

Pe(e)rfectly Skilled: proficiently skilled in legal pleas, even without a teacher?

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Pe(e)rfectly Skilled: proficiently skilled in legal pleas, even without a teacher? – Students’ perceptions of the effectiveness, efficiency and attractiveness of feedback variants within an online skills training method in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports results of a qualitative study on sophomore students’ online experiences with using the Pe(e)rfectly Skilled (PS-) method to train their pleading skills at two universities (regular and distance learning university). The PS-method is an online, interactive and practice-oriented method for complex skills training, facilitating formative assessment, reflection and (self-, peer and expert) feedback through the use of (video-enhanced) analytical rubrics and self-regulation support. This method facilitates more frequent and highly structured (peer)feedback, so that students can consciously focus their practicing efforts on the mastery of specific subskills. At the same time it intends to reduce teachers’ support burden. Participating students from two different Dutch universities received either both teacher and peer feedback (TP) or only peer feedback (P) while practicing their legal presentations (‘pleas’) with the PS-method. Afterwards, groupwise as well as individual interviews were conducted with a random selection of participating students (6 TP interviews (13 students), 9 P interviews (17 students)). In these interviews, students were asked about their experiences with the overall method, focusing on its perceived effectiveness, efficiency and attractiveness. Additionally, we explored whether students who didn’t receive teacher feedback perceived the method as effective, efficient and attractive as students receiving both teacher-and-peer feedback. Moreover, their suggestions for improvements of future versions of the method were collected. Transcripts of these interviews were analysed with a coding scheme, that was first validated through an inter-rater reliability test. Results showed that in general, students perceive and experience the PS-method both as effective as well as efficient, although teacher feedback is more readily accepted than peer feedback. Moreover, students overall also enjoy working with the method. Additionally, no important differences in perceived effectiveness and attractiveness were detected related to feedback variants, although for perceived efficiency both feedback variant as well as the type of university seemed to matter.

KEYWORDS:

Online skills training, complex skills, formative assessment, (peer)feedback, reflection, self-regulated learning, (video-enhanced) rubrics, higher education, distance education

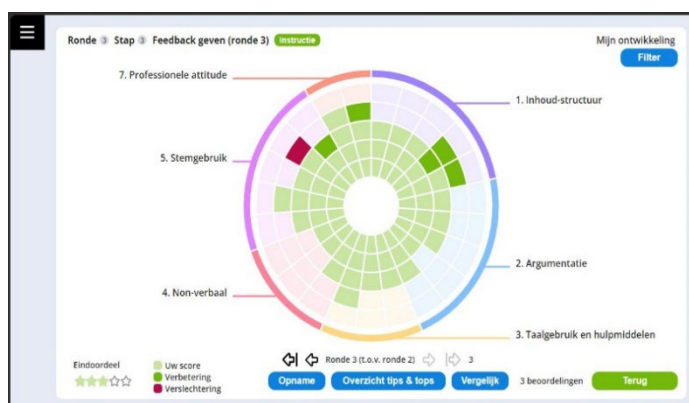
INTRODUCTION

Training (legal) presentation skills (i.e., pleading) requires, in addition to a lot of repetitive practice by students, also support, like constructive feedback and structure (Vincent-Wayne & Bakewell, 1995). Feedback during the practice process is a powerful tool for teachers to support skills training (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kirschner & Van Merriënboer, 2008; Planar & Moya, 2016; Shute, 2008), however a growing number of students makes it increasingly challenging to provide individual and personalized feedback on time (Allan & Bentley, 2012; Planar & Moya, 2016). While the number of first-year students at Dutch universities has increased by more than 55% since 2010, the growth in teaching staff is only 28% (CBS, 2021). Additionally, only recently UNESCO (2023) sounded the alarm on a global teacher shortage, indicating teacher capacity is increasingly a problem at an (inter)national level.

While it is still the teacher's task to provide support and interact with students in learning activities, students' active role and the type of learning activities they perform appear to be the most important predictors of students' learning achievements. Even if compared to teachers' activities (Biggs, 2003, p.23). Moreover, the increased attention and space in educational policy for a more central role of students' learning processes and experiences in education opens up possibilities for other types of learning activities, such as peer feedback (Vincent-Wayne & Bakewell, 1995). Formulating peer feedback requires students to engage actively, both at a cognitive as well as a more personal and emotional level and can contribute to knowledge construction (Filius, 2019). That is why peer feedback could have an added value as an effective learning activity, as well as potentially save teacher time (Filius, 2019; Nicol, 2010).

