

TITLE: Experiential Workshop to Develop University Students' Feedback Skills

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Abstract

Feedback is a powerful force for learning (Hattie & Timperley 2007) and, when it comes to student teamwork, peers are well placed to provide relevant feedback. Further, the ability to constructively use feedback is fundamental to becoming an independent learner (Evans 2013) and managing the emotional aspects of feedback discussion is a key management responsibility (Torres et al. 2018). Being able to generate, share and respond to feedback is therefore an important set of skills for students to develop. Studying and working in increasingly diverse, international, and hybrid modes makes feedback skills even more important.

While we may first think about the analytical aspect of feedback, the potential emotional challenges of actually discussing the feedback may impede the exchange of pertinent information. Students in our institution have indeed told us that concerns about emotional reactions are a major barrier to feedback discussions in their teams, and they have responded positively to our workshop that creates the opportunity to practice skills for emotional management.

In this workshop, participants will both experience a (shortened) version of the student workshop and reflect on the workshop format, which employs our 3-part framework for teaching transversal skills (Isaac et al. 2023). As has been exhaustively documented for transversal skills (Picard et al. 2022), experience with situations requiring transversal skills is insufficient for students to develop the skills without deliberate pedagogical interventions. The experiential workshop involves participants providing (sometime difficult) feedback to teammates, based on their interaction during a problem solving activity with tangibles. Student learning objectives for this workshop relate to the management skill of providing feedback to team members, including both formulating feedback in such a way that it can be 'heard' by others and managing one's emotions when receiving and responding to feedback. Instances facilitated for engineering students in Switzerland found the activity was effective for stimulating discussion among students about the challenges and advantages of giving feedback in their team projects.

The workshop will conclude with a meta level of reflection and discussion about teaching transversal skills in higher education. Participants will receive the activity outline for their own use.