



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

Making the Most of Feedback – Promoting Feedback Literacy in Student Placements

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“Feedback literacy is not just a tool for doing better in university studies but a core capability for the workplace and lifelong learning. In view of its importance and complexity, the development of student feedback literacy needs greater attention and discussion than it has hitherto received”

Carless and Boud 2018



Today we will discuss:

- the concept of feedback literacy in social work practice teaching and learning
- strategies to help students make the most of feedback
- enablers and barriers to student and practice teachers' positive engagement with feedback
- how to deliver feedback in a manner that aligns with evidence-based practice



What is Feedback?

- Feedback is a process
- Feedback supports students to bridge the gap between their learning objective and their performance.
- Feedback helps students understand areas they need to develop in order to meet their learning goals.

(Dawson et al, 2019; Burgess and Mellis, 2015; Quigley, 2021)

- The purpose of feedback is to improve the learner's knowledge, skills and behaviour
(Burgess and Mellis; 2015)
- Feedback is the giving of specific information about the comparison between a trainee's observed performance and a specific standard, provided with the intent to improve the trainee's performance.

(Van de Berg et al, 2006)

Why is Feedback Important on Placement?

Feedback promotes learning in three ways:

- Informs the student of their progress
- Informs the student regarding observed learning and their needs for improvement
- Motivates the student to engage in appropriate learning activities

(Burgess and Mellis, 2015)





This is Emma.

Emma is a social work student and she is currently on placement. Her practice teacher has just observed her meeting a service user. It was a service user that Emma knew well.

After the meeting Emma met with her practice teacher who provided her with some feedback. Emma said she thought the sessions went well.

The practice teacher said:

- Emma had done well. She was well prepared for the meeting.
- Next time she would like Emma to be more empathetic
- Emma was improving each week placement progressed.

Emma is pleased with this feedback. However, when she goes home she thinks about the meeting and the feedback:

- In what way was she not empathetic?
- What does she need to do differently in future?
- How would she know that she was being empathetic next time PT observed?

How do students and practice teachers engage with feedback?

- Students and practice teachers agree that the purpose of feedback is to progress the student's learning
- Practice teachers think effective feedback is guided by issues such as timing, manner of delivery and connected tasks.
- Students believe effective feedback is feedback that includes high quality, detailed comments that were specifically about the student's work.

(Dawson et al, 2019)

Student view of feedback

Students can view feedback as:

- Hierarchal

or

- An active process in which they are also engaged

(Quigley 2021)



When we understand how students respond to feedback it can help us to provide effective feedback that supports the student's ability to engage in the feedback process and use the information to improve their practice



Feedback Literacy

Students are feedback literate when they have the :

- understandings, capacities, and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies

and

- when they can identify the components of feedback and they recognise that feedback can successfully support their self development as a social work professional.

(Carless & Boud,2018)





Providing effective feedback includes:

Finding ways to encourage students to be active participants in the feedback process

AND

Delivering feedback in a manner that aligns with best practice.



Common Errors when sharing feedback

- **Vanishing Feedback:** Trying not to upset the student can lead to a lack of clarity (Burgess and Mellis, 2019)
- **Not being specific:** You need to clearly tell the student what exactly they did that was not best practice and why this practice is something they need to develop
- **Not discussing a plan** of action with the student
- **Not providing future opportunities** to demonstrate progress resulting from feedback



Key Elements of Effective Feedback

Formative, or developmental, feedback will help students see the gap between their skills and the standard required and it will create a plan to help them know how to bridge that gap.



