

## OVERVIEW

The Self and Peer Assessment (SPA) tool facilitates the objective, analytical, and learning comprehension skills of students. Reviewing the work of fellow students through criteria-based reference evaluation allows constructive feedback. The constructive feedback that students give to and receive from their peers can enhance their comprehension of the subject material and provide valuable insights into their own efforts.

Large classes can benefit from the self and peer review process by distributing the administrative workload; quality feedback can be provided from several different individuals, allowing students to apply their knowledge gained from developing their own submissions.

The tool can be set to allow self and/or peer review of student submissions. Evaluations may be anonymous to encourage candid assessments, or peers may be identified to permit students to evaluate the work of specific other students. These options may impact the integrity of the assessment process; care must be exercised in their use.

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## STRUCTURE OF A SELF & PEER ASSESSMENT (SPA) ASSIGNMENT

A SPA assignment consists of one or more questions, each with one or more criteria.

### Question 1

- Criterion 1
- Criterion 2
- Criterion 3

### Question 2

- Criterion 1
- Criterion 2

The assignment has distinct time periods – submission, evaluation, and review. Students submit a response for each question during the submission period. During the evaluation period, students engage in self and/or peer review of submissions by assessing each question using the relevant criteria. After the evaluation period has ended, students may review the evaluations they have received.

## CREATE A SPA ASSIGNMENT

1. Using the *Subject Menu* of your subject, navigate to the area where you wish to create a link to an assignment.
2. Click **Edit View**.
3. Select **Self and Peer Assessment** from the drop-down menu on the right of the screen, then click **Go**.
4. Select **New** for **Create New or Import**.
5. Enter a name and instructions for the assignment.

Note that submission dates and evaluation dates are included automatically as information for students so this information does not need to be manually added to the instructions.

6. Set the appropriate **Start Date** and **End Date** for the submission period.

Note that the submission period should not start immediately or the assignment link will be shown to students whilst questions and criteria are still being added.

7. Set the appropriate **Start Date** and **End Date** for the evaluation period.

Note that the evaluation period cannot commence before the end of the submission period.

8. Select **Yes/No** to allow or prevent **anonymous evaluation**.
9. Select **Yes/No** to allow or prevent **self evaluation**.
10. Select **Yes/No** to show or hide **evaluation results to submitter**.
11. Select the appropriate **number of submissions to evaluate**.
12. If required, select date restrictions for the assignment link availability.

Note that assignment availability will hide/show the assignment link independent of the submission and evaluation periods. Care must be taken not to hide the link during the time students should be interacting with the tool. Unless clear reasons exist to change the settings, leave these as default.

13. Click **Submit** and then **OK** on the following receipt page.

## ADD A QUESTION TO A SPA ASSIGNMENT

Questions provide both the structure and content of the SPA assignment. Questions may be simple or complex. For example, *What year did Queen Elizabeth I die?* or *Explain why Napoleon's armies were defeated at the battle of Waterloo*. An optional model response can be provided. The model response allows evaluators to compare submitted answers to an example. It is not displayed to students during the submission period, only during the evaluation and review periods.

1. Using the *Subject Menu* of your subject, navigate to the area where the SPA assignment is located.
2. Click **Edit View**.
3. Click **Modify** for the relevant SPA assignment.
4. Click **Assessment Canvas**.
5. Click **+Question** to create a new question.
6. Enter the question text, and an optional model response.
7. Click **Submit** and then **OK** on the following receipt page.

## ADD CRITERIA TO A QUESTION

The criteria that accompany each question provide the means to evaluate the responses to those questions. The number of criteria can also range from one (*Did the answer =4*) to many:

- *Does the response place the issue within the broader context of the subject?*
- *Is the response well organized and clearly laid out?*
- *Was the response proofread carefully? Was it free of significant grammatical, spelling, or typographical errors?*

In general, essay questions may require many criteria per question while shorter questions may only require one or two criteria.

