

PEER AND SELF-ASSESSMENT IN A PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION COURSE: DOES TASK TYPE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?ⁱ

Tharwat EL-Sakran

English Department, College of Arts and Sciences, American University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

telsakran@aus.edu

Abstract: *The extensive literature on peer and self-assessments, their outcomes and effectiveness in developing students' critical thinking and objectivity cites numberless benefits. One such benefit is that they help pass on skills of evaluation and critical judgment to students. However, the effectiveness and limitations of peer and self-assessments have yet to be established in professional communication courses, where students get involved in several types of assessment tasks. Thus, this research tests and compares the use of assessment tools in a professional communication course for engineers at a private educational institution in the United Arab Emirates and reports the potential benefits and limitations of peer and self-assessments. Specifically, the focus of this research project was on the assessment practices of two distinct technical communication written genres- the resume and the internship application letter (IAL). Results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between students' self-assessments and peers' assessments of resumes, indicating that students awarded themselves higher grades than their peers. Moreover, statistical analyses of marks given by peers and the course instructor on the initial drafts of the resumes demonstrate a statistically significant difference between peers' assessment and the instructor's assessment; that is, peers assigned higher grades to students than the instructor. However, results for the students' self-assessments of the IAL and the instructor's assessments of the same showed that students assigned themselves higher grades, but the difference is not statistically significant. This research contributes to growing studies on peer- and self-assessment by suggesting that the type of tasks being assessed may facilitate or complicate the assessment task. It also shows that students' emotions may interfere in the assessment process. The study concludes with limitations and recommendations for further research in the area of professional communication.*

Keywords: Peer and self-assessment; assessment and task type; assessment in professional communication courses; assessment and critical thinking; emotions and assessment

1. Introduction

The past four decades have witnessed several paradigm shifts in education, its

ⁱ The author thanks the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful and constructive feedback on the originally submitted manuscript.

philosophy and mission (Tautila, 2017). Consequently, research has emphasized the active engagement of students in their own learning, developing learner responsibility and metacognitive skills, and adopting a dialogical, collaborative model of teaching and learning. Thus, higher education institutions are expected to produce employable graduates who possess refined team work skills, can assess their own work and that of others, provide sound feedback and make rational decisions. Such soft skills are especially critical for today's university graduates and the labour market's employability (EL-Sakran, 2018a; 2018b; 2014a; EL-Sakran and Awad, 2012; El-Sakran, Prescott and Mesanovic, 2013).

According to Ahmed and Abouabdalkader (2018) and Wee and Kek (2002), self and peer assessment tools are important aspects of assessment for learning practice. The authors argue that when students assess their own work or that of others, such a practice helps them develop their understanding of both the targeted learning objectives and success criteria. Andrade and Du (2007) define self-assessment as a process of formative assessment where 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 (2007, p.160). For Falchikov (2007) "peer assessment requires students to provide either feedback or grades (or both) to their peers on a product or a performance, based on the criteria of excellence for that product or event which students may have been involved in determining" (p.132). There are many variants of peer assessment, but essentially it involves students providing feedback to other students on the quality of their work. In some instances, the practice of peer feedback will include the assigning of a grade, but this is widely recognized to be a process that is fraught with difficulties (Boud and Falchikov, 2006; Macdonald, 2004; Ross, 2006; Siström, Magyari, Kellner and Edwards, 2003; Tan, 2012).

Along the same lines, Leong and Lee (2018) and Hattum-Janssen and Lourenço (2008) note that self-assessment is a way of improving student learning by passing on skills of evaluation and critical judgment to them. Thus, self-assessment can be both formative and summative. Likewise, peer assessment can be both formative and summative, and it can be a useful way of enabling students to think critically about their own work. Research has shown that learners make more progress when they are actively involved in their own learning and assessment (Boud, 1985; Tan, 2012). Moreover, self-assessment is one useful device for enabling students to reflect on practice (Bifuh-Ambed, 2013; EL-Sakran, Ahmed and EL-Sakran, 2017; EL-Sakran and Mesanovic, 2012; EL-Sakran, 2014b; Gunn, 2010; Schön, 1983; Sharma, Jain, Gupta, Garg, Batta and Dhir, 2016; Zimmerman, 2002).

2. A Brief Review of Studies on Peer and Self-Assessment

The importance of feedback is more essential when writing is viewed as a process; writing occurs and feedback is provided in the stages of drafting, editing, redrafting, etc. rather than feedback only being given on a summative product. Hyland and Hyland (2006, p. 86) indicate that "commentary on a draft is likely to serve more immediate pedagogical goals than that given on a final product". Likewise, Scrivener (2005) states that "feedback on writing isn't something to save up until the entire text is fully completed" and "it is of very little use then, as the thing is over and students will probably just want a complementary comment and then to forget

