

# Use of Moodle Workshops for Student Self and Peer Assessment

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## Abstract

Self and peer assessment is reported to be an effective assessment practice for students in higher education with a number of benefits as well as challenges. Learning Management Systems have created ways in which to implement such assessments online with Moodle having the Workshop activity as an option. This study aims to explore the success of an online self and peer assessment activity experience. Students in two practical courses at the Department of Social Sciences, University of Namibia were introduced and participated in a self and peer assessment activity. An online questionnaire, administered through Moodle's Survey activity, was used to gather data from the students. Key findings include the fact that most students had never been exposed to self and peer assessment before hence faced a number of challenges. However, those who managed to pull off the assessment did share that it was useful and they enjoyed it. The findings from the study would be added to the training of lecturers on the use of Moodle Workshops at the University.

*Keywords: Self-assessment, peer assessment, Moodle Workshop activity, Learning Management Systems, University of Namibia*

## 1. Introduction

Simply defined, self and peer assessments involves, "students assessing their own work (self-assessment) and that of other students (peer-assessment)" (Hanrahan and Isaacs, 2001). Since the switch from teaching to learning at higher education, Spiller (2012) shares that, "Teachers who see dialogue and the co-construction of knowledge as a core part of their teaching conceptions need to consider the importance of inviting the students to share more fundamentally in the assessment processes." Therefore, self and peer assessment allows for such to happen. It has been explained that self and peer assessment is of benefit to both the students and the lecturer (Bostock, 2000; Luxton-Reilly, 2009).

The University of Namibia (UNAM), Department of Social Sciences offers two practical courses at Year 2 of the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Media Studies. The courses hence feature a practical assessment of the learning and understanding of the content. These assessments are ordinarily attempted in a computer lab on campus with a number of consultations among students and lecturer before the submission date. Due to the fact that the assessments were done during times of emergency remote teaching, it was noted that the students missed on the opportunity of interacting with each other and hence learning from what others are producing. As such, a self and peer assessment of the work was used to bridge the gap.

The self and peer assessment was given as part of a formative assessment with the students being made to submit a project that they have been working on as Part 1. This carried 80% of the full grade and was teacher assessed. Part 2 featured the review of one's own work and then a review of two other student's work as assigned by Moodle. In the review, the students were to comment

on the submitted projects based on an assessment form which featured no grades. The students would then be given two grades, one for the submitted project under Part 1- this was assessed and graded by the lecturer. The second grade came from having done a self and two peer assessments. The second grade was one issued for participation hence not based on the contents of the assessments and definitely not based on other students' comments or reviews. As such, if one did not submit Part 1, they were still allowed to participate in Part 2 and get a grade for that part. It was also true for one who would participate in Part 1 and not Part 2 of the assessment. Again, the aim here was to get the students to see what others were working on and learn from it.

Spiller (2012) notes that it is key to have “intensive conversations with students...before introducing any self-assessment practices.” As such measures were put in place to support the students. First the lecturer made sure to post announcements highlighting that the assessment is not a standard one and that the students should be aware of the difference. The lecturer also arranged for a virtual class to discuss the assessment in terms of what is needed and how it should be attempted. A demonstration video published by VassarACS (2020) on understanding Moodle's Workshop activity from the side of the student (student role) was shared within the instructions on the assessment. This was meant to assist the students to have a preview of what they would have to do to complete the assessment on the Learning Management System (LMS). Lastly, the lecturer scheduled a consultation week for the students to reach out with any issues regarding the assessment. This meant no lectures on that week and a special Moodle forum was created to discuss any issues faced.

UNAM introduced Moodle as an LMS in 2015 (Mosha, 2015). The Moodle Workshop activity module was added to UNAM's Moodle in 2020 with training on how to set-up such being made available in 2021. It should be highlighted here that the Moodle training was provided for facilitators and not for students.

## **2. Literature Review**

The literature review is divided into two parts, one being on self and peer assessment and the other is on the Moodle Workshop activity.

