

GATO Session B: Feedback and Coaching for Better Learning Resource Guide

Introduction

This session was designed to help GTA's gain an appreciation and initial tips for planning and providing effective assessments, feedback, and coaching to students. This resource guide includes Instructional Objectives, Session Topics, Suggested Activities that you may choose to utilize in your session, and a list of References that provided source material. Throughout this document, information for you is italicized, while information geared towards TA's is not. The information in the Session Topics section includes the kind of material you may wish to discuss. We feel it is more important, however, to meet the instructional objectives drawing upon your teaching expertise rather than cover a list of material. Key points and suggested activities are embedded in the PowerPoint slides which you will receive and can modify to suit your particular style.

Instructional Objectives

- *Be able to define feedback and coaching, and the role of these in student learning*
- *Be able to create a rubric and coaching guidelines to grade and provide appropriate feedback on an assignment*
- *Be able to discuss the difference between assessment and evaluation, and give an example of each*
- *Be able to ask basic questions and receive guidance and resources regarding assessment and feedback concerns*

Session Topics

Your authentic enthusiasm for teaching and your genuine caring about students are significant factors in your success!

Assessment, feedback, and coaching involve routine tasks related to such things as in-class questions, assignments, grading protocols, and office hours. Fundamentally, students want clarity about your expectations. A lack of clarity invites problems. Students want fairness. They want rational explanations. Being EXPLICIT with students when providing rationales for asking them to do something prevents resistance. Be consistent. If you describe consequences, you must carry them out. Get student buy-in. Involve students in discussions about assessments and feedback. Whether in office hours, discussion sections, labs, or as the instructor of record, engage the students in discussions or activities that provide you insight into what they have learned, what may still be confusing to them and how well they will be able to apply the information on a test, in a project and ultimately, in a life situation.

Assessment vs. Evaluation

Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning. (Huba & Freed, 2000, p. 8)

GATO Session B: Feedback and Coaching for Better Learning Resource Guide

As the quotation above suggests, the main purpose of assessment is to provide feedback in order to continually improve teaching and learning. Whereas, the purpose of evaluation is to make a judgment about student learning, typically by assigning grades. Perceived fairness in grading and clear, concise guidelines regarding expectations will assist in classroom management since students are concerned with grades in the course. Grading policies should be in the syllabus and discussed during the first day of class.

Three Key Ideas

1. Adult attention span

This refers to how long an average adult can stay attentive in a class/lecture type format. Plan to have some type of activity where they must process the information you have just presented about every 10 minutes. It can be as simple as asking them to explain the concept you just presented to the person sitting next to them. Then going around the room asking them what they discussed. This is a type of informal assessment and can be a powerful memory tool. This process need take on a minute or two of class time.

2. Wait time

This is a concept that refers to the amount of time a teacher should wait after asking a question. Often one thinks they wait a long time however most wait about 2-3 seconds. That is not long enough for a student to think about what you've been saying and formulate a question or answer. Plan on waiting at least 10 seconds this communicates that you truly WANT them to ask or answer questions and you are prepared to wait for them. I taught myself this skill by asking a question and then silently counting 1-1000, 2-1000, 3-1000 etc up to 10-1000.

3. Critical Reflection

This is an end of class strategy that can provide you with informal feedback about what they believe they learned, what they are remembering as class ends and what they may still be confused about. This technique also begins the first important step in memory processing, that is, to review as soon as possible the important points of a class. Index cards are a perfect way to get brief, concise feedback.

Strategies for Effective Assessment and Feedback

What Do Students Need To Be Able To Do?

- ✓ Asking yourself “what do students need to be able to do” with this material or at the end of this class is the first step in designing effective assessments.
- ✓ A common tool to assist you is Bloom's Taxonomy. This is a time-tested classification of levels of learning developed in 1956 by Dr. Benjamin Bloom and a group of educational psychologists. Within the cognitive domain, he identified six levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. These describe what learners are able to do with increasing complexity of learning. (*A more detailed description*

GATO Session B: Feedback and Coaching for Better Learning Resource Guide

of each level of Bloom's Taxonomy is included in the Passport booklet that each TA will receive at the start of GATO.)

- ✓ Only “covering content” through such traditional instructional methods as lecturing, rarely promote learner progress through the higher levels of learning.
- ✓ Since the purpose of an assessment is to provide students with feedback about their learning, they should be used throughout the learning process. Assessments can be as simple as asking students what they learned during class or as complex as a thesis or dissertation. They can also be used as evaluation tools to assign grades. An excellent resource for a variety of assessments is Angelo & Cross' *Classroom Assessment Techniques*.
- ✓ Students learn in a variety of ways, provide options for out-of-class assignments to allow for [learning style differences/preferences](#).

Grading Rubrics

- ✓ For graded work, the use of [Rubrics](#) is highly recommended to provide students with guidance and direction in completing assignments. An assessment rubric is a clear, concise set of standards used to systematically judge the quality of performance and often to assign grades. Often they are designed in the form of a table, where standards (or criteria) are listed in rows and achievement levels are listed in columns.
- ✓ Rubrics tell students what is expected of them so they are able to perform to the standard that they choose.
- ✓ Students should be given the rubric in advance of an assignment, exam, or other assessment.
- ✓ Questions to ask yourself when designing a rubric include (based on Huba & Freed):
 - What criteria must be present in the student's work to ensure that its quality is high? (and what criteria describe work that is poor in quality?)
 - What rating scheme will you use and how many achievement levels (e.g. Excellent, Fair, Poor; A,B,C,D,E)?
 - For each criterion, what is a clear description of performance at each achievement level?