it" (p. 199). Nowadays it is common to engage students in the assessment of the learning tasks. Consequently many researchers have begun exploring the effects of peer and self-assessment on students' learning. Although several of these studies have underscored the benefits of peer and self-assessment in helping students self-regulate and become critical of their work and others' work (Andrade and Valtcheva, 2009; Bolívar-Cruza and Verano-Tacoronte, 2018; Bouziane and Zyad, 2018; Hattum-Janssen and Lourenço, 2008), there is evidence that peer and self-assessments are still fraught with much subjectivity. In this regard, Ross (2006), Macdonald (2004) and Siström, Magyari, Kellner and Edwards (2003) reported learners' higher tendency towards self-overestimation and overestimation of others. Along the same lines, Becker, Geer and Huthes (1995) note that students are driven by a natural desire for high grades. Contrary to these findings, Kun (2016) reports "that students are less likely to overestimate their own results, which means they have a more realistic attitude" (p. 365). Likewise, Sharma, Jain, Gupta, Garg, Batta and Dhir (2016) reported a significantly positive correlation between student and teacher marking ($r = 0.79$).

Summarizing the situation of assessment tools, Nicol and MacFarlane-Dick (2006) also contend that by commenting on the work of their peers, students develop objectivity in relation to standards which can then be transferred to their own work while acknowledging that the reliability of students' judgements remains an important concern. On this particular issue, Isaacs (2001) points out that many students find it uncomfortable to grade friends or fellow students too harshly. For example, students tend to avoid the extreme ends of a scale when marking between groups, whereas they tend to prefer the high end of the scale when grading within their own group. In support of this, Brown & Knight (1994) mention that power relations among students can result in over-marking, resulting in the noisiest or most dominant getting the highest marks. As a consequence, Isaacs (2001) proposes that peer and self-assessments will increase instructors' workload because they have to check and collate the marks assigned by peers and students in addition to the feedback they also provide. Although Rowe (2013) argues that peer and self-assessment tools are promoted as a way of increasing student responsibility for learning, developing students' abilities to make judgments about their own and others' work, personal dimensions of feedback, including emotions, remain a big concern in these types of assessment tools. Rowe rightly believes that feedback will evoke emotions within students; hence, it is important to understand the roles that positive and negative emotions play in assessment.

This quick review reflects discrepancies in the results of previous studies on peer- and self-assessment. Furthermore, the effect of task type(s) being assessed has not been considered in the context of writing genres in a professional communication course.

3. The Present Study

The effectiveness and limitations of peer and self-assessment as assessment tools have yet to be established because the literature indicates that they can be subjective (Tan, 2012). Thus, it is the aim of this research to test the use of these two tools in a professional communication course for engineers at a private educational institution in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It seeks answers to the following questions:

1. Do student assessors give reliable and constructive feedback to their peers?
2. Do marks assigned by student assessors on their peers' work match the course instructor's marks for the same work?
3. Does assessment differ in accordance with the type of task being assessed?
4. Do affective factors (i.e. fear, friendship relationships, etc.) play a role in self and peer assessment?

To date there has been little practical evidence concerning the effectiveness of self and peer-assessment in professional communication courses and the role that affective factors might play in these processes (Tehrani, 2018).

3.1. The Context

The activities described in this paper were carried out in a Professional Communication for Engineers Course taught to engineering students at a private higher educational institution located in the UAE. In this course, engineering students study and learn several technical communication skills required for the workplace. They are taught how to write and produce several technical written communication genres addressed to a real audience. The course is a prerequisite study for engineering students to be undertaken before going for an internship position and before starting the senior design project in their final year.

3.2. Assessments

The course contains several assessment tasks such as delivering team oral progress reports, writing engineering multidisciplinary research proposals and projects, designing and giving poster presentations, writing transmittal letters and executive summaries, constructing individual resumes, writing internship application letters and sitting for a midterm and a final exam.

3.3. Research Design

This study was conducted over the period of two academic semesters during the year 2017-2018 and the course content was delivered through the traditional method. That is, it is normal practice in this course that students do peer and self-assessment for some of the writing tasks.

3.3.1. Participants

Four sections of the Professional Communication for Engineers course that the researcher taught were used for data collection. The participants were 91 male and female students from all engineering disciplines at the academic institution that the researcher works for. There were not enough female students in the course to allow for gender comparisons of assessment.

3.3.2. Focus of the Research

This research focused on the use of peer, self and instructor assessments in two distinctive professional writing genres: the resume and the internship application letter (IAL). The peer assessment procedure was conducted before the self-assessment as the former "serves to give students a chance to apply the skills they have learnt to their own work (Bouziane and Zyad, 2018, p.133). The instructor's assessment was completed third (last).

