

From Concepts to Country Reports

Scaffolding a complex macroeconomic country report with a weekly process-folio

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A small-teaching inquiry / RITE Gallery Walk, 14 August 2026

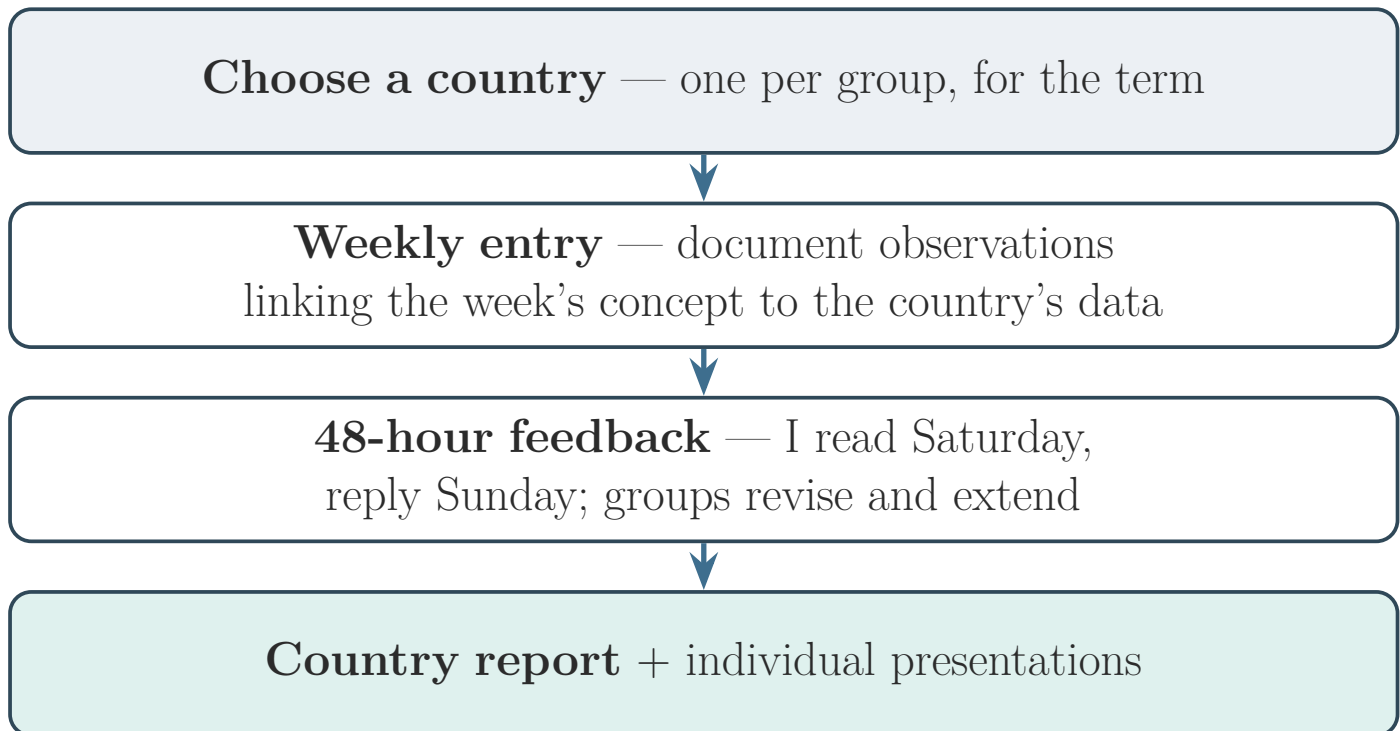
The Inquiry

How does a weekly work-in-progress process-folio affect students' ability to manage and integrate a complex macroeconomic country report?

- **Course context:** Graduate Macroeconomics for Public Policy; 29 students from diverse disciplines, most new to economics. The capstone country report and presentation (50% of the grade) carry the course's signature competencies.
- **Challenge:** In past iterations, most groups put the report off to the final weeks, when an integrative task turns overwhelming, the work gets rushed, and the report quality suffers.

A Weekly Process-Folio

The intervention: each group picks a country and builds the report a layer at a time on a shared Canvas document, week by week, not all at once.



The middle two steps repeat every teaching week (~8 cycles); feedback came in writing, in class, and in meetings.