1. Using the *Subject Menu* of your subject, navigate to the area where the SPA assignment is located.
2. Click **Edit View**.
3. Click **Modify** for the relevant SPA assignment.
4. Click **Assessment Canvas**.
5. Click **Criteria** for the appropriate question.
6. Click **+Criteria** to add a new criterion.
7. Enter the criterion text.
8. Enter the number of **points possible** for this criterion.
9. Set **All or Nothing**, or **Partial Credit** to decide how to assign points.
10. Click **Yes** or **No** to decide whether or not to **Allow Feedback to User**.
11. Click **Submit** and then **OK** on the following receipt page.

## EXPORT A SPA ASSIGNMENT

Assignments can be exported as a ZIP file so they can be imported into another LMS subject at a later time, if required. Only the assessment structure (questions and criteria) is exported, none of the submissions are.

1. Using the *Subject Menu* of your subject, navigate to the area where the SPA assignment is located.
2. Click **Edit View**.
3. Click **Modify** for the relevant SPA assignment.
4. Click **Export Assessment**.
5. Click **Save**, then select a location to save the file.
6. Click **OK**.

## IMPORT A SPA ASSIGNMENT

Assignments can be imported using ZIP files created in the assignment export process (see previous). If the start date of the submission period occurs in the past, then the start date is reset to 24 hours from the time of importing. All other dates are automatically adjusted forward in time while maintaining the same relationships that were established in the original assignment, though the settings can be edited after importing the file.

1. Using the *Subject Menu* of your subject, navigate to the area where you wish to create a link to an assignment.
2. Click **Edit View**.
3. Select **Self and Peer Assessment** from the drop-down menu on the right of the screen, then click **Go**.
4. Select **Import** for **Create New or Import**.
5. Click **Browse** to locate the file to be uploaded, then click **OK**.
6. Enter a **name** for the new assignment.
7. Click **Submit** and then **OK** on the following receipt page.

## MONITOR SUBMISSIONS & EVALUATIONS

Submissions and evaluations can be viewed during the assessment process, allowing staff to monitor class progress in the learning activity. Submissions and evaluations can be downloaded as a collection or on an individual basis so they can be reviewed later. The content is bundled in a ZIP file that contains an HTML file for each submission/evaluation. The files can be opened and read in any web browser.

1. In the *Control Panel* of your subject, from the *Subject Tools* module, select **Self and Peer Assessment**.
2. Click the **name** of the appropriate assignment.
3. Click **Submissions**.

The screenshot shows the Blackboard Academic Suite interface in Internet Explorer. The page title is "Submissions" and the breadcrumb trail is "LMS TRAINING SUBJECT 10 (TRN010) > CONTROL PANEL > SELF AND PEER ASSESSMENT > RESULTS OPTIONS > SUBMISSIONS".

**Assessment:** The future and history of UniMelb  
**Submission Dates:** 23 February 2009 10:15:00 until 2 March 2009 10:15:00  
**Evaluation Dates:** 2 March 2009 10:15:00 until 9 March 2009 10:15:00

Below the dates is a "Download All" button and a "Filter By: Status" dropdown menu set to "Show All".

Completed	Name	Username	Question Responses	Submission	Submission
✓	Brown, Naomi	studenta	2 of 2	<a href="#">View</a>	<a href="#">Download</a>
✓	Pallen, Roger	studente	2 of 2	<a href="#">View</a>	<a href="#">Download</a>
✗	Rodriguez, Simon	studentd	0 of 2	<a href="#">View</a>	<a href="#">Download</a>
✓	Smith, Terry	studentb	2 of 2	<a href="#">View</a>	<a href="#">Download</a>
✓	Tan, Wei Hoo	studentc	1 of 2	<a href="#">View</a>	<a href="#">Download</a>

An "OK" button is located at the bottom right of the table area.

Figure 1: Monitoring submissions for a SPA assignment.

1. In the *Control Panel* of your subject, from the *Subject Tools* module, select **Self and Peer Assessment**.
2. Click the **name** of the appropriate assignment.
3. Click **Evaluations**.

