



A-Z University Teaching & Learning

Feedback

Types of feedback

We constantly provide feedback – feedback is part of communicating. One of Watzlawick et al.'s axioms of communication is that we cannot not communicate. Likewise, even the lack of a response can be interpreted as feedback. The following examples show the wide range of feedback:

- Conscious: I agree, I nod.
- Unconscious: I fall asleep during the conversation.
- Spontaneous: "Wonderful, thank you so much!"
- Verbal, in words: "No, that's not it."
- Non-verbal, without words: I leave the room in a hurry.
- Formal: I fill out an evaluation form.
- Informal: I applaud happily.

When distinguishing between different types of feedback, some are suitable, for example, when commenting after sitting in on a colleague's lecture or after a student presentation. In this function, you give feedback as a colleague or as a lecturer (Giving feedback). But you are also always receiving different types of student feedback or even incorporating these consciously into your teaching (Receiving feedback).

Giving feedback

1. Feedback is descriptive

Describing is different from evaluating, interpreting, or looking for reasons. First try to describe what you have observed and only draw conclusions afterwards. Starting right away with an assessment can make your interlocutor feel defensive. It is helpful to identify factual and emotional information and to express one's impressions by using I-statements.

Instead of "That was boring." -- "I felt that the students were restless. What might have been the cause of this?"

2. Feedback is appropriate

It can be demotivating if you do not sufficiently consider the other person's situation. If possible you should take into account your own frame of mind as well as the one of the feedback receiver.

Instead of "What were you thinking?" -- "How would you assess the situation from your point of view? I have some ideas that have helped me in a similar situation."

3. Feedback is constructive

The basic attitude of the feedback giver is one of respect. Feedback is based on a person's development potential and also identifies weaknesses, when appropriate. Positive aspects are expressed, too.

4. Feedback is timely

Feedback is more effective when the time between the respective behavior and the information for affecting this behavior is short. Moreover, refer to a specific observation in order to have a clear starting point.

Instead of letting several days go by, give feedback as soon as possible.

5. Feedback is worded clearly and precisely

The better you phrase your feedback, the better it can be understood by the recipient. He/She can compare his/her own response to the feedback giver's view. Unclear positive feedback can even have a demotivating effect.

Instead of "That was all good." - "I liked how you activated the students by asking questions."

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Instead of "That was all bad." - "Due to the noise level at the end of the session I had the impression that the students were not so motivated anymore."

Further checklist for creating a feedback form for student presentations:

Giving feedback on student presentations

MerkblattFeedback_Referat.pdf (richtige Links einfügen zu englischer LINKs – abklären mit Katharina)
<http://www.hochschuldidaktik.uzh.ch/hochschuldidaktikaz.html#F>

Receiving feedback

When you receive feedback, too, it may be helpful to keep the following points in mind:

1. Basic attitude: Feedback is an opportunity.
2. Listen actively.
3. Explain behaviour if necessary, do not make excuses.

There are a large number of ways to get student feedback and include it in your teaching. This can range from Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) to informal feedback during the seminar to a formal course evaluation.

Further information:

Reflecting on one's teaching

<http://www.hochschuldidaktik.uzh.ch/begleitung/dozierende/lehrevaluation/die-eigene-lehre-reflektieren-und-evaluieren.html> richtige Links einfügen zu englischer LINKs – abklären mit Katharina)

Literature (in German)

Fengler, J. (2009). Feedback geben. Strategien und Übungen. Weinheim: Beltz, 4. Aufl.
Watzlawick, P.; Beavin, J. H.; Jackson, D. D. (1996). Menschliche Kommunikation. Formen, Störungen, Paradoxien. Bern: Verlag Hand Huber, 9. Aufl.