

CHAPTER 3.

PEER REVIEW IN ONLINE, REAL-TIME LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Meghalee Das and Michael J. Faris

Texas Tech University

In this chapter, the authors describe peer review practices using synchronous tools for students to practice giving feedback: evaluating and providing peer feedback, evaluating feedback they receive, and using feedback in revision in online, real-time learning. In particular, the authors detail peer feedback activities that can promote flexible writing practices, metacognition, and engagement. In describing their “better practices,” this chapter addresses the themes of practices in motion across teaching and learning modalities and practices adapted from classic composition strategies.

FRAMEWORKS AND PRINCIPLES IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing, Engagement:** A sense of investment and involvement in learning.
- **Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing, Flexibility:** The ability to adapt to situations, expectations, or demands.
- **Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing, Metacognition:** The ability to reflect on one’s own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes used to structure knowledge.
- **GSOLE Principle 3.4:** Instructors and tutors should migrate and/or adapt appropriate reading, alphabetic writing, and multimodal composition theories from traditional instructional settings to their OLI environment(s).

GUIDING QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU BEGIN READING

- How can online writing instructors design peer feedback activities drawing on the unique features of online, real-time instructional environments in ways that encourage flexible and meaningful writing processes for students?

- What does successful learning look like for peer feedback activities?
- How can online writing instructors design peer feedback activities to provide space and time for reflection on those activities while also promoting metacognition?
- How can online writing instructors design activities in ways that provide space and time for productively practicing with peer feedback technologies without resorting to simply teaching tools?

INTRODUCTION

In spring 2020, I (Meghalee) taught a second semester first-year writing (FYW) class focused on inquiry and research that was delivered in an in-person, real-time learning environment. Through a series of scaffolded assignments like formal essays, discussion board posts, class activities, and peer reviews, students researched an issue of public interest that they were personally connected to. As an international first-year doctoral student teaching rhetoric-focused composition classes, I found that students and I had a lot in common with each other in the ways we were trying to navigate academic expectations, college writing, work-life balance, and the desire to form a sense of community with peers. The lively discussions that took place in class gave us an opportunity to engage with each other and with civic issues, and motivated students to ask questions, analyze audiences, evaluate the credibility of sources, discuss ethical implications, and look at people, discourse, texts, and topics beyond binaries to compose effective and purposeful texts in a variety of genres.

However, when our lives were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic with the sudden move to an online course delivery format, students were unsure of how to complete assignments, peer reviews, and activities, and I, with no background in online teaching, was anxious about recreating the same community in an online class. However, students expressed relief to be able to interact with their classmates over Zoom, and I was determined to find ways to research, learn, and apply online pedagogical strategies that would make classes fulfilling and engaging for students. My goal was not to find perfect online teaching solutions but instead to be adaptable to the rapid changes happening around us and to incorporate teaching techniques, video conferencing, writing and collaboration tools, and peer engagement strategies to meet the needs of students and facilitate a meaningful learning experience. I was preparing “better” practices, building on my experiences as a teacher and feedback from students, focusing on inclusive learning, student-centered instructional design, and dynamic online peer engagement strategies, among others.

In fall 2021, when I was assigned to teach the same FYW class again in an online, real-time learning format, I recalled how in the in-person version of the class, I put students in groups for peer reviews, and they gave each other feedback by making comments and annotations on printed drafts. I moved among these groups to answer questions, and, depending on how much time was left in the class period, we held a general discussion on the feedback session. In previous online, any time learning versions of the course, I used online peer review tools like FeedbackFruits¹ and discussion boards for peer reviews. I have more experience with online teaching now, but I was still concerned about designing effective online, real-time learning peer reviews, which are not only a crucial part of a writing class but also an indicator of what students are learning or how they are contributing. In digital environments, attention can be fragmented, engagement can be inconsistent, and the informal conversations that aid in building community and trust among students are often limited unless intentional online group activities are initiated by the instructor, as students don't share a collective physical space. I chose to embrace the technological features afforded by a video conferencing platform like Zoom, where the class was taking place, and to use an online word processor like Google Docs that has editing features to digitally reconstruct the peer review experience. But I wanted to go beyond mirroring in-person, real-time teaching strategies in the online environment by focusing not just on the tools but also on cultivating cognitive skills in students that help them engage with texts, provide feedback, and collaborate better. I also hoped that implementing an online, real-time learning peer review would facilitate interaction among students and develop their sense of agency and accountability in learning.

As Michael and I discussed the benefits and challenges associated with an online teaching modality and planned the peer reviews for this course, he advised me to include a practice and preparation session for peer feedback to help students understand the importance of peer reviews in the writing process, develop the skills of a peer reviewer, and become more comfortable with online peer review tools. This chapter, thus, was born out of functionality and a goal to create meaningful online, real-time learning peer review sessions, along with critical and iterative reflection on my part to improve the experience as we moved through the semester.

