

Explanation

Especially when students start their studies, they need feedback from their teachers. This exercise has been developed to help students actually understand this feedback and incorporate it into their assignments.

Using a shortened and adapted version of a conversation tool developed under CC License, students will practice analyzing and processing received feedback. The exercise examines the emotions feedback evokes, after which students must categorize the feedback received into strengths, areas for improvement, new information, and surprises, and then formulate action points based on these findings.

The starting point is the feedback they received from their teacher – based on the assessment criteria for the submitted assignment. Because the tool alternates between individual assignments and consultation sessions with fellow students, it ensures that all students engage with the feedback.

NB. The original conversation tool and materials are freely available under a CC license at:

<https://lerenvantoetsen.nl/hoe-stimuleer-je-een-feedback-dialogoog-eerste-ervaringen-met-een-gesprekstool/>.

Preparation

This exercise can be done either plenary in class or in small groups, or individually as a self-study assignment.

In class:

Students will need the following materials during class:

- digital version of the assignment with the teacher's feedback
- form 'feedback dialogue' in class
- process map (printed per group of on the board)

Individual:

Students will need the following materials:

- digital version of the assignment with the teacher's feedback
- form 'feedback dialogue' - individual

Important:

- Allow sufficient time to complete the exercise and for discussions about the action plan for each group.
- By starting the exercise immediately after students receive the feedback (rather than waiting a day), you ensure they're immediately engaged in processing it. If this isn't possible, choose a time as close as possible to the time the feedback is released.

Preparation (continued)

- This exercise can be done in a group setting, with the teacher acting as the timekeeper, or in small groups of 4-5 students. In the latter case, the group designates a process keeper. The process map serves as a roadmap through the exercise.

The importance of the process keeper in each group should not be underestimated; they ensure that every step is taken, that nothing is skipped, that the group adheres to the time, and that there is no confusion about what steps are taken individually and what steps as a group.

During class

The instructor begins the session by briefly explaining the exercise. In this exercise, students will review the individual feedback provided by their teacher on their assignment. The goal is for students to analyze this feedback and formulate action points, allowing them to process it and actually improve their assignments. It's important to also allow for the emotions and feelings that feedback may initially evoke.

Step 1: Emotions after feedback (3 min)

Briefly explain to students that feedback often evokes certain emotions. It can create a sense of pride when positive, but it can also lead to dissatisfaction, a sense of injustice, irritation, and anger. Both emotions can make it difficult to consider the content of the feedback.

For example, if the student is proud, the feedback may be read only to a limited extent, and any areas for improvement may be dismissed or considered less important. Positive feedback can also be helpful for future assignments. On the other hand, feedback can sometimes be perceived as unjustified and evoke negative feelings. This can lead to students being limited in their receptiveness to the feedback, quickly labeling it as "not true," overlooking positive feedback, and therefore finding it difficult to improve the assignment.

It's therefore important to first create space for emotions, briefly reflect on them, and give students the opportunity to talk or write these emotions down before examining the feedback in depth. Have students express their emotions after reading the feedback. Also, have them explain their thoughts on the feedback and why.

During class (continued)

Step 2: Discussing emotions (3 min.)

After students have identified their emotions, it's helpful to give them the opportunity to express them. Have them briefly discuss the emotion with their classmate by identifying it, explaining why, and briefly comparing it to their classmate's feelings.

Step 3: Analyze feedback (10 min.)

Now, emphasize to students that it's important to put their emotions aside for a moment, even though they might be very intense. Hopefully, the first two steps have helped with that.

Next, it's important that they consider the feedback purely on its merits, hopefully without feeling too emotional about it. They'll analyze this feedback and enter it in the table.

The first column of the table provides space for students to list the feedback for each section of the rubric, or perhaps just the section itself. Students then analyze the feedback and identify any strengths, new information, areas for improvement, or surprises. They fill in this information for all the feedback they received in the table. An additional column labeled "Other" can be added if students wish.

It is important here that all feedback is placed in the table (both from the rubric and possibly in the margins of the document).

Step 4: Discuss feedback (3 min.)

Give students the opportunity to briefly discuss their feedback and analysis with a fellow student. Have them discuss questions like:

- Do they have the same feedback?
- Are there things they don't fully understand yet and can they help each other with that?
- Does the fellow student have a strong point that could be an area for improvement and/or a surprise to the other student?
- Do the students have any tips for each other based on the feedback?

Step 5: Action plan (5 min.)

This last step is crucial within the feedback assignment. Students must explicitly explain their feedback and translate it into action points.

Students should therefore consider which feedback they received is most important to them and consider how they will use it. It's important to emphasize that positive feedback can also be valuable, as it means they'll likely continue to use it next time.