3.3.3. Research Procedures

Task 1: The Resume Exercise

At the start of the resume teaching and writing classes, the students were lectured on the components of the resume, the different sections it may contain, the resume layout, font size and type and consistency issues. They were also provided with samples of problematic and exemplar resumes for which they were shown how to perform a resume assessment. Additionally, prior to the individual assessment, they were presented with detailed assessment and marking rubrics (see appendix 1). Then, they were instructed to write their own individual resume using Microsoft Word and follow the below instructions with the colleague that the professor paired each student with:

- The individual student will send his/her resume to the classmate s/he is paired with via the university email by the date the course instructor specified.
- Once the resume is received, it will be saved on the receiver's desktop, read carefully, and commented on; when necessary, using the Microsoft Track Change feature, save and send back to the writer with a mark out of 5.
- The other student does the same with the colleague's resume.
- The course instructor is cc-ed with a copy of the resume with the comments and the assigned mark.
- The resume recipient reads the comments and implements the recommended modifications/changes, provided they are convincing and make sense.
- Hard copies of the resumes with the peers' comments and the final modified ones are sent to the course instructor for further feedback.

In this exercise, students were not told that their resumes with the colleagues' comments had been subjected to assessment by the instructor, since they knew that this exercise would follow a process writing procedure. According to Hyland (2003), the process-oriented approach emphasizes the writer as an independent producer of texts, but it goes further to address the issue of what teachers should do to help learners perform a writing task.

Task 2: The IAL Exercise

In engineering programs, completing an internship period that ranges between 6 to 10 weeks is an integral part of the engineering education. Thus, the students are required to apply for any engineering company that offers professional engineering practice in their area of specialization. Therefore, they are taught how to write an impressive IAL. The communicative aim of such letters is to secure an interview for an internship position by highlighting the most relevant information and skills within the candidate's resume, and how relevant those are to a specific position's requirements. Students are supplied with specific procedural steps of how to analyze the internship ad, group the requirements into categories (thematic groups), and how to use the outcome of their thematic analysis to guide and inform the contents of the IAL and the divisions between its components. Additionally, a detailed description of the IAL's schematic pattern, the linguistic realizations of these schematic units and how these different units relate to each other is made available to students.

Prior to this activity, students were required to find and bring to class an

engineering internship ad that they intended to apply for after completing this prerequisite course. All students, individually, were asked to carefully read and examine the requirements section in the ads and try to familiarize themselves with company demands. Second, a class-wide discussion took place where all students shared the requirement details for their prospective internship opportunities. In line with Race's (2000) recommendation, students were taught and trained in how to use rubrics (see appendix 2) when assessing their own work and that of their peers. To possibly eliminate irresponsible grading, students were told that their awarded marks were not final since the course instructor would be providing further feedback.

3.3.4. Data Analysis

Task 1: The Resume Exercise

The students' comments on the online submitted resumes were examined in accordance with the resume rubric and the learning objectives that had been explicitly targeted in the course (see appendix 1). When analyzing the samples for learning outcomes, use of targeted resume writing skills was considered an indicator of learning transfer. Thus, each resume was coded according to whether or not the learning outcomes had been applied. These were rated as 0 for no use of learning outcome (poor), 1 for minimal use of learning outcome (average) and 2 for extensive use of learning outcome (superior).

Task 2: The IAL Exercise

The online submitted IALs were assessed according to IAL guidelines (see appendix 2), the internship ads they were written in response to and the course learning outcomes. The same coding procedures used in Task 1 were followed here.

4. Results

As for research question 1, Do student assessors give reliable and constructive feedback to their peers?, careful examination of comments given on peers' resumes and IALs show that students provided clear and objective substantive feedback on the work of their peers. That is, students were able to detect shortcomings with layout, formatting, typos, under-informativity, categorization and grouping of entries under their relevant sections, etc.

Examples of these are:

- a. Specify the city and the country (a comment on the address given)
- b. The most recent degree comes first (A comment on the sequence of qualifications)
- c. You can specify how well your knowledge on these program skills is (a comment on listed computer skills)

Also noted that the comments made were focused on and restricted to local issues within individual resume sections. In other words, global intersection comments among the different sections of the resume were missing. In spite of this, modified versions submitted later on in the course of the semester did not support positive uptake of these local comments (EL-Sakran, 2014a), which may suggest that the

students waited for more reliable feedback from the course instructor. Findings also show signs that students are not able to do the same for their own resumes; they seem to be writing for themselves or people who are in the same environment as them. This could be a problem of being self-centred and oblivious to audience information requirements, so they do not have a full understanding of text.

In regards to the second research question, Do student assessors' assigned marks of their peers' work match the course instructor's marks for the same work?, statistical analysis of marks given by peers and the course instructor on the initial drafts of the resumes indicate a statistically significant difference ($t=3.54$, $df=179$, $p\text{-value}=.001$) between peers' assessment and the instructor's assessment, indicating that peers awarded higher grades to students than the instructor as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Two-sample t-test and ci: Peer and instructor assessments of resumes

| Sample | N | Mean | StDev | SE Mean |
|-------------------------------------|----|-------|-------|---------|
| Peers' Assessments of Resumes | 91 | 3.161 | 0.465 | 0.049 |
| Instructor's Assessments of Resumes | 91 | 2.920 | 0.454 | 0.048 |