### **2.1 Self and peer assessment**

Self and peer assessment can be used for both formative and summative assessment strategies. In the case of the assessment used in this study, it was used to assess formative learning. “Self and peer-assessment are often combined or considered together. They have many potential advantages in common,” (Bostock, 2000).

Self-assessment, in formative assessments, as defined by Andrade and Du (2007 in Spiller, 2012) is an “assessment during which students reflect on and evaluate the quality of their work and their learning, judge the degree to which they reflect explicitly stated goals or criteria, identify strengths and weaknesses in their work, and revise accordingly.”

Topping (2009) defines peer assessment as, “an arrangement for learners to consider and specify the level, value, or quality of a product or performance of other equal- status learners.” It is further stated that, “Research on collaborative learning, and studies on peer assessment show that

students learn from peers by collaboratively studying educational materials and assessing each others' work," (Van den Berg, Admiraal, & Pilot, 2006).

"Despite compelling evidence of its potential effectiveness, uptake of self and peer assessment in higher education has been slower than expected," Adachi, Tai and Dawson (2018). This sentiment is shared by Ashenafi (2017) who wrote that, "Despite the substantial amount of research carried out, peer assessment has yet to make significant advances." It is important to note that, "Both self- and peer-assessment skills are needed by graduates in the course of their working (and private) lives" (Hanrahan and Isaacs, 2001). In addition, self and peer assessment advances lifelong learning (Bostock, 2000).

Thomas, Martin and Pleasants (2011) note that, "Future-learning oriented assessment engages students in the assessment process to improve both short- and long-term outcomes by requiring students to make sophisticated judgments about their own learning, and that of their peers." Another advantage is the fact that, "Effective and durable learning achievements can result from students' engagement in their own learning," (Ndoeye, 2017).

Lui and Carless (2006) drew, "on relevant literature to argue that the dominance of peer assessment processes using grades can undermine the potential of peer feedback for improving student learning." It is with this school of thought that the lecturer did not have the element of students getting grades from others as part of the peer assessment review. An additional reason was the fact that the students were not able to design the assessment form and they were juniors, in their second year of study. It is however explained by Topping (2003) that, "A peer assessor with less skill at assessment but more time in which to do it might produce an equally reliable and valid assessment." This makes self and peer assessment a great alternative for lecturers with a high number of student in their class.

Typical of self and peer assessments is the fact that, "students appeared to enjoy marking the work of others... However, they did [do] not enjoy receiving the comments and marks of their peers during the feedback stage of the assessment process" (Davies, 2000). Furthermore, "females are more stressed by self-assessment than males and that being subjected to self- and peer assessment, while more stressful, leads to improved student performance in summative tasks" (Pope, 2005).

## **2.2 Overview of Moodle Workshop Activity**

Luxton-Reilly (2009) explains that, "online tools have been developed to enable peer assessment to be applied in large class." One such tool is the Moodle Workshop activity. According to Moodle (2021), "Workshop is a powerful peer assessment activity. Students add submissions which are then distributed amongst their peers for assessment based on a grading scale specified by the teacher." The study features a self and peer assessment which followed a standard Moodle Workshop flow. "The typical workshop follows a straight path from Setup to, Submission, Assessment, Grading/Evaluation, and ending with the Closed phase," (Moodle, 2022). This was to the advantage of the students as the Workshop module, "lists all the tasks the user has in the current phase with the information of whether the task is finished or not yet finished or even failed" (Moodle, 2022).

A study by Wen and Tsai (2006), shares that, “Results revealed that participating students held positive attitudes toward the use of PA [peer assessment] activities, but they viewed online PA [peer assessment] as a technical tool to facilitate assessment processes, rather than as a learning aid.”

### 3. Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to explore the success of an online self and peer assessment activity experience. The objectives included to;

- Identify students’ experience of having to conduct online self and peer assessment;
- Unearth the challenges faced by students while conducting the self and peer assessment;
- Outline the students’ sentiments from the experience of using the Moodle Workshop for self and peer assessment.