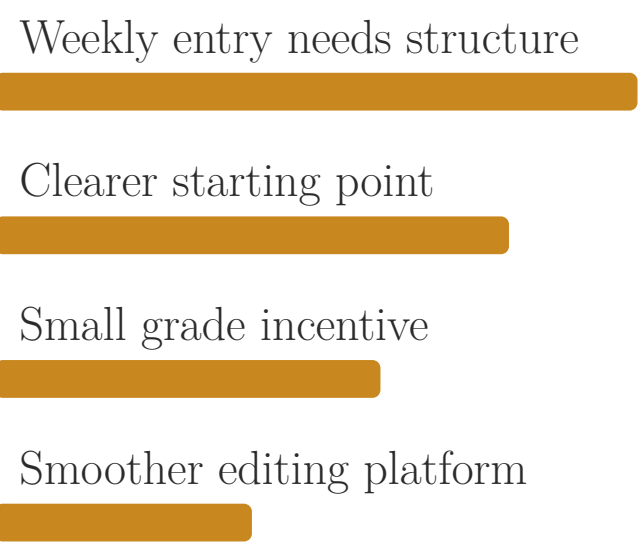
Design features: distributed cognitive load • explicit concept-to-data links • iterative formative feedback • individually graded presentations for accountability.

Reflections from Data

What helped (Menti, n=13)



What to improve (Exit, n=18)



Two complementary open questions: “what *helped*?” (Menti, n=13) and “what would you *change*?” (exit Q4, n=18). The change-framed answers paired endorsement with a concrete ask. Selected items by frequency; n small, illustrative.

What I Learned

- **The paradox of scaffolding.** A change meant to ease end-of-term load was felt by some as one more weekly task; scaffolding redistributes effort, it does not remove it.
- **Autonomy needs structure.** Students wanted clearer milestones, scaffolding within the scaffolding, and explicit guidance did not cost them their independence.
- **Timing matters.** A predictable 48-hour feedback rhythm signaled that the work was read and that it mattered.

Next iteration: concept-specific prompts • a week-2/3 calibration check-in with exemplars • a small grade weight • coaching on using feedback.

Honest limit on transfer. Suited to cumulative, integrative deliverables; it did not transfer to a course with a more self-contained task. A useful lesson in what travels.

How Students Rated It

89% understood the folio's purpose (16 of 18)

