12-5-2017

The Self and Peer Assessment Tool in Blackboard Learn

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The Self and Peer Assessment Tool in Blackboard Learn

**Tool:** Self and Peer Assessment

**Product:** Blackboard Learn

**Company:** Blackboard Inc. - Website: [http://www.blackboard.com/](http://www.blackboard.com/)

**Pricing Information:** The Self and Peer Assessment tool is included in the package for Blackboard Learn 9.1 and upgrades. Cost varies based on the licensing agreement with Blackboard.

**Pedagogical Framework**

Self and peer evaluation is often used as a formative assessment strategy that can significantly impact the student learning experience. Once the course instructor has aligned the tool to the assessment design and the learning outcomes, students have the opportunity to reflect on the new knowledge acquired and their learning skills, and compare their knowledge with what their peers have learned and shared. From an instructional designer perspective, this tool may be considered one of the resources to enhance student collaboration and the creation of a learning community. Therefore, this tool is recommended to reinforce student-student interaction and spur a sense of belonging and participation. Research shows that peer learning can help students learn more effectively (Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2001), promote metacognition and proactiveness (Arendale, 2014), and foster motivation and academic achievement (Ginsburg-Block, Rohrbeck, & Fantuzzo, 2006; Rohrbeck, Ginsburg-Block, Fantuzzo, & Miller, 2003).
Blackboard Learn 2016 offers a revamped Self and Peer Assessment tool, which facilitates this approach on online learning (https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Learn/Instructor/Assignments/070_Self_and_Peer_Assessment).

**Tool Review**

Blackboard is a Learning Management System that allows to create and distribute learning experiences in a digital environment. One of the most recent Blackboard themes, Learn 2016, includes a revamped Self and Peer Assessment tool. This tool allows instructors to implement evaluations and self-evaluations, define the number of assignments each student will evaluate (anonymously or not), provide examples, and supply rubrics. The anonymity of the peer assessment process supports the instantiation of a safe and unbiased environment in which students can compare their own efforts to those of their peers. In this enterprise, students engage in critical thinking and self-reflection, as they review content presented in class from different perspectives.

The new release includes an improved version of the tool that overcomes one of the constraints of the previous edition: only students who submitted the first part of the assignment are matched for the evaluation part.

However, some issues persist, including a grading criteria structure that can be time-consuming for both students and instructors. For example, if the rubric contains five elements to evaluate, students have to click five times to complete the evaluation. With this structure, some students may provide feedback but forget to assign points, or skip some criteria for review. The suggested solution is to provide a single criterion, ask students to consider several elements related to this criterion, and assign a cumulative grade.
**Recommendations and Best Practices for Instructors**

The Self and Peer Assessment tool could be integrated in the teaching methodology for flipped or hybrid classes. Especially for hybrid courses, too often the delivery method is based on the aggregation of micro-sections divided between face to face and online parts that fragment the learning experience.

An alternative approach, proposed in this tool review, is to embed online peer assessment activities that provide materials for discussion in subsequent classes, stimulate peer learning and collaboration inside and outside of the classroom, and allow students to build a critical portfolio as they advance through the course. The exchange of peer feedback can provide the foundation for in-class or online discussions facilitated by the instructor. This can help bridge face to face and online activities, thus providing a more cohesive and engaging learning experience (Fig. 1).

![Figure 1. Peer assessment in hybrid courses](image-url)
Moreover, students can refine their assignments by integrating the feedback received from their peers and collect these revised and improved works in a “critical portfolio” that can be used in their academic and professional careers.

The Self and Peer Assessment tool described in this review is available for Blackboard users only, even though similar tools are available for other Learning Management Systems such as Canvas (Peer Reviews tool) and Moodle (Peer Review Assignment), as well as platforms for MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) such as edX.

References