### 4. Limitations

The self and peer assessments were administered to a group of students in two course within the same year which meant some students had the upper hand as they had prior exposure to such kind of an assessment.

### 5. Methodology

The study used a quantitative research design to extract data from a population of 116 students with a sample of 49 students as seen on Table 1. A questionnaire was distributed using the Moodle Survey activity to all the students who were registered for the two courses.

**Table 1**

*Population and Sample*

Course 1	69 students
	26 respondents
Course 2	47 students
	23 respondents

The collected data was analysed initially through Moodle’s Survey Analysis. The datasets for the courses were downloaded from Moodle as CSV files. These files were then merged so as to create graphs of the datasets easily. The graphs were then created from the data using Microsoft Excel and Orange data mining software.

### 6. Ethical Considerations

The Moodle Survey was set up to be anonymous hence no names of students were captured during the collection of data. The survey was also taken on voluntary bases with the option to opt

out at any point without any consequences. The datasets were downloaded from Moodle and handled by only one person- the researcher. All datasets are stored safely in a hard drive to be destroyed in the near future.

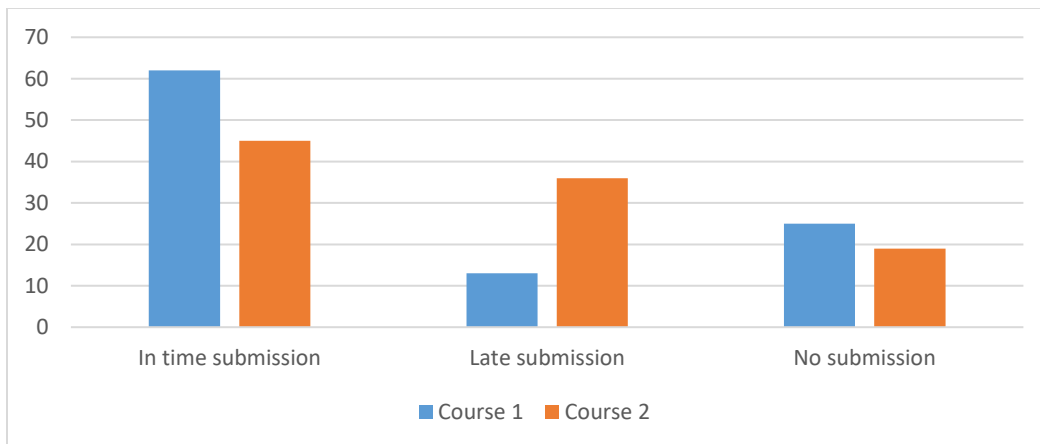
## 7. Findings and Discussions

Due to the fact that the assessments were conducted during times of emergency remote teaching, it was key to assess how the student access the assignment on Moodle. About 50% of the students accessed Moodle through Wi-Fi and/or hotspot and the other used mobile data. In the context of Namibia, mobile data is usually limited unlike Wi-Fi or hotspot. A majority of the students, close to 70% in each course, attempted the assessment on their desktop or laptop. A few others used their mobile phones and others used other people's computers.

Figure 1 illustrates the student participation in Course 1 and 2 in terms of the self and peer assessment. In Course 1, 62% of the student submitted on time, 13% submitted late and 25% did not submit the project. In contrast, Course 2 had 45% of the student who submitted on time, 36% submitted late and 19% did not submit at all.

