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# Examining the Efficacy of Peer Feedback as Part of the Writing Process in an Introductory Biology Course

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A goal of introductory biology labs is to introduce students to scientific writing by having them write lab reports. With several lab sections taught by different instructors, consistency in grading is a problem. Another challenge is that students do not appear to engage with instructor feedback; they see writing as subjective, or fail to use the feedback to improve. One approach to these problems is having students carry out peer assessment with the goals of: encouraging engagement in the process of writing, introducing students to the peer review process (fundamental to science), and addressing inconsistencies in grading. Students in Biology 1010 used Moodle Workshop to grade exemplar Introductions and Discussions. They then prepared and peer evaluated *Introductions* and *Discussions*. Students were surveyed (22% responding: 44/200). Forty-five percent of respondents disagreed with the statement: I feel that the peer-feedback that I received helped to improve my writing; however, 90% of these identified stress and/or the belief that they would have received higher marks from their instructors as the reason(s) behind their negative evaluations. Eighty-six percent agreed with the statement: I feel that engaging in the peer-feedback process helped to strengthen my critical reading skills. Overall, preliminary results support the use of peer feedback.

**Keywords**: scientific writing, peer assessment

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