# Getting Started with PeerAssessment.com

# Instructions

Welcome to PeerAssessment.Com, also called PAcom! These instructions will help you create and run your first class and assessment. Then you can explore the numerous ways to customize it around your specific needs. Look for links to extra help information on PAcom features.

There is a separate document with teaching tips, called **Teaching with PeerAssessment.Com**. Plus the Instructor Resources Library on our website has many more ideas on integrating PAcom into your teaching practices and even into your research.

For tips on teaching with PA.com, see Teaching with PeerAssessment.Com

If you need further assistance:

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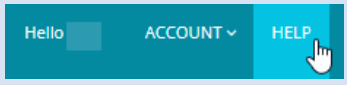
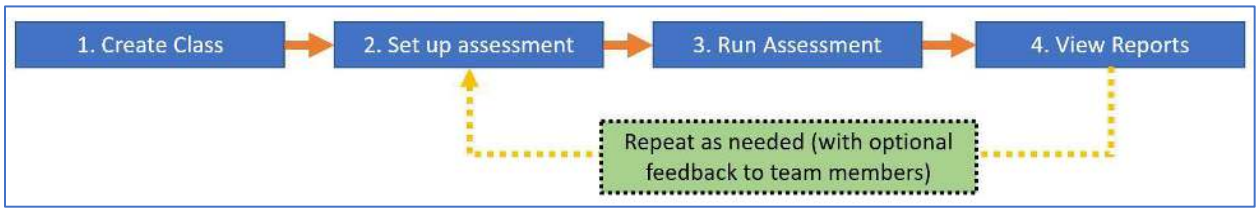
**Finding Assistance**




You can always find HELP in the top right corner. In addition to in-depth instructions about PAcom, my contact information is there and teaching tips are found under INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES.

## HOW PEERASSESSMENT WORKS

Once you Sign In, there are four phases to set up and run assessments:




In this Getting Started document, we will talk about Signing In before we dive into the phases.

## 0. SIGN IN TO PEERASSESSMENT.COM

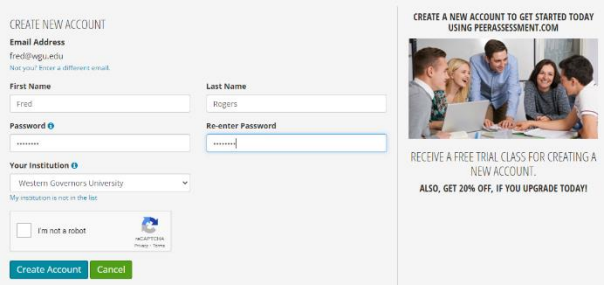

a) Enter PAcom from our website at *https://PeerAssessment.com*
b) Choose **SIGN IN** on the menu and enter your email address (You must use your institutional email address


- **If you already have an account**, then enter your password and your Dashboard will be displayed.

- **Does your institution have a Site License?** If so, your PAcom account is automatically created. Simply go to PeerAssessment.Com/Login, enter your email address, then log in via your institutional authentication system.

## …. CREATE ACCOUNT

c) **If PAcom does not recognize your email address**…



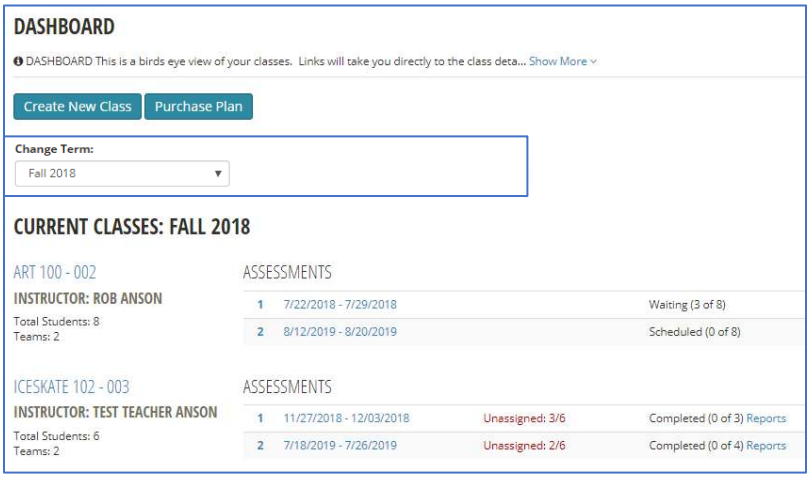

a. It will ask you to *CREATE NEW ACCOUNT*.
b. Fill in the information.
c. **If PAcom recognized your email address domain**, it will add *Your Institution*. In that case, it will immediately send you an email. Find it in your Inbox and click *Confirm* to finish creating your account. You may now LogIn.
d. **If PAcom did not recognize your institution**, it will ask for your institution's country and name. We will make sure your school is correctly configured in the system and ready for use within 2 business days.