**Figure 1**

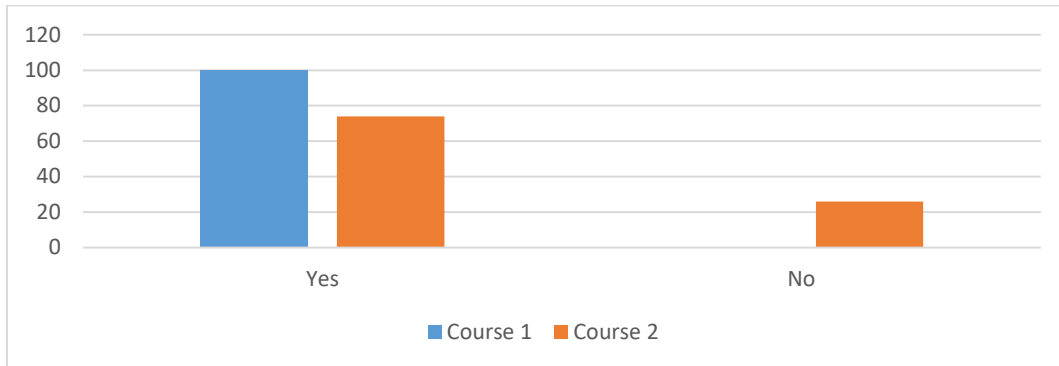
*Part 1 Submission for All Registered Students*



The findings revealed that 92% of the students in Course 1 had not previously been exposed to self and peer assessments with the number reducing to 82% for Course 2. Similar figures were presented in terms of the use of Moodle's Workshop activity with 96% in Course 1 and 78% in Course 2. The difference in figures in Course 2 can be explained by the students possibly not knowing that the Moodle Workshop activity is a self and/or peer assessment activity. However, only 58% of the respondents in Course 1 and 61% in Course 2 attempted to have some form of consultation during the assigned consultation week. In addition, 96% of the respondents in Course 1 did watch the demonstration video with 69% finding it helpful. In Course 2, 91% of the respondents watched the video and 61% found it helpful.

The illustration on Figure 2 shows that 100% of the respondents in Course 1 participated in both Part 1 and 2 of the Workshop while only 74% of the respondents from Course 2 participated in both parts.

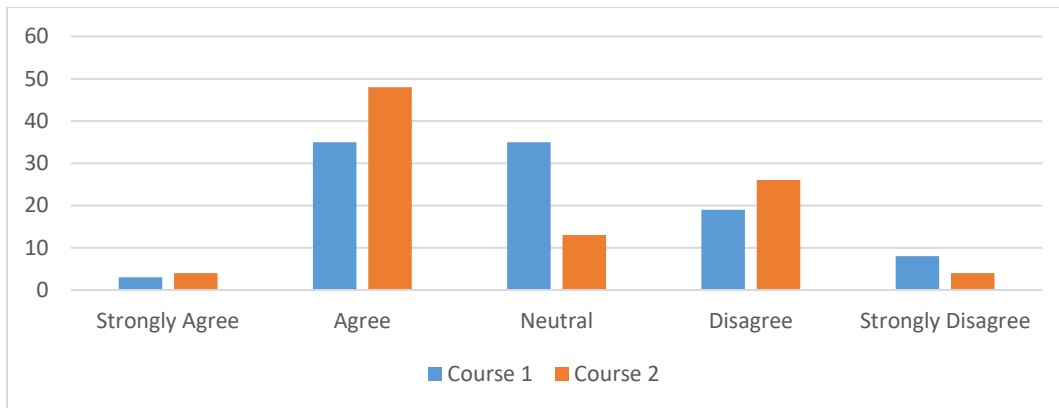
**Figure 2**  
*Respondents Attempt of Part 1 & 2*



Of the 100% respondents in Course 1 who participated in Part 1 and 2, only 81% completed Part 2. In Course 2, only 65% of the 74% completed Part 2. Completion meant having assessed one's own work and two other student's work. The low figure in Course 2 could be due to students' previous exposure to the fact that there shall be no consequences for not completing Part 2.