Our approach to peer review in this chapter is driven by three principles or values in the field. First, our approach is informed by the belief in the field that "All Writers Have More to Learn," one of the five threshold concepts for writing studies provided in Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle's (2015) *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*. As contributors to the discussion

1 Learn more about FeedbackFruits at <https://feedbackfruits.com/get-started-now/educators>

of this threshold concept observed, writers need to learn flexible strategies through a variety of practices (Rose, 2015; Yancey, 2015); writers who are most effective can externalize their writing “into an independent artifact that can be examined, revised, or otherwise worked on by the writer, collaborators, or other people” (Bazerman & Tinberg, 2015, p. 61); and learning to write effectively means new and different types of practice and revision (Downs, 2015; Yancey, 2015). Throughout the semester, we created opportunities for students to give feedback on each other’s drafts in real time and at various stages of the projects, learn from each other, and be flexible in feedback formats, such as in small breakout room groups, in whole-class discussions, and through comments on Google Docs.

This principle—that all writers have more to learn—is echoed in a second set of principles that guided our choices for designing peer feedback sessions in Meghalee’s course: that students should “develop flexible [writing] processes,” from the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* (Council of Writing Program Administrators [CWPA] et al., 2011, p. 8). Since writing is not a linear process, students need opportunities to practice different aspects of writing like “research, drafting, sharing with others, revising in response to reviews, and editing,” and these practices can be facilitated by fostering eight habits of mind or ways of approaching learning, namely, curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition (CWPA et al., 2011, p. 8). Through online, real-time peer reviews, we draw particular attention to the following:

- **Engagement:** Students are encouraged to make connections between their own and their classmates’ drafts, discover new meanings and ideas, and incorporate the feedback they receive through peer reviews to revise their ideas and projects.
- **Flexibility:** Students are given opportunities to approach assignments in different ways, encouraged to give verbal feedback or textual feedback to their peers, and make choices based on context, purpose, and audience.
- **Metacognition:** Students are encouraged to not just evaluate others’ work but also reflect on their own writing process, goals, and choices, and use what they learn from reflections on one assignment to improve writing on following projects.

The third principle informing our approach is from the Global Society of Online Literacy Educators’ (GSOLE, 2019) Principle 3.4, which states, “Instructors and tutors should migrate and/or adapt appropriate reading, alphabetic writing, and multimodal composition theories from traditional instructional settings to their OLI environment(s).” Setting up effective peer reviews requires

making intentional choices that align with the course and assignment goals and can be particularly difficult to replicate in online classes, especially in terms of engagement, organic interaction, access, and technological proficiency. Moreover, most online writing instruction scholarship on evidence-based practices focus on online, any time learning classes, where instructors can enable peer review features like discussion forums or use peer review tools like FeedbackFruits in the learning management systems. There has been an increasing focus on online real-time teaching, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, and this delivery format continues to be adopted in many programs across institutions. Through practice and reflection, we have explored the benefits, opportunities, challenges, and solutions to barriers in online real-time peer reviews to recommend practices which can be replicated in similar class settings.

Our main driving question in this chapter is: How can online writing instructors design peer feedback activities drawing on the unique features of online, real-time instructional environments in ways that encourage flexible and meaningful writing processes for students? We also explore: What does successful learning look like for peer feedback activities? To encourage students to evaluate each other's writing, provide useful feedback to peers, evaluate the feedback they receive, plan and implement revision, and promote engagement, flexibility, and metacognition, we use the Transparent Assignment Design (TAD) format. Based on the Transparency in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (TILT) framework, whose goal is to "make learning processes explicit and equitably accessible for all students" (Winkelman et al., 2019, p. 1), the TAD prompt format gives clear instructions on the activity's purpose, task, and completion criteria.

COURSE CONTEXT AND LESSON

As mentioned in the introduction, in fall 2021, I (Meghalee) taught an online, real-time FYW class called Advanced College Rhetoric, which focused on conducting research on an issue that students choose for the semester, analyzing the various stakeholders associated with the issue, finding and evaluating sources, mapping out the conversations around the issue, and incorporating source material in their final project. The course was divided into three units, with the following major assignments:

- Unit I: Developing Interest and Inquiry: A low-stakes exploratory essay called the "I-Search Essay."
- Unit II: Mapping the Conversations: An Annotated Bibliography and an essay that synthesizes and analyzes research called the "Mapping the Conversations Essay."

- Unit III: Entering the Conversation: A Final Project that makes an argument and enters the conversation, with options for media, genre, and format.

Throughout the course, students conducted multiple peer reviews of drafts and scaffolded assignments related to these major projects. I aimed to learn from each peer review session and improve the prompt with each iteration. Some improvements I made, which I discuss below, included increasing the activity time, using technical features like commenting or suggesting, assigning meeting roles in breakout rooms, and adding a reflection task after the peer review activity.

