

# Queen Mary Academy

Getting involved in peer-to-peer  
assessment and feedback: a guide for  
staff and students.

---

## Authors

**Omobolaji Odekunle**

LLM, International Business Law and Queen Mary Academy Intern 2023  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Queen Mary, University of London

with support from:

**Dr Emily Salines**

Head of Education Programmes  
Queen Mary Academy  
Queen Mary, University of London

**Dr Luigi Ventimiglia**

Reader  
School Of Economics and Finance  
Queen Mary, University of London

# Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a Learner Intern Project aimed at understanding and enhancing peer-to-peer assessment and feedback practices within Queen Mary. The research aligns with the University's strategy, focus on co-creation, and addresses National Student Survey (NSS) concerns related to Assessment and Feedback.

The research examines learners' familiarity, comfort and perception of peer-to-peer assessment and feedback. A mixed-methods approach involving surveys and interviews was used to gather insights from which recommendations were drawn.

## Key findings

### 1. Familiarity and Comfort

- 67% of surveyed students are familiar with peer-to-peer assessment and feedback.
- 88.9% of students who gave feedback found the experience positive.
- Students reported a willingness to participate in peer assessment and expressed a positive perception of the process.

### 2. Benefits and Perceptions

- Peer-to-peer assessment offers diverse perspectives and promotes empathy due to shared experiences.
- Students value the opportunity to gain experience from peers' viewpoints and benefit from feedback from fellow students.
- Peer assessment is seen as valuable for employability skills development and fostering collaboration.

### 3. Guidelines and Support:

- Clear guidelines and support from educators are crucial for effective peer-to-peer assessment.
- Predefined formats for feedback and roles of both providers and receivers enhance the process.
- Input from educators is important to ensure alignment and accuracy of peer reviews.

### 4. Growth and Improvement:

- Emphasizing the growth and improvement aspect of peer assessment motivates students.
- Creating a supportive environment encourages skill enhancement and performance improvement.

## Recommendations

### For Students:

- Seek feedback from educators who possess subject expertise and assessment knowledge.
- Engage in peer assessment with a growth-oriented mindset.
- Understand marking criteria to provide accurate grading and assessment.

### For Educators:

- Emphasize growth and improvement through peer assessment.
- Foster a supportive environment for students' skill development.
- Provide clear guidelines and support for effective peer-to-peer assessment.
- Focus on formative approaches and avoid using them for summative activities.

Overall, this report highlights the positive potential of peer-to-peer assessment and feedback, emphasizing its role in skill development, collaboration, and growth. Clear guidelines, educator involvement, and a nurturing environment are key factors in facilitating successful peer assessment experiences.

# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Rational and aim of the research</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Research methodology</b>	<b>5</b>
Research question	5
Methodology	5
<b>Results</b>	<b>6</b>
Survey	6
Interviews	9
Formative dimension	10
Inclusivity	10
Development of employability skills	10
Need to consider appropriateness	11
Need for guidance	11
Valuing educators' views	11
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>12</b>

## Rational and aim of the research.

The aim of the research project was to capture the learner's voice and views on peer-to-peer assessment and feedback. This aligns with university strategy 2030 and focuses on co-creation and contributes to work to support NSS questions on Assessment and Feedback.

There is much evidence in research literature on the positive impact that peer-to-peer assessment and feedback have on learning, but educators and learners often express the need for support and advice on how to implement this. The aim of the project was therefore to provide guidance to educators and learners on how to be partners in assessment and feedback. To examine this, and supported by the literature, our aim was to ascertain how widespread peer-to-peer assessment and feedback is across the institution, and how learners from around each School/Institute feel about getting involved in peer-to-peer assessment. We surveyed students across the institution, asking questions regarding their familiarity, perception and needs regarding this assessment practice. We then followed up with semi-structured interviews with learners who have experienced peer-to-peer assessment, as well as those who have not (to explore their views, expectations, and experience as appropriate). Thematic analysis was used to extract trends and key themes with the intention to provide tangible guidance and recommendations to educators as an outcome.

## Research methodology

### Research question

---

**What guidance do students need to support them in engaging with peer-to-peer assessment and feedback?**

### Methodology

---

The research methodology used for this project involved a combination of surveys and interviews to gather comprehensive insights into the experiences and perspectives of participants regarding peer-to-peer assessment and feedback. A cross-sectional survey was conducted to collect quantitative data from a diverse sample of students. The survey instrument was developed based on a thorough review of relevant literature and included a combination of Likert-scale questions and open-ended items to capture both quantitative ratings and qualitative responses. The survey was administered online through the Microsoft forms platform, and participants were selected from registering their interest to participate in the project.