As for self-assessment of the resumes, there is also a significance difference ($t=7.28$, $df=176$, $p\text{-value} < .001$) between the grades that the instructor assigned to resumes compared to grades assigned by the students to their own resumes; that is, students allotted themselves higher grades in comparison with those given to the same work by the course instructor as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 Two-sample t-test and ci: Students assessments of their own resumes and instructor's assessment

| Sample | N | Mean | StDev | SE Mean |
|---|----|-------|-------|---------|
| Students' Assessments of their own Resumes | 91 | 3.377 | 0.392 | 0.041 |
| Instructor's Assessments of Students' Resumes | 91 | 2.920 | 0.454 | 0.048 |

Results also indicate that there is a statistically significant difference ($t=3.40$, $df=174$, $p\text{-value}=.001$) between students' self-assessments and peers' assessments of resumes; that is, students gave themselves higher grades than their peers as demonstrated Table 3.

Table 3 Two-sample t-test and ci: Students' assessments of their own resumes and their peers' resumes

| Sample | N | Mean | StDev | SE Mean |
|---|----|-------|-------|---------|
| Students' Self-assessments of Resumes | 91 | 3.377 | 0.392 | 0.041 |
| Peers' Assessments of other Students' Resumes | 91 | 3.161 | 0.465 | 0.049 |

When looking at students' self-assessments of the IAL and the instructor's assessments of the same (Table 4), there are differences. Students assigned themselves higher grades; however, the differences are not statistically significant ($t=1.45$, $df=177$, $p\text{-value}=.148$).

Table 4 Two-sample t-test and ci: Students' assessments of IAL in comparison to instructor's assessment

| Sample | N | Mean | StDev | SE Mean |
|--|----|-------|-------|---------|
| Students' Self-assessments of their IAL | 91 | 3.458 | 0.321 | 0.034 |
| Instructor's Assessment of Students' IAL | 91 | 3.385 | 0.362 | 0.038 |

This last finding may indicate that the assessment of a running text (i.e. IAL) is different than assessing another composed of different sections with different functions, which may be an answer to question no. 3: Does assessment differ in accordance with the task type being assessed? Also observed that students, in contrast with the resume activity, highlighted local and global shortcomings on the the IAL. That is, comments covered different issues within the single paragraphs of the IAL as well as the transition from one paragraph into the other and the overall format. Some of these are:

- a. You list courses studied here. How do these relate to the position you are applying for?
- b. You have not addressed the personal attributes required in the internship add.

As far as research question number 4 is concerned, Do affective factors (i.e. fear, friendship relationships, etc.) play a role in self and peer assessment?, based on the marks the students assigned themselves and their peers and comparing them with those assigned by the instructor, there seems to be a strong element of emotional involvement when dealing with products of self and less when dealing with peers' products, although emotions are there in both cases. In other words, students awarded their own products more marks than the high marks they gave their peer. This is supported by the extensive number of shortcomings pointed out on their peers' documents and the high marks assigned to the products. That is, the greater the number of negative comments made, the lower the grade should have been, but this was not the case.

5. Discussion

While the author of this research strongly believes in teaching writing as an ongoing process, analysis of students' provisional writing drafts of two professional communication writing genres clearly support the view previous researcher held that student-instructor mark agreement is difficult to achieve (Bouziane and Zyad, 2018; Isaacs, 2001; Nicol and MacFarlane-Dick, 2006). It is also evident that self-assessment is inflated compared to peer-assessment, and that the instructor's assessments are the lowest. This corroborates the argument Andrade and Valtcheva (2009) put forward that students perceive themselves as "A" students, regardless of their performance. This also suggests that the use of self- and peer-assessments must be considered carefully, which can be implemented through extensive training in these two tools. In this context, Bouziane and Zyad (2018) note that "the instructor has an important role to play in monitoring the students' feedback and offering guidance on how to suggest a balanced assessment that taps on local and global aspects of writing" (p.133). It is also worth noting that students did provide substantive feedback on the work of others; however, contrary to Lapp, Shea and Wolsey's (2011, p. 33) findings, subsequent submissions of the

same writing documents showed that student writers ignored some of the useful tips the peers made on their drafts. This may indirectly indicate that students still did not trust the comments made by their peers and instead preferred to wait for the instructor's comments, which they consider to be the most important since a course instructor is the one who ultimately provides a summative grade on an assignment. Another factor could be that students treated the assignment as an ongoing improvement process and therefore did not bother much about the weight of the assigned mark. The disconnect between the volume of negative comments made and the weight of the assigned mark may also be interpreted as either the students not taking the task seriously, or the students not wanting to make a negative emotional impact on their peers' work.

The other important issue that calls for an interpretation is:

- Why do students overrate themselves in self-assessed works and award higher grades to the works of their peers, while ignoring the volume of comments they made on the drafts?

There could be two main reasons for this kind of behavior as reported by Abdelfatah and Tabsh (2010) and McCabe, Feghali, and Abdallah (2008). These are:

- The culture the students were brought up in which considers helping others, regardless of whether this kind of help is acceptable or unacceptable, as support.