Constructive Feedback and Coaching

- ✓ When giving students feedback, it is helpful to think of this process using the metaphor of coaching. Your aim is to help students improve their performance, not scold or punish.
- ✓ Discussing, debating, and providing clear, consistent consequences are more effective than nagging, lecturing, and threatening.
- ✓ Whether your feedback is provided in writing or in dialogue with the student, the following guidelines can help you with your coaching:
 1. Give feedback in a timely manner.
 2. Share information and explore alternatives. Don't give advice.
 3. Take into account the needs of the learner.
 4. Share the amount of information the student can use. Avoid the temptation to share all the information you wish to send.
 5. Focus on behaviors, not the person.
 6. Focus on behaviors or characteristics you observe rather than those you infer.
 7. Focus on specifics rather than on generalities.

GATO Session B: Feedback and Coaching for Better Learning Resource Guide

8. Focus on behavior over which the student has control.
9. Write or ask questions that help students understand themselves as learners.
10. In dialogue, be sure that you and the student have really understood each other. Paraphrase each others' ideas.

(From Huba & Freed, p. 194)

- ✓ Pre-set office hours are reserved for students. If you are unable to be present, let them know well in advance. Using D2L, a class blog or listserv is an excellent mechanism for sending reminders and updates. (The Learning Technology Center is available to assist you with educational technology: <http://www.ltc.arizona.edu>)

University-wide Policies Regarding Academic Integrity and Code of Conduct

Every student and employee of the University agrees to a legal set of policies and procedures when they accept admission and/or employment with the university. It is the responsibility of the student and the employee to read and remain up-to-date with these University rules. For all students the Dean of Students Office (DOS) is the governing body. The following two websites represent the main areas of instructional concern regarding issues of academic integrity and student behavior and code of conduct. You will be required to go to these websites, read them and answer questions regarding them as part of your online training.

<http://dos.web.arizona.edu/uapolicies/cai1.html>

<http://dos.web.arizona.edu/uapolicies/scc5308abcd.html>

You will want to include these websites in your syllabus. Along with a brief statement regarding Academic Integrity and the Student Code of Conduct, check with your department to see if there are prepared cut and paste statements and if there are additional specific departmental guidelines/policies/procedures.

Students with Disabilities

- ✓ The Disability Resource Center is a service unit on campus for students who are identified with disabilities that may influence their learning. Their website <http://drc.arizona.edu> provides assistance to you in knowing how you navigate the accommodations identified for a DRC student.
- ✓ Most often, accommodations are related to course assessments (e.g. additional time for taking quizzes and exams).
- ✓ Recommended Syllabus Statement (You can cut and paste this from their website. Click on the link for "[Teach](#)")

The Undergraduate Course Syllabus Policy requires that all syllabi must contain a statement about the availability of reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. The University has accepted standard language for inclusion on all course syllabi:

Students with Disabilities:

If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with me. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you determine that formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, it is very important that you be

GATO Session B: Feedback and Coaching for Better Learning Resource Guide

registered with Disability Resources (621-3268; drc.arizona.edu) and notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. We can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations.

Please note that while Disability Resources is responsible for documenting student disabilities and determining appropriate reasonable accommodations (thus necessitating students' registration with the office), instructors are welcome to coordinate the delivery of those accommodations independently in their own classrooms or departments, as long as the resulting accommodations are effective. Disability Resource staff is available to consult.

Keeping the Fires Burning

“Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I understand.” - Chinese proverb

“I forget what I was taught. I only remember what I have learned.” - Patrick White

Three Tips to Keep the Fires Burning:

1) *“In the course of teaching, college faculty assume a great deal about their students' learning, but most of their assumptions remain untested” (Angelo & Cross, 1993, p. 7).*

This is where assessment comes in.

2) *“What works well in one class will not necessarily work in another” (Angelo & Cross, 1993, p. 5).*

Assessment can help tell you what is working and what needs to be adjusted in your teaching.

3) *“The chief finding from the Harvard Assessment Seminar about the most effective courses at Harvard, as judged by students and alums, was the importance of quick and detailed feedback” (Wiggins, 1997, p. 35).*

Suggested Activities

Activity 1: Coming to Grips with Assessment and Evaluation

For TA's: (On the board or PowerPoint slide)

“Working in pairs, you will have 3 minutes to design and build a paper airplane.”

(This could be the basis for a discussion on grading rubrics and feedback. Paper and rubric handouts will be included with your facilitator materials.)

Activity 2: Experiencing Feedback and Coaching

For TA's: (On the board or PowerPoint slide)

“Working in pairs or small groups, brainstorm answers to the following questions and list them on your T-chart:

GATO Session B: Feedback and Coaching for Better Learning Resource Guide

1. In your experience, what type of feedback is most effective (+)?
2. In your experience, what type of feedback is least effective (-)?"

(This could be the basis for a discussion about feedback and coaching.)

GATO Session B: Feedback and Coaching for Better Learning Resource Guide

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