



## **Computer Assisted Self and Peer Assessment Ratings: CASPAR**

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Computer Assisted Self and Peer Assessment Ratings (CASPAR) is an internet based software tool which was developed to manage the administration and assessment of group work more efficiently. This case study describes its uses and how it can fit into your teaching and assessment.

### **Introduction**

Group work remains a fundamental part of teaching in Hospitality, Leisure, Sport, Tourism and Events and it continues to present opportunities and challenges for students and teaching staff (Hassanien, 2006). Group work helps to develop key transferable employability skills but it is often accompanied by tensions arising from interpersonal conflicts, disproportionate levels of participation and perceived unfairness of marks (Sivan et al., 1995; Knowd and Daruwalla, 2003). One way to manage these issues and learn from the processes of group work is through self and peer assessment (SPA) (Johnston and Miles, 2004; Zhang et al., 2008). SPA is a recognised pedagogic strategy that helps to identify individual contributions to group work and helps students to gain a better understanding of both the processes and outcomes of group work (Williams, 1992; Hughes and Large, 1993; Somervell, 1993).

Computer Assisted Self and Peer Assessment Ratings (CASPAR) is an internet based software tool developed to manage the administration and assessment of group work more efficiently. CASPAR allows lecturers to set up group projects and students to participate in online SPA throughout the life of the project. CASPAR allows students to provide qualitative feedback and quantitative marks, and it has a number of features that help to facilitate the group work process e.g. project journal and live messaging service. Lecturers can monitor progress, moderate marks and collect feedback, which can be used within formative and summative assessment.

CASPAR was developed by colleagues at the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice, Bournemouth University (CEMP) and CASPAR V2 has been released for use. CEMP provides a hosting service for the web based system and will continue to develop future versions for end users. Consequently,

institutions or individual lecturers do not have to fund development work or host the service themselves. It also ensures the systematic development of CASPAR and avoids the development of idiosyncratic versions, which may result from distribution of the software for end user setup and development.

To find out more about CASPAR and to trial the system, please follow the following link:

<http://www.cemp.ac.uk/caspar/>

Users can trial the system free for 90 days or subscribe to a premium version.

The user help guide is available at:

<http://www.cemp.ac.uk/caspar/files/CASPAR-User-Guide-v2.pdf>.

### **CASPAR's features**

- Easy to use and access.
- Users can access CASPAR from anywhere in the world, as long as they have internet access.
- CASPAR can assign groups alphabetically and randomly.
- Lecturers can allocate students manually.
- Student information can be extracted from student record databases such as Unit-E and transferred into the CASPAR system using a spreadsheet.
- The system can use the same passwords that staff use to access their university e-mail/intranet accounts. If staff change their password, CASPAR will recognise the new password.
- Lecturer can enter the marking criteria that students use.
- Multiple dates and time-frames for the completion of peer and self assessment can be preset and the marking area becomes available during these periods.
- The system identifies late submissions.
- Users assess using alphabetical grades (A-E), marks (out of 100) and provide qualitative feedback.
- Feedback can be anonymous.

- Students can view assessment scores, qualitative feedback and track changes in their grades throughout the project life.
- Users can record project related information and send messages to other group members through a project journal.
- When setting up a project, staff can set the standard deviation, which helps to identify potential collusion or disagreement among member. The system will then highlight significant deviations in marks between group members.
- Staff can moderate final marks.

### **CASPAR's Limitations**

- Once students are placed in a group and the project is started, it is not possible to reorganise groups or reassign members to different groups.
- Once a project is initiated, it is not possible to change assessment dates or add new dates.
- Once a project is started, it is not possible to change any of the assessment settings (e.g. the marking criteria or standard deviation).
- The process of assigning groups is time consuming.
- Staff can moderate marks but offensive comments cannot be edited or removed during moderation.
- Staff are not able to edit marks prior to the closure of the marking period.
- Staff cannot select or ignore one set of marks, for example, those assigned during one marking period.
- Students cannot recall or change marks or comments once they have been submitted.
- The final marks can be printed, but staff cannot extract large groups of marks or feedback in a spreadsheet format.

### **User advice**

- When uploading student data and selecting groups, it is easier to sort students into seminar groups prior to the data entry stage. For example, when loading student data to a project the students were separated into seminar groups and their data was saved in separate spreadsheets (e.g. Grp1, Grp2 etc). These seminar group files were loaded individually and projects set up individually for each seminar group. The alternative is to

go through the group selection function, which the computer can do or which users can do manually. This is time consuming with a large cohort of students already assigned to different seminar groups.

