Faculty Advisors

Effective Mentoring Skills for Advisors:
Asking Questions and Giving Feedback

WAKE FOREST
UNIVERSITY

- Learn how to ask thoughtful and thought-provoking questions
- Learn how to give effective, objective feedback and guidance

A purposeful and personal relationship in which a more experienced person (mentor) provides guidance, feedback, and wisdom to facilitate the growth and development of a less experienced person (mentee).

Or, to put it another way:

A developmental relationship based on INTENTIONAL conversations
Ask open-ended questions

Who
What
Where
When
Why
How

Bloom:
- Level 1: Knowledge – asks students to recall information
- Level 2: Comprehension – asks students to put information in another form
- Level 3: Application – asks students to apply known facts, principles, or generalizations to solve a problem
- Level 4: Analysis – asks students to identify and comprehend elements of a process, communication, or series of events
- Level 5: Synthesis – requires students to engage in original creative thinking
- Level 6: Evaluation – asks students to determine how closely a concept or idea is consistent with standards or values
Why is feedback important?

- It prevents small issues from festering into unmanageable problems
- It builds trust in relationships
- It promotes personal and professional growth
- It clears up misunderstandings
- It is a way to acknowledge and recognize skills, contributions, and accomplishments

Communication Styles

- Acting – direct and task-oriented
- Feeling – enthusiastic and relationship-oriented
- Meaning – supportive, big picture-oriented; avoids change and confrontation
- Thinking – accurate and detail-oriented

- Can I identify and accurately describe the behavior or performance I want to redirect or reinforce and its effects on others?
- Do I have detailed examples of the act and its effects that I can use to support my descriptions?
- Do I have positive intent?
- Can I identify and describe the results that I hope my reinforcement or redirection will produce?
- Does the person receiving the feedback understand my expectations for his or her performance?
- Is the person receiving the feedback truly responsible for the act in question?
- Is the other person open to receiving feedback from me?
- Have I put off giving this feedback for a long time?
- Have I given myself enough time to prepare the feedback?
1. Be intentional

2. Ask open-ended questions

3. Ask questions at different cognitive levels to help students develop critical thinking and communication skills

4. Be aware of differences in communication styles

5. Plan your feedback

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### 4 Major Communication Styles/Preferences

**Acting** – direct and task oriented  
**Feeling** – enthusiastic and relationship oriented  
**Meaning** – supportive and avoids change and confrontation  
**Thinking** – accurate and detail oriented

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Prefers to Give/Receive Feedback</th>
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| Acting  | Quickly  
Directly  
To the point  
Focusing on the “WHATs” |
| Feeling | Conversationally  
Allowing time for anecdotal support  
Sensitively  
Allowing time for much verbalizing  
Focusing on the “WHATs” and “WHOss” |
| Meaning | Patient, allowing time to respond  
Non-threateningly  
Clearly  
Supportively  
Focusing on “WHATs” and “HOWs” |
| Thinking| Objectively  
Thoroughly  
Accurately  
Without surprises  
Focusing on “WHATs” and “WHYs” |

**Acting:** like to make personal decisions, enjoy having power and do not like being told what do or not to do. You will enjoy greater success by providing alternatives and choices rather than insisting on a specific conclusion. In addition, try to provide facts and data about the probability for the success or effectiveness of the various options.

**Feeling:** really don’t want options and probabilities. Seek a clear, specific solution with maximum guarantees and assurances that this is the right decision with no need to look at the other options.

**Meaning:** the opinions of other people considered important, prominent or successful will mean more in the decision-making process than all of the facts and logic you might introduce. Whenever possible, provide testimony from prominent persons and organizations that support the opinions you want to use.

**Thinking:** make decisions based on facts and tend to avoid risks. You must provide evidence that what you say is so. This evidence should be solid, tangible, practical and realistic – not someone’s opinion. Require assurance that any decision made today will remain reasonably valid in the future.
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<tr>
<th>What to do</th>
<th>How to do it</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Align your feedback with the student’s agenda</td>
<td>Provide real-time feedback. Make it usable and realistic. Offer concrete practical steps and options.</td>
<td>“I have a few ideas that might help…”</td>
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<td>“What works for me is…”</td>
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<td>Provide feedback about behavior that the student can do something about.</td>
<td>Stay with the student’s behavior rather than succumb to the temptation to evaluate it.</td>
<td>“Tell me about the impact of the behavior…”</td>
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<td>“How might someone else see that behavior?”</td>
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<td>When you talk from your perspective, remember that your reality is not the student’s reality.</td>
<td>When you talk about your own experience, set a context and be descriptive so that the student can see the parallels.</td>
<td>“In my experience, which was..., I found that... I know that is not your situation, but maybe there is something to learn here.”</td>
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<td>Check out your understanding of what is being said.</td>
<td>Listen actively. Clarify and summarize.</td>
<td>“If I understand what you are saying…”</td>
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<td>“Help me understand what you mean by…”</td>
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<td>Use a tone of respect.</td>
<td>Take care not to undermine the student’s self-esteem.</td>
<td>“I liked the way you…”</td>
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<td>“I am curious…”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“I wonder…”</td>
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<td>“Have you ever considered…”</td>
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<td>Be aware of your communication style and how that works with that of your student.</td>
<td>Share information about communication styles with your student, and discuss the implications for feedback.</td>
<td>“I find that I get defensive when…”</td>
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<td>“I react positively to…”</td>
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<td>Avoid giving feedback when you lack adequate information.</td>
<td>Ask for time to get the information you need. Faking it doesn’t work.</td>
<td>“To be honest with you, I need to think about that a little more.”</td>
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<td>Encourage the student to experience feedback as movement forward rather than interruption from the journey.</td>
<td>Continuously link progress and learning to the big picture and the journey.</td>
<td>“When we started out... And then... And now...”</td>
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