<https://cdn.oxfordowl.co.uk/2017/04/21/10/32/07/582/bp_observation_guide.pdf>

# **Giving Feedback to Tutors**

When giving feedback it is important to remember:

* That feedback is a two-way process, you should invite the tutor to comment and respond
* To give praise where it is deserved
* To avoid identifying standard practice as a strength
* To distinguish clearly between description and evaluation
* To be explicit about weaknesses
* To be positive and make constructive comments

Be mindful of asking vague questions. Vague questions illicit vague answers.

Rather than ‘how do you think it went? You may want to be more specific ‘the aim of your session was...How well do you think you achieved this?

Try and avoid giving a positive followed by however/but…. (negative)

Do not be over-prescriptive – avoid ‘I would have’. If asked, try ‘I have found’ ‘Have you tried?’ ‘How would it be if…?

When writing your report, you should;

* Ensure the outcome is consistent with the comments
* Concentrate on the effectiveness of the learning and how the teaching contributed to this – refer to the learner response
* Use specific examples to illustrate points

# **Managing Difficult Feedback: Top Tips**

Giving constructive feedback after an observation can be challenging, especially when there are areas of weakness or poor practice evident.

Most people are often a little worried about being observed and anxious to know that they did ok. People respond differently to perceived criticism, some before very defensive, others emotional, while others become withdrawn. Hopefully the advice below will enable you to give difficult feedback with a positive outcome.

Feedback is an opportunity for you both to reflect on the observed session.

1. **Thank the tutor**. It can be very stressful to have someone watching you teach, so thanking the tutor for the opportunity to observe is important and will set a positive tone to the feedback session.
2. **Contextualise the feedback**. Remind the tutor that this relates to just an element of their course, and only reflects that moment.
3. **Think about your delivery**. The tone of voice and body language you adopt will influence how the feedback is received. Try and avoid harsh tones, or overly judgemental statements. Remember you are trying to be supportive of the tutor to enable them to improve practice.
4. **Use the feedback as an opportunity to clarify the context of the learners**. Find out if there are any particular behaviour issues or sensitive areas that would affect learner engagement. This can be noted in the context of the session. Whether or not the behaviour of learners was atypical.
5. **Give the tutor a chance to talk**. Tutors will often want to give an explanation for things that did not go well or to plan. It is important for tutors to give their views – but make sure they listen to you, too. Engage them in listening and responding by asking questions about the learners and their work. Ask them what they would have done differently next time or why they didn’t think it worked.

Far better for the tutor to identify for themselves where things could be improved rather than be given a list of ‘requires improvement.’

1. **Depersonalise your feedback**. Make it clear that the learners and their learning were the focus for observation and not the tutor. Be specific about what the learners did/did not learn or achieve and explain why you think they could have done better. It is not a character assassination!
2. **Make positive suggestions**. Suggest ways for improving the learners learning and focus on the difference the changes would make. You can use these later to generate action points for the tutor. What you are trying to do is to encourage the tutor to decide and agree on the action points for themselves.

Alongside the suggestions, offer support that would make a difference, even if it is something quite minor. In this way, you help to show that you are on the tutor’s side in terms of wanting to improve the learning.

1. **Be positive about the strengths of the session**. It is important to draw attention to the successful parts of the session. Wherever you can, use the strengths you observed in the session to help you give feedback on the weaknesses.
2. **Give feedback on the quality of the teaching overall**. Be very clear about the judgement you make. Always try and end on a positive.
3. **Make the action points clear**. Creating action points will support the tutor themselves. Hopefully the tutor will have identified for themselves on areas that they need to develop. Good reflection will enable the tutor to ‘own’ the action points. If the tutor does not agree with the action points then you should be able to explain why and how these are needed.
4. **Respond sensitively to negative reactions**. Tutors may get upset during feedback. Respond appropriately but stay calm yourself. Do not be swayed by an emotional response to change your original judgement to make the tutor feel better. Remind them that your judgements refer to the quality of learning that was taking place.

**Questions to ask the tutor during your debrief**

How could you have handled that on another occasion?

Talk to be about…?

Could you have…

* + Written more on the whiteboard
  + Used a different handout/resource
  + Asked a learner to…demonstrate/explain/identify

Have you thought about…

* Changing the size/colour/font as this might…..
* Using a different article

Is that fairly typical for this group/individual?

What do you think the group have learnt during the session?

Do you think some found it difficult? Why was this? What could you have done to support them?

What are the next steps for learners?

‘What did you think of the learning in that session?’

‘Can you link that back to the learners’ learning?’

‘How much progress would you say that the learners made in this part of the session?’

In which part of the session did the learners make the most progress? How did you know this?’

**Classroom observation: A Guide to the Effective Observation of Teaching and Learning** (Pg85-86)

Matt O’Leary (2014)

***10 practical pointers to help observers manage the feedback discussion effectively***

1. Try not to make purely evaluative or judgemental comments – focus on what you see. If in doubt pose searching questions rather than making absolute statements.
2. Be sensitive. Overtly critical comments can be off-putting and dent the person’s confidence considerably. Try to avoid ‘offering solutions’; i.e. ‘well this is what I think you should have done…’ unless specifically invited to do so.
3. Avoid making generalised statements such as ‘you need to work on your classroom management skills.’ Instead, make sure you provide practical suggestions for future classes, based on concrete examples of classroom practice that the observe can relate to.
4. Vary the types of questions you ask and try to use questions that are more geared to encouraging reflection or eliciting a detailed response from the teacher e.g. ‘you chose to do “x” at that point in the session. Why was that?’ ‘Can you explain to me what you were hoping to achieve with this task?
5. Provide ‘constructive criticism’ or ‘balanced feedback’ i.e. feedback that is honest but helpful in developing the observee’s practice and that accentuates the positives as well as the areas for improvement. Think about what they did well and why it was successful. Remember that highlighting strengths is a helpful as recognising and describing what seem to be the challenges faced by the person teaching.
6. Feedback should be a two-way process. With this in mind, try to encourage the observe to take an active role in the feedback discussion, thus taking ownership of their learning and development.
7. Allow the observee the opportunity to explain their decision-making, to provide a rationale for why they did what they did in the session.
8. Encourage a shared discussion and agreement as to the key areas for future improvement/development and what support, if any needs to be provided. With your guidance the observee should be encouraged to self-evaluate and identify their professional development needs.
9. Prioritise areas for development. It would be both demotivating and unfair to present the observee with an exhaustive list of areas to develop. Use your professional judgement when deciding what the main priorities are for the observee to focus on in the short term.
10. Make sure feedback is timely i.e. ideally it should take place within a day of the observation, but certainly no longer than a week after.

**Different models of feedback**

Model 1

* Start by asking the teacher how well they thought they achieved the learning objectives. Use open questions and prompts to encourage greater analysis.
* Present your analysis of the strengths and areas for improvement observed and, if it is policy give the grade.
* Summarise what worked particularly well and could be built on and what aspects need further development
* Agree on any action to be taken

Model 2

* Begin by presenting a summary of strengths and areas for improvement, using specific examples from the session to illustrate particular points where useful
* Invite the teacher to add any observations of their own and to comment on your assessment
* Summarise what worked particularly well and could be built on and what aspects need further development. If policy give the grade
* Agree on any action to be taken

Model 3

* Begin by going through the session chronologically, describing the effectiveness or otherwise of the various stages and activities of the session.
* Encourage the teacher to contribute their views and ideas
* Summarise what worked particularly well and could be built on and what aspects need further development. If policy give the grade
* Agree on any action to be taken