



## Chat Transcript for Session Topic: Collaborative writing in divergent disciplines

Discussion of  
Cutts "Essay Writing with Peer Reviewing and Marking"  
Das and McGugan "Shakespeare: Page Stage Screen"

Facilitated and Moderated by  
Catherine Owen  
University of Strathclyde, Strathclyde, United Kingdom

Date/Time	Author	Comment
31/05/2007 09:02:59	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	Good morning, afternoon or evening! I'm Catherine Owen the REAP Project Manager and I'm delighted to welcome you to this chat session on collaborative writing. I'm playing a dual role as both facilitator and moderator for this session
31/05/2007 09:03:15	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	I'm very happy to be joined by case study authors Nandini Das and Stuart McGugan from the University of Liverpool and Quintin Cutts from the University of Glasgow.
31/05/2007 09:04:06	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	I hope that everyone participating in this session will find it valuable. If things become busy and questions are flowing fast, please give the authors time to respond before posting another comment or questions.
31/05/2007 09:04:40	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	Quintin, Nandini and Stuart - I wonder if you could start by giving a (very!) brief summary of your case studies?
31/05/2007 09:04:47	<b>Stuart McGugan</b> (mcgugan)	Precis of Shakespeare case - Group editing assessment for final year english students. Allows for early feedback. Richer interpretation of playwrights work based on shared dialogue. Develops keys skills as well as deep learning
31/05/2007 09:05:15	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	The aspect of the course discussed here is designed to improve skills in developing and criticising written arguments. Students develop these skills working with their own and their peers' essays. All peer feedback is done blind, which helps the process
31/05/2007 09:05:40	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	I was grateful for the thoughtful responses to my initial review made by the authors on the session message-board forum. A theme that seems to be emerging is one of community. How important do you think it is to design courses that encourage community d
31/05/2007 09:06:14	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	Really important, I think. Student feedback for my courses often mention this.
31/05/2007 09:06:20	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Very important - and I see that the blind reviewing system actually keeps students apart in some ways
31/05/2007 09:06:46	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	although it does embolden them to speak out. Perhaps I could mix this up somehow...
31/05/2007 09:07:10	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	Quintin - in some ways your course isn't 'collaborative' in a team way?
31/05/2007 09:07:38	<b>Steve Draper</b> (SteveDraper)	Das: is your design the only place for groupwork on the whole degree programme? at least for joint work lasting longer than an hour?



31/05/2007 09:08:32	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	The students are required to take part in all parts of the course, otherwise they lose marks. This is couched in terms of professionalism - they need to contribute in order to support their peers' learning
31/05/2007 09:08:54	<b>Geetha Abeysinghe</b> (gka23)	Geetha: Nandini and Quintin: Did the students underwent a pre session where they learnt what to look for and how to evaluate? How did you get students to trust peer feedback?
31/05/2007 09:08:59	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	Steve -- No, students do assessed group presentations in a couple of other modules in Year 2, and increasingly, non-assessed group work in Year 1.
31/05/2007 09:09:41	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	gka23 has picked up an important point about setting expectations and criteria - how did you deal with this?
31/05/2007 09:09:55	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	gka23: I did have a session looking at this, using previous years' reviews as examples of good and bad practice - but this is an area that needs serious expansion
31/05/2007 09:10:29	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	We don't really have peer evaluation per se, although students do evaluate how well the group worked as a team. We have an introductory session on this.
31/05/2007 09:11:03	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	Both of you use pre-defined criteria. How could you get students to develop their own criteria?
31/05/2007 09:11:40	<b>Geetha Abeysinghe</b> (gka23)	Quintin: I do a similar exercise for essay type assessment to show students good styles of writing and referencing. I was told that I cannot use previous studentwork unless I have prior permission from then due to data protection issues. How did you overcome this?
31/05/2007 09:11:53	<b>Mark Russell</b> (MarkRussell)	Great question Catherine - I wonder if you might additional benefit from thinking and setting criteria too
31/05/2007 09:12:08	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	I could make use of a scheme more like Rosario's - although as has been suggested, this would work better for simple aspects of essay writing rather than for argument development
31/05/2007 09:12:37	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	Why is argument development harder to assess for students?
31/05/2007 09:12:46	<b>Mark Russell</b> (MarkRussell)	my last post - from getting students to think about and create criteria
31/05/2007 09:13:20	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	gka - oops, I think I've fudged this issue. I do ensure of course that it is thoroughly anonymised, but with DPA regs, that's not enough :-)
31/05/2007 09:14:23	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	Mark -- The problem is of time -- since the groupwork is done in the first half of the semester, turnaround time is tight -- in order to ensure that they can use the experience and the feedback from tutors for thier individual assessed essays. I guess we could have a cumulative process, in which we take student feedback about the criteria into account every year.
31/05/2007 09:14:28	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Because may of them, initially certainly, don't have a good understanding of a strong argument - this of course is the aspect to develop
31/05/2007 09:14:43	<b>David Nicol</b> (DavidNicol)	more abstract, complex, multidimensional - can't easily be articulated even by lecturers ie argument development
31/05/2007 09:14:46	<b>Geetha Abeysinghe</b> (gka23)	Quintin: true. I am thinking of getting s signed consent along with their submission of work
31/05/2007 09:15:30	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	David - yes, how true about the lecturers! :-)
31/05/2007 09:15:36	<b>Stuart McGugan</b> (mcgugan)	yes I think some criteria easier to work with than others - just like staff
31/05/2007 09:15:49	<b>Mark Russell</b> (MarkRussell)	Nandini, time the bain of us all. I like the idea of learning and taking to next year.