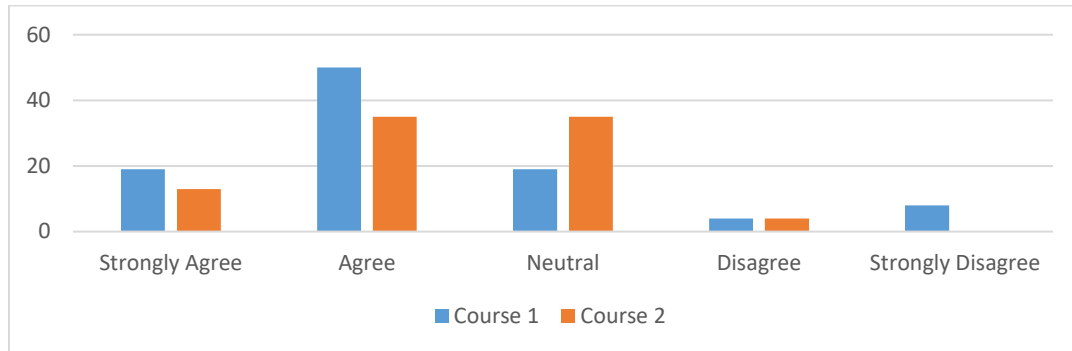
Figure 3 illustrates the mixed feelings of the respondents being sure of what was asked of them within the assessment. A good number indicate that they agree, with percentages at 38% and 52% for Course 1 and 2 respectively. Course 2 had a higher percentage than Course 1 and it could be explained by the fact that some students would have been exposed to self and peer assessment through Moodle Workshop activity in Course 1.

**Figure 3**  
*Respondents Sure of What to Do*



Sadly most student were not comfortable with assessing themselves and their peers. Figure 4 shows the response from being asked how comfortable the students were in assessing their peers. In Course 1, 69% of the respondents agreed that they were not comfortable with the assessment and 19% were neutral and in Course 2, 48% agreed while 35% were neutral. Similar figures were found within the analysis of the self-assessment.

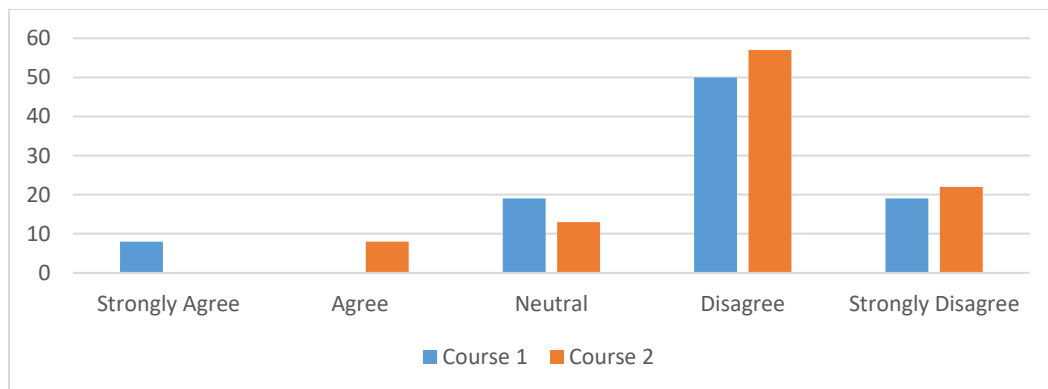
**Figure 4**  
*Respondents Comfortable with Assessing Their Peers*



Finding show that, 42% of the respondents in Course 1 and 28% of the respondents in Course 2 agreed that the self and peer assessments should be awarded more grades. Both courses have 35% of the respondents being neutral when it came to issue of grade allocation.

When asked if the self and peer assessments through Moodle’s Workshop activity were tasking, a number of responds disagreed with the figures being 69% and 79% in Course 1 and 2 respectively as shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6**  
*Working with Moodle Workshops was Tasking to Respondents*



In the end, 65% of respondents in both courses shared that they learned a lot from the self and peer assessment. This is demonstrated in Figure 7.