Although the results of this study clearly demonstrated that students were able to make evaluative decisions of their own and peers' work based on the available information supplied to them through the rubrics, nevertheless they failed to assign a mark that would reflect the accurate assessments they made. Worthy of note is that this had happened in spite of the fact that the participants in this study had to read and sign an ethics statement! Perhaps this could be remedied and addressed through the frequent use of self- and peer assessment in and out of class under the instructor's direct supervision and scrutiny (Lundquist, Shogbon, Momary and Rogers, 2013), and making peer and self-assessment a standard practice in and out of class.

- This takes us to the second factor, which is the emotional involvement in one's own work and other self-interests.

In this regard, Falchikov (2007) argues that assessment creates the potential for strong feelings within the students. This seems to explain why students generally enjoy supporting one another in their work for fear of losing friendship or becoming unhelpful outcasts, or what Rowe, Fitness and Wood (2014) refer to as "provide protection against rejection". This is also supported by research that Gentina, Tang and Gu (2017) conducted on French and Chinese students. This means that changing students' mindset on the subject of peer and self-assessment is needed. This also underscores the imperative of involving students as partners in the development of feedback practices, whether at the course or institutional level, since it contributes to an enhanced sense of belonging on the student's part (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; Leong and Lee, 2018; Rowe, 2017). Worthy of note here that the students' comments on peers' products did reflect any interpersonal relations among them. That is, the judgment of inflated marks is purely based on the high mark(s) given, in comparison with the volume of the comments made on the product.

6. Conclusion

While it is undeniable that through feedback and the provision of clear and specific assessment criteria that students reflect a good understanding of the task at hand, results of this research point out that there are still discrepancies between students' self-assessed tasks, the assessment of their peers, and that of the instructor's. Findings also indicate that the type of tasks being assessed may facilitate or complicate the assessment task. In other words, it seems that assessing the resume was more difficult than assessing the IAL. Searching for reasons why such a difference exists, it seems that the latter was a straightforward process since it was written in response to a series of questions/statements represented in the internship ad requirements, which may have made it easier for students to assess. The former assignment, on the other hand, was written with discrete and varied sections, which may have made the assessment task difficult. Another factor could be that the resume construction and assessment was a novel exercise (Hussein. 2014) that students were exposed to for the first time in their educational career, in comparison to the IAL where they did have experience assessing similar tasks in their previous writing courses (Sayed and Curabba, 2019), which may be referred to as transfer of training (James, 2009). This could prompt researchers to look into the impact of genres on assessment and the relationship that might exist between frequency of assessment exposure and its effect on the specific assignments being assessed. Worth noting that the participants in this study had carried out several assessment tasks in previous prerequisite writing courses they completed before beginning this professional communication course. Researchers may also try the same procedures with students across sections of the same course and compare their findings when emotional involvement is considered. Students could also be asked to provide reasons for the marks assigned to the assessed drafts to better chart and understand their individual progress. Future researchers may also consider gender effects on assessment. To conclude, involving students in self and peer assessment may also lead to a reduction of complaints students may initiate against instructors' assigned marks.

References

- Abdelfatah, A. S. and Tabsh, S W. (2010) "Engineering Students' Perception of Academic Dishonesty at an American University in the Middle East", *Online Journal for Global Engineering Education*, Vol. 5, No.1, Article 1.
- Ahmed, A., & Abouabdelkader, H. (eds.) (2018) *Assessing EFL writing in the 21st century Arab World: Revealing the Unknown*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Andrade, H., & Du, Y. (2007) "Student responses to criteria-referenced self-assessment", *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, Vol. 32, No. 2, pp. 159-181.
- Andrade, H., & Valtcheva, A. (2009) "Promoting Learning and Achievement Through Self-assessment", *Theory into Practice*, Vol. 48, pp. 12-19.
- Becker, H., Geer, B., & Huthes, E. (1995) *Making the grade: The Academic side of college life* (2nd ed.), New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction publishers.
- Bifuh-Ambed, E. (2013) "Developing Successful Writing Teachers: Outcomes of Professional Development Exploring Teachers' Perceptions of Themselves

