

# Peer- and Self-Assessment

*When combined with the instructor's assessment, peer- and self-assessment can provide a more comprehensive picture of a student's performance*

Part of a student's well-rounded learning experience is to take an active role in group activities, group projects, and group presentations. Even though you would expect all group members to be equally involved, we know that some students will do more than others. To find out how well each of the students performed in the group and to round out the "group experience," allow students to assess the performance of their group. Often, the group is asked to assess each other's performance using guidelines or a rubric which allows for both quantitative and qualitative feedback. In addition to the peer feedback, each group member could also reflect on their own performance within the group. When combined with the instructor's assessment, peer- and self-assessment can provide a more comprehensive picture of a student's performance as depicted in Figure 1 below.

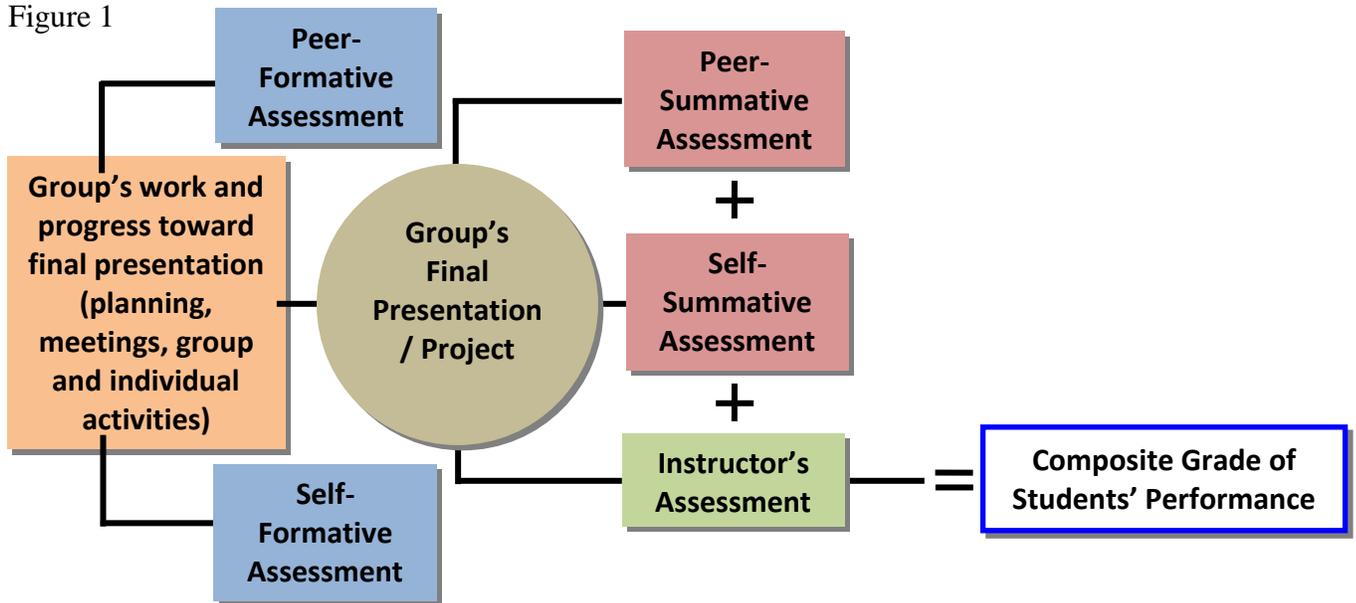
## Formative Assessment

Figure 1 illustrates peer- and self-assessment at the *formative stage*—where each group member will begin to assess the performance of one another, including themselves. Formative assessment is useful in that it allows the group to assess their ongoing performance and to make changes, adjustments, and modifications of their initial plans toward the final product.

## Summative Assessment

*Summative assessment* occurs during the group's final presentation or after the project has been submitted. As before, the group will assess each other's performance, but now that assessment is based on the final performance or project. It is at this point the instructor provides his or her assessment, using the same or similar guidelines or rubrics used by the students. Both formative and summative assessments can be identified on one form.

Figure 1



*Also, make clear to students your expectations and provide guidelines and rubrics to help them objectively assess their peers and themselves.*

Before the group projects begin, discuss with students the fundamentals of assessment and the benefits of peer- and self-assessment. Provide specifics of both formative (ongoing) and summative (end of the project) assessment and give them an opportunity to practice these methods. For example, students could practice their assessment skills by evaluating each other's performance during an in-class activity after which they compare and discuss their comments and ratings with the instructor's marks. This discussion activity will help students learn the basics of assessment and to reflect on the process. Also, make clear to students your expectations and provide guidelines and rubrics to help them objectively assess their peers and themselves

#### **Benefits of Peer- and Self-Assessment**

- Peer- and self-assessment gives students the opportunity to critically assess the performance of group members and themselves.
- Peer- and self-assessment has shown that group members will be more likely to be personally accountable for their share of the work load knowing that their peers will be assessing one another.
- Peer- and self-assessment promotes self-reflection.
- Peer- and self-assessment data can be used in calculating final grades. This can help increase the objectivity of the final group grade.

#### **Concerns with Peer-and Self-Assessment**

- Inability to assess – some students may have difficulty assessing their peers and themselves and give inappropriate negative feedback and/or inflated positive feedback.
- “Hitchhiking” – some students will work off of other students to appear as though they have done their portion of the project.
- Misleading high or low marks and comments – this could raise or lower the final grade.
- Unequal scores – sometimes self-assessment scores can be higher than peer scores – meet with the student to discuss any issues which might have led to the score.
- Collusion between students – minimize this by providing detailed guidelines and rules of conduct for both the project and the assessment rubric.
- Taking assessment lightly – reduce students' apathy about peer- and self-assessment by involving them in developing the criteria they will apply to each other's work. Also, walk students through “mock” peer- and self-assessments to make them more comfortable when assessing their own work and the work of others.

**Summary**

Peer- and self-assessment gives students the opportunity to take an active role in the ongoing and final performance of their peers and themselves in group activities. Peer- and self-assessment further encourages students to be cooperative, responsible, and productive members of a group. Finally, peer- and self-assessment promotes reflection and helps build an awareness of students' learning.

**Resources**

Hanna, G. S., & Dettmer, P. A. (2004). *Assessment for effective teaching: Using context-adaptive planning*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

McMillan, J. H. (2004). *Classroom assessment: Principles and practice for effective instruction, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.* Boston, MA: Pearson.

Walvoord, B. E., & Johnson Anderson, V. (1998). *Effective grading: A tool for learning and assessment*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.