## *DASHBOARD*

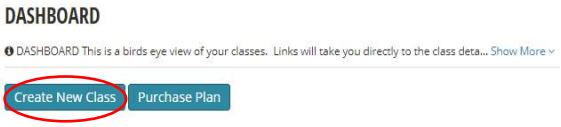
After logging in, your *DASHBOARD* appears. It is easy to track your classes, create new ones, and purchase new class credits if needed. There are three special items to note:

- Note the blue links to directly access the set-up information for both class and assessments, as well as to open the reports.
- Change Term if you wish to access past or future classes.
- PAcom also warns you, in red, if some students are not assigned to teams. The assessment can go ahead. However, the unassigned students will be excluded from that particular assessment.




**1. Create Class** → 2. Set up Assessment → 3. Run Assessment → 4. View Reports

*Press **CREATE NEW CLASS** on the Dashboard to get started.*




Creating a new class will involve four steps:

a) **Select Plan Option for the Class**
b) **Enter Class Information**
c) **Load Student Information**
d) **Assign Students to Teams**

**Special Note: Does your institution have a Site License?**

If your institution has a Site License, you will skip step (a). That is, the Site License allows you to create unlimited classes, so you will not need to select a Plan Option.

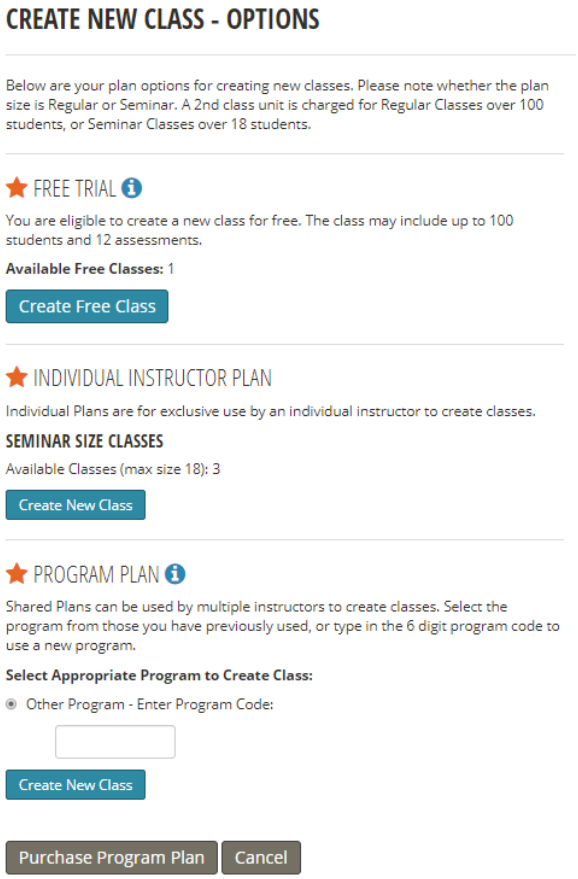
## *1. Select Plan Option for the Class*

This first screen asks how you wish to obtain the class. There are up 4 options, depending on whether you or your institution has purchased plans for your use.

1. **FREE TRIAL** – When creating an account, you receive one free class.
2. **INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTOR PLAN** – You may have purchased one or more classes for your individual use. Check how many are available, and press *Create New Class* to use one.
3. **PROGRAM PLAN** – These purchased classes are shared among faculty in an academic program, such as your department or college.

   You will need to enter the 6-digit Program Code the first time you use the plan. (After that the program name will be displayed.) You can get the code from your administrator, or ask our help.

   You may have multiple plans available as options if you teach in different programs with Plans. The choices you have available will show up on the Class Options page.
4. **PURCHASE PROGRAM PLAN** – Finally, you may elect to buy a new plan using the ***Purchase Program Plan*** button.



