

## Key Strategies

- 1. Identify and teach the skills required for peer review.** As you are planning your course, make a list of the skills that students should be learning and putting into practice when participating in peer review. These might include reading skills (discerning a writer's main point, locating key points of support or relevant data, etc.), writing skills (writing clear, specific comments and questions), and collaboration skills (phrasing critiques in a descriptive, constructive way). Articulating what you see as the core skills involved in peer review will help you develop a coherent plan for integrating peer review into your course and will make more clear the specific instructions your students will need as they learn how to review a peer's paper and how to use the comments they receive during peer review.
- 2. Teach peer review as an essential part of your course and the writing process.** Emphasize to students that peer review is not just a course requirement: it is an essential part of the writing process that all successful writers engage in at some point. Your students may not realize the extent to which scholars and other professionals practice peer review as an integral part of producing effective writing in their fields. Consider explaining why, as a scholar, you find peer review helpful—even when you do not agree with or appreciate every comment made by a peer-reviewer.
- 3. Describe peer review as an opportunity for students to learn how to write for an audience.** Undergraduate students often do not perceive how completing academic writing assignments will prepare them for work in the professional world. One way to help them make this connection is to point out a fact that many instructors take for granted but that undergraduates need to be reminded of: no matter what university students end up doing after graduation, the quality of their ideas and their work will be judged, in a large measure, by how well they can communicate in writing to diverse audiences. Participating in peer review can help them learn to shape their written language as a medium of communication with readers. For example, seeking out peer feedback can help one student construct a convincing argument by anticipating and answering counter-arguments that his readers might pose, while peer review can help another student determine how to explain the significance of her research to readers who are not experts in her field.
- 4. Define the role of the peer-reviewer as that of a reader, not an evaluator.** Develop guidelines for peer-reviewers that ask them to complete specific tasks: examples include indicating the strongest part of a paper; identifying or rephrasing the thesis; listing the major points of support or evidence; and indicating sentences or paragraphs that seem out of order, incompletely explained, or otherwise in need of revision. Some of these tasks are descriptive and others are evaluative. However, those that are evaluative should put the emphasis on the reader's impressions and responses and should not require the peer-reviewer to pronounce a judgment on the paper as a whole (Nilson 2003). This approach should help you develop specific instructions to students that will clarify how they should respond to one another's writing and should also help you pare down your expectations of what students can realistically accomplish during in-class peer-review sessions. Defining the role of the peer-reviewer as a reader will also help you underscore the fact that it is up to the writer to decide whether and how to make changes to the paper through revision. In other words, the writer should think about all of the reviewers' comments, but may decide to ignore some of the comments and to make changes in response to others.