31/05/2007 09:16:49	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	Mark -- yes, that would be easy enough to implement, since we have anonymised student evaluations for all modules anyway.
31/05/2007 09:17:27	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	But argument development is central to the value of the essay! Stuart and Nandini - you ask students to justify their decisions around a text, so the 'arguments' are reflective and explicit?
31/05/2007 09:19:29	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	Are you able to describe that process of group debate?
31/05/2007 09:19:30	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Catherine, of course you are right - and as David identifies, the evaluation process isn't easy to identify. Certainly some students are very good at it - but others opt for teh easy stuff, like gross structure, grammar or spelling.
31/05/2007 09:19:47	<b>Geetha Abeysinghe</b> (gka23)	I would like to know what kind of collaborative tools you are using. Does the software allow the team to work on a document simultaneously?
31/05/2007 09:19:57	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	Catherine -- Yes. We also hope that the process of creating the argument is a learning process in itself - getting used to articulating and defending your own point of view within a group.
31/05/2007 09:20:06	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	gka - me or Nandini?
31/05/2007 09:20:08	<b>Rosario Hernandez</b> (RosarioHernandez)	Catherine, I agree with you, students are good at making judgments about 'arguments' and reflect about their quality, either their own or their peers
31/05/2007 09:20:56	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	It also helps them to be flexible, and yet constructively critical about the work produced by their peers.
31/05/2007 09:21:11	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	... because they have a personal investment in the end result!
31/05/2007 09:21:12	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	So we're really trying to develop a 'higher order' engagement with criteria that recognises abstraction and complexity rather than mechanistic tasks...
31/05/2007 09:21:56	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	Could the authors address gka's question about technology? No WIKIs or other tools used for example?
31/05/2007 09:22:17	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Nandini - yes, oddly I'm trying to encourage exactly those same skills, but in an entirely different process!
31/05/2007 09:22:42	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	We are hoping to start using wikis and discussion boards for the preparatory stage from next year.
31/05/2007 09:23:20	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	gka: no collaborative working on documents. The technology is an extension of a shareware conference management system
31/05/2007 09:23:28	<b>radu catalin</b> (karadu)	nandini why wiki and not moodle or else?
31/05/2007 09:24:06	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	Not sure what moodle is, I'm afraid! We are just using the tools available within the university's e-learning system.
31/05/2007 09:24:48	<b>radu catalin</b> (karadu)	Moodle is a course management system (CMS) - a free Open Source software package designed to help educators ....
31/05/2007 09:25:07	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	There has been quite a lot of discussion about assessing generic skills during the conference. Obviously, the employability agenda is of real concern globally and employability was a major driver in the design of both these courses. Is designing employa
31/05/2007 09:25:34	<b>John Hamer</b> (John Hamer)	Quintin, have you looked at group authoring or group reviewing?
31/05/2007 09:25:48	<b>Stuart McGugan</b> (mcgugan)	Wiki perhaps allow monitoring the editing function and the quality of individual contribution. Can moodle offer similar functionality