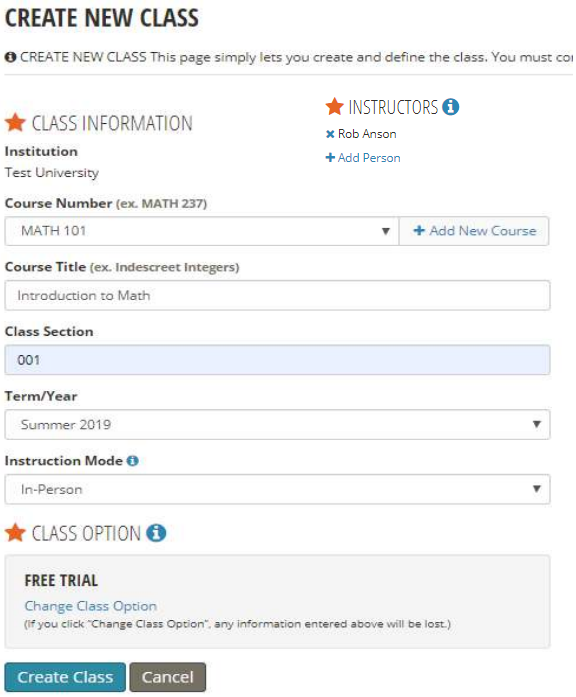

Finally, you may also elect to buy a new plan using the ***Purchase Program Plan*** button.

For complete instructions see ***Purchasing Instructions*** and ***Current Price List***

## 2. Enter Class Information

Next create your class. A "class" in PAcom is equivalent to one "section". That is, it's taught by one or more co-instructors, over a given time period (under 6 months), and involves one set of enrolled students.




a. *Enter the required CLASS INFORMATION.*

b. *Select the course using the dropdown. Or, If it is a brand new course, click on "+ Add New Course" to add a new number and title.*

c. *Select the Term/Year and mode of instruction.*

d. *If you have any co-instructors or teaching assistants, you may enter them. (If they have not already created an account, no problem. Add them later.)*

e. *Click the CREATE CLASS button*

That's it! Your class has been created in PAcom.

## *3. Load Student Information*

***When to load your students?*** *You can skip loading your students and proceed to setting up your first assessment. However, you must load your student file and assign students to teams, before the first assessment begins.*

Next is to load a CSV file with basic information about each of your students—name and email, and optionally their team and student ID. You can create this file in a spreadsheet by hand. But it is far easier and quicker to export it from your Learning Management System (LMS) if you use one.

We have Quick-Load procedures for the following LMS systems. See links for detailed instructions.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Aula Quick-Load** or **brief video** | Open People and select Participants or Groups (if you placed students in teams). Click Download. |
| **Blackboard Quick-Load** | There are two ways to do this with Blackboard. |

i. Open **Grade Center**. Select 'Work Offline', and 'Download'. Set parameters to 'User Information Only' and 'Comma' delimiter type, and 'No' regarding hidden information.

ii. Open **Groups**. Select 'Groups and group members' also 'Include header row', then select the file that ends in '…_groupmembers.csv'

| | |
|---|---|
| **Canvas Quick-Load** | Open Gradebook and press Export. |

**Moodle Quick-Load**

Select the group assignment. Under Grading Action select 'Download grading worksheet'.

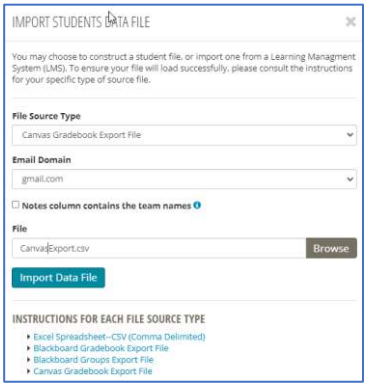
**Standard CSV File**

If you do not have access to one of the above learning management systems, use these instructions to build the **Standard CSV File.**

***Difficulties using Quick-Load?*** *Please let me know! Occasionally an institution changes the format of the file exported. We can usually work around it if you let us. Or, if you have a different learning management system, we will see if we can add it.*

There are 3 steps to load the students' file.

a. *Export file from your Learning Management System (or Create the CSV file)*
   - *The file will be exported to your local drive.*
   - *Please do not open or change the file in any way!*
b. *In PAcom, open your class and press* ***Import Student File***
c. *Import students*
   - *Make sure to select a type of file from the* ***File Source Type*** *dropdown*
   - *Fill in other information requested and press* ***Import Data File***
   - *PAcom displays a sample of your data. Make sure the First and Last names show correctly, and the email addresses look correct. Teams and Student ID are optional*
   - *Press Confirm.*




At this point, your students are in the class. They probably still need to be placed in teams. We will show you how to assign students to teams in the next section **2. Set up Assessment**.

