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Using Qualtrics Offline Surveys App for Peer Marking in Remote Areas

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Abstract

The use of peer learning and assessment became popular due to its educational value and offer the opportunity to develop team skills (Hastie, Fahy and Parratt, 2013). It has been reported that students find peer assessment valuable and enjoyable (McGarr & Clifford, 2013). In this context, Advanced Environmental Earth Science Unit decided to implement a peer marking activity within a field trip to NZ. Students delivered a 5 minute (pre-prepared) oral presentation in the field (i.e. without mobile signal coverage) which was peer-marked by all other students. The student's rate this activity very highly for learning. This is in large part due to the peer-marking which students report keeps them engaged with the talks in addition to collectively introducing them to the field environment. The existing paper-based marking system generates many pieces of paper (27 students x 26 markers = 702 sheets) which must be collected and manually entered into a spreadsheet, with attendant transcription errors.

In order to address this issue, a mobile interface (smartphone/tablet) was identified as a possible solution. This would be used by students to mark the oral presentations of their peers in a remote field situation as well as being used in the classroom and for other assessment tasks (e.g. posters, tutorial participation). The functionality required for the App was specified as: (1) Works across platform i.e. in iOS and Android devices; (2) Works offline to store data to be collected in the field and when Wi-Fi is available to upload the data into the server automatically; (3) Be able to populate student's cohort by uploading Excel or CSV file; (4) Be able for the students to download the App and create a login with their university ID and/or email address; (5) Create survey questions such as multiple choice, Likert scale, open ended questions, etc.; (6) Gather student data as CSV/Excel file to download.

As developing applications for mobile devices requires a heavy investment of both time and money, we decided to investigate the possibility to use Qualtrics Offline Survey Application. The advantages using this server were: (1) supported by Macquarie University; (2) Cross platform compatible (iOS and Android); (3) Free to download for any user; (4) User friendly interface, and; (5) Records data on different formats such CSV, Excel, SPSS, etc. Using Qualtrics, we were able to draft all of our questions, share the survey between the academic and educational designers, and trial the actual survey to evaluate the user interface and process. In conclusion, Qualtrics allowed a far more comprehensive and rigorous peer assessment when compared to paper based and removed the tedious and time consuming data collation. We believe it is a good alternative to implement peer marking if your institution has access to the Qualtrics Suite.