How does my work compare to that of my peers?

If you ask a new online student what they are missing from their face-to-face classes, they will invariably say something about contact with their peers and teaching/academic staff. Contact with peers is very important, as meaningful learning occurs when learners are engaged in social activities (Kim, 2012). What is also valued, and often missing, is the ability for the learner to know how they are performing relative to their peers. This type of rich feedback motivates students to improve their competence (Wlodkowski, 2008) and builds their skills in evaluative judgement (Tai, et al, 2018). In your face to face teaching, this exchange might have happened in and around tutorial and seminar sessions, or in project fair days, but without these types of gatherings, opportunities for students to review the work of other students have become limited.

Take a minute to reflect on your current online course – what opportunities are there for students to review and compare the work of their peers?

In this *Guide,* we will discuss several ideas to help learners know where they are in relation to their peers in the online classroom and provide links to the related learnonline help resources to support you to include some of these in your online courses.

Peer assessment

Peer assessment is when students, upon submitting a piece of work for assessment, are asked to assess several of their peers' work in the same assessment. Peer assessment positively impacts on the academic performance of the student marker as well as the student being evaluated (Double, McGane & Hopfenbeck 2020) as they are able to compare their performance to the work of their peers.

Peer assessment can be performed online using the moodle tool **Workshop.** The teacher supports the Workshop by providing a marking rubric for students to use. They also prepare example submissions which

students can use to practise their marking as well as compare their scores with how the teacher grades the same piece of work. Workshops can be conducted over a period of time as it moves through its 4 phases: Submission, Assessment (peer grading), Evaluation and Close. Students receive two different automatically-calculated marks from participating in Workshop, an averaged grade for their submission and a grade that represents how well they performed as a marker, which is [statistically calculated](#).

Note - Workshop cannot be linked to the Course Outline, so it is used for formative assessment only – if you would like this changed, then suggest this as an enhancement to leanonline.

- Learnonline help - [Peer assessment with Workshop](#)
- [Learnonline enhancement request](#)

Assessment Results

Students are often keen to know how they performed in an assessment relative to their peers. But before any grade lists are displayed, students' privacy needs to be considered.

UniSA's Assessment Policy and Procedures Manual,- section 1.6.1:

> *In accordance with policy [A-46: Confidentiality of students' personal information](#) and the University's [Privacy Policy](#), the University will take reasonable steps to protect students' personal information against loss, unauthorised access, use, modification or disclosure, and misuse. This includes assessment processes, submission of assessment tasks including cover sheets, and providing results and feedback to students.*

And 1.6.3 b.

> *vi) test/exam results may only be displayed in public if the student ID and result are the only information displayed. A student's name and ID must not be visibly linked in the public domain.*

Your course website is not in the public domain, however, students may take information from the course website and place it in the public domain, so it is important to anonymise personal data when sharing class assessment results.

Also, you will need to provide adequate support for students when sharing assessment results. For example, it is not enough to let students know that they are performing poorly, without providing some way forward for them to address the problem!

Now that we have that covered, let's look at some of the ways that assessment results from the class can be shared with students.

If you use quizzes in your course, you can access an automatic histogram of results that can be captured and shared with students. To do this, access the **Quiz administration > Grades** and scroll to the bottom of the page. Use a tool such as the Snipping tool to capture the graph as an image and share this in one of your regular Announcement posts, as shown below, explaining that 8O% students have performed well in this quiz, and those who have not need to take (specific steps) to improve their performance in the next assessment.
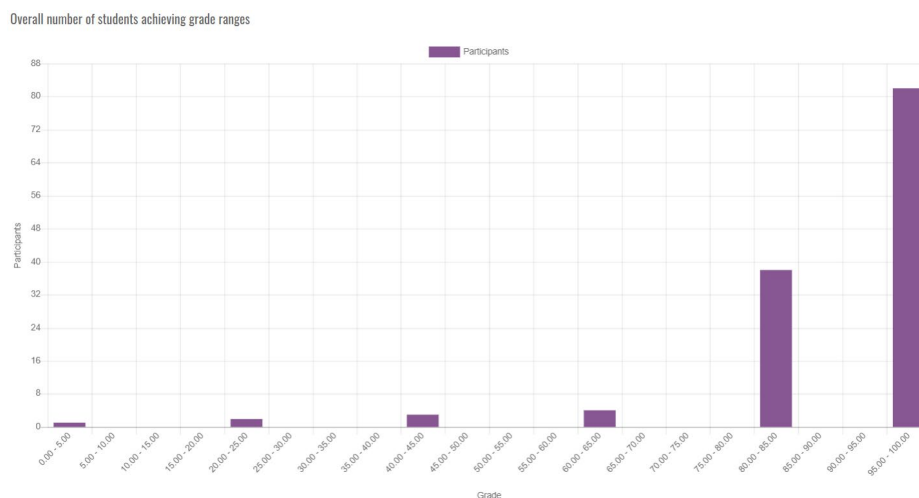
Another way to get similar information for all your assignments is to use the Assessment grade distribution tool within your teaching dashboard (**Course dashboard > Analytics > learnonline Assessment Reports > Assessment Grade Distribution**). You can then use the selector to view the results for individual assessments, such as the learning journal assessment in the example below.
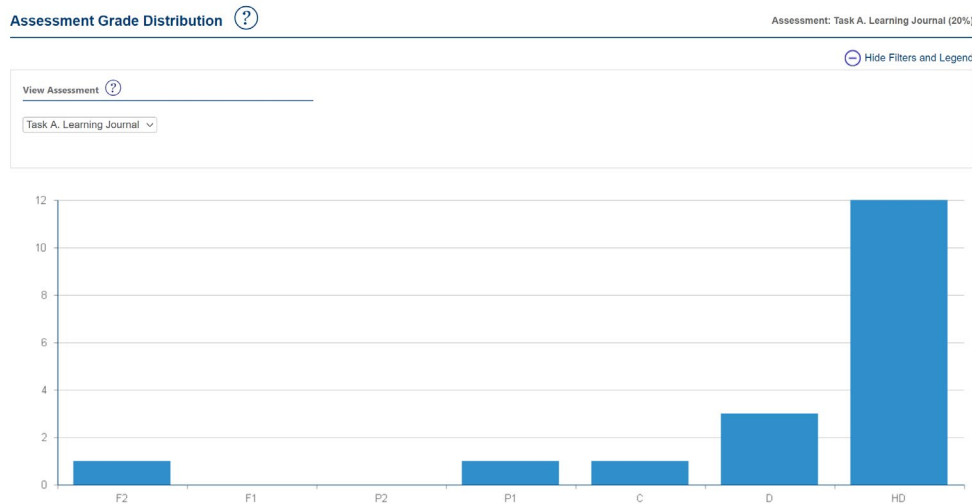
Sharing this information within the course forum can provide learners, who already know their grade, with an insight to where they sit in relation to their peers and reflect on what they need to do next to prepare for their next assessment.