**Is your new class like some other class?**
After importing your students, a time-saving option called COURSE COPY will appear on the Class page. That will copy settings for ALL assessments in an existing class (yours or another instructor's) to this new class.

1. Create Class → **2. Set up Assessment** → 3. Run Assessment → 4. View Reports

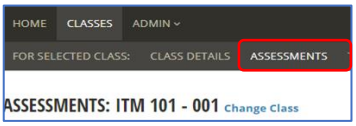
An Assessment is basically a questionnaire emailed to all students of a class who are members of a team. You will determine when students can complete the questionnaire, and when or if reports will be sent to students. Thus, setting up an Assessment has various elements to address.

1. Set Up ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE
2. Adjust ASSESSMENT OPTIONS *(defaults included)*
   - Questions *(defaults included)*
   - Email messages *(defaults included)*
   - Report distribution *(defaults included)*
   - Special instructions for questionnaire *(optional)*
3. Assign Students to Teams

Remember that there are many defaults built in. For example, the default questions provide a solid, well tested starting place. Also, you will find the email messages quite complete, so are rarely customized except for special circumstances.

*To get started, click on the menu to open the ASSESSMENTS page.*




**Iterative Assessments**

It's easy to create up to 12 iterative assessments to check-in on teams periodically during a project. These check-ins usually involve the same questions, emails, and teams. The way PA works is, when you create a new assessment, it copies over the questions, emails and teams from the previous assessment.

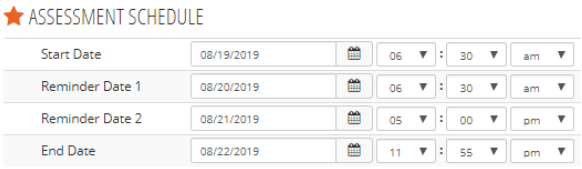
To create iterative assessments, start by setting-up the first assessment completely—prepare the questions, emails, and teams, plus set report distribution and special instructions. Then click '***+ New Assessment'*** for as many more assessments as you will need-- each is identical to the prior one. Just plug in new dates for each assessment, (and modify any other settings) and you are ready. You can build up to a dozen assessments in minutes

Check here for more on Iterative Assessments.

## *1. Set Up Assessment Schedule*

PAcom communicates with students via emailed links. There are 4 dates/times that tell PAcom when to automatically send off each email to students, to enter their feedback or retrieve a personalized report.

a. *Click on EDIT ALL DATES to set the default dates and times to suit your needs.*
   - *Assessment Start Date*
   - *Reminder Date 1*
   - *Reminder Date 2*
   - *Assessment End Date*




b. *Press SAVE ASSESSMENT SETUP.*
   *To change a date or time, click on the edit icon.*


## *2. Adjust ASSESSMENT OPTIONS*

Defaults are set for all of the **Assessment Options**. The main options for customizing a given assessment include:

A. **Manage Questions** allows you to select sets of questions you wish to include, and edit individual questions if needed.

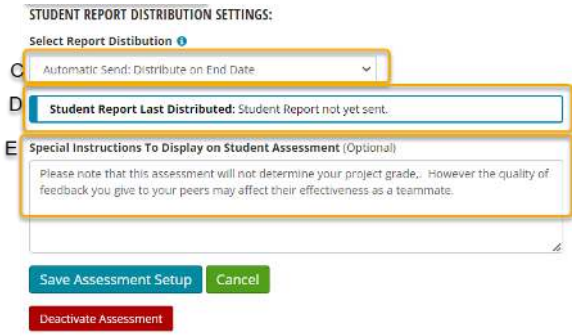

 

For instructions to set up questions, see **Manage Questions**
Or view the **brief video** here.