The online Pe(e)rfectly Skilled (PS-) method guides students step by step in developing their complex skills, such as legal presenting, by systematically supporting self-, peer- and expert feedback processes. Moreover, PS- is interactive and practice-oriented, facilitates formative assessment, reflection and self-regulation support through the use of (video-enhanced) analytical rubrics (Rusman & Nadolski, 2023) and data visualizations of their skill performance progress. Behavioral aspects of skills are illustrated via video-enhanced rubrics and video modeling examples (Ackermans et al., 2021; Rusman et al., 2019; Rusman, 2020; Rusman & Nadolski, 2021). Feedback on students' performance level by various feedback providers is visualized, throughout time, in a 'skills' wheel (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Visualization of received feedback and students' performance level on subskills through time in the 'skills' wheel



Feedback is automatically summarized and displayed in the skills wheel and compared to students' previous performance. Students can see where performance of a subskill can still be improved as an indent in the wheel. Each 'spoke' of the wheel represents a subskill, and each block in a spoke represents a performance level. If performance improved (compared to previous practice), a subskill becomes bright green; when it faltered it turns red.

Through this PS-method, students are supported to go through a number of cyclic (formative assessment, feedback and reflection) processes in a structured and stepwise manner, fully supported online in a so-called PS-tool. Thus, the method supports more frequent and highly structured (peer)feedback, helping students to gain insight in where their skill performance level may still be improved, so that students can consciously focus their practicing efforts on the mastery of specific subskills. In this study, sophomore students' perceived effectiveness, efficiency and attractiveness of the PS-method to train complex legal pleading skills online was evaluated. Moreover, the perceived value of teacher feedback compared to peer feedback only was determined. The following research questions stood central: *What are students' perceptions of the effectiveness, efficiency and attractiveness of the PS-method to train complex pleading skills? Are their perceptions dependent on the feedback variant (peer-and teacher feedback; only peer feedback) they received? Is teacher feedback perceived as essential to support students' skills training?*

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative study was set up to evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency and attractiveness of the PS-method to train complex pleading skills online in two universities (Open University of the Netherlands (OU) as a distance learning university and Maastricht University (UM) as a blended University). Additionally, it was explored whether students perceived teacher feedback as an essential element for their skills mastery, or whether teacher feedback could be left out or reduced. Therefore, in-depth online interviews with students were used to explore their experiences (Cresswell, 2014, p. 30).

In total 264 sophomore students (207 UM and 57 OU) in both Faculties of Law participated in the overall study. The students within each university were divided in two experimental groups: they either received Teacher, Peer and Self-feedback (TP) directly on their performances, or received Peer and Self feedback (P) directly, and received delayed teacher feedback at the studies completion. All students who participated were informed about the study and were able to indicate their wish to participate via an informed consent. From this overall group of students, a group of students (n=30) was randomly selected from the list (alphabetized), with whom interviews were conducted via MS Teams, approximately equally divided (17 P and 13 TP) over both conditions and across universities (13 OU and 17 UM). The interviews with the students took place individually, in duos or in trios. All interviews lasted between 50 to 60 minutes.

The online interviews were semi-structured via an interview scheme (Appendix A, available upon request). All interviews were recorded and transcribed and for the interviews with multiple people cut into interview responses per person. To analyze the student interviews a coding scheme was developed. The process for developing the coding scheme consisted of four steps:

1. All interviews were broadly explored to gain an overall picture, generate ideas, and organize the data (Creswell, 2014). These insights, combined with both theoretical knowledge as well as the objectives of the study, led to a first version of the coding schemes. The main concepts and associated labels were divided into categories and subcategories with corresponding codes and descriptions, with values added to represent positive (+), neutral (- +), or negative (-) experiences.

2. The coding scheme was then tested with three interviews. Based on this first test, the coding scheme was updated: codes were added, modified or removed.
3. In the third step, the updated coding scheme was applied by one of the researchers and an independent second coder, who was not involved in the study. Based on the results and feedback from the second coder, the coding scheme and adhering descriptions and instruction were further improved.
4. In the last step, the application of the coding scheme by two independent coders was compared by means of the Krippendorff's alpha binary value (Krippendorff, 2004). This provided insight into the extent to which the coders reached agreement when assigning statements to categories. The reliability of the coding schemes was examined by applying them in to two interviews, using selected statements (predefined quotes). The inter-coder agreement coefficient was determined for each semantic domain in the scheme and the Krippendorff's alpha binary values (Krippendorff, 2019) were interpreted according to the recommended reference values: $\alpha < .667$ (unacceptable), $.667 \geq \alpha < .800$ (acceptable for preliminary conclusions) $\alpha \geq .800$ (acceptable), $\alpha = 1.000$ (ideal). The coding scheme had an acceptable to ideal acceptable inter-coder agreement coefficient (variables = $.780 \geq \alpha \leq .995$), except for the "experienced competence development" category, where the reliability was unacceptable. After analyzing the differences in coding between the two coders, it was discovered that the second coder had linked statements about the emergence or improvement of the mental model to the "perceived utility" of the PV method code instead of the "competence development" code. The instructions were modified based on these findings, and both coders reached agreement in the final coding exercise. Appendix B (, available upon request) contains the main coding concepts and (an excerpt of) the resulting coding scheme.