In addition to the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of participants to provide in-depth qualitative data. The interviews were designed to understand the participants' views on peer-peer assessment and feedback, explore participants' experiences, challenges, and recommendations related to peer assessment and feedback. The interviews were on Microsoft Teams and recorded with participants' consent. The interview guide included a set of open-ended questions that were tailored to each participant's responses and allowed for probing and clarification.

Data analysis for the survey involved descriptive statistics to summarize quantitative responses and thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns in the qualitative data. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were analysed.

The combination of surveys and interviews provided a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives, experiences, and needs regarding peer-to-peer assessment and feedback. The triangulation of

quantitative and qualitative data enhances the validity and reliability of the findings, allowing for a deeper exploration of the research question.

# Results

## Survey

The survey was conducted from 23 March 2023- 5th April 2023, with participation from seventeen students representing various faculties, including the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, and Faculty of Science and Engineering.

Figure 1 - Survey faculty distribution



Among the participants, eight students were postgraduates, while nine students were undergraduates.

Figure 2 - Student type

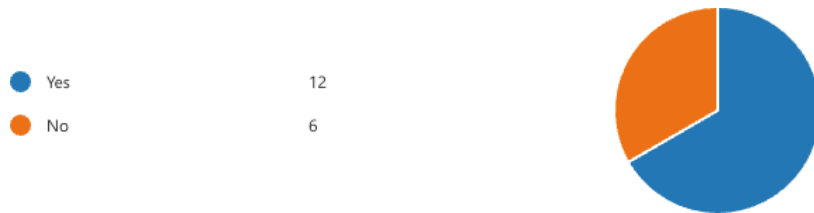


The survey questions were designed to gain insights into three key aspects:

- Familiarity with peer-peer assessment and feedback: The survey aimed to understand how familiar students are with the concept of peer-peer assessment and feedback.
- Comfort level with giving and receiving peer-peer assessment and feedback: The survey sought to determine how comfortable students are with engaging in the process of giving and receiving peer-peer assessment and feedback.
- Perception of the experience: The survey aimed to explore whether students consider peer-peer assessment and feedback as a positive or negative experience.

Based on the survey results, it was found that 67% of the students are familiar with peer-peer assessment and feedback, while 33% are not.

Figure 3 - Familiarity with peer feedback

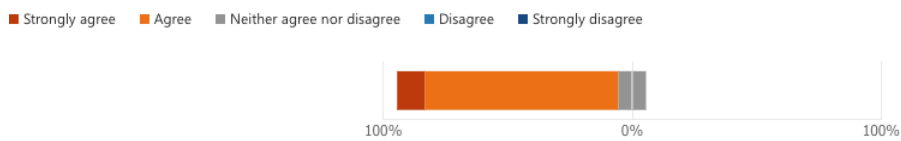


Half the students surveyed had experienced giving feedback to fellow students, and 88.9% reported that it was a positive experience.

Figure 4 - Have you ever given feedback to your fellow students?



Figure 5 - If yes, was it a positive experience?



More students experienced receiving feedback than giving it, and again all found it a positive experience.

Figure 6 - Have you ever received feedback from fellow students?

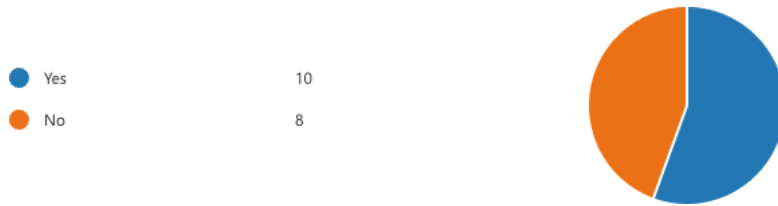
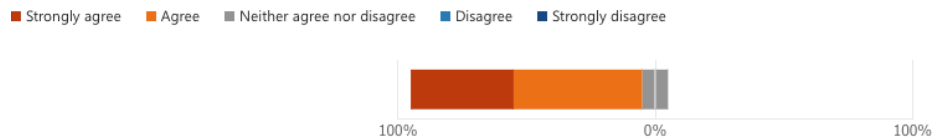
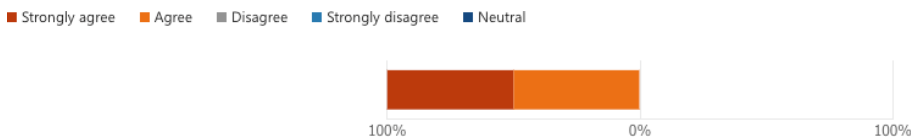


Figure 7 - If yes, was it a positive experience?



