**Session Title:** “You were a lousy teammate, but I’ll give you an A”: The inflation of graded peer-assessments.

**Abstract:** This roundtable focuses on peer evaluations in team-based projects. We gathered quantitative data on self-ratings, peer non-graded ratings, and graded peer ratings; and qualitative data on students’ reactions to graded vs. ungraded assessments across four classes. These data suggest students are most comfortable giving and receiving non-graded developmental feedback, and assign more variable ratings for non-graded assessments. This roundtable briefly summarizing these findings, and focuses on discussing instructors’ goals for peer assessments and when different ratings formats can be most effective. We end by sharing a peer-ratings template, which can aid instructors in optimally designing peer/self-assessments in their future classes.

**Keywords:** Peer Evaluations, Grading, Developmental Feedback

**Introduction**

The purpose of this session is to have a lively conversation about the use of peer evaluations in management education. We examine and discuss the influence of graded evaluations (i.e. evaluations that affect peer grades) versus ungraded peer evaluations (i.e. evaluations used for student development). Graded peer evaluations can improve the assessment of students’ team task performance (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995) and discourage social loafing (Aggarwal & O’Brien, 2008; Myers, 1990). However, students may find it difficult (and be reluctant) to evaluate others when these ratings effect their peers’ grades (Falchikov, 1995). Many instructors use peer evaluations, yet the educational literature provides few insights into how students think about and react to peer evaluations (Jassawalla & Sashittal, 2017); making the topic of graded versus ungraded peer evaluations a fruitful area for discussion.

The aim of this session is for attendees to generate new ideas about how embracing students’ perspectives on peer evaluations can make these assessments more effective learning tools. We hope to encourage a robust roundtable discussion by presenting key takeaways from student data we have collected on graded versus ungraded peer evaluations. The objective of this session is for attendees to leverage our reported findings, reflect on their pedagogical goals when using peer and self-evaluations, and ultimately design evaluation tools that will serve as accurate student assessments that align with instructor goals. This session’s target audience includes faculty and graduate student instructors currently using (or who are interested in using) peer evaluations.

**Theoretical Foundation & Teaching Implications**

Peer evaluations are an important topic in management education. Many business school instructors are now using peer evaluations, particularly when assigning students to work in project teams (Brutas & Donia, 2010). Peer assessments can offer insights into workgroup behaviors and task performances that occur outside the classroom. As more business schools are relying on peer project teams to help students prepare for the world of work (Pfaff & Huddleston, 2003), it is becoming increasingly valuable to understand how peer evaluations can be effectively leveraged to both reach instructors’ goals and encourage student learning.

*Peer Evaluations and Student Outcomes*

Empirical research has identified a number of ways students benefit from peer evaluations. These evaluations can increase work group satisfaction when they are used to reward students for contributing to their team’s project––particularly for students who are concerned with the equal distribution of work among their peers (Chapman & Van Auken, 2001; Erez et al., 2002). When peer evaluations are shared with students, they can also encourage greater growth and learning. For example, peer feedback can positively affect self-awareness, cooperative behaviors, and enable more effective workload sharing (Brooks & Ammons, 2003; Druskat & Wolff, 1999; Erez et al., 2002; Greguras et al., 2001). Evaluations that are highly consequential to students’ grades have also been positively associated with impression management behaviors and perceptions that other students are contributing more (Jassawalla & Sashittal, 2017).

*Dilemmas in Peer Evaluation*

Students also tend to assign their peers higher ratings in comparison to faculty marks (Falchikov, 1986). It has been suggested that this tendency for “over marking”, or the inflation of peers’ grades, results from students’ reluctance to assign lower grades on evaluations that affect their peers’ grades (Falchikov, 1995). When peer feedback is used solely for developmental purposes, ratings may be more than marks given when peer evaluations affect student grades (Farh et al., 1991). Thus, students may be more willing to provide accurate ratings when peers’ grades do not suffer from their candid feedback.