Based on the final coding scheme, all interviews were coded by one researcher with Qualitative Data Analysis software Atlas.ti version 26. The unit of analysis was on answer level and multiple codes per (selection of an) answer were possible. Herewith both quantitative and qualitative data were derived. Overviews were generated that indicated whether a student made statements that could be related to a specific code at least once or not at all. To calculate percentages, the number of statements per concept within a code group/category were considered. If specific students did not make any statements within a code group, category or concept, these students were excluded from the count in order to calculate a percentage: the remaining number of students were considered as 100%. Furthermore, a normative comparison was made at the variable level between positive and negative statements per variable. This approach was chosen because questions often overlapped, resulting in students frequently repeating arguments. To gain further insight, also quotes belonging to subcodes were analyzed. Percentages were calculated by plotting the number of unique statements per person within the relevant subcode against the total number of unique statements per person.

RESULTS

Students' perceived effectiveness of the Pe(e)rfectly Skilled (PS-) method

The perceived effectiveness was determined on the basis of three criteria: 1) students' experienced competence development, 2) the perceived usefulness of the (various steps of

the) PS method and 3) the perceived usefulness of the feedback in general, peer feedback and/or teacher feedback in particular. Despite the fact that 100% of the interviewed students (30) experienced the method as effective, 90% of the students indicated that they experienced the method with regard to some aspects as ineffective. It was therefore further investigated to what degree the three criteria were perceived as most or least effective and which arguments were mentioned.

1st effectiveness criterion: perceived competence development - Students competence development was indicated by 1) a rich(er) mental model of a skill; 2) development of feedback skills; 3) development of pleading skills and 4) an increase of self-confidence. Students (n=29) experienced this overall criterion as positive: 97% indicated that they have developed themselves, compared to only 3% who indicated that they have not developed themselves in one or more areas. Most students indicate that they feel that they have developed their pleading skills and have a better image and mental model of such skills, respectively 86% and 83%. In addition, 55% of students felt that they have more self-confidence and 38% indicated that their feedback skills have been developed. These findings are illustrated in Table 1 by some exemplary quotes.

Table 1 – exemplary codes illustrating students’ perceived competence development

Criteria	Exemplary quotes
Rich(er) mental model of skill	<i>I'm sure my first video [plea] was a lot worse than my last video. So I really learned a lot in that regard</i> (Respondent #10 duo speaker 2)
Development of pleading skills	<i>You mainly got to see... "a good person will do this and this", through given examples. And a person who doesn't do that well... you got to see this from good to bad, so to speak, there were steps in between. Because they had already given examples, you could also get a better picture of "this is a good plea/this is a bad plea"</i> (Respondent #1 solo)
Development of feedback skills	<i>I also just think that in the course of the [feedback] process, that you saw improvement in it, in that giving. And I think everyone also thought, you know [that they knew] how to give feedback, but I also enjoyed seeing how others did it, and that you indeed just learn from each other, which is nice. What you like to receive is also nice to give back, and with that rubric it was very easy to pick up on a certain point, and then you only had to put it into words</i> (Respondent #5 trio speaker 2)
Increase of self-confidence	<i>I had actually come to the conclusion for myself "I can do certain things, ..., but I [also] can't do certain things, and that is presenting. And now I think, well, maybe I should do that more often. Because I can, I'm pretty good when I have a story, that doesn't look bad at all. In that sense it really helped me, I'm really very positively surprised</i> (Respondent #9 solo)

Note: some editorial additions are indicated between [brackets]

2nd effectiveness criterion - perceived usefulness of the Pe(e)rfectly Skilled (PS)-method - Students’ perceived usefulness of the complete and/or various steps within the method was assessed positively by all (100%) of the students (n = 30). The most frequently cited argument (70%) in support of positive findings is repetitive practice; 60% of the students also mention the structured, step-by-step approach and 53% the available information and instruction in the method. Of the five steps that the students go through, step 2 is especially experienced as useful by 77%, step 3 by 90% and step 4 by 53% of the students. Step 1 and step 5 were not

mentioned as often, compared to the other steps. These findings are in Table 2 illustrated with some exemplary quotes.