The screenshot shows the Blackboard Academic Suite interface in Internet Explorer. The page title is 'Evaluations' and it is part of the 'LMS TRAINING SUBJECT 10 (TRN010)' course. The assessment is titled 'The future and history of UniMelb' and has submission dates from 23 February 2009 to 2 March 2009, and evaluation dates from 2 March 2009 to 9 March 2009.

The 'Evaluations' section shows a table of evaluator data. The table has columns for 'Completed', 'Evaluator', 'Evaluator Username', 'Submissions Evaluated', 'Percentages', 'Points', 'Average', 'Evaluated Self', and 'Evaluation'. The data is as follows:

Completed	Evaluator	Evaluator Username	Submissions Evaluated	Percentages	Points	Average	Evaluated Self	Evaluation
✓	Brown, Naomi	studenta	Naomi Brown Roger Pallen Simon Rodriguez	25% 95% 0%	6/24 23/24 0/24	40%	✓	<a href="#">View</a> <a href="#">Download</a>
✓	Pallen, Roger	studente	Roger Pallen Simon Rodriguez Wei Hoo Tan	87% 0% 41%	21/24 0/24 10/24	42%	✓	<a href="#">View</a> <a href="#">Download</a>
✓	Rodriguez, Simon	studentd	Simon Rodriguez Naomi Brown Terry Smith	- - 4%	- - 1/24	4%	✗	<a href="#">View</a> <a href="#">Download</a>
✓	Smith, Terry	studentb	Terry Smith Naomi Brown Wei Hoo Tan	4% 37% 33%	1/24 9/24 8/24	24%	✓	<a href="#">View</a> <a href="#">Download</a>
✓	Tan, Wei Hoo	studentc	Wei Hoo Tan Terry Smith Roger Pallen	50% 54% 91%	12/24 13/24 22/24	65%	✓	<a href="#">View</a> <a href="#">Download</a>

The table also includes a 'Filter By: Status' dropdown set to 'Show All' and a 'GO' button. An 'OK' button is located at the bottom right of the table area.

Figure 2: Monitoring evaluations for a SPA assignment.

Note that the points listed for each evaluator are the points provided by that student to their peers during the evaluation period. The **average** column aims to provide a summary of evaluation points awarded to identify whether a student is providing a significantly higher or lower number of points than other students. However, this column may be of little informative value to staff where a student has been randomly allocated students with different assignment quality. Staff should take care in the analysis of these values.

## VIEW RESULTS

Results can be monitored and reviewed once the submission phase has ended. Staff should be aware of the issues surrounding the calculation of results through the SPA tool – see the ‘Technological limitations & workarounds’ section for further information.

4. In the *Control Panel* of your subject, from the *Subject Tools* module, select **Self and Peer Assessment**.
5. Click the **name** of the appropriate assignment.
6. Click **Results**.

The screenshot shows the Blackboard Academic Suite interface in Internet Explorer. The page title is 'Blackboard Academic Suite - Windows Internet Explorer'. The browser address bar shows the URL: [http://app.lms.unimelb.edu.au/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab\\_id=\\_2\\_1&url=%2fwebaj](http://app.lms.unimelb.edu.au/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab_id=_2_1&url=%2fwebaj). The page content includes the University of Melbourne logo and 'Learning Management System' branding. The navigation menu includes 'My Home', 'Subjects', 'Communities', 'Manage Content', 'Staff Resources', and 'Logout'. The breadcrumb trail is: LMS TRAINING SUBJECT 10 (TRN010) > CONTROL PANEL > SELF AND PEER ASSESSMENT > RESULTS OPTIONS > RESULTS.

The main heading is 'Results'. Below it, the assessment details are:

- Assessment:** The future and history of UniMelb
- Submission Dates:** 23 February 2009 10:15:00 until 2 March 2009 10:15:00
- Evaluation Dates:** 2 March 2009 10:15:00 until 9 March 2009 10:15:00

There is a checked checkbox for 'Update the points possible for the column in the Grade Center when sending results'. Below this are two buttons: 'Send Results to Grade Center' and 'Download All'.