This creates a dilemma. If an instructor’s goal is to gather data that helps them evaluate students’ team performance, how can we ensure these ratings are a true reflection of individual contributions when the very mechanism used to measure these contributions (i.e. graded peer evaluations) may also be artificially inflating the indicators of these contributions? Moreover, is it reasonable to anticipate students can learn and grow from graded peer-ratings, if these ratings are not accurate indicators (i.e. inflated) of their true team contributions and interpersonal skills?

*Contribution to Teaching and Learning*

Understanding how students perceive and respond to graded versus ungraded peer evaluations can provide insights into how to make peer evaluations more effective evaluative tools. Specifically, embracing students’ perspectives on peer evaluations can likely aid faculty in designing and implementing peer-evaluations that both align with their goals and serve as more effective learning tools for students. Consequently, this roundtable aims to contribute to effective teaching and learning by focusing on the different ways that peer assessments can be designed and leveraged to meet instructors’ goals and achieve greater student learning.

**Session Description**

This session will run as a facilitated discussion. We will begin the session by asking attendees about (1) their experiences with peer evaluations, (2) their goals when using peer evaluations in the classroom, and (3) how they believe students respond to peer evaluations. This initial audience participation will serve as an ice breaker for the roundtable, and attendee comments will also be documented and referenced throughout the session to facilitate participant involvement (i.e. by focusing on topics that speak directly to session attendees’ experiences and goals). Following the session introduction, we will briefly highlight qualitative and quantitative findings from our research on peer evaluations in business courses. Specifically, we collected data at four time points, across four courses, with a total sample of approximately 80 students. We will briefly present our data on student perceptions of graded versus ungraded peer evaluations, and will compare and contrast findings from quantitative data on graded and non-graded peer assessments. After highlighting these findings, we will quickly return to the audience input from the beginning of the session to explore how our findings relate to participant’ anecdotes of positive and negative experiences peer grading. While the remaining discussions will be largely dictated by the attendees’ experiences and interests, we provide example topics below that we are both prepared to discuss and address pertinent issues related to peer-evaluations in higher education:

1. Timing of evaluations. What are the benefits and drawbacks of using start-of-semester, mid-semester, and end-of-semester evaluations?
2. What is being rated. What form of assessments are best suited for evaluating task performance and team contributions versus ratings of skills and abilities?
3. Type of student. How does teaching introductory versus higher-level courses, and undergraduate versus MBA students, relate to the type of peer-evaluations instructors could implement to reach their goals?
4. Information to share. How much and what type information should instructors provide about assessments prior to administering them, and how does this relate to the type of assessment that is being used?

*Taken together––* we aim to provide empirical evidence from the students we have sampled, in combination with instructor experiences, to develop fresh perspectives on how to use peer evaluations effectively in the classroom. As a tangible take-away, we will also provide attendees with “peer-ratings template” that can be used to improve the efficacy of peer-ratings. This template will provide suggestions for best practices regarding the use of graded versus ungraded peer-ratings, implications of the timing of evaluations, and differences between graduate and undergraduate assessments. With this template, attendees can better plan their peer-assessments for upcoming semesters by considering the factors included in the template, our empirical data, and the insights gained during this roundtable discussion. In doing so, we aim to fulfill the underlying goal of this session: *for attendees to reflect on their goals when using peer and self-evaluations, and to leverage our findings to design assessment tools that help them achieve their goals.*

**Session Timeline:**

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| PHASE | SUMMARY | PURPOSE | TIMELINE |
| OPENING | Session introduction and solicitation of attendee feedback | *Gauge attendees’ goals and begin dialogue around the use of peer assessments* | 5 minutes |
| SURVEY OF PEER ASSESSMENTS | Overview of the purposes of peer assessments, and a brief summary of our empirical findings | *Familiarize attendees with subject matter and provide a foundation for an informed roundtable discussion.* | 8-10 minutes |
| GOALS OF EVALUATION & FORMS OF ASSESSMENT | Discussing the benefits and drawbacks of different assessment tools | *Assist attendees in identifying what types of assessments can be most valuable for their goals and encourage discussion around the use of peer evaluations in higher education,* | 35-40 minutes |
| CLOSING | Introduce the peer-ratings template | *Assist attendees in planning their peer-assessments for upcoming semesters* | 5 minutes |

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