31/05/2007 09:26:57	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	Catherine -- about designing employability skills being a challenge. Yes, it is. We had some resistance from students this year -- some do not see the 'point' of groupwork, while others say that the group work experience stood them in good stead during job interview group discussions, etc.
31/05/2007 09:27:11	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	John - no - my gut response is that I'd rather keep solo authoring, but maybe group reviewing would be a valuable process (just as double marking can be a valuable education for a lecturer)
31/05/2007 09:27:20	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	Seeing 'the point' seems to be a big issue?
31/05/2007 09:27:54	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	What about the authenticity of these tasks from an employability perspective?
31/05/2007 09:28:30	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	could you explain further?
31/05/2007 09:28:44	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Mine are generally embedded in social/professional/ethical scenarios that might affect a student in their working life - hence authentic, I think
31/05/2007 09:29:15	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	E.g. "you are a consultant asked to advise on..."
31/05/2007 09:29:49	<b>Steve Draper</b> (SteveDraper)	To combine the 2 threads of Prof training and of solo/group, Quintin said in the forum "I don't think of this as groupwork - because as you say, all the components of the coursework are undertaken as solo work - the essay writing, reviewing, marking
31/05/2007 09:30:04	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	Quintin - I think you're right that the CONTENT of the essay is authentic, but I guess one might argue that most employees don't have to write essays in the workplace?
31/05/2007 09:30:11	<b>Stuart McGugan</b> (mcgugan)	Authentic tasks probably help motivate the students to 'see the point'
31/05/2007 09:30:29	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	But, Catherine, you are right - some of my students are dyed in the wool programmers/techies, and they just don't see essay writing as part of gthe game - this is why getting industry folk in is important
31/05/2007 09:30:31	<b>Rosario Hernandez</b> (RosarioHernandez)	and how do you inform employers that our students have those skills? In Ireland emplyability skills are not a major drive yet
31/05/2007 09:30:46	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	It's more the actual experience of working under a time-limit, within a group which counts, I suppose.
31/05/2007 09:30:59	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	... than the essay-writing itself.
31/05/2007 09:31:02	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	And yet the celtic tiger still going strong Rosario!
31/05/2007 09:31:22	<b>Rosario Hernandez</b> (RosarioHernandez)	That's right!!!
31/05/2007 09:31:23	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Catherine - but they do have to come up with persuasive arguments, as any employer would tell me... a pure techy will never advance far
31/05/2007 09:32:13	<b>David Nicol</b> (DavidNicol)	Quintin, there is a lot of cycles on a single piece of writing in your task. Would it be better to simplify and change topic to heighten motivation or transfer the learning?
31/05/2007 09:33:13	<b>David Nicol</b> (DavidNicol)	I mean transfer the skills to a new context/topic (ie generalise and strenghten them)
31/05/2007 09:34:01	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Yes, I am beginning to realise this, DAvid. And, I see a lot of small exercises evaluating short arguments as valuable too. In defence of this structure, the students are reviewing and marking six different essays - so their critical analysis skills are



31/05/2007 09:34:36	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	Stuart/Nandini - how do you deal with students who don't see value in group writing?
31/05/2007 09:34:44	<b>David Nicol</b> (DavidNicol)	I was in part thinking about motivation as I feel I am reading the same topic again and again
31/05/2007 09:35:43	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Oh yes, that is probably right, although there are four essay topics to choose from. Of course, it helps us lecturers to see a few essays on a topic before calibrating our marking...?
31/05/2007 09:36:35	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	Catherine -- Try to explain to them the rationale behind such group tasks, and the benefits. It is usually the really bright students, interestingly enough, who grumble, because they feel that they are being 'dragged down' by the other members in the group.
31/05/2007 09:36:49	<b>Stuart McGugan</b> (mcgugan)	Catherine - articulate the benefits of the experience 'sell it to them'...
31/05/2007 09:37:13	<b>Stuart McGugan</b> (mcgugan)	..also have lots of space to be individuals
31/05/2007 09:37:22	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	What do you say to them? Do you invite graduates from the course like Quintin does?
31/05/2007 09:37:24	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Nandini - similarly, my bright students sometimes grumble about the quality of the reviews they receive
31/05/2007 09:37:55	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	No, we haven't invited graduates from the course.
31/05/2007 09:38:05	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	Quintin -- how do you handle this?
31/05/2007 09:38:32	<b>David Nicol</b> (DavidNicol)	I grumble at the reviews I receive on papers and then find them useful if I stick to why they said what they said.
31/05/2007 09:39:21	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Catherine is jumping ahead - I realise I need to do this, and I've had one or two tell me years later that they now see the value of the course. I have many slots for visiting speakers, so I can fit one or two grads in to speak about the course in the 1s
31/05/2007 09:39:59	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	David, this is a key aspect to get over to the students: the reviewer has something to say, they may not have said it well, but you (author) should work to find out what it is...
31/05/2007 09:40:23	<b>David Nicol</b> (DavidNicol)	It is about the effect of the writing on the reader
31/05/2007 09:40:37	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Yes, absolutely.
31/05/2007 09:41:58	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	Quintin - we discussed in the forum the issue of some of your students underestimating the complexity of reviewing?
31/05/2007 09:43:18	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Well, following on from earlier, I think they haven't properly grasped the nature of a well-constructed argument. As I said in the paper, I need to focus on REAP aim/guideline 1.
31/05/2007 09:44:07	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	And all the authors seem to agree that these tasks may be more effective if they are introduced earlier?
31/05/2007 09:44:17	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	In first year, for example?
31/05/2007 09:44:24	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	Yes, certainly. We are trying to do this now.
31/05/2007 09:45:02	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Yes, some students have even commented on this. Having read John Hamer's case, I'm wondering whether that is something I can more easily get into an earlier year
31/05/2007 09:45:11	<b>Rosario Hernandez</b> (RosarioHernandez)	We are also looking at 1st years too
31/05/2007 09:45:36	<b>John Hamer</b> (John Hamer)	Peer review changes the nature of the writing task, from a private (author-to-tutor) task to one that is more public. Would any of you like to comment on this?





