Occupational Therapy
Practice Education Collaborative
O T P E C - Q Queensland

FACT SHEET – Characteristics of Constructive Feedback

Characteristics of Constructive Feedback

- ***Individualised and relevant,*** demonstrating empathy and attention to the particular learning style and needs of the student, rather than comparing or generalising to other students; feedback is linked to the particular learning goals of the student.

- ***Goal-directed,*** providing assistance and increased understanding of what is expected or required, with a focus on the needs of the clients and relationship to the learning goals of the student.

- ***Well timed and expected***, given as soon as is appropriate during or after the action/behaviour (with consideration to client safety, privacy, time available for discussion and the student's readiness to hear it) to prevent further problems or embarrassment arising. Avoid waiting until halfway assessment or supervision session to provide the feedback if client-student or staff-student relationships are at risk of being negatively affected.

- ***Behaviour- focused,*** rather than personality focused. Feedback that refers to what the student does, allows scope for change. We might comment "you appeared to lose focus and direction when interviewing Mr J", rather than commenting "you are too vague during client interviews".

- ***Positive and encouraging***, balancing comment on strengths you have observed and what the student did well with areas of weakness or that require further growth; encouraging improvement with practical and specific suggestions.

- ***Collaborative,*** inviting student involvement and agreement in identifying strengths and weaknesses, in seeking solutions, reaching conclusions and formulating plans for future action; facilitating self-evaluation.

- ***Change focused (non-evaluative)***, exploring specific strategies to maintain strengths and improve weaknesses and facilitating a problem-solving approach that highlights the consequences both positive and negative of particular behaviours or actions.

- ***Factual (not generalised),*** providing evidence-based examples based on observed performance that highlight actual strengths and weaknesses of modifiable behaviours you have observed; providing specific suggestions of improvements to what they are doing, or occasions where positive behaviour was demonstrated, and discussing outcomes of each behaviour.

- ***Digestible,*** focussing on one selected area at a time or providing the student with choice about the focus of feedback first. Overloading a person with too much feedback all at once reduces the possibility that the feedback will be accommodated and used.

- ***Respectful,*** demonstrating mindfulness of acceptable boundaries, respecting confidentiality and using language that is non-judgemental, and provided in a relaxed mutually agreed upon setting.

- ***Reciprocal,*** inviting feedback from the student about aids and barriers to learning as experienced on placement and about your feedback and teaching methods.

- *Verifies perceptions,* checking that the student has understood the intention and meaning of the feedback. Ask the student to re-phrase the feedback received and what they found most useful. Ask if they have any concerns about the feedback.

- *Documented,* noting ongoing and specific observations and key suggestions for improvement.

- *Followed up on at a later date*, reflecting on changes and developments that you/the student have noticed as a result of the feedback; monitoring what the student actually *does* with the feedback you provide. You may like to set a date to review a particular aspect of performance relating to feedback given.

(Clinical Placement Advisory Committee [CPAC], 1997; Crago & Pickering, 1987; Ende, 1983; Ovando, 1994)

Reference List:

Clinical Placement Advisory Committee (1997) *Clinical supervisor's survival kit. A resource handbook for Occupational Therapists supervising students on placement*. University of Queensland, Division of Occupational Therapy. Australia.

Crago, M.B. & Pickering, M. (Eds) (1987) *Supervision in human communication disorders: perspectives on a process.* Boston: College Hill

Ende, J. (1983). Feedback in clinical medical education. [Electronic version] *The Journal Of The American Medical Association*, 250(6):777-781.

Ovando, M.N (1994) Constructive feedback. A key to successful teaching and learning. Conceptual Paper. [Electronic version] *International Journal of Educational Management*.1994. 8(6): 19-22.

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