

Tips on giving structured feedback

The purpose of providing feedback is to help the trainee understand aspects of their performance in order to reflect on, and where necessary, improve their learning and practice.

Virtually every interaction between trainer and trainee relating to the trainee's performance involves giving feedback. Feedback works best when it is constructive and given in a structured way. The benefit for the trainee is that it provides a positive learning experience. For the assessor, the process is rendered more efficient, both in time and outcomes.

If the trainee is to learn from feedback, the comments should be captured as a written account in the trainee's portfolio so that they can be referred to repeatedly as well as providing evidence of progression.

The points below may be helpful when providing feedback on workplace-based assessments:

- Feedback should be given when the occasion demands, not just at pre-determined points.
- Feedback is likely to be more positive when the trainee and trainer agree beforehand about what is to be assessed and at what standard.
- Assessors should allow the trainee to put forward his/her own thoughts about what has happened or what they have just done with minimal prompting. This enables the assessor to consider the trainee's insight and ability to articulate reflection. Assessors should use open prompts e.g. *How do you feel that went?...Why?...* and so on. Assessors can then make any additional comments, giving examples where possible.
- The trainee and assessor should agree an action plan at the conclusion of the discussion, identifying actions for meeting learning needs. A defined set of actions may for example, include observing a trainer; exploring the literature; practising in a simulated setting, or repeating the session.
- If the assessment requires repetition, then the action plan should include a timeframe.
- The trainee/assessor should record the feedback and action plan in the portfolio.

Workplace-based assessments are assessments *for* learning and feedback is central to this process. Trainees who embrace the concept of learning through assessment are more likely to be those who have received detailed, frequent and considerate feedback from their assessors.