**Figure 7**  
*Respondent Learned a lot from the Assessment*

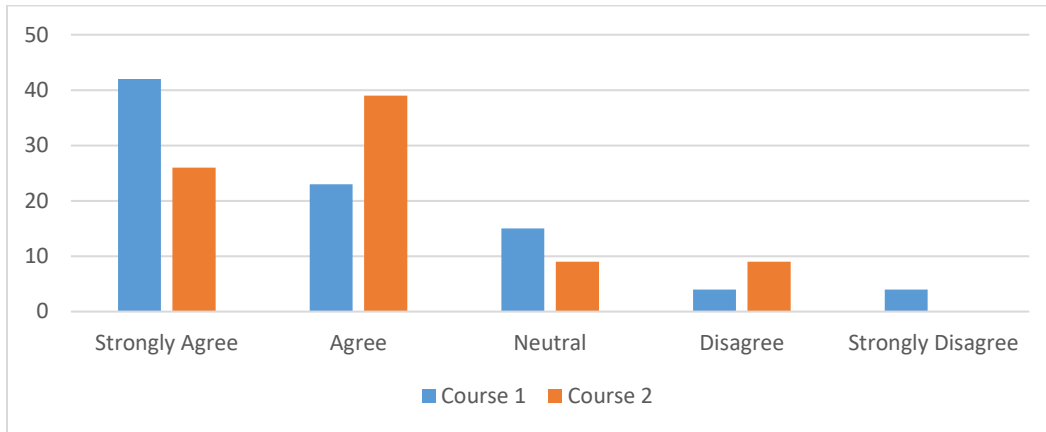
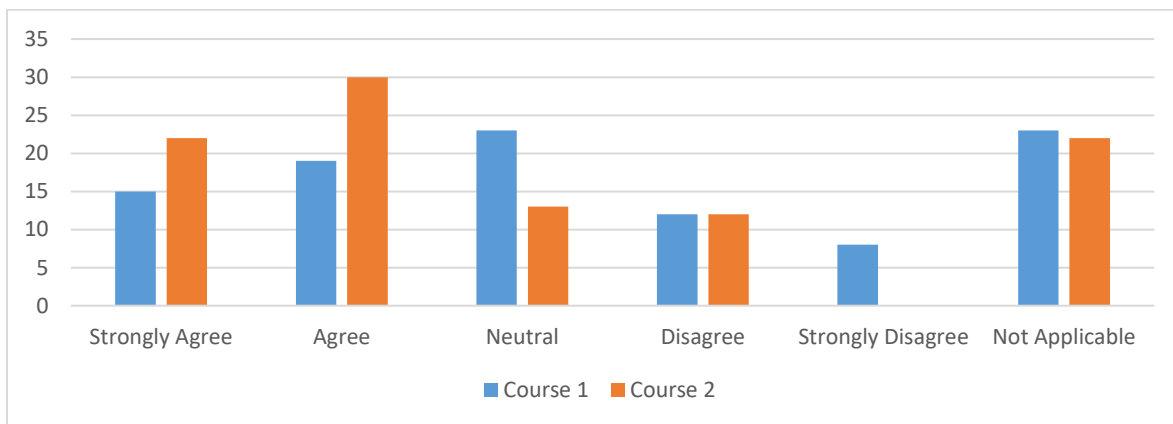


Figure 8 illustrates how the respondents saw the assessments as given by their peers to be useful. In Course 1, 34% of the respondents agreed that the review were helpful and this figure increased to 52%. In Course 1, 20% of the respondents disagreed to the fact that the reviews were useful and the figure was 12% for Course 2. It must be noted that 23% and 22% of the respondents in Course 1 and 2 respectively, chose “Not Applicable” as a response signifying that they are indifferent, at the time of the survey, when it comes to them finding the assessments useful.

**Figure 8**  
*Respondent Found Peer Reviews Useful*



Finally the student were asked to share their comments on the self and peer assessment that they experienced. The overall comments relate to the point that the self and peer assessment were good but the use of Moodle Workshops complicated the experience as it gave them more work to do. This is a fact for most as this was their first time dealing with such an activity on Moodle.

Figure 9 features a word cloud created from the comments as extracted using Orange software. Positive words such as “learned,” “best,” “interesting,” “great,” and “enjoyed” made a good part





internet hence the assessments were done in a hurry and some parts were omitted. Future studies could take a step back to look at the challenges students and academics face in self and peer assessments before expanding into challenges faced by working with Moodle Workshops at UNAM.

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