In this chapter, we focus on three peer review sessions, one from each unit, to show the evolution of our plans and their implementation, students' experience with the exercises, and the modifications we made in the prompts and our approach as we progressed throughout the semester. We begin by explaining how we prepared students for online peer reviews in Unit I by setting up a practice peer review with a sample student essay and then a peer review session of students' drafts using the Describe–Evaluate–Suggest (DES) heuristic by Bill Hart-Davidson (Eli Review, 2016).² Next, we focus on peer feedback for one scaffolding assignment in Unit II for the Mapping the Conversations Essay. Lastly, we describe a peer review activity from Unit III for the Final Project, which also includes a reflection and revision element. For each example, we outline the plan and materials for scaffolding activities, including the peer review assignment prompt based on the TILT/TAD model (Winkelmes et al., 2019). The chapter also includes a reflection on these peer review activities and description of students' experiences and challenges, as they used various tools like Google Docs and Zoom for online peer reviews. Throughout our narrative, we have included excerpts from students' comments (shared with permission) during and after the activity to help readers understand our activity plans and student responses.

PRACTICING PEER REVIEWS

Research on peer review workshops indicates that teachers need to prepare students on how they can give effective feedback instead of assuming they know how to do so, and that such preparation, demonstration, and practice can lead students to giving more specific and numerous comments to their classmates (Atwell, 2014; Min, 2005). To prepare students for effective peer reviews, I assigned a sample I-Search Essay for students to read before class and uploaded the sample essay to a Google folder as a Google document. (While I used Google

2 Learn more about Eli Review at <https://elireview.com/>.

Drive for this activity, teachers could use a different file sharing space, such as Microsoft OneDrive.) On the day of the practice peer review session, I began preparing students by first discussing textbook readings on feedback and revision and the value of peer reviews in the writing process. The class also watched a video on giving helpful feedback using the DES heuristic by Hart-Davidson (Eli Review, 2016), which aligns with our approach that learning occurs through peer learning and collaborating.

The DES heuristic encourages students to describe or say what they see as a reader, evaluate or explain how a text meets (or doesn't meet) the assignment criteria, and suggest or offer concrete advice for improvement. It is one way to encourage novice writers to practice giving feedback that provides specific suggestions for revisions, thereby promoting metacognition and critical thinking. As we reviewed examples of comments that followed the DES format, some students said such a format was useful in planning how to give substantial feedback. During these discussions, students also shared their concerns about technology and inexperience with giving feedback, such as unfamiliarity with the tools, an unstable internet connection, and a general awkwardness about conducting peer review over Zoom with classmates they barely knew in the second week of class.

After the discussion, I shared the link for the Google Drive folder and the sample I-Search Essay in the chat. I had also posted the link on the course learning management system so that students could access the document from multiple places after we closed the Zoom room. I shared my Zoom screen and gave a brief tutorial on basic features of Google Docs, like the editing and suggesting features and the commenting tool. A few students said they had worked on Google Docs before, but most hadn't. In fact, many teachers assume that students are technologically proficient and familiar with a variety of new media tools. However, research shows that younger generations have a wide variety of experiences, access, and skill levels when it comes to new technologies (Hargittai, 2010). And so, writing teachers need to explicitly teach functional, critical, and rhetorical literacies around new technologies (Selber, 2004). I encouraged students to explore the editing, commenting, and suggesting features, and I observed how the more experienced students helped novice Google Docs users employ these features by speaking or commenting in the chat. I realized how important it was to allot enough time for online peer review preparation, as the technological and cognitive overload, exacerbated by the unfamiliarity of using online collaborative tools, can weigh on the minds of students and must be considered when planning peer reviews.

For this practice session, I shared a simple prompt with students, which was divided into two parts:

- **Part 1:** Using the “suggesting” and “commenting” features in Google Docs, give your feedback on the assigned sample essay based on the requirements of the I-Search Essay assignment prompt using the Describe–Evaluate–Suggest method. Give at least one comment on what the writer is doing well and one suggestion or area of improvement.
- **Part II:** Now read the comments that everyone has posted on the sample essay. Which comments do you like the best, which are the most effective, and why? Share with the class by replying to the comment directly on the Google document, by writing a note in the Zoom chat, or by unmuting yourself and speaking to the class.

Using a sample for practice helped students to be frank and more comfortable than giving feedback to a classmate’s draft for the first time. We discussed which comments were effective and why. It was important for us to use the practice session as an opportunity to learn how to give effective feedback and not just a demonstration of tools. Students remembered the earlier discussion on the DES heuristic and incorporated that into their review. For example, the sample essay contained the following sentence, referring to research questions: “The first I developed was simple.” A student commented, “The first what? More clarification would make the sentence sound better.” Another student suggested that their classmate’s comment was effective because, rather than just pointing out a problem with the text, the peer reviewer offered a specific solution for the writer. A couple of students agreed with the comment and mentioned how they appreciated receiving specific comments with suggestions that helped them improve their drafts rather than vague compliments like “this sentence is effective.”