Table 2 – exemplary codes illustrating students’ perceived usefulness of the (PS)-method

Criteria	Exemplary quotes
Repetitive practice	<i>Because I think this is the way to do it. Practice, look back, receive feedback, do something with it. And then do it a few times more</i> (Respondent #2 solo)
Structured, step-by-step approach	<i>I found the structure very logical and the way of working as well. That gave a structured picture. You just make your presentation first, try to take an example from the videos of [other] students and the examples, the feedback too, and you also take that with you when you get it again. So I just liked the way it was put together</i> (Respondent #8 duo speaker 3)
Information and instruction	<i>... yes, you just get very clear instructions, also very extensive, you know exactly what to do. You have to read everything first, of course, "ok, I have to pay attention to this"</i> (Respondent #8 duo speaker 2)
Step 2 - practice, record and self assess	<i>That you look back on and record yourself and really look back to see how it was. I think that's a really strong point. And furthermore... yes, really nice example videos of how something should be done and how something is not done well. Sometimes obvious, but then you see yourself doing it anyway, so it is good that you know for sure that that is not the purpose. That's really supportive in a nice way</i> (Respondent #9 solo)
Step 3 - provide peerfeedback	<i>I thought it was nice to keep the example videos next to it, because then you really had an example [with the rubric descriptions] and what you really should be able to see and [compared to] what it [peers performance] really looked like. So I thought this was useful comparison material to really look [critically] at the presentation of other students</i> (Respondent #12 trio speaker 3)
Step 4 – consult feedback	<i>I found the progress you could see and the skill wheel really motivating. So when I saw that I actually found something difficult myself, but that the feedback was good and that another dark green block was added, I was really happy for a while</i> (Respondent #12 trio speaker 3)

Note: some editorial additions are indicated between [brackets]

In contrast to the positive evaluations of students, more than half (63%) of the students also indicated at least once that they did not find (aspects of) the PS-method useful. The argument most often given by students (43%) is that they lack a dialogue opportunity to ask questions about the peer feedback. An example cite as illustration: “*If there had been a chat function, I'm sure I would have asked for an explanation, like: hey, can you explain in more detail what exactly you mean by ...?*” (Respondent #3 duo speaker 3). Other arguments were a lack of an opportunity to provide overarching top-level feedback; the repetition of feedback and practice; the abundance of information; difficult/uncomfortable to self-assess or insufficient perception of quality criteria of good peer feedback. These arguments were given by only 7 to 10% of the students.

3rd effectiveness criterion - perceived usefulness of the feedback - Students’ statements about their experiences with received feedback, from their peers and (depending on the condition) from their teacher, gave insight in how they perceived the usefulness of the feedback. Most students evaluated teacher feedback ($n = 12$) and peer feedback ($n = 30$) as useful (92% and 80%). On the other hand, 53% did not appreciate peer feedback usefulness and 25% did not

find the teacher feedback useful on certain aspects. As arguments for the perceived usefulness of teacher feedback, 58% of the students mentioned the reliability of the source and 50% appreciated the degree of concreteness of feedback. Furthermore, the fact that feedback was critical in nature (17%); the comprehensiveness of the feedback (17%) and expert opinion of the teacher (8%) were mentioned by students. Students' arguments for a negative assessment of the usefulness of peer feedback were the reliability of the source (20%); comprehensiveness of peer feedback (13%), only positive feedback (13%) and peer feedback insufficiently concrete formulated (10%). Nevertheless, 82% of students choose a combination of teacher and peer feedback (only 5% prefer only peer- and 18% only teacher-feedback). Arguments for the combination of teacher and peer feedback for students is that they can combine the reliability of teacher feedback with receiving more feedback through their peers, however also while giving and receiving peer feedback creates a sense of connection with their peers. Finally, a few students indicate that mirroring with the help of peer examples is also of added value. In Table 3, these findings of the preferred choice of the feedback source are supported by some exemplary quotes.

