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#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the "Peer Feedback Tool for Lectures & Small Group Teaching" is to provide information about the quality of a faculty member's teaching based on peer observation. The form can help the observer to provide feedback to the instructor about specific domains of teaching. The teaching behaviors listed on the form are based on the literature, but they are neither exhaustive nor are all behaviors appropriate for every teaching session. The check boxes are provided so the observer can easily indicate the teaching behaviors they wish to comment about, *e.g.*, behaviors they did or did not observe. More importantly, ample space is provided for written, descriptive comments based on observations. Strengths and/or suggestions for improvement can be summarized from the data. Optimally, the observer and instructor should meet in person soon after the observation to discuss the teaching performance in detail, beginning with asking the instructor to share his/her perceptions about the teaching session.

The peer feedback tool was originally developed for formative feedback in order to improve faculty teaching performance, but an optional "Overall Rating of Effective Teaching Skills" is provided at the end of the form. Institutions may use this rating as evidence of good teaching performance for the purposes of appointment and promotion. Some faculty members may wish to use such a summative rating to demonstrate improved performance over time after multiple peer observations of their teaching.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- 1. To provide a form for peer feedback that may be used to collect information about observed teaching behaviors during lectures and small group teaching.
- 2. To provide a framework for peer discussion of teaching performance.
- 3. To provide a model to enhance teaching through individualized peer coaching and faculty development that includes peer feedback.

#### **CONTEXT**

We suggest the following outline of recommended guidelines for using the "Peer Feedback Tool for Lectures & Small Group Teaching".

# **Pre-Observation Exchange**

- 1. **Determine the purpose of the observation.** Ask the instructor:
  - what he/she hopes to gain from this observation.
  - whether he/she is thinking of using this observation for formative purposes (promoting the development of his/her teaching practice) or summative purposes (using the outcomes of this observation for departmental or promotional review).
  - how you can best address his/her expectations and needs.
- 2. **Establish confidentiality.** Point out that you will keep your observations and post-session discussion confidential and that you will send the completed observation form only to the instructor, unless he/she requests that you disclose this information to others.
- 3. **Set up the schedule and share the procedures.** Schedule the observation and the post-session feedback encounter (20-30 minute meeting). Explain the procedures for the observation and post-session to the instructor.
- 4. Learn about the context of the session to be observed. Ask for information about:
  - the target audience.
  - the course syllabus or session plan.
  - the session format.
  - the session goals.
  - any other information the instructor wants you to learn about before you observe.
- 5. Identify teaching behaviors to be observed with the instructor by:
  - asking what he/she would like you to focus on during the observation.
  - sharing the observation form.
  - asking the instructor to identify any specific teaching behaviors on the form that he/she would like you to pay particular attention to during the observation.
- 6. **Decide on the observer's position and introduction.** Before the session begins, decide with your peer where you should sit and how you will be introduced to the learners in order to share with them the focus of your observation.

#### **Observation**

- 1. **Maintain the focus of the observation.** Focus on the teaching behaviors the instructor exhibits, and be attentive to other aspects you might want to consider drawing the instructor's attention to as well.
- 2. Identify aspects that you think are strengths of your peer's teaching practice.
- 3. Identify aspects that you think he/she needs to develop.

4. **Document observations.** During the observation, you can take field notes to record your observations and/or relevant quotes and then use those notes to guide your completion of the form after the observation. Note times throughout the observation. You may also complete the form during the observation itself. Choose the approach that would best work for you.

# **Feedback**

- 1. **Organize observations to share.** At the end of the session:
  - Give yourself time to organize your observations and complete or review the observation form.
  - Invite the instructor to take this time to reflect on the session and identify issues he/she would like to discuss with you.

### 2. Exchange observations.

- Start the discussion by asking the instructor to share his/her reflections with you.
- Share your observations on the issues he/she wants to discuss with you and include other issues you observed.
- Identify 3 strengths and 3 areas for improvement objectively and support your comments with the data you collected. For example, you could say, "When you said..." "that connected the topic with the lab yesterday.
- Offer suggestions for improvement and help the instructor identify specific teaching strategies he/she might want to consider putting into practice.
- 3. Wrap up and sharing learning. At the end of the encounter:
  - Summarize your observation.
  - Share something that you learned from observing this teaching and learning event. For example, "I like how you probed learners to think about other hypothetical cases and I look forward to using that strategy in my own teaching."

#### LESSONS LEARNED

Based on discussions among the authors and with other users of the tool at national and regional meeting workshops, three key lessons have been learned from the use of the "Peer Feedback Tool for Lectures & Small Group Teaching" (manuscript submitted for publication in *Medical Education*).

