writing skills has the benefit of becoming embedded within the pedagogical process. This has the benefit of integrating the development of study skills into a programme of study rather than presenting them as a separate exercise that can appear unrelated. In addition this encourages students to become part of a community of practice, as argued by Whittington et al. (2004), Read et al (2005) and Bloxham and West (2007).

Bloxham and West's (2007) work on learning to write in HE provides a justification for a focus upon developing writing skills so as to become more effective. It can be argued that the process of editing student assignments as detailed earlier by Orrell can detract from the tutor's ability to provide teaching and feedback because the tutor is focused upon matters concerning the quality of writing rather than the quality of the learning that is evident. This reduces the opportunities to develop learning. At the same time students may be able to demonstrate a good understanding of the material being assessed but find that their grades are not reflecting this because of issues relating to writing or presentational style. As such this exercise provides both a confidence boosting experience of marking and a more meaningful assessment process.

For Light and Cox (2001) using a marking exercise is a good way of improving understanding. They offer a useful model for achieving this but here again the matter of the relationship between academic writing and level of academic ability is taken as axiomatic. Importantly though Light and Cox see exercises in marking and ranking of previously marked work as a preliminary exercise that can be used prior to peer-assessment demonstrating the need for developing students as peer-assessors. My marking exercise provides for both self and peer-assessment to be facilitated.

They also point out that HE has traditionally focused on the development of individual work yet recent years have seen calls for students to develop team-working skills and other social abilities (Knight & Yorke, 2003). Models such as that offered by Biggs (2003) and Light and Cox (2001) are reflected in this exercise in that they contribute to the development of team working through peer-assessment exercises and both can be seen as stages on the path to the development of self-assessment. This can contribute to the development of independent learners.

## 5. The empirical study

The study took place in a first year undergraduate class which has a formative and a summative assignment. The formative assignment is marked and feedback is provided to students but no grade is given. The intention is that students learn from their performance in the formative assignment and use this to enhance their performance in the summative assignment. Although the formative and summative assignment tasks differ slightly they draw on the same material.

I introduced the exercise by providing students with a sheet of codes (illustrated in appendix 1) corresponding to typical issues found in student assignments. In a previous class I had discussed how I used these codes and indicated that we would use them as part of a peer-assessment exercise.

Students were informed that in the final class of the module they were to bring two copies of their formative assignment to use as part of a marking exercise. It was made clear to them that they would be asked to mark two assignments written by other students and that their assignment would be marked by two other students as part of the exercise. The marking that they would be asked to carry out would be in accordance with the marking codes discussed previously. I impressed upon the students that we were concerned with issues around editing writing. Student concerns about their ability to comment upon what others had written when they did not feel that they were knowledgeable enough were countered by emphasising that it was not an exercise that would require them to be knowledgeable about the subject of the assignments that they were to mark. It is also important to note that in previous classes I had given some attention to academic writing styles, identifying some common issues that arise in student work so as to frame the exercise. I also reiterated that the work would be anonymous. Details regarding how the exercise would operate within the class were provided within the module handbook as follows.

*Before you come to the class:*

Write your formative assignment. Bring two copies of this to the class as hard copy. Do not put your name on them. Only put your student number on them (on each page). These can be stapled together, a folder is not necessary.

Bring the Marking codes and the assessment criteria to the class.

*Class activity in minutes:*

0 – 10mins: I organise the distribution of assignments

10 – 50 mins: students to mark one formative assignment using the marking pro-forma provided

50 – 60 mins: short discussion of issues arising. Marked assignment to be passed on to next student

- 60 – 80 mins: Break
- 80 – 120 mins: mark second (marked) formative.
- 120 – 150 mins: mark the other copy of your own formative assignment
- 150 – 180 mins: discussion in small groups based upon experience of marking

The class is scheduled for three hours. A shorter class will require the timings to be changed or for the exercise to be completed over two classes.

Forty minutes were provided for each student to mark one assignment after which there was a short break. After the break they were asked to pass the assignment that they had marked on to another student. They would then receive another assignment (already marked by another student). Each student now had a marked assignment and had a further 40 minutes to mark it again. After marking the second assignment students were asked to mark the unmarked copy of their own assignment, which was followed by 30 minutes for discussion.