31/05/2007 09:46:11	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	The students say they gain a lot from seeing other examples of student writing - how good and bad it can be
31/05/2007 09:47:01	<b>Steve Draper</b> (SteveDraper)	John: I tell my students that actually fellow students are a better image of thier audience to have in mind than their tutor. Using the tutor means they assume most of the information and argument can be filled in by the reader: which is actually counter productdive
31/05/2007 09:47:28	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	That's a really good point, Steve. So true!
31/05/2007 09:47:47	<b>Stuart McGugan</b> (mcgugan)	John, Yes, I've always thought when marking that my studnets might benefit from readin this
31/05/2007 09:48:03	<b>John Hamer</b> (John Hamer)	We've had interesting discussions with students who found the "public" nature of writing changed the way they thought about what they were doing.
31/05/2007 09:48:06	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Steve, yet they find it hard to trust what's being said by their peers
31/05/2007 09:49:05	<b>Geetha Abeysinghe</b> (gka23)	John: As I told Quuintin earlier, I use previous student work to demonstrate writing skills. What I found was students are more realistic/fair/closer to examiner's mark when they were peer reviewing work from previous students. but when they were peer revioewing their own colleagues they were more generous intheir marks. Has anyone else observed this?
31/05/2007 09:49:10	<b>Rosario Hernandez</b> (RosarioHernandez)	Exploring the public aspect of writing is something that students don't understand at the start, then they thank the tutor for it
31/05/2007 09:50:06	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	gka - many of my students were over-generous in their reviews, and were picked up for this by their peer markers
31/05/2007 09:50:43	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	gka - is this because of social pressures?
31/05/2007 09:50:56	<b>Nandini Das</b> (NandiniDas)	The same thing happens -- albeit under more 'open' circumstances -- in seminar presentations. There is always a tendency to 'go soft' on their friends.
31/05/2007 09:51:08	<b>John Hamer</b> (John Hamer)	I find the reviewing tends to settle down after they gain more experience. Making peer assessment a routine activity is important.
31/05/2007 09:51:11	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	But Quintin's markers are anonymous...
31/05/2007 09:51:17	<b>Geetha Abeysinghe</b> (gka23)	Quintin: what do you mean by 'picked up'? Do they reevaluate the peer ewview?
31/05/2007 09:52:20	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	gka: each student writes three formative reviews. These reviews are then peer-marked by another 3 students, in an attempt to ensure that the reviewers take the process seriously
31/05/2007 09:52:32	<b>Geetha Abeysinghe</b> (gka23)	catherin: I don't think it si social pressure. I did not get a chance to discuss this with that group due to time contrait.
31/05/2007 09:52:57	<b>Stuart McGugan</b> (mcgugan)	Quintin, are do thye take it seriously?
31/05/2007 09:54:03	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	For the most part. They all submit all of their reviews. But some reviews are clearly rush jobs - say around 10-15%. But then a student gets three, so I'm hopeful that most get at least two serious review
31/05/2007 09:55:02	<b>Stuart McGugan</b> (mcgugan)	sounds like a pragmatic approach
31/05/2007 09:55:32	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	Time is nearly up. Any last burning questions?



31/05/2007 09:57:23	<b>Quintin Cutts</b> (QuintinCutts)	Just a final thought. Stuart and Nandini's approach is very focussed on the process - and I think I wonder whether to make this more explicit in mine...
31/05/2007 09:58:27	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	Here's a question from me that perhaps we could take to the forum: One of the reasons I was particularly interested in the paper from Liverpool is that I am an English Literature graduate and I did no group work at all in my u/g degree. So this looks like a departure from disciplinary norms. Do both of these case studies challenge norms?
31/05/2007 09:58:38	<b>Catherine Owen</b> (CatherineOwen)	If your question hasn't been answered or if you would like to participate in more debate about this fascinating topic, please remember that the message-board forums will be available throughout the duration of the conference and for two weeks subsequently. A great place for more leisurely and reflective debate!

- TRANSCRIPT ENDS -

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