Table 3 – exemplary codes illustrating students' preferences regarding feedback

Criteria	Exemplary quotes
Trust in feedback source and perceived psychological distance	<i>I also think that it gives a completely different dynamics if you also work together with [fellow] students. In a sense you have to do it together. It also causes social pressure, perhaps, that you think: oh yes, I really have to do my best, because it is also very nice for them if I can give them good feedback that they can use, so I really liked that aspect. In terms of the usability of the feedback, I naturally think teacher feedback is a bit more useful than feedback from your peers, because we all don't have that much experience with it yet, but I was very pleased to know that you were really in it together, and that everyone did the same, and that you really took it into account in your feedback like "oh yes, I will also receive feedback from them later, let's take each other to a higher level". I really liked that about it, and found it motivating (Respondent #5 trio speaker 3)</i>
Feedback acceptance and quantity	<i>I think I like getting different types of feedback. I must say that I benefited more from the teacher feedback, probably while I also accepted it more quickly, because she is more knowledgeable than my peers. But what I said, like that tic, she hadn't noticed and that fellow student had. And I think in the end it is your overall presentation that is looked at and then I think that the more people assess it, the more it will ultimately help you. It depends on the teacher, but I think it's very nice that four people looked at it instead of one teacher (Respondent #13 duo speaker 3)</i>
Feedback acceptance and mirroring of performances	<i>The teacher really looks at it like an assessment, so to speak, and peers really look at it like this: what can you still improve and what could you maybe still improve yourself on looking at what you have seen from another student [performance]. Maybe look a bit at how the other person was doing and then maybe mirror that in your own presentation (Respondent 12 trio speaker 4)</i>
Feedback quantity (sec)	<i>Like this it's right for me. Legally, of course, I rely more on a teacher, but in terms of presenting and feedback, yes, the more the merrier, so I think it's good to get feedback from peers as well (Respondent #11 duo speaker 3)</i>

Mirroring	<p><i>So on the one hand I would prefer to receive teacher feedback, but on the other hand, if I have a video from a peer and also receive feedback from peers, I like that a lot better, because in that way you also know about... for example with the pleading note in terms of content, then you already know: I forgot this and I should have put this in better, and that introduction is much more catchy, so I better change it. That you have something like "yes, now I can compare a bit with peers, how they are doing and getting started. And I think that's actually the best thing about the program, that you can make a comparison with each other: why does his introduction goes so well and why is the ending better, so that he comes across more convincingly? I really like that (Respondent #4 trio speaker 2)</i></p>
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Students' perceived efficiency of the Pe(e)rfectly Skilled (PS-) method

The perceived efficiency consisted of two criteria: 1) perceived ease of use and 2) experienced required or available time to go through the method. What is striking is that overall 82% of the students ($n = 28$) indicated that they experienced the complete method as efficient, however 93% on certain aspects as inefficient. A similar contradictory picture can be seen for the two independent criteria time (+64%, - 68%) and ease of use (+74%, - 89%). Therefore, it was subsequently investigated in more detail which arguments students gave for their positive and negative efficiency experiences.

1st efficiency criterion: perceived ease of use - An analysis of student statements ($n = 27$) shows that the perceived ease of giving and receiving feedback with the online PS-tool is the most important reason for students (56%) to regard the method as user-friendly. In addition, the overall ease of using the tool (30%) and the proper functioning of the PS-tool (19%) are mentioned as reasons by some of the students. Looking into the negative experiences, the most frequently mentioned reason for 52% of the students appears to be the difficulty of assessing the skill: they find it difficult to recognize sub-skills and then assign them to rubrics and assign a performance level score to them. The use of the PS-tool (for example, not being able to go back to previous steps and/or difficult to upload own recordings) is the reason for the perceived negative ease of use for 48% of the students. For 37%, issues with retrievability and readability of the information (because there is a lot of information, information is easily overlooked) and the user-friendliness of the recording options (30%) – when the default – recommended – Webcam option is not used also play a role in the negative experiences. Table 4 provides some exemplary quotes illustrating these findings.

2nd efficiency criterion: time available or required - After an analysis of the criteria of available or required time, a diffuse picture of student experiences ($n = 25$) emerges. On the one hand students appreciate the required time investment (24%, they agree that the method makes them feel compelled to invest a lot of time in practicing the skill and giving feedback), but on the other hand they think that working with the method takes (too) much time (40%), amongst other things because of the number of practice and feedback rounds. Moreover, students do think they learned a lot in a relatively short time (24%). The perceived time spend in the overall study program itself is independent of the efficiency of the PS-Method, but it seems to influence students' perceived efficiency as 24% of the students also mention this as a limitation in terms of time investment. Dependence on deadlines is not appreciated by 28% (they depend on others and get out of their 'flow'), although other students indicate that they

appreciate a ‘big stick’ to get them through the deadlines. Finally, 12% like the time and place independent character of the method, and finally an equally large percentage of students think the number of feedback and practice rounds is too elaborate. Table 4 contains some exemplary quotes.