All students who had not experienced giving or receiving feedback said that they would like to try.

Figure 8 - If not, would you like to try?



Some participants shared specific instances where they found peer-peer assessment to be positive:

*'I had to provide feedback on topic titles for an essay after been made the essay project manager for a module.'*

*'Looking at each other's responses to a question.'*

*'Reading assessment of peers in a lecture and giving oral feedback.'*

*'Giving feedback on lab reports and how well they worked in group projects.'*

*'Anonymous marking of essays on an online platform.'*

*'It was in class where we had to read over each other's work and peer assess it.'*

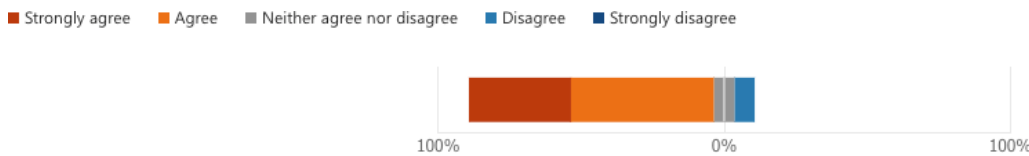
When it came to **assessing**, rather than just giving, or receiving feedback, fewer students had experienced this, and there was slightly less appetite for it, reflecting sector research.



Figure 9 - Have you been engaged in assessing your peers (e.g., giving them an indicative grade)?



Figure 10 - Would you like to try?



Below are excerpts of the participants' thoughts on peer-peer assessment and feedback.

*“It would help us understand the metrics of what is expected of students. I would prefer it if these were conducted in a low stake environment or assessment (preferably a mock). It would help if the criteria have been disseminated to the class and everyone is aware of it before the assessment is done. After the assessment, another review should be done to give feedback to the entire class.”*

*“Peer to peer assessment sounds like a great idea but I have engaged with it less than I would have liked because I didn't find opportunities to do it.”*

*“Peer to peer assessment is an interesting form of assessment and should be used but not too much and should not be weighted heavily when deciding the final grade assessment and feedback from lecturer is more useful.”*

*“I find students are really harsher markers than the seminar tutors themselves.”*

*“It is a reasonable way to understand your limitations and advantages against peers, being people that overall have the same knowledge and position as you. This can improve how you look at critical assessment in a positive way.”*

## Interviews

The interviews were designed to gather insights and perspectives from students regarding their experiences with peer-to-peer assessment and feedback. The primary aim was to identify the specific guidance and support that students require to effectively engage with these processes. Five students participated in the interviews.

The interviews questions included:

1. How would you define peer-to-peer assessment and feedback?
2. Have you experienced it? Can you give me details?
3. Would you describe this as a positive / negative experience, and why?
4. What are the benefits of peer-to-peer assessment in your view?
5. When do you think peer-to-peer assessment and feedback would be most useful / impactful?
6. Are there times when this would not be appropriate?
7. What guidance or support would you need to be involved in peer-to-peer assessment?

During the interviews, the following themes emerged.

### Formative dimension

*'They would give you their comments based on what they reviewed, how you can improve what has been submitted or general comments about the work or the quality of the work that has been submitted.'*

*'I think it was my lecturer's way of helping each of us understand what was required for certain answers.'*

*'It gives each student an understanding of what is required of them.'*

*'The reason I think is positive is it gives everyone an understanding of what is required. If I am expected to grade my colleague, I would want to be fair and that means an understanding of what the standards are. I would also be able to communicate my ideas better to make sure I meet those requirements when I am writing my answers.'*

*'it's always good to kind of get feedback from different perspective perspectives and different views.'*

*'I think you can learn so much from your peers, from a totally different point of view from the leading professor.'*

### Inclusivity

*'Sometimes it might be easier to hear feedback from someone who feels, understands iteration better, so you might feel that your peers understand your struggles or what you're going through.'*

