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## Introducing Double-Blind Peer Review in Teaching Communication Research Methods

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## **Introducing Double-Blind Peer Review in Teaching Communication Research Methods**

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### **Abstract**

This proposal promotes the idea of using student double-blind peer review in assignment evaluation to improve learning outcomes in communication research methods classes. Scholarly peer review is widely used in academia to determine an academic paper's suitability for publication. The double-blind peer review process not only improves the quality of the work but also helps practice the reviewers' unbiased critical thinking skills. Currently we have many forms of peer evaluations, but the double-blind approach is less emphasized. By assigning 2-3 reviewers for evaluating a student research design (e.g. survey questionnaire), the author will benefit from receiving diverse comments on the research planning and the reviewers will engage in reflexive learning through providing constructive feedback.

### **Goal**

The goal is to introduce a new assignment evaluation format in teaching communication research methods, either at the undergraduate or graduate level.

### **Rationale**

Peer learning, the process of students learning with and from each other, has attracted educators' attention since its origin in 1981 (Topping, 2005). Some of the peer learning activities include group projects, student-led workshops, online discussion forums, etc. Students develop collaboration and communication skills in group learning activities with an enhancement of confidence, and they enjoy the ability to take control of their own learning (Biggs, 2003). However, for achieving some of the learning outcomes in research design classes, it will be helpful to introduce the academic double-blind peer review system to strengthen the efficiency of providing feedback. Students are sometimes biased by the identity of the authors or their relationships with the authors (Lee et al., 2012). Therefore, a double-blind system can help students focus on the content itself.

### **Procedures**

I have practiced this method in my Communication Research and Insights graduate level course with positive student feedback. For a survey design assignment, I asked the students to submit their work without including any identifiable information. I then numbered the students from 1-25 and had each of them reviewing another two numbers. Students are required to make anonymous comments on the word document submissions to reupload to the Canvas portal and complete a separate Google Form evaluating the three dimensions of the survey quality on a 1-5 scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Three statements were included in the Google Form: 1). The phrasing of the survey questions is easily understandable to me; 2). The author integrates some of the course content on survey design; 3). Overall, this survey can effectively achieve the research objectives. We took the average scores from the two reviewers to assign a final grade for the author. The highest score possible was 15. When the two reviewers' scores differed by more than 5 points, the professor stepped in to serve as the third reviewer (mocking the journal editor's role) in assigning an additional grade.

Afterwards, the commented files from the reviewers were shared with the authors along with the scores they received. Students then revised their survey design integrating the feedback from the reviewers and formally imported their survey to Qualtrics.

### **Results**

The double-blind peer review experiment was a success in my class in the Spring 2022 semester. Students were able to provide different perspectives to help improve the survey questionnaires. Student integrated the classroom knowledge on survey design and their own understandings on sharing information in providing feedback to their peers. They also shown great interests in the double-blind concept in eliminating bias and enabling a positive learning environment.

### **References**

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