For complete question set descriptions, see **Question Library**

**B. Manage Email Messages** allows you to customize the default email messages. Select the appropriate message and make your desired changes. The items in {…} brackets will insert the specific information into that position of the message. We strongly recommend that you not modify the start of the message with access information.

**C. Select Report Distribution** directs when the student reports will be distributed and which teams of students should receive reports. The date and time the report was last distributed is shown.




- **Automatically Send: Distribute on End Date** -- This setting will automatically send the report link out to students in all teams with the assessment End Date email.
- **Hold and Review: Distribute on Demand** – Delays the report distribution until you have reviewed (or even edited) the student responses. When you are ready, press the ***Distribute Student Reports Now*** button. You will be prompted to send it to students in all teams, or only selected teams.
- **Do not distribute: Distribute on Demand** – Marks that these results will not be distributed to students. However, you will be able to distribute manually if you wish to.

**D. Student Report Last Distributed**

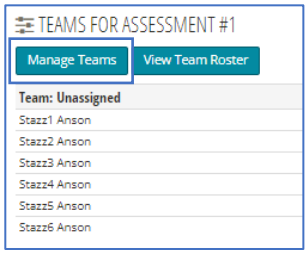
**E. Special Instructions** (optional) are displayed at the top of the assessment for the student to read when they open it.

***Make sure to press SAVE ASSESSMENT SETUP before you move off this page!***

## *3. Assign Students to Teams*

For complete instructions to set up and assign teams or add/remove students, see **Manage Students and Teams**
Or view the **brief video** here.

Usually team assignments are not imported in from your Learning Management System; everyone is shown as "Unassigned". Thus you will need to assign students to teams before your first assessment. The MANAGE TEAMS feature is also used to re-assign students between teams, if there are changes required, as well as adding or removing individual students from the class.




Here are the steps to initially place students into teams.

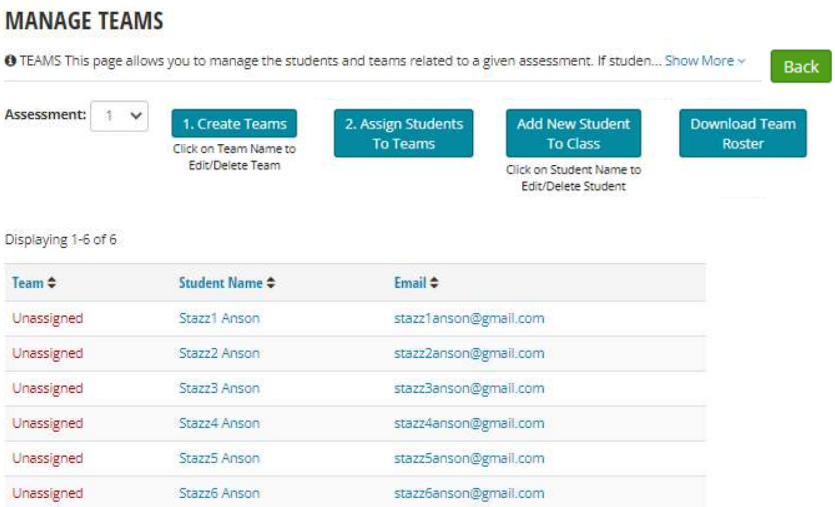
*a. From the Assessment window, open **MANAGE TEAMS**.*
*b. Create teams by pressing the **Create Teams** button. Enter a team name then press* Save. *Close the window when you have added all the teams.*

c. *Place students in teams by pressing* **Assign Students to Teams**. *Team assignments become dropdowns in order to select the team each student will enter. Press* Save Team Assignments *when complete.*

You may leave some students as "Unassigned". This represents both a caution and a feature.

- CAUTION: "Unassigned" students will be excluded from this assessment, so it is important that students be placed in their proper teams.




**Congratulations! You just set up your first assessment. PeerAssessment.Com will send out emails and links using the dates and times you have entered.**

**Constructive Ways to Use Unassigned**

Sometimes, certain students are not involved in the group project, or are excluded from an assessment for some other reason. Just change their status to "Unassigned" for that assessment.