*'It's kind of just helps bring the class together if you're doing peer-to-peer feedback.'*

### Development of employability skills

*'If you are an employer, you are always going to be giving feedback. If you plan to go into academia. For me, learning to assess and review and give feedback is part of what it takes to be a good Academician or lecturer. So, it is a very big plus in terms of career value that it adds.'*

*'It does give you more skills (...) it helps you to improve as a person. It helps you to be able to take in feedback to listen and to respond to it.'*

*'I would say peer-to-peer assessment is a good thing because the students it helps students collaborate.'*

### Need to consider appropriateness.

*'There are times where it would not be appropriate. I feel that more towards the exams, like when we have broken off now and we are in the final say reading weeks and you know completing towards the exams.'*

*'It would be best in a low stakes assessment.'*

### Need for guidance.

*'we should have a format of what should be said and you know what sort of feedback is going to be given, how would that, how should the person giving the feedback be and, what's their role and the responsibility is and what's the role of responsibilities of the person receiving feedback and also maybe also some guidance and support from the seminar leader or the lecturer module leader would be definitely helpful.'*

*'If the students marking do not have a clue of what the marking criteria is, I think it would be inappropriate for you to be able to effectively grade or assess your peers or colleagues.'*

*'I wasn't really sure what to look for.'*

*'I think it's important to provide guidance on how to give this positive critique.'*

### Valuing educators' views

*'It would be better and more appropriate to go to the teacher about this since they have done this before rather than the student who is about to take the exam. They would not really know how best to give you feedback.'*

*'You also need assessment from people that know more in the area than you or that have better understanding of the subject.'*

## Conclusions

- a. **Understanding the Role of Fellow Students:** Fellow students are not just individuals attending lectures; they can provide valuable feedback based on shared experiences and a deeper understanding of the learning process. Peers may better empathize with your struggles and provide feedback that resonates with your challenges.
- b. **Learning from Different Perspectives:** Peer feedback offers diverse viewpoints that differ from those of leading professors, allowing for alternative critiques and the opportunity to broaden your professional growth, and embracing receiving feedback from different perspectives can enhance your understanding and provide a more holistic view of your work. It is important to note that the value of peer-to-peer assessment lies in gaining multiple perspectives, even if some feedback may be less constructive.

- c. **Educator's Input:** Peer-to-peer reviews are typically subjected to input from lecturers, tutors, or teaching assistants to ensure alignment and accuracy. Lecturers provide expertise and guidance to verify if the peer review process is on track. Particularly, when seeking feedback for exams or assessments, students should approach teachers who have prior experience and a better understanding of the subject matter. Students who have not yet experienced the assessment may not possess the necessary knowledge to provide effective feedback.
- d. **Establishing Feedback Guidelines:** It is helpful to have a predefined format for feedback, including the content and way it should be delivered. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of both the feedback provider and receiver. Students should be free to seek guidance and support from seminar leaders, module leaders, or lecturers to ensure a smooth peer assessment process. Students should also consult with the tutor or session leader to understand the intended purpose and goals of the peer assessment and feedback process and clarify expectations and guidelines for marking and providing feedback.
- e. **Support:** Educators should focus on growth and Improvement and emphasize the objective of peer assessment as an opportunity for growth and improvement, rather than solely focusing on criticism. Students participating in peer-peer feedback and assessment should also encourage a supportive and nurturing environment that motivates other students to enhance their skills and performance in future assessments.
- f. **Clarity:** Additionally, it is important to gain clarity on marking criteria, effective peer assessment requires a clear understanding of the marking criteria. If students are unaware of the assessment criteria, it may hinder their ability to provide accurate grading or assessment of their peers.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation for students:** It is important to note that when seeking feedback for exams or assessments, students should approach teachers who have prior experience and a better understanding of the subject matter. Students who have not yet experienced the assessment may not possess the necessary knowledge to provide effective feedback.

**Recommendation for Educators:** Educators should ensure peer-peer assessment and feed focus on Growth and Improvement, emphasize the objective of peer assessment as an opportunity for growth and improvement, rather than solely focusing on criticism.

Encourage a supportive and nurturing environment that motivates students to enhance their skills and performance in future assessments. It is important for educators to recognise that during intense exam periods, peer-to-peer assessment and feedback may be less suitable due to time constraints and added stress.

