

Building Peer Review into Your Courses

Instructor Guide for Designing, Coaching, and Assessing Student Feedback

Peer review transforms student writing from a solitary hurdle into a collaborative, professional dialogue. When designed intentionally, peer review helps students recognize writing strengths, deepen critical reading, and experience real-world feedback loops. As an instructor, your guidance shapes this practice from a simple administrative task into a high-impact learning experience.

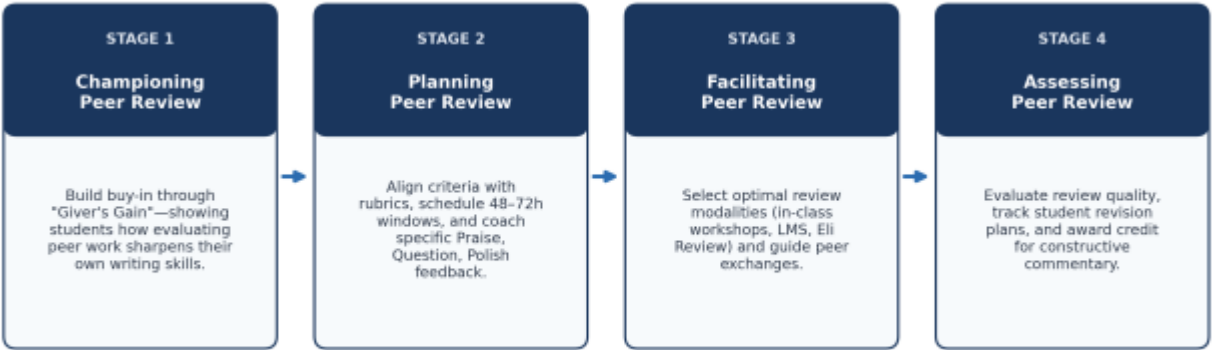


Figure 1: The Four Essential Stages of Course-Integrated Peer Review

Key Andragogy: The Giver's Gain

Students often focus on what feedback they will receive, but critical reading of peers' drafts builds evaluative judgment. Emphasize to your class that evaluating peer work helps them spot structural gaps and rhetorical choices in their own writing.

1 Citations for 'Giver's Gain':

- Cho, K., & MacArthur, C. (2011). Learning by reviewing. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 103(1), 73–84.
- Patchan, M. M., & Schunn, C. D. (2015). Understanding the benefits of providing peer feedback: how students respond to peers' texts of varying quality. *Instructional Science*, 43(5), 591–614.
- Van Popta, E., Kral, M., Camp, G., Martens, R. L., & Simons, P. R. J. (2017). Exploring the value of peer feedback in online learning for the provider. *Educational Research Review*, 20, 24–34.

Stage 2: Planning Peer Review

Effective peer review requires careful advance planning. Before assigning reviews, establish explicit evaluation criteria aligned with your assignment rubrics, determine logistics, and train students on constructive commentary.

Planning Dimension	Instructor Considerations & Options
Review Criteria & Rubrics	Provide specific prompts aligned with rubric metrics rather than broad questions like 'Is this paper good?'.
Group Size & Logistics	Assign 2–3 papers per student in pairs or small groups to balance depth of feedback with student workload.
Timing & Deadlines	Schedule reviews so students have at least 48–72 hours to evaluate drafts and another 3–5 days to execute revisions.
Coaching Specificity	Teach students to use the Praise, Question, Polish (PQP) framework for targeted, actionable commentary.

Coaching Specific Feedback: Fill-in-the-Blank Prompts for Students

Guide your students away from vague praise ('Great job!') by sharing these actionable comment starters:

- 'Your thesis statement clearly argues _____, but you could strengthen it by adding _____.'
- 'In paragraph 3, I got lost when transitioning between _____ and _____. Consider adding a bridge sentence.'
- 'The evidence you provided regarding _____ was convincing, but I wanted to see more detail on _____.'

Stage 3: Facilitating Peer Review

Select a delivery modality that best suits your course format, class size, and technical comfort. Below is a comparison of common review modalities to help you select the right fit.

Modality	Best Used For	Key Advantages	Instructor Trade-Offs
In-Class Workshops	Face-to-face courses, first-time reviewers	Immediate discussion, real-time instructor coaching	Requires dedicated class time; limited written depth
Specialized Platforms (e.g., Eli Review)	Writing-intensive courses, multi-draft projects	Automated analytics, built-in revision planning, feedback rating	Requires initial setup & platform orientation
LMS Assignments (e.g., Canvas/Blackboard)	Blended or online asynchronous courses	Integrated with LMS gradebook, familiar interface	Fewer automated peer coaching features
File Exchange (OneDrive / Email)	Upper-level or graduate seminars	Flexible file sharing, low technical setup	Higher student autonomy; harder to track individual reviews

Stage 4: Assessing Peer Review

Assessment reinforces that peer review is a valuable learning task rather than administrative busywork. Evaluate students both on their review contribution and their ability to execute revision plans.

- **Evaluate Review Quality:** Grade feedback based on specificity, helpfulness, and alignment with review prompts rather than length alone.
- **Assess Revision Alignment:** Review student revision plans against their final submissions to verify that peer insights meaningfully informed their editing.
- **Incorporate Self-Reflection:** Ask students to write a brief post-review reflection on how reviewing others' drafts impacted their own writing choices.

Instructor Takeaway: Building a Culture of Feedback

When you champion, plan, facilitate, and assess peer review intentionally, you build a sustainable culture of peer feedback in your courses. Students graduate with practical communication skills that extend far beyond a single writing assignment.