- as Writers and Writing Teachers and their Students' Attitudes and Abilities to Write across the Curriculum", *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, Vol.12, No.3, pp. 137-156.
- Bolívar-Cruza , A., & Verano-Tacoronte, D. (2018) "Self-assessment of the Oral Presentation Competence: Effects of Gender and Student's Performance", *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, Vol. 59, pp. 94-101.
- Boud, D. (1995). *Enhancing learning through self-assessment*. London: Kogan Page.
- Boud, D., & Falchikov, N. (2006) *Aligning Assessment with Long-term Learning. Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, Vol. 31, No.4, pp. 399-413.
- Bouziane, A., & Ziad, H. (2018) "The Impact of Self and Peer Assessment on L2 Writing: The Case of Moodle Workshops, in Ahmed, A. & Abouabdelkader, H. (eds.) (2018) *Assessing EFL writing in the 21st century Arab World: Revealing the unknown* (pp. 111-136), London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brown, S., & Knight, P. (1994) *Assessing learners in higher education*, London: Kogan Page.
- Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, C., & Felten, P. (2014) *Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching: A guide for faculty*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- El-Sakran, T. M. (2018a) "Engineering Internship Ads Informing the Teaching of Writing of Internship Application Letters (IALs). *Journal of Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol.6, No.2, pp.135-147.
- El-Sakran, T. M. (2018b) "Understanding our Audience: The Writing of Email Messages from Concept to Completion", *The Journal of Languages for Specific Purposes*, Vol.5, pp.19-30.
- El-Sakran, T. M. (2014a) "Students Cannot Cross Resume Borders: A Case Study of Transfer of Learning", *The ESP World Journal*, Vol.15, No.43, pp. 1-24.
- EL-Sakran, T. M. (2014b) "MATESOL Students' Reflections and Perceptions of an ESP Course in the United Arab Emirates", *Journal of Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 2, No.1, pp. 137-151.
- El-Sakran, T. M., & Awad, A. (2012) "Voices from the United Arab Emirates: Engineering Graduates' Labour Market Requisite Competencies", *American Journal of Engineering Education*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp.105-114.
- El-Sakran, T. M., Ahmed, K., & EL-Sakran, A. (2017) "University Students' Perceptions of Transfer of Academic Writing Skills Across Time", *Journal of Languages for Specific Purposes*, Vol.1, No.4, pp. 7-23.
- El-Sakran, T. M., Prescott, D., & Mesanovic, M. (2013) "Contextualizing Teamwork in a Professional Communication Course for Engineering Students", *International Journal of Engineering Education*, Vol.29, No. 2, pp. 439-449.
- Falchikov, N. (2007) *Assessment and emotion: The impact of being assessed*, In D. Boud & N. Falchikov (eds.), *Rethinking assessment in higher education: Learning for the longer term* (pp. 144–156, London: Routledge.
- Gentina, E., Tang, T. & Gu, Q. (2017) "Does Bad Company Corrupt Good Morals? Social Bonding and Academic Cheating among French and Chinese Teens", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 146, No.3, pp. 639-667.
- Gunn, C. (2010) „Exploring MATESOL Student 'Resistance' to Reflection", *Language Teaching*, Vol.14, No.2, pp. 208-223.
- Hattum-Janssen, N. V., & Lourenço, J. M. (2008) "Peer and Self-assessment for

- First-year Students as a Tool to Improve Learning”, *Journal of Professional Issues in Engineering Education and Practice*, Vol. 134, No. 4, pp. 346–352.
- Hussien, A. M. (2014) “Reading Arabic Shallow and Deep Genres in the Fifth and Tenth Grades: Indispensable Variables to Science of Reading”, *Journal of Education and Learning*, Vol. 3, No.1 , pp. 60-69.
- Hyland, K. (2006) *English for Academic Purposes: An advanced resource book*, London: Routledge.
- Hyland, F. (2003) “Focusing on Form: Student Engagement with Teacher Feedback”, *System*, Vol.31, No.2, pp. 217-230.
- Isaacs, G. (2001) *Assessment for learning*, Brisbane: The University of Queensland.
- James, M. A. (2009) “"Far" Transfer of Learning Outcomes From an ESL Writing Course: Can the Gap be Bridged?”, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, Vol.18, No. 2), pp. 69-84. doi:10.1016/j.jslw.2009.01.001.
- Kun, A. I. (2016) “A Comparison of Self Versus Tutor Assessment Among Hungarian Undergraduate Business Students”, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, Vol.41, No.3, pp. 350-367.
- Lapp, D., Shea, A., & Wolsey, D. W. (2011) “Blogging and Audience Awareness”, *Journal of Education*, Vol. 191, No.1, pp. 35-44.
- Leong, A. P., & Lee, H. H. (2018) “From both Sides of the Classroom: Perspectives on Teacher Feedback on Academic Writing and Feedback Practice”, *The Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, Vol. 6, No.1, pp. 151-164.
- Lundquist, L. M., Shogbon, A. O., Momary, K. M., & Rogers, H. K. (2013) “A Comparison of Students’ Self-assessments with Faculty Evaluations of their Communication Skills”, *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, Vol. 77, No. 4, p. 72. doi: 10.5688/ajpe77472.
- Macdonald, A. (2004) “Student Self-evaluation of Coursework Assignments: A Route to Better Perception of Quality”, *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, Vol.1, No.1, pp. 102–107.
- McCabe, D.L., Feghali, T., & Abdallah, H. (2008) “Academic Dishonesty in the Middle East: Individual and Contextual Factors”, *Research in Higher Education*, Vol. 49, No. 5, pp. 451-467.
- Nicol, D., & MacFarlane-Dick, D. (2006) “Formative Assessment and Self-regulated Learning: A Model and Seven Principles of good Feedback Practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol.31, No.2, pp. 199-218.
- Pearce, C. (2007) “Ten Steps to Writing Curriculum Vitae Covering Letters”, *Nursing Management*, Vol. 14, No.8,pp. 25-25.
- Race, P. (2000). *500 tips on group learning*. London: Kogan Page.
- Ross, J. A. (2006) “The Reliability, Validity, and Utility of Self-assessment”, *Practical Assessment Research & Evaluation*, Vol. 11, No.10, pp. 1–13.
- Rowe A.D. (2017) Feelings About Feedback: The Role of Emotions in Assessment for Learning. In: Carless D., Bridges S., Chan C., & Glofcheski R. (eds.) *Scaling up Assessment for Learning in Higher Education. The Enabling Power of Assessment*, Vol. 5. Springer, Singapore
- Rowe, A. D. (2013) *Feedback in higher education: Personal, relational and emotional dimensions*, *Unpublished doctoral dissertation*, Australia:

