

Chapter 76

Teamwork Assessment and Self/Peer Evaluation in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the challenges and opportunities associated with fostering students' learning skills through teamwork assessment and self/peer evaluation in the Business Technology 2 (BT2) undergraduate unit at an Australian university. This assessment will encourage students to promote skills in teamwork, communication (writing, interpersonal interaction and cultural awareness, and presenting), critical and creative thinking (problem-solving and solving and decision-making), Information Technology literacy, and information literacy, and is intended to increase their self-confidence in both their studies and in the future workforce. This chapter provides empirical evidence from 267 students, based on quantitative and qualitative data derived from two sources. The first consists of anonymous informal feedback collected during the semester, while the second (formal) source of students' evaluations and attitudes towards the BT2 unit and teaching is "eVALUate." The students indicate that they are satisfied with this form of assessment as it assists them to develop specific skills and understandings, including time management, problem solving, decision-making, cultural awareness, oral presentation, communication, and meeting a deadline.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter investigates the challenges and opportunities of improving students' learning skills through teamwork assessment and self/peer evaluation in higher education, as this form of assessment is extensively employed in the higher education sector worldwide. This assessment is

designed to inspire students and both establish and advance a range of skills including teamwork, communication (writing, interpersonal interaction and cultural awareness, and presenting), critical and creative thinking (problem-solving and solving and decision-making) information technology literacy, and information literacy. Furthermore, this form of assessment in higher education (in-

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cluding distance learning) will improve students' work performance and productivity, increase self-confidence in a range of situations, and prepare students for the workplace in the future.

From the business perspective, it has been noted that Information Systems practitioners have been enthusiastically exploring the need for developing effective and practical skills in their students including teamwork, critical thinking, writing, communication, and oral and written presentation, among Information Systems graduates (Budimac, Putnik, Ivanovic, Bothe, & Schuetzler, 2008; Freeman & McKenzie, 2002; Ku, Tseng, & Akarasriworn, 2013; Lanning, Brickhouse, Gunsolley, Ranson, & Willett, 2011; Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2009). Thus, university instructors have begun to target the development of these skills in their curricula and unit designs in order to assist students in university life, their future workplace and life in general. In alignment with business demands and requirements, a teamwork assessment and self/peer evaluation system was developed and integrated into the Business Technology (BT2) unit to inspire and challenge students to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of the new technologies in the marketplace and present the outcomes as a report in an academic style, as well to identify how the new technologies will assist businesses to improve their performance, increase productivity, and raise their awareness in the workplace. The teamwork assessment activity discussed various cutting-edge topics, namely: 'fibre to the home' (FTTH); security, the Internet, and the latest operating systems; mobile technologies and Internet telephony; 2015 new laptops; wireless technology, i.e. WiMax (Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access); green technology; cloud computing; IPv6; and virtualization. The teamwork assessment and self/peer evaluations were released in week one of the semester, with the necessary information from the marking guide, strategies for the presentation and structure of reports, and guidelines regarding plagiarism and referencing style.

The self/peer evaluation aims to encourage all students to reflect upon and understand how well they and their partners performed the team activity, and to develop their teamwork skills. Each pair submitted one peer-reflective and one personal (self-reflective) comment on what was accomplished for this assignment, together with a copy of notes on the resources that were developed or located for the purpose of completing this assignment. The self/peer reflection questions were grouped under the following headings: 1) Individual roles and responsibilities; 2) Generating and creating ideas/strategies; 3) Research; 4) Collegiality; 5) Organizational skills; 6) Final outcome/product.

Furthermore, students were asked to complete the self/peer reflection as well as the peer reflection comments section. The former included three questions or tasks: 1) what did you learn from this group activity (in terms of the process of working in teams – not content/information)? 2) What would you need to change in the way you worked with your partner in order to make future team activities more successful? 3) List three strengths that you have in team working and two weaknesses that you need to address in order to improve; and, list three strengths and two weaknesses that you perceived in your partner during this team-work assignment. All students uploaded their evaluations and draft resource materials to the blackboard FLECS facility, and later the lecturer checked and assessed each group's work and identified how well the pair functioned. Finally, this assessment provided the students with an opportunity to inform the lecturer about any problems with the pair interactions, the division of workload, or other issues. Based on this information, the lecturer had the capacity to assign each student a different mark based on his or her efforts to complete the assignment satisfactorily.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the important challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of teamwork assessment in the higher education sector. This study is drawn

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