Immediately after the exercise students were asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire (detailed in appendix 2) to elicit their feelings towards the exercise. The aim here was to gather data that reflected the levels of anxiety or comfort that the students had experienced. It was hoped that the instructions provided to students regarding the exercise would provide a safe environment within which to complete this exercise. Although I was confident that the exercise was useful in respect of students’ learning I wanted to get richer data with the intention of refining my approach in future. There were three aspects to the questionnaire: the first section asks for responses to closed questions with the second section providing scope for more detailed responses. The final section is a simple ‘yes/no’ response which asks students to assess the usefulness of the exercise overall with respect to their learning and whether or not they would recommend it be used with other groups.

## 6. Results from questionnaire

The results of the summary questions: “On reflection do you feel that this was a useful exercise that has helped you develop in terms of your understanding of what is involved in the production of written work?” and “Would you recommend that the exercise be used with future student groups?” are supportive as is illustrated in tables 1 & 2 below.

Table 1: did students find the exercise useful in developing academic writing

	Response			
	Yes	No	Both	Not answered
On reflection do you feel that this was a useful exercise that has helped you develop in terms of your understanding of what is involved in the production of written work?	10	3	1	2

Table 2 would students recommend the exercise be used with other groups?

	Response			
	Yes	No	Both	Not answered
Would you recommend that the exercise be used with future student groups?	10	1	2	3

From these results it seems that students in general saw the exercise as useful. This paints a simple picture of the way that students experienced the exercise though. This does not reflect feelings of either confidence or anxiety with respect to the exercise and although it may support arguments which promote peer assessment it ignores those issues that may hinder its use. In considering the open questions more detail is offered. Students were guided to comment upon their general feelings about the exercise (table 3) as well as to comment upon what they felt about it before and after it had been completed. This was useful because, as has been considered above, there is a general view that peer assessment is beneficial but this can overlook particular issues. The structure of the questionnaire was intended to reveal what these issues might be. The results have been organised into particular themes. In general four themes are evident with anxiety appearing to be dominant write this as a complete sentence. Given that only three students noted that this was a useful exercise the value of the summary questions in requiring a response to this aspect of the exercise is vindicated.

Table 3: General feelings about the exercise.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>
Anxiety	6
Concern about own image	1
Found it useful	3
Saw it as causing conflict within the group	1

The responses relating to how students felt before the exercise are perhaps unsurprising and demonstrate the importance of clear instructions and a structured approach (table 4). In designing approaches to courses, modules and classes tutors will consciously or otherwise reflect upon pedagogical principles and seek to structure individual classes in particular ways. Max Weber's concept of *verstehen* however is a useful tool to be reflected upon within this planning process. Weber uses *verstehen* to demonstrate the importance of researchers putting themselves in the shoes of those being researched. Tutors may have an idea as to what they intend to achieve in their approaches to teaching and this may be backed up by sound evidence reflecting contemporary principles of teaching but it is also important to try to assess how any teaching approach will be experienced by students. Weber urges us to place ourselves in the students' shoes to start to understand what our approaches mean for them. In this study we find, perhaps not unsurprisingly, that asking students to carry out a task that may be perceived to be the tutor's role can create a number of feelings such as anxiety, frustration and even annoyance. This is because assessment presupposes knowledge and understanding. As such it may be an activity that can explicitly reveal the student's lack of knowledge and understanding.

The fact that 50% of the group felt either anxious or unqualified demonstrates that the tutor should introduce, explain and structure peer-assessment in a manner that minimises these issues as far as is possible. The danger is that such feelings may not be overcome and the value of the exercise may not be realised.

Table 4: student feelings before the exercise

**BEFORE**

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>
Anxiety	5
Feeling unqualified	3
Confused as to reason for exercise	1

It is interesting that the responses in respect of feelings about the exercise afterwards (table 5) were not as positive as the summary questions with only 6 respondents stating that it was useful.



Again this demonstrates the value of both questions in that one allows for greater responses and one requires greater reflection.