UNIT I: PEER REVIEW OF I-SEARCH ESSAY

After the warm-up with the practice session, students were ready to begin reviewing each other’s drafts for the I-Search Essay. I first asked students to upload their I-Search Essay drafts to a Google Drive folder and assigned students into breakout rooms in groups of two or three. Part of planning effective peer reviews consists of giving students clear instructions on what they are expected to do in the workshop. I shared with students an online activity handout based on the TAD format, and they began reading and reviewing their partner’s drafts from the folder. Most of them were using suggesting and commenting functions to provide feedback in real time, although I reminded them that they could download these documents from the folder or refer to them again later. Although I had initially allotted 15 minutes for the peer review activity plus another 10 minutes for discussion, I had to leave out and postpone the discussion time

because the practice session took longer than I had anticipated, and I did not want students to feel rushed. Nevertheless, some breakout rooms were less engaged than others, while some gave detailed feedback to each other, including mentioning the I-Search Essay assignment evaluation criteria to support their feedback. This was the peer review prompt for the final draft of the I-Search Essay based on the TAD model:

PEER REVIEW: I-SEARCH ESSAY

Breakout Room Activity Time: 15 minutes | Main Room Discussion: 10 minutes

Purpose

- To recognize specific rhetorical choices in the drafts of other writers.
- To provide feedback on your classmate's I-Search Essay draft.
- To assess the strengths and weaknesses of your own writing.

The assignment is designed to help you reach the following goals and learning outcomes:

Writing Processes and Craft:

- Develop a writing project through multiple drafts.
- Develop flexible strategies for reading, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, rereading, and editing.
- Evaluate the work of others, give useful feedback to others on their writing, and evaluate and incorporate feedback from others in their own writing.

Teamwork: To include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.

Task

1. Get into breakout rooms on Zoom.
2. Click on your partner's essay in the Google Drive folder. The link to the Google Drive folder is provided in the chat.
3. Using the "suggesting" and "commenting" features of Google Docs, give your feedback on your partner's I-Search Essay draft. Review requirements in the I-Search Essay prompt and refer to the Describe-Evaluate-Suggest method to give at least two comments on what they are doing well and two suggestions or areas of improvement.
4. Come back to the main room, where we will discuss the comments and feedback as a class.

Criteria for Success

1. You have provided at least two comments on what your classmate is doing well in the draft and two suggestions or areas for improvement.
2. You've had a chance to briefly discuss your feedback with each other.

In the next class, I held a discussion about what worked and what needed to be changed for the next peer review session. It was important for me to gauge students' perceptions of this activity and make modifications based on their responses. Students, in general, said they found the exercise useful and interesting, although it took some time to get used to the technical aspects. For example, one student said they would like to do this again, while another accepted that their unfamiliarity with the tools along with the time constraints of the activity caused some anxiety (mostly because they were not sure if they would finish reviewing the document). A couple of students mentioned that they had done peer reviews in a previous online, any time learning FYW class using a tool called FeedbackFruits. So, I asked the class to share if they found online, real-time learning peer reviews different from online, any time learning, and if so, in what ways. Students said that they liked that in a real-time format they could ask their partner questions to have a more organic discussion on the drafts. My biggest takeaway from the activity and the follow-up discussion was that I needed to ensure that ample time be allotted for peer feedback preparation because we cannot assume students will be familiar with online feedback tools, which can lead to some anxiety, along with the pressure of performing well in front of classmates they barely know yet. Having a discussion with students post-peer review was also important and helped me to understand their needs and modify the approach or process accordingly.

UNIT II: PEER REVIEW OF MAPPING THE CONVERSATIONS ESSAY

In Unit I, my goal was to familiarize students with the process of online peer reviews and how to give effective feedback. In Unit II, students started to feel more comfortable with the peer review process and document editing tools. Even when there were technical difficulties—like when some students got disconnected due to an unstable internet connection, their audio stopped working during discussions, or they had trouble opening the Google document—they let me know what the problem was and promptly improvised. For example, they gave comments in the Zoom chat or LMS discussion board if their audio or the commenting feature in Google Docs did not work, and seamlessly continued the discussion on their phone if they got disconnected on their computers. As they participated in more breakout room activities, a sense of camaraderie had

also developed among the students by Unit II, and so I encouraged them to engage in in-depth discussions with each other and invest in more complex analysis of the drafts than giving sentence-level stylistic comments. (I had noticed in previous peer reviews that students tended to focus on local, stylistic issues and not comment on larger, more global issues.) One way I tried to involve students in more productive discussions was by giving them the opportunity to choose meeting roles for themselves during the peer review activity. I discuss the roles in more detail later in this section, but the main idea was to encourage students to be accountable and time efficient by choosing roles like notetaker, facilitator, and timekeeper during the activity that allowed them to take responsibility for reviewing the prompt and meeting the assignment goals.