- 1. The form can help faculty members at medical schools measure and recognize a faculty member's educational activities and may contribute to the faculty member's portfolio of overall teaching contributions.
- 2. The form can be used to evaluate teaching and give insights into instructors' behavior in teaching settings. During conversations with users, it became clear that the feedback obtained may also be useful in evaluating instructors' instructional materials, evaluating instructors' participation in curriculum development and educational research, and assessing the quality of instructors' academic, personal, and advising skills.
- 3. Although designed primarily for formative feedback, the presence of the optional rating scale also allows the form to be used for summative purposes.

#### DESCRIPTORS FOR TEACHING BEHAVIORS LISTED ON OBSERVATION FORM

# **Establishing Learning Environment**

- 1. Knows learners and adjusts session accordingly.
  - Designs the session based on the learners' needs and interests.
  - Takes group's "vital signs" (background/knowledge on topic, anxiety, *etc.*) before and during session and adjusts material accordingly.
- 2. Demonstrates sensitivity to diversity.
  - Treats learners impartially, thoughtfully, and respectfully
  - Does not express prejudicial or biased opinions and questions about those expressed by others.
  - Is sensitive to learners' individual interests, abilities, knowledge, skills, and cultural background.
- 3. Listens to learners.
  - Listens actively and non-judgmentally to what the learner is communicating without interruption.
  - Incorporates learners' ideas and comments into the session.
- 4. Encourages learners' participation.
  - Welcomes and demonstrates appreciation of learners' participation.
  - Reminds learners that they are to respect their peers' participation.
  - In problem-solving sessions, clarifies that everyone is part of the "team" to resolve the problem, including the instructor.
  - Draws nonparticipating learners safely into the discussion without "grilling" learners.
- 5. Incorporates learners' ideas.
  - Draws/builds on learners' comments to offer examples, provide reinforcement, or expand a concept.
- 6. Encourages learners to voice uncertainty and ask questions.
  - Elicits learners' concerns, critiques, and questions.
  - Encourages learners to openly express what they do not know.
  - Emphasizes that no question is a "stupid question" and that all responses are valid as long as the learner can support his/her reasoning.
- 7. Keeps eye contact with learners.
  - Maintains moderate to high eye contact with learners. Learners need to feel that someone is talking to them as individuals.
    - In small groups, eye contact should be established with every learner as equally as possible.
    - In lecture settings, makes sure to make eye contact with learners from every section of the auditorium, using sweeping rather than darting eye movements.
  - Does not read from notes or speak to board or screen.
- 8. Shows enthusiasm.
  - Is enthusiastic about the subject matter and makes it interesting.
  - Shows interest in learners' ideas, comments or concerns.
  - Uses humor appropriately.
  - Displays energy and passion.

# **Managing Session**

- 1. Communicates clear goals.
  - Clearly explains and/or collaborates in identifying the goals of the session.
  - Offers a preview of the entire lecture by presenting the goals, questions to be answered, or an outline of the key points.
- 2. Structures session according to the goals.
  - Topics of discussion are aligned with the session goals.
- 3. Starts and ends session on time.
  - Is aware of the session time frame and plans material accordingly, also leaving ample time for questions from learners.
  - Keeps track of time during the session.
- 4. Summarizes session.
  - Summarizes and concludes decisively or asks learners to summarize.
  - Reflects on what learners have accomplished and what still may need to be done.
- 5. Solicits learners' feedback.
  - Solicits learners' feedback and suggestions for improvement on the session or/and his/her teaching.
  - Ask individuals what they specifically are taking away from session.
  - In small group sessions, reflects on how well group has worked together.
  - Asks learners what factors facilitated or blocked their learning.
  - Ask learners how they plan to apply what they've learned.
- 6. Encourages group collaboration if appropriate.
  - Promotes active exchange of ideas and redirects questions to other members of the group instead of answering himself/herself.
  - Fosters learner interaction, not facilitator-learner one-on-one discussions.
  - Helps learners become more responsible for the group, to teach each other.
  - Turns conflict or differences of opinion into learning opportunities.
  - Helps learners to collectively solve problems or make decisions together.
  - Remind learners that he/she is a member of the learning team.
- 7. Limits digressions of group discussion.
  - Facilitates group focus on discussion topics, but allows digressions that reinforce or enrich the group's understanding of the topic, keeping in mind the time limits, as well.
  - Reorients digressions that may take the group off tangent including his/her own.

#### **Presenting the Material**

- 1. Varies voice, body language, pace, movement, etc.
  - Uses a variety of vocal qualities, varying pitch, speaking rate, and volume to convey enthusiasm; avoids speaking in monotone.
  - Experiments with movement; doesn't stay rooted behind the lectern.
  - Gestures and facial expressions are natural and meaningful, reinforcing the subject matter (no nervous mannerisms *e.g.*, tapping pencil, jingling keys).

