



The art of peer-evaluation

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Summary: This short text aims to describe the state of mind one should have when starting a peer-evaluation, as well as a few mandatory rules for the few student who wouldn't fully understand this state of mind.

42 is a community. You're part of a whole. In the same way, you are legitimate to contribute to the school's good vibes, to each and everyone's progress, to the resources available (and maybe even to some evolutions to the school's pedagogy itself) and it's natural for you to contribute to the students evaluations.

By talking all the time to a lot of people, sharing ideas or showing your code, you always have regular feedback from this community on what your work worths. You're aware of what works and what does not, if you're going to have rather a good grade or rather a bad one. Long story short, no unexpected things will happen during the defense. Grades exists mainly for the staff who could monitor everyone's progression, and also to avoid to some students to lie to themselves about the grim truth about their work (yes, they do exist).

If you pay enough attention to the videos and documents related to the school's pedagogy at the beginning of the piscine, a process of progress through projets is mentionned, with reading/debates of the subject, then on leads to follow, tests, debates again, and so on until success. However, this process includes a final step, a step of understanding, of balance, of feedback on your work once it's done, its difficulties, the strategies you chose, what worked out, and what failed. Once work is done, one could rush towards the next project, this final and most important step is sometime botched, sometime even ignored by the less involved students. What a fool they are ! This final step is extremely important, even vital to your schooling, WHATEVER the quality of your work ! At 42, the only time suitable for such final step is the defense. Even if the defenses' purpose is mostly for evaluation the first weeks, one should avail as much as possible from them to grow better and richer.

Engaging multiple defenses in a row for a given project is important, for both the statistical aspect of it (by removing side effects) and the psychological aspect, in order to not regress back to the teacher's "one and only truth" era. One should engage as much defenses as possible for a given project, in order to avail of each and every interlocutors you'll encounter, both as defender and defendee. Never trust someone who tells you defenses are a waste of time. This kind of speech is the symptom of someone who don't understand the school's philosophy and goals (...and surely is about to drop).

This is our view of what a defense should be:

- Meeting someone (new?). Exchanging names, smiles and good mood. But most of all, meeting someone in the flesh. No mails, phone calls or whatever except for defense arrangement! Never accept a defense if the other student is not physically present next to you. Please read that sentence again. Then, and only then, the evaluating peer can `git clone` the repository of the evaluated peer.
- Take your time. The time to stop, to sit, to talk and to discover each other. Each peer will be different, each defense is unique. Whatever the work done (or not done), a defense must last the required time (15 to 20min, a bit more for bigger projects).
- if a Norm applies to the project, it must be checked first, before anything else, by

using the official “norminette”. This step is not random. The Norm is not aimed to make you a foolproof developer, its goal is to help you growing your capacity to use elements of verification, and monitoring of your work. If the Norm is not respected, the defense stops. And yes, that means the grade is 0. There is no such thing as a “tiny-not-important-at-all Norm error”. Either the Norm is respected in the whole code, or it is not.

- Notice, together, what works, and what does not. Everybody should agree on the results of the tests, as well as the respect of the scale and the grade. If not, debate until you do. The grading step is more a functional step, like your future client who checks if all the specifications are fulfilled, without wondering if a hashtable or a linked list have been used. Don't grade how the code has been written. Grade if the code works or not.
- An exchange. Of ideas, of hypothesis, of solutions. Of the relevance and the quality of the product, its factors of success or failure. Think about it like a conversation between you and a coworker.
- Constructive. Everybody should leave a defense with the feeling of learned something new, either on the technical, relational or organisational side.

We could add lots of mandatory rules and lots of interdictions, but I'd rather like that each and everyone to appropriate this state of mind, because this state of mind is meaningful. Feedbacks are also important, use them to witness the quality of a defense.

Some of you will undoubtedly fail to understand the philosophy of the school and see in this text the gibberish of a hippy know-it-all. It's not. But to help you understand, let's sum things up a bit:

- Every defenses must happen with every students involved physically present
- The amount of grades received must reach a required threshold, otherwise you won't receive experience points in case of success.
- This same amount of required grades also applies to given grades, and must be reached too, otherwise, you will lose your “evaluation points” and you won't be allowed to have your work evaluated anymore until you earn some evaluation points by evaluating other. Think of the evaluation points as a currency.
- It's absolutely forbidden to refuse an already planned defense for whatever reason.
- Feedback is mandatory and must be done right after the defense. As long as all your feedback are not done, you won't receive experience points.

These elements are essential to the efficiency of peer-evaluation, and are parts of the deal between the school and you. Non compliance with these rules will lead to sanctions.

These sanctions can span from the deletion of a grade to a definitive exclusion.

One more time, these elements must be considered as a natural behavior in your schooling and toward 42's community. If you feel like these rules are a constraint for you, then your working ethics and involvement toward you schooling must mature.