Evaluated	Name	Username	Average Percentage	Average Score	Results Sent	Evaluated Self	Evaluators		
✓	Brown, Naomi	studenta	29%	7/24	Yes	✓	1 of 2	View	Download
✓	Pallen, Roger	studente	92%	22/24	Yes	✓	2 of 2	View	Download
✓	Rodriguez, Simon	studentd	0%	0/24	Yes	✗	2 of 2	View	Download
✓	Smith, Terry	studentb	21%	5/24	Yes	✓	2 of 2	View	Download
✓	Tan, Wei Hoo	studentc	42%	10/24	Yes	✓	2 of 2	View	Download

An 'OK' button is located at the bottom right of the table area. The footer of the page includes 'Powered by Blackboard', 'Local intranet', and a zoom level of '100%'.

Figure 3: Viewing results for a SPA assignment.

## **TECHNOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS & WORKAROUNDS**

Whilst the SPA tool may suit the teaching and learning requirements of some classes, it does not necessarily suit all. It is worth being aware of SPA tool limitations since it is sometimes possible to overcome these through planning ahead. The LMS Academic Support team has already contacted Blackboard to suggest enhancements for this tool to address each of the issues below. It is hoped future releases will include tool improvements to eliminate these issues.

### **ALL STUDENTS ARE INCLUDED IN THE ALLOCATION PROCESS**

The SPA tool includes all student accounts in the allocation process, so the tool cannot be used at a group or pair level. It is not possible to have two streams within a cohort, with each stream having their own SPA assignment, since students in Stream 1 may be allocated to peer review work submitted in Stream 1 or 2. It is also possible a student in Stream 1 may submit work but both evaluators are in Stream 2 therefore the student receives no peer reviews, undermining the goals of the learning activity.

No workaround currently exists for this issue – all students must be within the same SPA assignment to maximise the benefits of the tool.

### **STUDENT VIEW ACCOUNTS ARE INCLUDED IN THE ALLOCATION PROCESS**

The University of Melbourne provides a facility for staff to create a Student View account in order to simulate the experience of a student within a subject. Unfortunately, since a Student View account is indistinguishable from a real student account, the SPA tool includes these accounts within the allocation for self and/or peer review.

This leads to some students being requested to review the submission of a Student View account (which won't have a submission since staff won't submit any work using these accounts). Evaluators are simply advised no submission has been recorded for the Student View account so and no peer review is possible so evaluators miss out on the educational opportunity to critique the work of others.

Additionally, a student that submits work for evaluation may have a Student View account allocated to peer evaluate their submission. As a result, whilst the submitter is evaluating the work of their peers, no peer evaluation of their work occurs, and the student receives no educational benefit.

The effects of Student View accounts being allocated can be minimised by having students peer review two or more submissions. This should lead to each student having at least one real student peer review their work.

### **NON-SUBMISSIONS ARE ALLOCATED**

Students that do not submit any work during the submission period are included in the allocation for other students. Evaluators are simply advised no submission has been recorded for that student and no peer review is possible so evaluators miss out on the educational opportunity to critique the work of others.