As mentioned earlier, Unit II had two main projects, the Annotated Bibliography and the Mapping the Conversations Essay. This essay builds on the sources that students collected in the Annotated Bibliography (including additional sources) and synthesizes the conversations happening around their issue. Through scaffolding assignments, students analyze and connect the perspectives of various stakeholders, or the people affected by the issue. In this section, we highlight one of the peer review sessions for a portion of the Mapping the Conversations Essay. In this session, students reviewed their classmates' write-ups on the values and perspectives of one of the stakeholders associated with the issue they were researching. Since the essay is a significantly longer assignment, students posted drafts of smaller chunks of the essay on the LMS discussion boards so they could receive early feedback and revise smaller portions of the essay rather than trying to tackle the entire essay at once. In the example below, students had posted their drafts to a discussion board in the LMS before our class meeting so that their drafts were available to each other for online, real-time peer review during class.

The prompt below outlines the task and includes instructions of how to select meeting roles. Before the activity started, I explained to the students the meaning of the different roles:

- **the notetaker**, to take notes of what is discussed in the breakout room,
- **the facilitator/presenter**, to facilitate the discussions according to the activity prompt and later present key points in the main Zoom room, and
- **the timekeeper**, to keep track of time and ensure all the tasks are completed on time.

I have used assigned roles in many online discussion sessions in other classes, and I found this practice translates well to discussion-based real-time peer review activities in writing classes too. Assigning these roles helps keep groups accountable, and each group has something substantial to share in the main room after the peer review session.

PEER FEEDBACK DISCUSSION OF ONE STAKEHOLDER

Breakout Room Activity Time: 20 minutes | Main Room Discussion: 10 minutes

Purpose

- To provide feedback on your classmate's choice of one stakeholder and their analysis of the stakeholder's perspective and arguments.
- To reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of your analysis of your own stakeholder.

The assignment is to help you reach the following goals and learning outcomes:

Writing Processes and Craft:

- Develop a writing project through multiple drafts.
- Develop flexible strategies for reading, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, rereading, and editing.
- Evaluate the work of others, give useful feedback to others on their writing, and evaluate and incorporate feedback from others in their own writing.

Teamwork: To include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.

Task

1. Enter the assigned breakout room.
2. Assign roles to each other:
 - a. Facilitator/Presenter: Will facilitate activity and present key points in main room.
 - b. Timekeeper: Will keep track of time.
 - c. Notetaker: Will take notes of discussions.
3. Find your partners' discussion board posts on one of the stakeholders for the Mapping the Conversations Essay. In either verbal responses or by replying to the discussion board post, provide at least two comments on how they might better explain and analyze the stakeholder and their perspective. You might refer to these identification traits to help guide your comments:
 - a. The draft is clear about who this stakeholder is.
 - b. The draft is clear about the stakeholder's relationship to the issue.
 - c. The draft is clear about what the stakeholder argues and their reasoning for that argument.
 - d. The draft discusses the values that are informing the stakeholder's perspectives.

- e. The draft applies stasis theory to better understand the nature of this stakeholder’s perspectives and why and where they disagree with other stakeholders.
 - f. The draft appears to be using complex enough and reliable sources.
 - g. Sources are properly cited.
 - h. The draft shows complexity and understanding of the stakeholder’s perspectives, moving beyond mere description to analysis of why and how the stakeholder holds these positions.
 - i. The draft is well organized.
4. You might, then, ask yourself: Are there places where the writer could explain the perspective with more clarity, specificity, or complexity? Do they need more analysis to explain the stakeholder’s relationship to the issue and how and why they disagree with others (using stasis theory)? Do you have suggestions for the sources that the writer is using? Try using the Describe–Evaluate–Suggest model.
 5. Join the main room and present the observations.

Criteria for Success

- You have provided at least two suggestions to each group member’s posts either verbally or in comments.
- You’ve had a chance to briefly discuss your feedback with each other.
- You have noted key discussion points to be presented in the main room.

Once students came back from the breakout room, they enthusiastically presented their discussions according to their selected roles. However, since the activity prompt said they could share their feedback either verbally or as a reply in the discussion post, almost no one wrote down their comments. We still had an engaging discussion, but it is easy to forget these feedback points after class. So, for the next peer review, which I describe in the next section, I included not only written feedback but also a reflection task in which students briefly wrote about how they planned to implement the feedback they received. For the rest of the unit, there were more such scaffolding activities, where students posted on the discussion board and then had peer reviews in class. Such discussions involved analyzing more stakeholders, the background and context of the issue, and looking at sample essays.