Or perhaps you only want certain teams included in an assessment? See **Use Manage Teams to Assess Some Groups but not Others**

1. Create Class → 2. Set up Assessment → **3. Run Assessment** → 4. View Reports

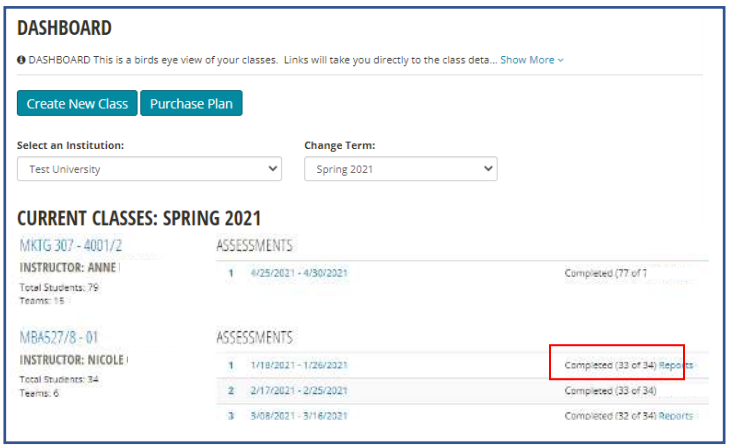
There is not much for you to do in the Run Assessment phase--the system is automatically sending emails to your students, and your students are dutifully filling out questionnaires. Nevertheless, there are three things you may be doing:

- **Monitor response** to ensure students are completing the assessment.
- **Extend the end date** if it is drawing to a close and you want more students to respond.
- **Troubleshoot issues** if students report difficulties.

## …. Monitor Response Rate

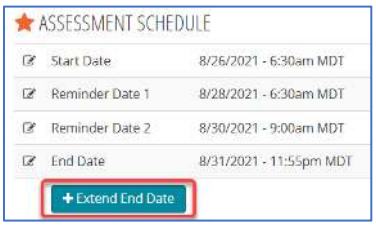
**To monitor student response rate**

1. *Log in to PAcom. This opens the Dashboard page which shows the completion for each assessment.*
2. *Or open the Assessment page where you can check which specific students have or have not responded.*



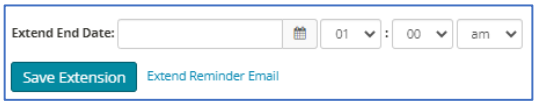

## …. Extend the End Date *OPTIONAL*

If students are slow to respond, you may need to **extend the End Date**. (This will even work if the assessment has closed!) The + Extend End Date button will both reset the end date to close the assessment, and send an **extend reminder email** to students who have yet to submit their assessments.




**To extend the End Date….**

1. *Go to the ASSESSMENTS page*
2. *Click "Extend End Date"*
3. *Enter new extended date and time*
4. *Optionally, you may edit the reminder email that goes out to all students who have not yet completed the assessment.*
5. *Click on SAVE EXTENSION*

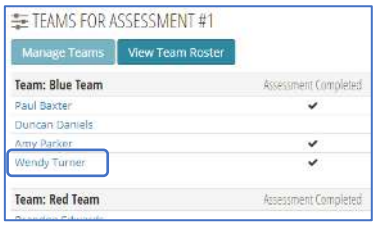



To reopen an assessment for just one or a few individual students, see **Reopen or Extend Deadline**

