

Learning and Teaching Conference 2012

Abstract 3E

Online peer review of scientific writing – Aropa

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Students' writing skills are subject to criticism, particularly in science subjects where there may be a lack of opportunity to practise. This is especially true in large classes, where assessments are often administered as multiple choice tests. In addition, the increasing number of students whose first language is not English makes the nuances and the conventions of scientific English particularly difficult to acquire.

In the School of Life Sciences at the University of Glasgow, we have implemented an online peer support system for Life Sciences students. This system is managed through a software program called Aropa which allows for the efficient delivery and management of such activities, (<http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/~hcp/aropa/index.html>).

We have evaluated student's experience of the system. In this instance students have had the opportunity to write short pieces of written work on biological topics and receive feedback from their peers. The work completed and the feedback received then builds across several repetitions to a final submission of written work for assessment.

This has benefits for international students as the assignment process is asynchronous, allowing sufficient time to complete the task, see examples of work from other students and receive feedback on their own work, helping to improve their fluency in scientific English. Of course, these principles can also be employed with home students; in effect ALL students could benefit from such a peer review process.

Outcomes

Determine the advantages of using an on-line peer-review system as a method of developing writing skills. Understand how such a system can be implemented at any academic level.