THE COURSEWORK MANIFESTO
A checklist for good practice amongst students
THE COURSEWORK MANIFESTO: A checklist for good practice

Conference Guidelines for speakers:
‘Avoid the “death by bullet point syndrome”...’

In defence of the checklist and bullet point...
THE COURSEWORK MANIFESTO: A checklist for good practice

The project…

builds on a Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund-supported project to encourage Level Four History students to develop improved skills in academic reading and writing

The project aims to…

develop a checklist for students to complete prior to the submission of coursework assignments; the checklist will identify common errors and omissions, asking students to confirm their assignment complies with academic and disciplinary conventions

An anonymised, online peer review exercise…

requires students to assess whether a colleague has ‘satisfied’ the checklist’s criteria, and provides an opportunity for comparative reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of submissions.
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The ‘Manifesto’ is being piloted in ‘A Tale of Two Cities’ – a Level 4 core course for students studying the BA Hons History programme.

The ‘Manifesto’ supports two of the course’s **Learning Outcomes:**

[Students who complete the course will...] “be introduced to the contested and diverse nature of historical enquiry”

[and] “demonstrate basic undergraduate-level ability in written communication, including linguistic competence and appropriate use and citation of sources”

The ‘Manifesto’ also seeks to encourage students to adopt a critical and reflective approach to their studies, and to recognise the importance of identifying and responding to particular assessment criteria.
Phase I: 2010-11

The assessment task selected was a 1200-word literature review, for which an exemplar was provided and criterion re: conventions/presentation identified; Peer review was coordinated electronically via Turnitin’s PeerMark facility, with five criterion to be assessed and an additional free response; Tutorial buzzgroups were held to assess the peer-review and gauge learners’ responses to the self-, and peer-, assessment.

Phase II: 2011-12

Revised checklist criterion, based on feedback from Phase I, will be issued for self-completion BEFORE submission; post-submission peer review will thus assess both given criterion and initial self-assessment.
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Phase I results/what I have learned...
The presence of an exemplar and bulleted instructions DID NOT lead to a marked improvement in students’ compliance...

But, the reflective peer review revealed most students correctly identified shortcomings/errors in submitted papers.

Phase II intentions/objectives...
It is hoped that the ‘Coursework Checklist’ will help to address this discrepancy by encouraging learners to identify and respond to the criterion for assessment.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING
Introduces academic conventions & subject knowledge

ASSESSMENT TASK
Measures learners’ awareness of academic conventions & subject knowledge

CRITERION reflecting LEARNING OUTCOMES

COURSEWORK MANIFESTO
Provides a concise set of criterion for students’ self-assessment prior to submission

PEER REVIEW
Reinforces awareness of conventions & their disciplinary significance
Wider reflections

Though the checklist is focussed on disciplinary-specific conventions re: footnotes/bibliographies/presentations, its real aim is to encourage students to think more carefully about what their assignments are assessing and how these criteria are assessed. These are wider more general objectives which support BOTH academic and transferable skills

Self-, and peer-, criterion-based assessment can provide opportunities to support and reinforce learning via assessment/assessment for learning (Black and Wiliams)

I’m interested in hearing more about your experiences with peer review, assessment design (especially the use of rubrics)