UNIT III: PEER REVIEW OF FINAL PROJECT

In Unit III, students worked on the Final Project, where they made an argument on their chosen issue and persuaded a particular stakeholder to change their mind

or to influence their actions on the issue. In this section, we share a peer review activity in which students provided feedback on statements of purpose for the Final Project—an early planning activity in which students designed three potential plans for their projects. At this stage of the semester, students also showed considerable improvement in the quality and usefulness of the feedback they gave to each other. For example, instead of superficial comments and only assessing whether drafts met the minimum requirements of the prompt, students also gave feedback in terms of audience analysis, specificity and clarity of purpose, and coherent organization of ideas, and they made suggestions on which medium would be most appropriate and realistically manageable for their final project.

Additionally, as mentioned in the prompt below, I added a reflection element in this peer review, during which students reflected on the comments they received on their drafts by writing a short reflection. I included the reflection task as a response to the peer review mentioned in the previous section: Students had participated in engaging discussions but did not write many comments or reflect on the comments beyond the class discussions. With the cognitive load from multiple classes that students take, it was unlikely they would remember every important point discussed during peer reviews unless they took notes or reflected on the effectiveness and relevance of the feedback received. This reflection of about 150 words required them to outline their plan on implementing the comments they received, thus making the peer review activity more productive. The prompt below outlines the whole peer review activity, with the reflection added as the third task in the session.

PEER FEEDBACK DISCUSSION OF STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE FOR FINAL PROJECT

Breakout Room Discussion Time: 20 minutes | Main Room Writing Time: 10 minutes

Purpose

- To give and receive feedback on drafts of three potential statements of purpose for final project.
- To choose one statement of purpose for your project based on feedback received from others.
- To reflect on the feedback received on the chosen statement of purpose and write how you plan to implement the comments.

The activity will help you reach the following learning outcomes:

- Develop flexible strategies for reading, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, rereading, and editing.

- Evaluate the work of others, give useful feedback to others on their writing, and evaluate and incorporate feedback from others in their own writing.
- Assess accurately the strengths and weaknesses of their own writing and develop individual plans for revision and improvement.
- Enact revision as substantive change.

Task

1. Enter your assigned breakout room.
2. Find your partners' discussion board posts on three possible statements of purpose for your final project. By replying to the discussion board posts of each partner, provide at least two suggestions for continuing forward. Try using the Describe–Evaluate–Suggest model. Consider the following questions:
 - a. Do the statements clearly state the rhetorical purpose, audience, and medium or context of the final project?
 - b. Does one of these ideas stand out as the most interesting and useful to approach? Why?
 - c. Do you have concerns about the audience (it could be more specific, or they don't seem to be considering a constraint or audience belief or value)?
 - d. Can the purpose be more clearly stated or be more precise?
 - e. Does one of these projects seem too extreme, unmanageable, or impossible (like the audience likely isn't persuadable)?
3. Join the main room when breakout rooms close. Reflect on the feedback you received on your own three potential statements of purpose and choose one statement/idea for your final project based on the feedback. Write a short reflection of 150 words as a reply to yourself in your original discussion forum post, where you will describe your final approach and how you plan to implement the feedback received or any revisions you want to incorporate.

Criteria for Success

- You have evaluated the draft statements of purpose of your partners based on the requirements of the activity prompt.
- You have given at least two suggestions to each partner by replying to their discussion board post.
- You have written your reflection and revision plan as a reply to yourself in your original discussion forum post (or as a new post if you do not have an original post).

Adding the reflection step reinforced learning as students both engaged with each other as well as exercised metacognition by being aware of their own thought processes. While some students shared their plans regarding the steps they planned to take next in terms of the content in the Final Project or the medium they planned to use, others used the feedback to assess the strengths of the drafts or to add any missing requirements. For example, one student's post reads,

One of the suggestions I received was to keep the audience engaged and I think with a podcast I can implement this by using a variety of sound effects as well as including multiple types of content in the podcast such as research, interviews, commentary, etc.

In their reflection, another student wrote,

I will probably use this feedback as a sign to work on the video statement of purpose, as I will find it the most interesting, and it seems to be the most effective way of showing my point. Since everyone watches videos nowadays. I will use statistics and appeal to a group of younger people to make the video more targeted.

One takeaway I had from these student comments was that the low-stakes reflection activity allowed them to pause, take in the feedback, learn the reader's perspective, review their choices, and build or modify their roadmap for the rest of the assignment. This action in reflection is a crucial part of the writing and revising process and can help make a peer review activity more meaningful.

As I developed these peer feedback strategies, I wanted to emphasize the dynamic nature of online learning modalities and how it was important to be flexible and responsive to students' developing needs and the environment. As an online writing instructor, I frequently updated activity prompts, sought feedback from students, and modified peer feedback activities according to the type of assignment reviewed. The strategies that I found most effective were preparing students on how to give meaningful peer feedback using the DES heuristic; giving clear instructions on the tasks, goals, time, and criteria in the TAD format; assigning enough time to comprehend and complete the task; and including a reflection task that allowed students to create a plan of action based on the feedback received. These practices encourage flexibility, engagement, and metacognition, the habits of mind which I tried to develop in students in this course.

