Flipping the student perspective: using peer-review (Aropa) for effective learning in a postgraduate law course

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Peer review is potentially useful in large cohorts where students may have few opportunities to get detailed feedback on their writing from teaching staff (e.g. see Arum and Roksa 2011). Prior research in peer review has shown that giving and receiving feedback on the work of other students of the same status can be as effective, if not more so than having work marked by teaching staff (e.g. see Falchikov and Goldfinch 2000).

In October 2015, we introduced peer review into our Civil Litigation course (a core component of the Diploma (PG) in Professional Legal Studies programme) in order to ascertain whether this might be a viable addition to the pedagogical strategy of the course, which is already a blend of online and face-to-face practical teaching. We asked the cohort of 240 students to submit a piece of written work (which would ordinarily have been submitted in hard copy to a tutor for marking) to the online tool Aropa for peer review. After the activity was complete, we surveyed the students to get their feedback on the process and whether or not they felt it was beneficial to their learning experience.

We examine both the technological and pedagogical affordances of using an online peer-review tool, considering the effectiveness of peer-review for formative learning in a practical law subject and its viability as a (possibly better) alternative to tutor-marked work in some situations.

References