Table 4 – exemplary codes illustrating students’ perceived efficiency of the (PS)-method

Criteria	Exemplary quotes
Perceived easy-of-use (+)	
Ease of providing/receiving feedback	<i>I actually always had that schedule with those stars next to it and you could just fill [your content-related] comments in and in advance I often also looked at what exactly was being asked (Respondent #9 solo)</i>
Tool usability	<i>It was very self-explanatory, which made it very easy for me to do things (Respondent #13 duo speaker 2)</i>
Technical functioning of tool (+)	<i>So it was... refreshing, I would say. That it was done in a different way, with a program that at least worked, because I also remember programs that didn't work, but this one just worked (Respondent #1 solo)</i>
Perceived easy-of-use (-)	
Recognizing subskills or levels	<i>I was sometimes thinking "maybe it was more about content than about structure or more about structure than about content [sub-skills in rubric]". That was also a bit of a worry now and then: where shall I put it? (Respondent #7 duo speaker 3)</i>
Technical functioning of tool (-)	<i>I think the weakest thing of the method is, this may sound very stupid what I'm going to say now, that you depend on that technical side, and when there is some kind of malfunction, for example.. (Respondent #8 duo speaker 3)</i>
Abundance of information	<i>So I sometimes had to click quite a lot and back and forth, searching, "where was that again, how did I get to that [information/text] again?" (Respondent #7 duo speaker 2)</i>
User friendliness of video-recording functionality	<i>Practically, I think it is quite difficult to set this up at home. So I think this is still a point to focus on. I messed around with a household stairs. I've tried different things to have that camera position in such a way that you are in a somewhat normal way positioned in the recording, and at the same time still be heard. So it does require some facilities at home to be able to do this (Respondent #3 duo speaker 3)</i>
Time available/required (+)	
Time investment (+)	<i>I really think [you learn] by practice and applying it and, above all, staying engaged with it. So not that you are going to do it very quickly, but that you also take your time (Respondent #12 trio speaker 4)</i>
Learning process independent of time and place	<i>And I think if you were to do it physically [f2f], you might have one or two days and then the same thing might come out, but I think because this is spread out over time, and while you're only doing it online, that really helps. In that respect I think it is really a good alternative (Respondent #10 duo speaker 2)</i>

Time available/required (-)	
Time investment (-)	<i>I was with three people, so it will take a while to give [them all] extensive feedback. Of course you first had to listen to all those presentations, then you have to go through the rubric for each student. This has taken quite some time</i> (Respondent #4 trio speaker 2)
Deadlines	<i>I found it annoying that you had to wait until a deadline had passed, while everyone was already finished</i> (Respondent #6 duo speaker 3)
Time available	<i>At least for myself I experienced this course, and I have also heard that from other students, just so heavy in terms of workload and it was therefore then difficult to put in all the time you wanted to put into it</i> (Respondent #12 trio speaker 2)
Number of practice and feedback cycles	<i>I found it difficult that there are two [practice] rounds in it. I do understand that it is meant to make progress, of course, so that you actually practice the same for a second round. But I myself was like “yes, if I liked my presentation the first time and I only got good feedback on it, why do I have to do it a second time?” Because it's exactly the same. Often it was also that it went less well the second time. Because for the sake of a change you just started doing things differently. But then it didn't get any better. At least in my case</i> (Respondent #6 duo speaker 3)

The perceived attractiveness by students - Attractiveness was operationalized in two criteria: 1) the perceived enjoyability to work with the PV method and 2) preference for this form of (online)education. All students ($n = 28$) indicated at least once (100%) that they experienced the method as attractive. However, 54% indicated that they not always appreciated the method, mainly because of its solely online form.

1st attractiveness criterion: perceived enjoyability of the Pe(e)rfectly Skilled (PS-) method - The perceived enjoyability of the PS-Method was derived from students' statements ($n = 28$) referring to perceived pleasure of developing skills/working with the method; their commitment to provide good peer feedback, their desire to use the PS-Method in other courses, or whether they would recommend it to others. The most frequently cited reason for perceived enjoyability is that students indicate that they like/enjoy working with the method and/or that they feel motivated (89%). In addition, 57% indicated that they would like to work with the PS-Method again to develop other skills and 61% would recommend the method to others. Finally, 32% of the students mentioned they really did their best when giving peer feedback. See Table 5 for some illustrative quotes.