- Learnonline help - [Assessment Reports — Assessment Grade Distribution](#)

Learning Analytics

In some courses, online engagement forms part of the assessment. A report that lets you do this is within the course dashboard (**Course dashboard > Analytics > learnonline Course Site Reports > Student Online Engagement**).

You are able to use a filter to select particular activities or resources that are included in the tally, as well as the engagement method (that is, are students just viewing, or are they contributing to the activities?).

The example below is from the course UO Construction Communication where a small amount of the course grade (2.5%) is associated with engagement in the course, with student engagement data being collected in the middle and at the end of the course. The teachers share with students a screengrab of the data and name the top 10 performing students in a course forum post.

We checked the level of your engagement in this course and we discovered that it is amazingly above the average of all courses in this degree. Still, we have some achievers to be endorsed for their commitment and active engagement along with the past first half of this course.
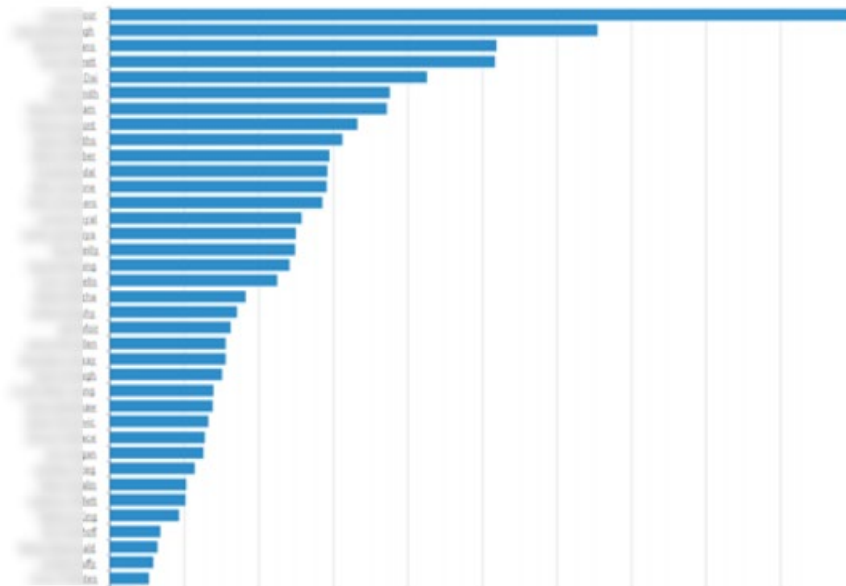
I would like to endorse the sincere and consistent engagement by our top 10 candidates (so far):

#1

#2

#3

#4

Large group activities

Large group activities can also be used to allow students to compare their work to those of their peers. In an online context, this means the use of the activities such as Forums, Database, Feedback and Wiki.

A particular forum type that is good for this is called the **Q&A forum**. After the teacher posts a question, students are able to reply. Once they make their response, they will be able to see the posts of other students and be able to compare their work with those of their peers.

- Learnonline help - [What kind of forum do you need?](#)

The **Database** can be used in a similar way. The database tool allows you to create a form for students to add an entry to a database. The settings can be adjusted so that students need to submit their entry before they can see the submission of others. For those working with **visual**

artefacts, the display of submitted images in databases on one page is relatively user friendly.

- Learnonline help - [Database](#)

Feedback is another tool that can be used to share student responses. In Feedback, the teacher prepares a form with fields for students to complete (text fields, MCQ, etc.). If allowed in the settings, students can see the aggregated results of the submissions after they make their submission (**Feedback Settings > After submission > Show analysis page > Yes**).

- Learnonline help - [Feedback](#)

Wiki is a tool that allows students to produce a webpage on the course website. Whether wikis have been created individually (an Individual wiki), or for small groups (a Collaborative wiki), you can allow students to see the wikis of others (e.g. at the end of a project) by changing the Group mode in the wiki to Visible groups (**Wiki Settings > Common module settings > Group mode > Visible groups**).

- Guide – [Supporting group work online](#)

Are there other ways you can think of to add peer review or extend peer review opportunities in your online course, while still maintaining students' privacy?

Remember that it is important, to not only help students to identify where they are academically in the cohort, but also to support poorer performing students with resources to improve their performance.

If you would like to ask online teaching and learning questions related to your course, you can look through our FAQs, write to TIU@unisa.edu.au or have an [online consultation with a member of the TIU.](#)

References

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