Table 5: student feelings after the exercise

<b>AFTER</b>	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>
Useful	6
Relief	2
Unable to do it	2
Didn't feel good about commenting	1
Confused	1
Would change procedure	1

The responses to Q1, (table 6 below), demonstrate the different aspects of this exercise. Q1a demonstrates that students were very, or mostly, clear as to what they were expected to do but that this did not mean that they were comfortable in doing it. Q1c had no students reporting that they were “very” comfortable marking others’ work, and only 6 (37.5%) were generally comfortable. Almost as many students were “not at all” comfortable with this task. Conversely, 12 (75%) were “very” or “generally” happy to have their work marked by others which reiterates the point made earlier that it appears to be a concern with their own abilities that most concerns students. This offers data which demonstrates that students are happier to allow others to see their shortcomings within their written work but much less happy with their perceived ability to comment upon the work of others. It may be that this reflects an approach wherein students are accepting that the comments of peers will allow them to develop but at the same time the exercise reveals their weaknesses in a personal and individual way. The difference in responses here may provide the basis for further investigations.

What was most pleasing however was that Q1e saw 13 (81.5%) of students reporting that the exercise was a “very” useful learning experience or a “generally” useful learning experience with no students reporting that the exercise was “not at all” useful. Alongside that 13 (81%) reported that they would be “very” or “generally” more likely to engage in collaborative work in future with only 2 students, (12.5%) reporting that they would not engage in such work.

Table 6: How the student experienced the exercise

	Please circle the answer that best reflects your feelings.			
	Very	Mostly/ Generally	Partly/ A little	Not at all
<b>Q1a</b> Were the instructions clearly explained to you?	8	8		
<b>Q1b</b> Was it clear what you had to do in this exercise?	8	7	1	
<b>Q1c</b> Did you feel comfortable marking someone else’s work?		6	5	4
<b>Q1d</b> Did you feel comfortable having your own work marked by others?	5	7	2	2
<b>Q1e</b> Do you feel that this was a				

useful learning experience?	3	10	3	
<b>Q1f</b> Will it make you more or less likely to engage in collaborative work with others?	4	9	2	1

## 7. Discussion

The data provided by the questionnaire together with comments made by students in the class discussion supported the use of the assessment exercise. Having started as an exercise aimed at making my own marking workload lighter whilst simultaneously providing greater guidance to students this approach can be seen as having developed into a more meaningful academic exercise to foster student learning. The exercise can be seen as a framework for embedding self and peer-assessment into programmes of study to enhance deep learning within students. Staff in HE institutions may be aware of tensions between an idealistic model of HE reflected in arguments about learning for its own sake, and of a utilitarian approach characterised by students who appear to seek only the credentials that HE gives them as a stepping stone to particular levels of employment. This exercise may be appropriate for both approaches.

A utilitarian approach may reflect a certain pragmatic reality to what HE means for many students but at the same time staff may draw on Ramsden's (2003) identification of what makes a good HE teacher. For Ramsden the good teacher is able to demonstrate an ability to make things useful and relevant noting that students engage more effectively with staff when they feel that they are concerned with helping them to learn. The feedback that has been received from students within this study demonstrates an awareness of the practical benefits of it and a recognition of how it can make them more effective. This also reflects the complex nature of HE in that students both learn about a subject or discipline, and also learn about how to learn as well. This idea is evident within Barnett's (2000) discussion of the role of Universities in what he terms "an age of supercomplexity".

## 8. Reflection and developments

In reflecting on the value of the assessment exercise and following from Elliott (2011) it can be argued that there is scope to adopt this exercise as part of a wider strategy in respect of developing and involving students. This would allow me to build on practical and theoretical models presented by Light and Cox (2001) and Biggs (2003) in a way that offers a structured experience for the student as follows:

### Year 1

1. Introduce students to examples of written work identifying common errors that are reflected in the marking codes used within this exercise.
2. Introduce the assessment exercise as detailed in this study to develop the above.

### Year 2

3. Following Light and Cox (2001) require students to rank marked papers and justify their claims. Require students to develop marking criteria as a second part to this exercise.
4. Following Biggs (2003) engage students in the Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome exercise, which he calls SOLO, to introduce them to the distinctions between types of assessment response.
5. Summarise the overall exercise for students as an exercise in developing their approaches to learning.