REFLECTION ON PRACTICE

Many assume that the measure of success of an online class depends on its ability to replicate in-person, real-time learning pedagogies, which are more familiar to teachers and therefore seen as ideal; however, effective online teaching strategies can inform in-person, real-time writing instruction, too (Neal et al., 2021). While I, too, was initially trying to recreate aspects of an in-class peer review experience, I wanted to go beyond migrating in-person teaching strategies to the online environment. According to Michael Neal and colleagues (2021), an effective online workshop must make it possible for “the class to collectively come together to receive direction” and facilitate “peer-to-peer interaction that allows for sharing and responding to students’ writing” (p. 193). As a facilitator of online peer review workshops, I reimagined the activity by embracing the affordances of online platforms, acknowledging the challenges of online collaborative writing and reviewing, and hoped to provide students with an authentic interactive experience rather than just a recreation of an in-class peer review session. Because online formats are different from in-person, real-time learning formats—and because online courses can vary widely in how they’re delivered and structured—I hoped to build on my experience with in-person classes but not limit myself to in-person pedagogies or make assumptions that the same strategies can work in all formats.

I used the guiding principles discussed in the introduction to direct the planning, design, implementation, and modifications of the peer review activities to encourage flexible and meaningful writing processes for students. Writers learn flexible strategies through a variety of practices (Rose, 2015; Yancey, 2015), and it is this flexibility that allows us to implement new and different types of practice and revision (Downs, 2015; Yancey, 2015). Effective peer reviews can provide opportunities for writers to approach learning collaboratively through engagement with each other and help them to develop habits of mind like flexibility and metacognition, which can improve awareness of one’s own writing (CWPA et al., 2011). This self-awareness was reflected in the comments students gave to each other, which gradually moved from surface-level comments to more substantive ones, and later in their own reflection and revision plans based on the feedback they received. As the semester ended, students wrote self-assessment essays in which they reflected on their experiences with the online, real-time peer reviews and how they used the feedback to improve their drafts. For example, one student reflected:

The small groups were a way to get a different perspective on your writing and allow classmates to make friendly criticisms on ways to improve your writing or catch some mistake that

you may have missed. This allowed for room for improvement with each draft progressing in a way that was more effective than before. Each time we were in small groups I was thankfully always helped by my classmates on improvements I could make on each assignment but mainly the annotated bibliography, the I-Search Essay, and the mapping the conversations essay. Each assignment required the submission of multiple drafts with hopes that with each draft, improvements were made and for me specifically they were. With each draft that was created, improvements were made on grammar, information selection, stakeholder credibility and effectively conveying the information gathered in a way that followed each assignment's criteria.

Another student also reflected on the peer review experience and wrote how he “evaluated the work of others, gave useful feedback to others on their writing, and evaluated and incorporated that feedback from others in his own writing.” He added,

I was fortunate enough to do this [peer reviews] on every draft we submitted. I was given the opportunity to give my feedback on three possible ideas my classmates had for their final project. It was useful to them because it aided them in narrowing down their thought processes. They could also incorporate my opinions and feedback from other classmates into their project. For example, with the Mapping the Conversations Essay we had a 20-minute peer reviewing group activity. We read through everyone's drafts and got to talk about some errors and some ideas that our peers would change or give kudos to the parts we enjoyed about their drafts.

Our third guiding principle was to develop appropriate composition teaching strategies for the unique features of the online instructional environment (GSOLE, 2019). We made use of the affordances of technology to try flexible approaches to both prevent monotony in the peer review activities and show students the multiple ways in which they can respond to each other and experience the advantages and the challenges associated with it. The goal was not to create a perfect peer review activity, but a realistic one, which can be messy, whether in-person or online. Rather, I wanted to cultivate habits of mind where students made connections between their own and others' ideas, acted on feedback, and discovered new meaning in their writing as a result of the guided interactions they had with each other in the form of scaffolded activities. I also

wanted students to use tools as facilitators helping to reach those writing goals. Using Zoom breakout rooms, the chat function, Google Docs commenting and suggesting, and LMS discussion board posts, students engaged with their classmates in different ways that kept the peer review discussions lively. Even when faced with barriers like technical difficulties, students used their creativity to give comments verbally in the Zoom classroom or in the LMS and reflect upon their plans based on the feedback.

However, I noted any barriers so that I could avoid them in the future and proposed some better practices that could help other teachers create peer reviews for their online, real-time learning classes. For example, allotting enough time for peer reviews is important, especially in online classes, as students need some time to become familiar with the technical tools besides reading and comprehending the drafts to be able to give useful feedback. I felt I rushed a bit in the first few peer reviews, and after talking to my students, I realized they, too, would have liked more time. I tried to put myself in their shoes and did the activity myself, which also included allotting time to read the prompt and one or more drafts and was able to create a more realistic timeframe for the activity.