Macquarie University.

- Rowe, A., Fitness, J., & Wood, L. (2014) "The Role and Functionality of Emotions in Feedback at University: A Qualitative Study", *The Australian Educational Researcher*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 283–309.
- Schön, D. A. (1983) *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*, Basic Books: New York.
- Scrivener, J. (2005) *Learning teaching: The essential guide to English language teaching*, Oxford: Macmillan Education.
- Sayed, S. and Curabba, B. (2019) "Harnessing the Power of Feedback to Assist Progress: A Process-based Approach of Providing Feedback to L2 Composition Students in the United Arab Emirates". In A. Ahmed, S. Troudi, and S. Riley (eds.), *Feedback in L2 English writing in the Arab World: Inside the black box*, London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Sharma R., Jain A., Gupta N., Garg S., Batta M., & Dhir S. K. (2016) "Impact of Self-assessment by Students on their Learning", *International Journal of Applied and Basic Medical Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 226-229.
- Sistrom, C. L., Magyari, E. J., Kellner, R. K., & Edwards, R. K. (2003) "Medical Student Self-assessment of Performance on an Obstetrics and Gynaecology Clerkship", *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, Vol. 188, No. 4, pp. 1078–1082.
- Taatila, V. (2017) "Paradigm Shift in Higher Education?", *On the Horizon*, Vol. 25, No.2, pp. 103-108, <https://doi.org/10.1108/OTH-06-2016-0030>
- Tan, K. H. K. (2012) *Student self-assessment: Assessment, learning and empowerment*, Singapore: Research Publishing.
- Tehrani, F. A. (2018) "Feedback for Writing or Writing for Feedback", *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, Vol. 14, No.4, pp. 162-178.
- Wee, K.N.L., & Kek, Y.C. (2002) *Authentic problem-based learning*, Singapore: Prentice-Hall.
- Yu, H. (2008) "Contextualize Technical Writing Assessment to Better Prepare Students for Workplace Writing: Student-Centered Assessment Instruments", *Journal of Writing and Communication*, Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 265-284.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2002) "Becoming a Self-regulated Learner: An Overview", *Theory Into Practice*, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 64-71.

Appendix 1

The résumé and job application letter are two separate professional documents covered in the course as two individual assignments. However, in business they should be sent together to recruiters by students / job applicants seeking internships and job positions. The résumé is a carefully thought and written account of a job seeker's academic and professional qualifications and experiences and a summary of their competencies and skills relevant to the internship / job position advertised. These skills include teamwork, management, verbal and written communication, computer skills and languages. It is important to tailor the résumé to the needs of the recruiter and the advertised job. The purpose of the résumé is to kindle employer interest and generate an interview. In most cases, a résumé needs to make a positive impression within 30-45 seconds; only

then will someone read it in detail. Therefore, it should not list all the applicant's skills and abilities (only the most important ones and those relevant to the internship / job position advertised or sought. The résumé should be written in a positive, honest way. Failing to do so may result in adverse consequences and end of employment.

The following measures and criteria should be taken into consideration when writing résumés:

1. Language: The résumé should employ accurate language, action verbs, and power words. It should avoid jargon, vague statements and any inappropriate abbreviations.
2. Sections: The résumé should have a number of sections starting with the most important and ending with the least important, given the fact that recruiters scan résumés at the initial stage. Such sections mainly include the applicant's education, work experience, skills (soft skills which are contextualized in statements rather than listed, computer skills, and languages), and references (available upon request). Other sections can be added by applicants if they deem them necessary, such as the optional introductory statement titled "Objective," and sections covering their awards, achievements, training, workshops, conferences and publications if any.
3. Formatting:
 - Appropriate address (including the applicant's name, city and country, telephone number and a professional email that contains an appropriate username)
 - The information in the "Education" and "Work Experience" sections should be arranged in reversed chronological order (from the most recent to the least recent). Dates of institutions attended and tasks in work-related experiences should be given.
 - For students, degree statement should be accurate and have the following details: the applicant's major of study, name of institution, current standing, GPA, and expected graduation.
 - Suitable use of white space
 - Standard constant font use
 - Left justified
 - Non-intrusive punctuation
 - Minimal use of lines and boxes
 - Significant information highlighted (preferably through boldface)
 - Consistent capitalization
 - Suitable length

