

Know Where You Stand: How Incentivized Self-Assessment Transforms Poster Presentations

Abstract

This case study explores an innovative approach to poster presentations that combines peer review with self-assessment to create authentic learning experiences. Dr. Nicola Koyama has developed an innovative assessment approach in a Level 6 Primatology module that transforms traditional poster presentations into engaging peer and self-assessment experiences. By developing a structured system where students review peers' work before evaluating their own, with marks awarded for accurate self-assessment, students develop critical evaluation skills and deeper understanding of assessment criteria. The success of this approach, evidenced by external examiner commendation and positive student engagement, demonstrates how traditional poster sessions can be transformed into powerful learning opportunities that build assessment literacy while reducing anxiety around formal presentations.

Keywords

Peer-review, Self-assessment, Assessment-literacy, Engagement, Reflection, Poster presentations

The Challenge

Traditional poster presentations often face several challenges:

- Students struggle to understand and seeing the connection with marking criteria and feedback relevance
- Passive engagement during poster sessions with students "sitting around chatting"
- Difficulty creating authentic conference-style experiences in academic settings
- Limited opportunities for students to develop critical evaluation skills
- Noise and chaos in large poster sessions reducing focus

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The Innovation

The poster presentation includes several innovative elements:

- **Small Group Format:** Break larger cohort into manageable sessions
- **Structured Peer Review:** Students receive 10 copies of marking sheets to review peers' posters. This includes a question component where students ask and record questions about peers' work to encourage interaction.
- **Self-Assessment Component:** Once the peer review sheets are completed and handed in the students evaluate their own poster.
- **Mark Incentive:** Students earn 2% of the poster mark for accurate self-assessment (within 5%).
- **Individual Data Sets:** Students collect their own data, which may be based on similar subjects or themes, which ensures authenticity even when students work collaboratively
- **Anonymous Numbering:** Posters are anonymised to support confidentiality in peer assessment when completing marking sheets

Assessment Design

The module assessment consists of:

- **Poster presentation (50%):** Including 2% for accurate self-assessment
 - 98% for the poster quality itself
 - 2% for self-assessment accuracy (within 5% of tutor mark)
 - Bonus marks available for answering questions well
- **Seminar evaluation (50%):** Recently redesigned to incorporate AI literacy

Support Structure

The approach is supported through:

1. Clear marking rubrics provided to all students
2. Smaller groups presenting posters which are based on research topics
3. Structured timing with adequate review opportunities
4. Staff circulation and support during sessions
5. Anonymous numbering system to reduce bias

6. Consistent question prompts from markers when discussing posters with the presenting student.

Impact and Outcomes

- Student Engagement: Some of Nicola's students aren't keen at first, she says "I think they grumble having to do something. But then at the end... they're excited to know whether they've judged their poster correctly."
- Learning Benefits: Nicola states "I've always been keen to think of ways to engage students in looking at the marking criteria and the feedback." This is designed to develop critical evaluation skills and their understanding of assessment standards
- External Recognition: The external examiners consistently identify this as good practice and an effective self-reflective exercise

Transferability

Key transferable principles include:

- Peer review structure with clear rubrics
- Self-assessment with accuracy incentive
- Small group management strategies
- Anonymous review systems
- Multiple marking sheet approach

This approach demonstrates how traditional poster presentations can become powerful learning experiences that build assessment literacy while maintaining academic rigor. The success over multiple iterations suggests strong potential for adaptation across disciplines.

The case particularly succeeds in making assessment criteria transparent and engaging students in understanding standards - addressing the common challenge where students "couldn't see the relevance of feedback to the next assignment."