Another important takeaway was the importance of preparing students for peer reviews; I not only explained to them the rationale behind these activities but also gave them ample time to practice, review what is considered effective feedback, and become comfortable with each other. For example, I used a sample essay for the practice session so that students would not feel hesitant to comment honestly, and I developed an exercise during which students analyzed which comments were effective so that they could model their comments based on the DES heuristic. Being very clear with the instructions was also important.

The TAD prompt format allowed me to focus on the purpose of the activity, learning outcomes, the steps of the task, and the criteria for success, which communicated to students what steps they had to take to complete the peer review activity and how they knew if they were successful. Adding the meeting roles—notetaker, facilitator, and timekeeper—in the assignment prompt encouraged students to be time efficient during breakout room discussions and to take responsibility for meeting the activity's goals. Finally, including the reflection task at the end of peer reviews helped students to meaningfully engage in metacognition: to consider the comments they received and plan a roadmap of the next steps they would take to incorporate the feedback in their projects.

CONCLUSION

One of our guiding principles in this chapter was “that all writers have more to learn” (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015), and while polishing online, real-time

peer review strategies and writing this chapter as a community of practice, I was reminded again that all instructors and instructional designers also have more to learn. Instructors need to be flexible and responsive because our aim is to facilitate an environment where learning outcomes can be met, and students can practice habits of mind. GSOLE's (2019) Principle 3.4 says, "Instructors and tutors should migrate and/or adapt appropriate reading, alphabetic writing, and multimodal composition theories from traditional instructional settings to their OLI environment(s)." This chapter provides insight on a particular approach taken by us, which consisted of using a file sharing, editing, and commenting platform and real-time audiovisual feedback on a video conferencing site. We also used the TAD assignment format, created small group discussions, and added individual reflection tasks for students based on our observation and student responses mentioned earlier.

As an online writing instructor aiming to develop composition, feedback, and reflection skills in students, I have found peer reviews to be an excellent tool that engages students and allows them to be responsible for their learning. New online teachers may feel overwhelmed by the number of options available to choose from for peer reviews or may have experience in only teaching in-person, real-time classes. We end the chapter with a few takeaways and observations from our experience conducting these online, real-time peer reviews:

- Plan a class during which you discuss with students the importance of peer reviews, model and practice how to provide effective and substantive feedback using a heuristic like the DES, and demonstrate peer review tools and technologies.
- Allot ample time for students to familiarize themselves with peer review, word processing, and video-conferencing tools, especially in the beginning of the semester.
- Keep in mind the goals for the peer review to narrow the learning outcomes and tasks of the peer review activity, and choose tools that are compatible with these outcomes and tasks.
- Break down assignments and peer review of assignments into smaller, scaffolded activities.
- Be flexible so that you can make modifications based on students' responses and respond to any unexpected technical challenges.
- Use clear instructions for the peer review prompts (such as the TAD format) to explain the goals, tasks, and completion criteria.
- Instruct students to assign meeting roles in breakout rooms such as notetaker, facilitator, and timekeeper to make the discussions more productive and time efficient.

- Include a reflection task with each peer review for students to reflect upon the feedback and how to apply useful comments in their drafts to make the peer review activity meaningful.

MOVING BETTER PRACTICES ACROSS MODALITIES

- **In-Person, Real-Time Learning:** The peer review strategies that we described in this chapter can be replicated in in-person, real-time learning environments. For in-person, real-time classes in which some students are joining via hyflex video call, we encourage asking onsite students to bring their own devices and headphones and to join the class's Zoom session. This way, onsite and online students can work with each other in peer review sessions in breakout rooms and develop community across modalities. The same peer review activity prompts can be used in this modality because once everyone is on Zoom, there is better engagement among students as their interaction is not limited by modality, and those attending in person can also receive feedback from those attending through video call.
- **Online, Any Time Learning:** The peer review strategies we mentioned were tailored for our course's online, real-time learning environment, but these practices can move across modalities and be adapted to an online, any time learning environment, too. Scaffolding assignments, giving clear directions in activity prompts, using peer feedback tools like FeedbackFruits embedded in the LMS or posting on discussion boards, and asking students to give feedback and reflect on a Google document can also lead to a meaningful peer review activity. Such an approach can foster habits of mind like flexibility, engagement, and metacognition, which facilitate practicing research, drafting, revising in response to feedback, and editing.
- **Hybrid Learning:** As we adapt these activities in a hybrid format, we should consider which activities would benefit students more by being present in an in-person, real-time learning environment, where they get feedback from their peers and the instructor, and which would be better for an online format, either real-time or any time. It might be a good idea to have in-person peer reviews and scaffolding activities earlier in the semester, as students get to know each other. As students gain more practice and become more familiar with the activities and with each other, these activities can be facilitated in online formats later in the semester.

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