2nd perceived attractiveness criterion: preference for this form of (online) education - This study distinguished between three forms: 1. fully online PS-Method; 2. practicing the PS-Method online with face-to-face presentations or the PS-Method in a blended form, alternating between form 1 and 2. Of all the students who commented on the form of instruction they would prefer for using the PS-Method ($n = 26$), on the one hand, 69% indicated that they would not have a problem using the PS-Method fully online. On the other hand, 46% of the students indicated a preference not to take fully online instruction if it was

not necessary. Finally, 31% indicated a preference for a blended variant, where they would also practice the skill face-to-face. This is illustrated by some exemplary quotes in Table 5.

Table 5 – exemplary codes illustrating students’ perceived attractiveness of the (PS)-method

Criteria	Exemplary quotes
Perceived enjoyability	
Fun/motivating	<i>I found it really fun and refreshing. Yeah, maybe also a little bit while we live in a pretty restricted world now [corona]. Everything goes through a screen and it's kind of awkward. It's quite hard to interact and I really enjoyed doing it in a different way and be engaged in this way through my study. I also remember very well that every time when there had been a deadline, that I was really curious about what became available in the method and what had happened, and what my feedback was. I also really looking forward to continue practicing again. So that was just very pleasant and I think also motivating, that you just kept working on it continuously</i> (Respondent #5 trio speaker 3)
Use in other courses/for training other (type of) skills	<i>I think the practice part and the feedback part can just help to improve skills and I don't think it really depends on presentation skills, but that it can also help with [practicing] writing or something like that</i> (Respondent#12 trio speaker 3)
Recommend it to others	<i>It has helped me a lot and I indeed now do know better what I can improve and what I'm already doing well. So it did provide a lot of insight. So I would definitely recommend it to others</i> (Respondent #12 trio speaker 2)
Effort for peer feedback	<i>I did try to give very honest peer feedback. Everyone should pay attention to the same points and, above all, make it very concrete. Also in the beginning of using the pv tool and the tip-top method, it was told that if you give a tip, you also give a top, so that you have a bit of balanced feedback. And also that you have to try to make things concrete. And I really tried</i> (Respondent #14 trio speaker 3)
Preference for this form of (online) education	
Completely online	<i>I think I have indeed invested more time into it now than if it had just been a live meeting. Now you indeed practice more often, you stop the video and then you start again and that is also part of your learning process. I do think that I have now spent longer developing this than I normally would have done. That's indeed nice!</i> (Respondent #12 trio speaker 2)
Blended (f2f&online)	<i>Physically [f2f], the experience is very different than online. So if you only do it online then you're not going to have the experience you can get when you're in court. So I think it's good to do it physically once or twice, but indeed combined with feedback and being able to look back, being able to optimize it in the initial phase, which can be done very well online</i> (Respondent #13 duo speaker 2)

Students' perceived effectiveness, efficiency and attractiveness of the PS-method in relation to the feedback variant

To determine whether the feedback context influenced students' experiences, quantified perceptions of students who received teacher feedback were compared with students who did not. Also, perceptions of students at the Open University were compared to those of Maastricht University. Comparisons were made by contrasting the percentage of students who made at least one statement appropriate to a code and/or category by context (see Table 6).

Table 6

Comparison of students' experiences between contexts (feedback variant and university)

	P	TP	Positive or negative perception	UM	OU
<i>n</i> =	17	13		17	13
Effectiveness	<i>n</i> = 17	<i>n</i> = 13		<i>n</i> = 17	<i>n</i> = 13
	100%	100%	+	100%	100%
	94%	85%	-	82%	100%
Students' perceived competence development	<i>n</i> = 16	<i>n</i> = 13		<i>n</i> = 16	<i>n</i> = 13
	94%	100%	+	100%	92%
	13%	8%	-	0%	23%
Perceived usefulness of received peer feedback	<i>n</i> = 17	<i>n</i> = 13		<i>n</i> = 17	<i>n</i> = 13
	88%	69%	+	76%	85%
	53%	54%	-	59%	46%
Perceived usefulness of the PS-method	<i>n</i> = 17	<i>n</i> = 13		<i>n</i> = 17	<i>n</i> = 13
	100%	100%	+	100%	100%
	71%	54%	-	53%	77%
Efficiency	<i>n</i> = 16	<i>n</i> = 12		<i>n</i> = 15	<i>n</i> = 13
	75%	92%	+	73%	92%
	100%	83%	-	93%	93%
Perceived easy of use	<i>n</i> = 16	<i>n</i> = 11		<i>n</i> = 14	<i>n</i> = 13
	69%	82%	+	64%	85%
	88%	91%	-	93%	85%
Perceived usage time available /required	<i>n</i> = 14	<i>n</i> = 11		<i>n</i> = 12	<i>n</i> = 13
	50%	82%	+	83%	46%
	86%	45%	-	50%	85%
Attractiveness	<i>n</i> = 15	<i>n</i> = 13		<i>n</i> = 16	<i>n</i> = 12
	100%	100%	+	100%	100%
	40%	62%	-	63%	33%