Résumé Grading Rubric

Name:

| Attribute | Superior 2 | Average 1 | Poor 0 |
|-----------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|
| LANGUAGE | | | |
| Accurate language | | | |
| Action verb use | | | |
| Absence of jargon | | | |
| Absence of vague statements | | | |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| MECHANICS | | | |
| Non-intrusive punctuation | | | |
| Standard consistent font use | | | |
| No inappropriate abbreviations | | | |
| Consistent capitalization | | | |
| FORMAT | | | |
| Minimal use of lines & boxes | | | |
| Significant information highlighted | | | |
| Suitable use of white space | | | |
| Left justified | | | |
| Dates used for education, work experience, etc. | | | |
| Suitable length | | | |
| Overall Shape/Appearance | | | |
| CONTENT | | | |
| References (available on request) | | | |
| Suitable objective | | | |
| Appropriate address | | | |
| Degree statement accurate | | | |
| Skills contextualized in a statement NOT listed | | | |
| Expected graduation | | | |
| Current standing | | | |
| Languages | | | |
| Computer skills | | | |
| GPA (optional no grade if included) | | | |

Total /50 ⇒ /5

Appendix 2

Job Application Letter

This document, also known as “job cover letter” or “covering letter,” should be submitted together with the résumé (not separately) to recruiters. This is because the job application letter is intended to encourage recruiters to read the résumé and request an interview.

There are three basic elements to preparing an effective job application letter:

1. Conducting excellent research about the company and industry
2. Making the letter short and to the point
3. Following up quickly

The following measures and criteria should be taken into consideration when writing job application letters (the format is given below):

Language:

- Accurate and appropriate language
- Clear, positive, polite tone throughout
- Power words
- Sentences employing action verbs
- Appropriate, consistent use of clear font
- Letter mentions résumé

- No inappropriate abbreviations
- Appropriate verb tense usage
- Consistent capitalization

Sections: There should be a balanced layout and suitable use of white space throughout. The sections should run as follows:

- Writer’s address
- Date of writing the letter
- Recipient’s address (title, full name, job position, and address of company). As for titles, use “Mr.” for males and “Ms.” for females.
- Standard salutation (Dear + title + addressee’s surname)
- Paragraph 1: purpose of letter, source of information (how the applicant has known about the job), first reference to the attached / enclosed résumé
- Paragraph 2: background, study, relevant academic and professional achievements
- Paragraph 3: particular employer needs addressed (only if required in the job advertisement). Alternatively, the applicants should mention what attracts them to the role, showing that they have done their research about the company and industry
- Paragraph 4: key skills and experiences highlighted. This paragraph refers to résumé.
- Paragraph 5: restates intention of internship and encourages follow-up by **a.** expressing that the internship / employment will be mutually beneficial **b.** thanking them for reviewing the résumé **c.** requesting an interview **d.** telling them that the applicant will follow up soon.
- Standard closure (“Yours sincerely” if the addressee is a person, and “Yours faithfully” if the addressee is a department or company).
- Signature and full name of applicant
- Enclosure: resume

Formatting: The job application letter should not take more than one side of an A4)

Applicant’s address here

Date

Recipient’s title and full name,

Position and full address of company

Salutation:

Paragraph 1:

Paragraph 2:

Paragraph 3:

Paragraph 4:

Paragraph 5:

Closure,

Signature (four spaces between closure and applicant’s name)

Applicant’s full name

Enclosure:

Internship Application Letter Grading Rubric **Name:** -----

| | | | |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|-----------|
| Attribute | Superior 2 | Average 1 | Poor 0 |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|-----------|

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Writer's address | | | |
| Address of institution | | | |
| Standard salutation | | | |
| Greeting | | | |
| Left justified | | | |
| Non-intrusive punctuation | | | |
| 1 st paragraph = purpose of letter | | | |
| 2 nd paragraph = background, study, relevant academic & professional achievements | | | |
| 3 rd paragraph = particular employer needs addressed (Practical Experience) | | | |
| 4 th paragraph = relevant personal traits & other attributes; refers to résumé | | | |
| 5 th paragraph = restates intention of internship and encourages follow-up | | | |
| Standard closure | | | |
| Absence of letterese | | | |
| Consistent capitalization | | | |
| Signature, name, enclosures | | | |
| Clear, polite tone throughout | | | |
| Suitable use of white space | | | |
| Appropriate clear font consistently used | | | |
| Accurate & appropriate language | | | |
| Letter mentions résumé | | | |
| No inappropriate abbreviations | | | |
| Balanced layout | | | |
| Appropriate verb tense usage | | | |
| Maximum 2 A4 Sheets | | | |
| No overlapping between paragraphs | | | |

Total /50 ⇒ /5