Q2 — the folio kept us on track



Q3 — it eased the final report



← disagree

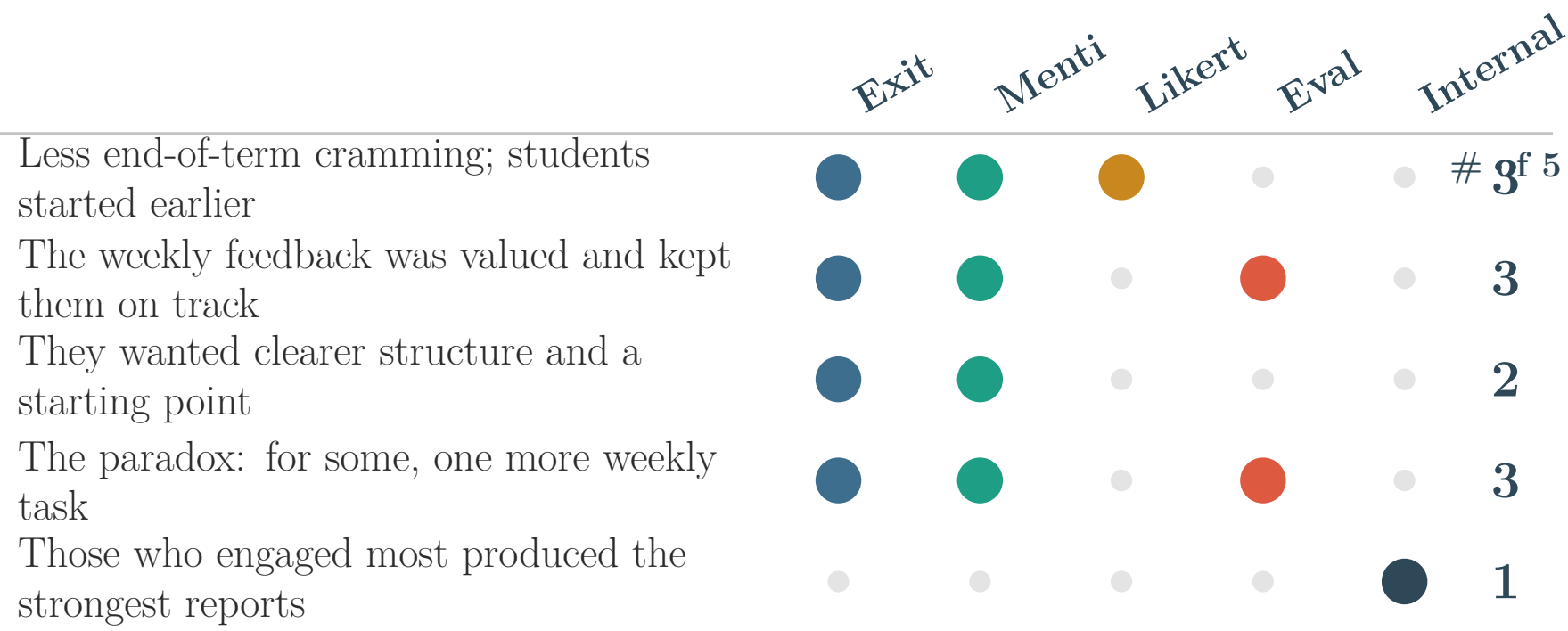
agree →

strongly disagree

strongly agree

Numbers in the bars count students (of 18) at each level • median 5 on both items • about 78% at or above the midpoint • anonymous exit survey, n = 18 of 29 (62%).

Where the Evidence Agrees



A filled dot = that source independently supports the finding; the count at right is how many of the five agree (convergence, not magnitude). Sources: Exit survey (n=18) • Mentimeter (n=13) • Likert items (n=18) • Course evaluation (n=29, 100%: **timely-feedback item 4.9/5**, overall effectiveness 4.8/5) • Internal engagement-report pattern (10 groups; directional, not causal).

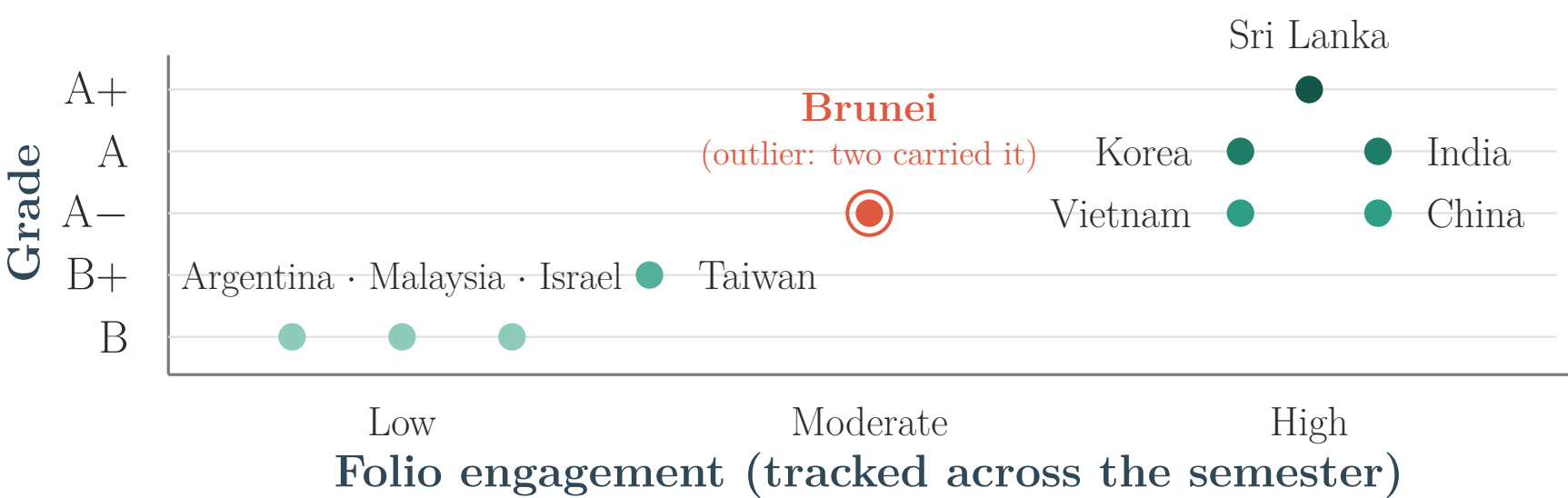
In Their Words

“The weekly process-folio was super helpful. We gradually progressed and learned a lot rather than rushing at the end, and we got the timely feedback as well.”

“Gathering data was like solving one big puzzle. It is fun once you find the pieces, then confusing because not all data matched, and fun again after the puzzle is finished.”

“The weekly process-folio is really helpful for organizing our work, but constantly changing our plan because of the feedback makes me confused and tired. Still, it is better to have the folio than not.”

Engagement and Attainment



Ten groups. Engagement was tracked across the semester (entries, feedback, debriefs), not inferred from grades. The pattern is directional, not causal. The most engaged group (China) landed an A–, and Brunei is the within-group exception. Grades are for the report and presentation; internal showcase only.