## 9. Conclusion

Overall the responses to this exercise provided by students have been positive but some important issues are raised which demonstrate that tutors must be clear in how it is introduced and used. The comments received from one student who had recently been diagnosed as dyslexic raise awareness of the frequently fragile nature of student confidence and I will be careful to present this exercise as moving beyond the identification of spelling mistakes in future. On reflection my research has demonstrated that tutors cannot employ either self or peer-assessment exercises without ensuring that clear guidance are provided to students so as to reduce the anxieties which may interfere with its successful operation.

Similarly the exercise can reveal tensions within a group and the teacher's knowledge of a particular group means that caution may be advisable even to the extent of not using the exercise. One response from the questionnaire alluded to conflict within the group that is not always evident to teaching staff but which students are very aware of. Student groups constitute complex organisational entities and preparatory groundwork may be necessary prior to using this exercise.

My feelings as to the overall value of using this exercise were supported by the feedback generated through the use of the questionnaire. In using the questionnaire to evaluate how students experienced the exercise I recognise that this was on a small scale but the feedback was mostly positive. I do feel confident that the assessment exercise has enhanced both my practice and the learning opportunities offered to students. The value in this research overall is in presenting a practical approach to establishing a safe framework for self and peer assessment which is recognised as such by students. As a strategy for developing student's approach to academic writing it can be seen as complementing other approaches which may be drawn upon.

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## Appendix 1 Marking codes

Please use this as a guide to understanding my comments on your assignments

### Note Explanation

- Ref A reference is required in the Harvard style eg. Knowles (2009) argues that....
- ?Ref Here's an opportunity for you to place a reference to good effect as it will indicate where the source material is. It also means that you can relocate it for yourself easily.
- XRef Your referencing style is incorrect. This is generally because the reference lists the name of the book rather than the date or the author, or sometimes the page number comes before the date.
- [text] Square brackets around a piece of text indicate that this section could be reworked so as to be more effective. It could be something simple such as "Piaget has [done] research on children..." which would be much better as "Piaget undertook research..."
- ✓ Good point, used well
- S You're telling a story about the evidence rather than using it. Eg. "In a book by Smith it is said that"; "A researcher called Piaget did experiments on children and he found..." Instead of telling a story these would be more effective as follows:  
"Smith (2005) argues that..."  
"Piaget (Schaffer 1996) demonstrated that..."  
This is more concise and *uses* the evidence.
- E What evidence do you have for making this assertion? When you assert something you need to offer evidence for it in the form of a reference. Eg. Inequalities are wider now than they were twenty years ago.
- SSP This is a single-sentence paragraph. Avoid this.
- Ask You're asking me a question rather than adopting a critical approach
- O'K I can see why this is here and it contributes to the structure of the work
- ?-- Why is this gap her? A paragraph break should be indicated by leaving a clear line. Don't end a sentence and then hit return in the middle of a paragraph.
- T This section is untidy in how it is written. This is one of those things that can often be picked up by getting someone to read your work aloud to you. If they struggle to read it it is likely that I will struggle to also.

Text

A word that has been circled or highlighted indicates a spelling mistake.

**Appendix 2 Questionnaire**

**Q1 Peer and self-assessment questionnaire**

Please circle the answer that best reflects your feelings.

<b>Q1a</b> Were the instructions clearly explained to you	Very	Mostly	Partly	Not at all
<b>Q1b</b> Was it clear what you had to do in this exercise	Very	Mostly	Partly	Not at all
<b>Q1c</b> Did you feel comfortable marking someone else's work	Very	Generally	A little	Not at all
<b>Q1d</b> Did you feel comfortable having your own work marked by others	Very	Generally	A little	Not at all
<b>Q1e</b> Do you feel that this was a useful learning experience	Very	Generally	A little	Not at all
<b>Q1f</b> Will it make you more or less likely to engage in collaborative work with others	Very	Generally	A little	Not at all

Please offer further details regarding how you experienced this exercise commenting upon how you felt before and after.

**Q2 In general:**

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**Q3 Before:**

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**Q4 After:**

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**Q5** On reflection do you feel that this was a useful exercise that has helped you develop in terms of your understanding of what is involved in the production of written work. Yes/No

**Q6** Would you recommend that the exercise be used with future student groups? Yes/No  
Please feel free to make any further comments or suggestions on the reverse. Thank you.