## …. Troubleshoot Issues with a Student's Assessment (Student-Assessment Page)

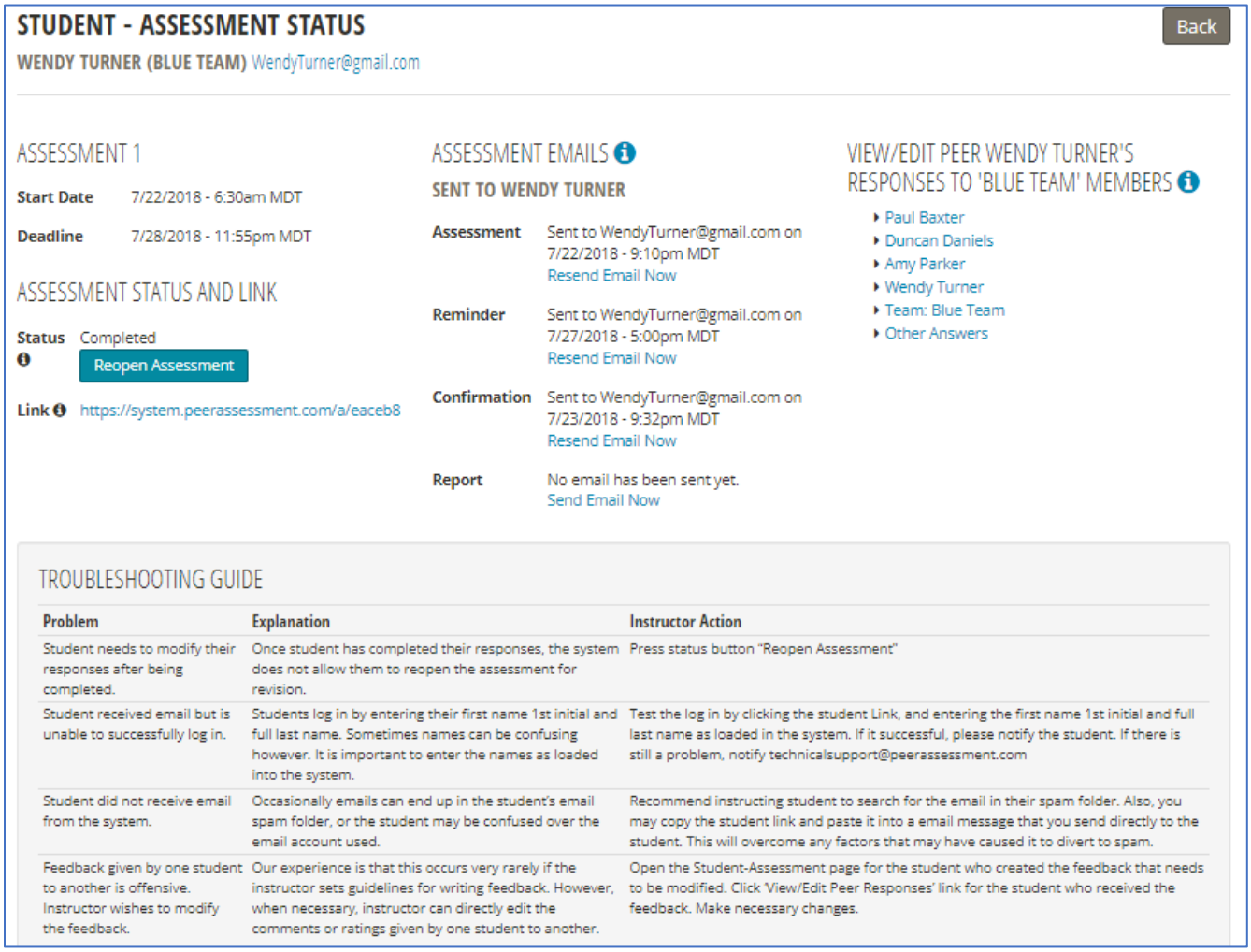
For complete instructions to troubleshoot issues with a student's assessment, see **Troubleshooting Assessment Issues**

There is a very handy troubleshooting page. If you go to the Assessments, you will see the list of students in their teams. Those who submitted an assessment have a check mark. Notice that the student names are actually links. Clicking on the student name takes you to the troubleshooting page.




On this page, you can:

- Reopen a completed assessment so the student can make further changes
- See if/when each email was actually sent to the student, and resend the email if needed
- Open the student's actual link to the assessment, so you can determine if it is working correctly
- Edit a student's responses to a specific peer team member, or to the team or other questions.