- 2. Uses audiovisual materials appropriately.
  - Audiovisual (including use of the board) materials are simple, uncluttered and clear.
  - Slides support the presentation, not substitute for it.
  - Uses graphs, pictures, etc. in slide presentations not all text.
  - Provides a handout that duplicates the slides for learner note-taking.
- 3. Refers to appropriate written materials.
  - Calls learners' attention to related assigned readings and/or handouts.
  - These materials should be appropriate for learners' knowledge level and consistent with goals of teaching session.
- 4. Speaks clearly.
  - Avoids using fillers (e.g., ums and aahs).
  - Clearly pronounces words.
  - Does not speak too rapidly.

#### **Conveying Content**

- 1. Delivers appropriate amount of material.
  - Does not provide learners with excessive amount of material that would result in having to rush through the session.
  - Material is consistent with session objectives.
- 2. Organizes content logically.
  - Arranges main points in a logical format that fits the material (*e.g.*, chronologically or in a problem-solution, inductive or deductive format.
- 4. Explains the relevance of topics to learners' training.
  - Clearly states why the topic is relevant to learners' current and future training and profession.
- 5. Links to previous material or learner knowledge and to future material.
  - Sample comments: "As you learned last week...."; "When you go to the floors...."; "When you see a patient with symptoms of.....".
- 6. Shows relationships between theory and practice.
  - Associates concepts with professional practice (e.g., how basic science can be applied in a clinical or a research situation).
- 7. Uses examples related to learner experience and knowledge.
  - Uses learners' experiences and knowledge to reinforce concepts.
- 8. Acknowledges personal knowledge limits.
  - Recognizes when he/she does not know the answer to learners' concerns.
  - In a problem-solving group, doesn't try to overwhelm learners as "the content expert".
    - Admits he/she knows a lot, but many more things he/she doesn't know.
    - Self-portrayal as "content expert" may intimidate learners, stifle discussion, and hamper learners' ability to "think outside of the box."
- 9. Directs learners to useful literature.
  - Encourages outside reading and refers learners to specific bibliography.
  - Cites evidence to support practice decisions.

- 10. Provides up-to-date information.
  - Shares accurate and current information from the field.
- 11. Gives periodic summaries.
  - Reinforces key learning points throughout the session.

### **Implementing Strategies to Promote Learning**

- 1. Uses questions to probe thinking and reasoning.
  - Phrases questions clearly and waits adequate time for learners to organize thoughts and respond.
  - Raises stimulating and challenging questions that provoke learners' reasoning.
  - Questions learners, to elicit underlying reasoning.
  - Uses appropriate balance between closed questions (to probe learners' knowledge about procedures or facts) and open questions (to open additional areas for exploration by learners).
- 2. Gives learners time to organize thoughts and respond.
  - Gives learners time to organize thoughts and respond (tolerates silence), waits 3-5 seconds after asking questions to allow adequate think time.
- 3. Asks for learners' clarification of ideas.
  - Requests learners to restate their ideas to promote understanding and refinement.
- 4. Restates learners' ideas to promote understanding.
  - Paraphrases learner's ideas to reinforce understanding for group and to make sure he/she is clear as to what learner is stating.
- 5. Encourages learners to question and critique.
  - Solicits questions and comments from learners.
- 6. Provides feedback.
  - Provides specific descriptive feedback supported by examples that is based on goals collaboratively set with the learners.
  - Gives learners ideas or help them identify strategies to improve in their knowledge, skills, and/or behavior.

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nstructor:	Observer:	Date:					
Target Audience:	Session Format:						
Session Observed:							
DEED REE		EACHING					
PEER FEEDBACK ON LECTURES & SMALL GROUP TEACHING							
Establishing a Learning Environment	Comments:						
☐ Knows learners and adjusts session accordingly.							
☐ Demonstrates sensitivity to diversity							
☐ Listens to learners.							
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☐ Incorporates learners' ideas.							
☐ Encourages learners to voice uncertainty and							
ask questions.							
☐ Keeps eye contact with learners.							
☐ Shows enthusiasm.							
Managing the Session	Comments:						
☐ Communicates clear goals.							
☐ Structures session according to the goals.							
☐ Starts and ends session on time.							
☐ Summarizes session.							
☐ Solicits learners' feedback.							
☐ Encourages group collaboration if							
appropriate.							
☐ Limits digressions of group discussion.							
Presenting the Material	Comments:						
☐ Varies voice, body language, pace,							
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☐ Refers to appropriate written materials.							
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Overall Rating of Effective Teaching Skills:	☐ Emerging	☐ Evident	☐ Exemplary					

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