Core elements of effective feedback

adapted from Winstone et al 2017, Careless and Boud 2019, Burgess and Mellus, 2015)

| Student Role | Practice Teacher Role | Shared Roles |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------|
| Value feedback | Assess observed practice | Engagement |
| Actively engage in feedback | Awareness of student response to feedback | Clarification |
| Offer self appraisal | Self regulation | Goal Setting |
| Develop skills based on feedback | Be clear and specific | |
| Seek clarity | Create opportunities for student to demonstrate improved skills | |



A Seven Step Approach in Providing Feedback

Adapted from The Westerveld Framework 2021

1. Open and Respectful Approach
2. Clarify Relevance
3. Timing
4. Part of an Ongoing Dialogue
5. Responsiveness
6. Sense making
7. Action Planning



1. Open & Respectful Approach

Practice Teacher:

- Understands potential differing perceptions and is **open to all responses to feedback.**
- Focuses on **issues and tasks**, not authoritative arguments
- When appropriate, addresses defensive reactions to feedback

Student:

- Is **open to learn from and proactively seeks** positive and negative **feedback**
- Responds respectfully, **avoiding defensiveness**



2. Clarify Relevance

Practice Teacher:

- Gives feedback information based on **performance of an observed task**
- **Relates feedback to** agreed **goals**
- Discusses the feedback until **mutual understanding** is achieved



Student:

- Seeks feedback on performed task from practice teacher
- **Links feedback** to agreed goals
- Discusses the feedback until **mutual understanding** is achieved

3. Timing

Practice Teacher:

- Considers own **readiness and that of the student** [moment of the day, safety of setting, states of mind] if either is not ready, considers postponing.
- **Gives student the opportunity to first learn independently and then give feedback**
- **Time giving of feedback** information so the student has **the opportunity to adapt performance on a future occasion**

Student:

- Considers own readiness and that of the practice teacher [moment of the day, (safety of) setting, states of mind] when either is not ready, considers postponing.
- **Seeks feedback after attempting to learn independently.**
- **Seeks feedback** when there is **still opportunity to adapt their practice**



4. Part of An Ongoing Dialogue

Practice Teacher:

- Offers feedback information as part of a conversation: **asks questions, listens actively, answers questions, offers room to respond, discusses desired alternatives, verifies understanding**
- Uses **clear and unambiguous language**



Student:

- **Participates actively in a dialogue: listens actively, asks clarifying questions** when necessary, answers questions, explores desired alternatives, confirms understanding
- Uses **clear and unambiguous language**

5. Responsiveness

Practice Teacher:

- **Considers and clarifies the student's needs**, feelings of competence /readiness to take next steps, motivation, contextual factors (consider their recent practice experiences, learning style, personal circumstances as relevant), shows understanding of **current emotions (verbal or non-verbal)**
- **Addresses how previous feedback information has been used and what can be built on in this new situation**

Student:

- **When appropriate and relevant, shares needs, feelings of competence/ readiness to take next steps, motivation, contextual factors (recent experiences, personality factors, personal circumstances) and current emotions**
- **Feeds back on previous and current feedback information in terms of content, use, and emotional response**



6. Sense making

Practice Teacher:

- **Prioritises the most important**, mutually understood **information**
- **Summarises** message
- **Invites the student to come back for further clarification if needed**



Student:

- **Interprets and prioritises received feedback information by comparing to: CORU domains and personal learning goals; Previously received feedback information from practice teacher and or others; Personal view on performance; Perception of own strengths and weaknesses.**
- Based on interpretation, **evaluates feedback information**
- **Seeks additional clarification** when feedback doesn't make sense.

7. Action Planning

Practice Teacher:

- Gives **forward looking feedback** information: **suggests improvement strategies and clarifies desired changes**
- **Encourages** student to **make an action plan**
- Suggests **useful resources** to support relevant actions
- Arranges follow up discussion and review

Student:

- **Revisits learning goals based on feedback information** (and suggested improvement strategies)
- **Creates action plan to achieve refined learning goals and desired changes**
- **Implements action plan**



Helping Students Make the Most of Feedback

- Understand feedback in context of teaching & learning.....
- Time feedback appropriately....
- Make the conversation a two-way street, engage in dialogue ...
- Relate feedback to learning goals and other mutually understood criteria e.g agency protocols, evidence-based practice...
- Seek student’s perspective.....
- Be conscious of your and your student’s feelings and try not to respond defensively....
- Think in terms of performance of tasks, not personality....
- Suggest supports and resources....
- Ensure clarity on what needs to change and plan for how the student will integrate feedback received
- Keep the conversation going.....review implementation of changes & follow up



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Thank You