1. Create Class → 2. Set up Assessment → 3. Run Assessment → **4. View Reports**

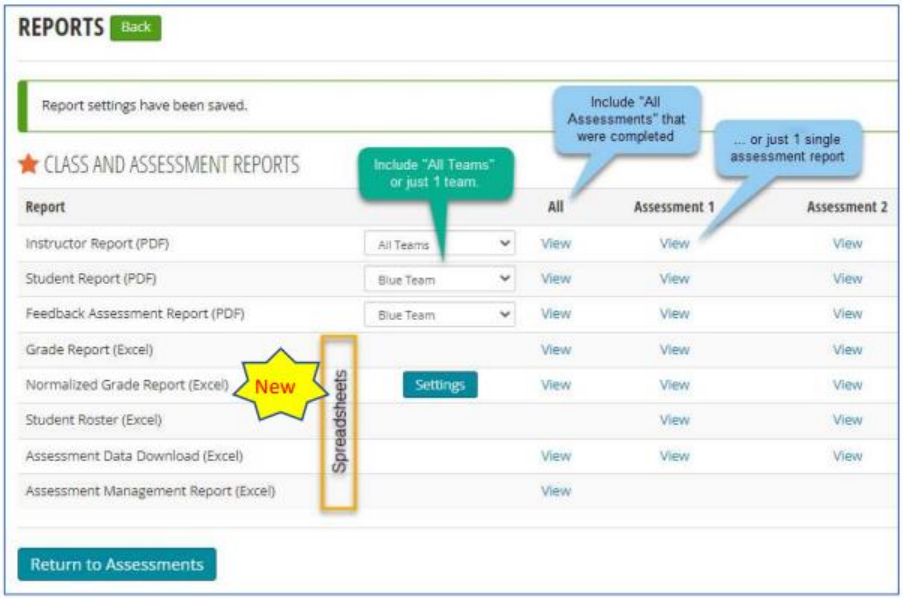
**We strongly encourage you to review the Sample Reports document, which includes descriptions and examples of each report. Also see suggestions for possible approaches to grade calculation.**

For complete descriptions and examples of reports, see **Sample Reports**

For suggestions, see **Calculating Individualized Grades from Peer Assessment Scores**

You can reach the Reports page for a given class either from the Reports link on the Dashboard, or from the Class Menu > REPORTS. There is a collection of PDF and Excel reports. You can access all assessment reports for this class from this page.

*Click 'View' to retrieve a report for a given assessment. The PDF reports can be filtered to include only a single team.*




## .... Brief Report Descriptions

**Student Report** – PAcom can email this report to each student with their own personalized feedback. It displays their responses as 'Self', while teammates' responses are anonymized as 'Peer'. All Peer Assessment and Team Assessment questions are included. (The 3rd category, "Other" questions, are not shared with students.) The instructor can download all student reports in a single PDF for records.

**Instructor Report** – This is like the Student Report except that all response authors are identified. This allows the instructor to spot patterns of potential concern. For example, if one student rates one teammate much lower than their peers there may be relationship issues. Or if one student provides only abbreviated, low quality text feedback to others, they may need a reminder to improve the constructiveness of their feedback. Furthermore, if inappropriate remarks are included, the instructor can alter the text to protect the student receiving the information.

**Feedback Assessment Report** – This report displays, on a single page, all open-ended responses written by one student about their team members and themselves. (All Peer and Team text questions are included.) This PDF report makes it easy to evaluate the quality of feedback given by each student. It can be used to teach students how to provide higher quality feedback to their team members—a critical career skill as well as a factor in immediate team success.

**Other Questions Report** – This report displays responses to the "Other Questions", an optional category of questions that the instructor may use. While Peer and Team question categories are intended to be shared with the student, "Other Questions" are for the instructor only. They are generally for confidential team feedback or for other types of feedback related to the project, class or instructor.

**Grade Report** – This report compiles quantitative results into a spreadsheet from which you can calculate grades. Even if grades are not calculated, this report give you a convenient comparison of how students are perceived by their peers, within and between groups.

Each quantitative question asked in the Peer section is summarized in terms of peer assigned point average and percent of possible points. Please consult the **Sample Reports** document for details, plus a discussion of three possible ways to calculate grades based on this information.

**Normalized Grade Report** -- This report is intended to replace the simple Grade Report above for two reasons. First, it provides a more efficient and flexible way to calculate individualized grades. This new spreadsheet even does the individualized grade calculations for you if you enter Group Project Scores into the Excel sheet. Second, many students find that normalized grades are more fair. This grading approach allocates extra points to students who are assessed above average on their team, and subtracts points from those assessed below average by their peers.

**Assessment Data Download** – This spreadsheet includes slightly summarized data prepared for further data analysis and visualization, if desired to support your instruction or research. The data includes columns with averaged peer and self- scores for all Peer and Team questions you included, with each student on a separate row.

If you are interested in pursuing research using larger, anonymized datasets, spanning multiple courses or institutions, please let me know at RobAnson@peerassessment.com

**ASSESSMENT COMPLETED!**