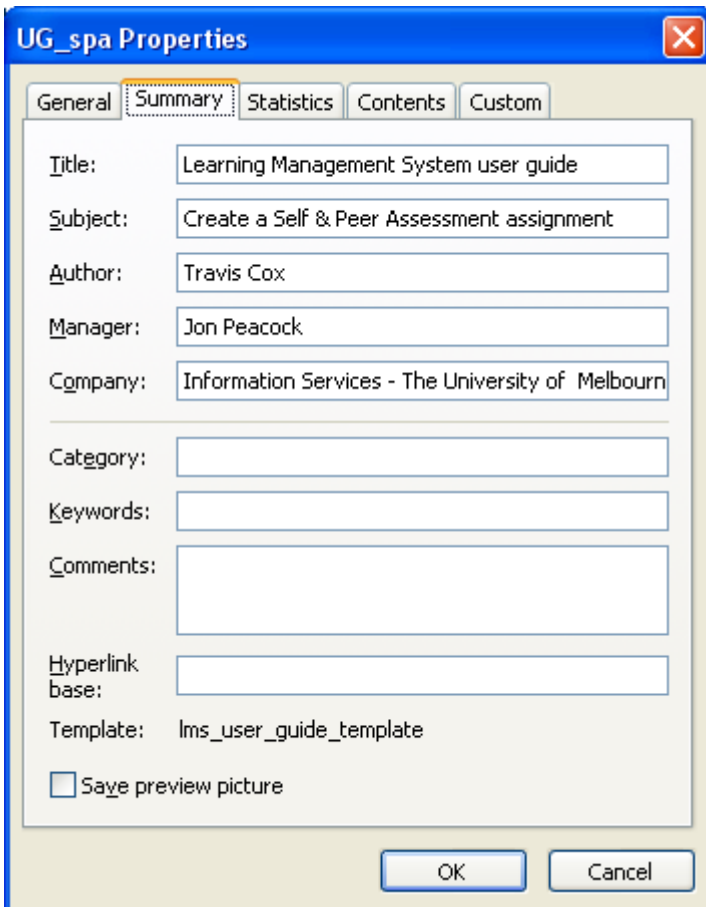
Within the tool, staff are able to monitor the submissions made by all students in the cohort so prior to the end of the submission period, can encourage students who have not yet submitted to do so in order to maximise the pedagogical benefits of the exercise. Staff should make sure students understand the value of the self and peer review activities for their learning, and take the opportunity to reflect on their own work through participation in the exercise. If an assessment element is attached to the SPA exercise, students can also be reminded that a submission may receive some points from their peers whereas a non-submission will only be allocated zero points.

Students that don't submit work are more likely to also not participate in the evaluation process therefore staff must monitor the evaluations performed by each student and may need to remind students of the need to participate prior to the end of the evaluation period.

## LATE SUBMISSIONS ARE NOT POSSIBLE

At the end of the submission period, students are randomly allocated to evaluate the work of their peers. It is not possible for staff to manually add a late submission into the system once the evaluation period has commenced.

Staff can view the names of students allocated to peer review each student therefore a late submission may be emailed directly to the appropriate evaluators, requesting they review the content and email their evaluations back to the teaching staff. If the SPA assignment requires anonymity, staff must remove all details of the author from the document. Note that some document types include author information in the file properties, not just within the document where a student has identified themselves as the author. For example, Microsoft Word properties for this document reveal considerable information about the author although no author names appear within the text.



**Figure 4: Microsoft Word file properties can reveal author identity.**

Staff must remove this file property information via the **File > Properties** option within Microsoft Word. Other file types (eg: PDF, JPG) may require alternate actions to remove the file author properties.

## STUDENT EVALUATIONS CAN AFFECT GRADE

Students may assign point values to each criterion for each question in a SPA assignment. These points may be included in the Grade Centre as a grade component for students in the subject. However, the technical issues associated with the calculation of point values mean the ease of transferring numerical student evaluations to the Grade Centre is offset by staff needing to truly understand the impact of this action.

The average points awarded to each student through the self and/or peer review process has limited use for analysis where:

- not all students participated in the evaluation process (average percentage will be decreased for students who have a 0% contributing to their score),
- the integrity of the assignment has been undermined through students assigning themselves an inappropriately high number of points in the self review, or
- evaluation quality is highly variable (may occur if staff have not provided clear guidelines and support for students).

For example, the average score for Terry Smith (see Figure 3) is 21%. However, we can see in the evaluations page that Terry's self review score was 4%, with one peer (Simon Rodriguez) awarding 4% and the other peer (Wei Hoo Tan) awarding 54%. Such variation in the second peer review suggests either a lack of clarity on how to appropriately peer review, or partiality through a lack of anonymity in the process. It is possible for the SPA assignment to be also graded by staff and for the allocated peer review points to form only a component of the final grade for the assignment but staff must ensure they fully understand the calculations performed by the tool rather than accepting the values without question. Whether using the SPA tool in the LMS or engaging in any other form of peer review, staff should consider adopting an alternate grading scheme which encourages participation in all aspects of the self and/or peer review process.

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