Perceived enjoyability	<i>n</i> = 17	<i>n</i> = 12		<i>n</i> = 17	<i>n</i> = 12
	182%	100%	+	94%	100%
	6%	8%	-	6%	8%
Preference for this form off (online) education	<i>n</i> = 14	<i>n</i> = 12		<i>n</i> = 16	<i>n</i> = 10
	50%	92%	+	56%	90%
	43%	67%	-	63%	36%

Note. P = Students who received peer feedback, TP = Students who received teacher- and peer feedback. UM = Students of Maastricht University, OU = Students of the Open University of the Netherlands.

Looking at the overall percentages at variable level, no striking difference can be seen between both feedback variants. When comparing students' perceptions per feedback variant at category level, it can be seen that the percentage of students who indicated that they had either positive or negative experiences with the required usage time differ with more than 30% between students with and without teacher feedback and also between students from the Open university and Maastricht University. Such a difference is also visible in the perceived attractiveness of the full online form of education, with more Maastricht University students perceiving this as negative.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study evaluated students' perceptions of the effectiveness, efficiency and attractiveness of an online method to train the complex skill of legal pleading, named Pe(e)rfectly Skilled. Moreover, it provides an indication whether the feedback variant (peer and teacher feedback or only peer feedback) influenced students' perceptions, to determine whether students perceived teacher feedback as essential for their skills development.

Results indicate that the majority of the interviewed students evaluate the overall use of the method as effective (100%), attractive (100%) and efficient (82%). However, on aspects students' evaluations of the method are not as effective, attractive and efficient as wished for. Overall 90% of the interviewees indicate they experienced negative aspects regarding effectiveness, 93% regarding efficiency and 54% concerning its attractiveness. To nuance this picture, the normalized judgments of the effectiveness of the PV method were examined and were found to be positive in nature in 86% of the judgments. Looking at efficiency 40% and for attractiveness 85% of the statements were positive. Students do suggest various ways to further improve the method, in particular for improving efficiency. Suggestions were given to reduce the number of feedback rounds; students would like to have more freedom to set the pace for all steps within their own peer group (e.g. remove fixed deadlines); allowing students more time to practice within the course (e.g. by reducing attention on other components); reducing the amount of explanation/instruction with each step in the method (e.g. through minimalist support approach) and to prevent students from 'getting lost' in the subskills focussing on a selection of subskills instead of all subskills.

Comparing the peer-and self feedback group (P) with the peer-self and teacher feedback (TP) group, no striking differences on perceived effectiveness, efficiency and attractiveness could be found at a general level. However, when looking at the underlying categories, it seems that students in the P-group perceived the required time overall less positive, and more negative

than the TP group. This may be due to students' spending quite a lot of time to provide peer feedback as it is their only feedback source and they are mutually dependant on it. Additionally, they lack the teacher feedback as a kind of reference framework, potentially making it harder for them to formulate their peer feedback. Moreover, looking at the online form only, OU students are more positive than UM students, which might reflect their overall accustombrance to a specific educational form (online, blended or f2f) or the amount of study pressure they perceive in the curriculum.

Looking at the perceived indispensability of teacher feedback compared to the peer feedback a mingled response was visible. The majority of students (80%) actually appreciated the peer feedback received, both in terms of quality as well as quantity. In addition, students mentioned that peer feedback helped them to feel connected and also to compare themselves to peers, thereby changing and improving their own performance.

However, 53% doubt the reliability of peer feedback. Teachers are seen as a reliable source of feedback, which is why 82% of students prefer a combination of both teacher and peer feedback. Teacher feedback was mainly appreciated as students trusted and accepted the teacher feedback more readily than peer feedback, although in practice in terms of content and suggestions for improvement feedback quality differed not a lot from peer feedback. Teacher feedback mainly seemed to serve as a 'quality stamp' mechanism for students and increased their feedback acceptance, however in terms of content and concrete feedback on their skill performance had less added value compared to peer feedback. However, as feedback acceptance is importance at least some kind of feedback quality control by a teacher seems indispensable.

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APPENDIXES A (interview scheme) & B (coding scheme) available upon request with the authors