- Check student lists prior to uploading data and the setting up of projects.
- Establish collaboratively the marking criteria (e.g. timekeeping, level and quality of written work etc.). This can be used to help students develop key employability skills.
- In briefing students about qualitative peer feedback, encourage students to identify one positive characteristic of a colleague as well as highlighting an area where they need to improve.
- Check the marking criteria carefully for spelling errors and clarity as these cannot be changed later.
- Get all students to check that they can access the system and that they have been allocated to the right group prior to the start of the assessment.
- If possible, set up a test project so that students can familiarise themselves with the system and the norms of assessment.
- Establish multiple marking points. This will help students to identify areas where they need to improve and give them time to address emerging issues.
- Provide students with clear guidance that helps them to allocate alphabetical and numerical grades (see below for an example).
- Ensure assessment dates correspond with appropriate milestones and deliverables deadlines in the group work project.
- Wherever possible, use peer and self-assessment as part of a broader learning and development strategy. For example, this can be used to think critically about students' strengths and weaknesses, the difficult nature of offering constructive criticism, the challenges involved in developing an appraisal/performance evaluation process. If possible, the qualitative feedback as well as their marks can be used within a Personal Development and Planning programme.
- When issuing guidance remind students to:
  - make sure they assess the correct person;
  - think very carefully about their comments/marks before pressing the submit button because they cannot change them later;
  - assess themselves, including qualitative feedback.

## **Example of a Briefing for Peer and Self Assessment Using CASPAR**

### **Peer and self-assessment marking criteria**

1. Contribution to group discussions (i.e. the amount, not the quality)
2. Reliability in carrying out allocated roles/tasks
3. Quality of written work/work produced
4. Acceptance of advice and criticism, including follow-up actions
5. Punctuality
6. Reliability in attendance
7. Organisation and preparation for meetings (this includes knowledge of relevant operations management principles)

Important: When writing feedback about a colleague, make sure you highlight:

- One positive trait or quality and
- One area where they can improve

### **Deadlines**

(Fill in as appropriate.)

The system will close after these dates.

Failure to complete the peer and self-assessment will mean that you will NOT qualify for 20% of the mark for this assessment!

## **Guidance on allocating marks**

### **High First 80+ All As**

This mark should only be awarded to those students who made an exceptional amount of effort and whose work was of a superior standard. They were fully involved in group discussion; they maintained a professional attitude throughout the exercise, and their punctuality and attendance were impeccable. They were completely reliable and produced exceptional written work. They prepared extensively for meetings and demonstrated outstanding knowledge of the subject area. They consistently reacted to advice and criticism positively and their follow up actions clearly demonstrated a high level of maturity and the ability to develop in a range of areas.

**First 70-79% Mainly As**

This mark should be awarded to those students who made an exemplary contribution and whose work was consistently of a very high standard. They were actively involved in group discussions; they maintained a professional attitude during the exercise, and their punctuality and attendance were excellent. They came to the meetings very well prepared and demonstrated an excellent knowledge of the subject area. They were completely reliable and produced superior written work. They consistently reacted to advice and criticism positively and their follow up-actions clearly demonstrated maturity and an ability to develop.

**2i 60-69% Mainly Bs, with some As**

These students made a good contribution to group discussions, and were generally reliable in carrying out their allocated roles and tasks. Their written work was generally of a good standard. They maintained a professional attitude for most of the exercise and their punctuality and attendance were mostly good. They came well prepared for meetings and demonstrated a good knowledge of the subject area. They were largely reliable and produced good written work. Most of the time they reacted positively to advice and criticism, and their follow up-actions showed some maturity and ability to develop.

**2ii 50-59% Mainly Cs or a mixture of grades**

These students made a fair contribution to group discussions. They needed supervision to ensure the completion of their tasks. They were sometimes late and missed several meetings. There was evidence of preparation prior to meetings but this may have been inconsistent and incomplete – as was their knowledge of operations management principles. Their work was generally competent but lacked flair or initiative. Their attitude lacked professionalism at times, they did not always react positively to advice or criticism, and their follow-up actions were inconsistent.

**3 40-49% Mainly Ds**

These students did not contribute to group discussions and were often unreliable in completing tasks without supervision. They did not work easily in a team and were not willing to accept advice and criticism. Preparation was very inconsistent and showed a low level of understanding of the relevant subject. They persistently failed to demonstrate the maturity and professionalism required for the exercise. Their standard of work was generally low.

### **Fail Under 40% Mainly Es**

These students performed unsatisfactorily in the group activity. They did not make an acceptable contribution to the group work and were consistently unreliable in meeting deadlines and in completing allocated tasks. There was little or no evidence of preparation for meetings and little evidence that they understood, or attempted to understand, the principles of operations management. They did not accept or act upon advice and criticism and their level of written work was generally poor.

### **Weak Fail Under 29% All Es**

These students performed very unsatisfactorily in the group activity. They contributed very little or nothing to the group work and were consistently unreliable in meeting deadlines and in completing allocated tasks. There was no evidence of preparation for meetings and little or no evidence that they understood, or attempted to understand, the principles of operations management. They paid little or no attention to advice and criticism and their level of written work was very poor or non-existent.

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