AAMC GSA PDI:

Feedback and Recognition Guide

GSA

Professional Development Initiative

Background

The intent of this document is to provide an overview of the GSA performance framework as part of the GSA Professional Development Initiative. For further information on the Initiative and available support, go to www.aamc.org/gsapdi and/or send a message to GSApro-develop@aamc.org. Contact the Initiative sponsor for more immediate needs – Geoffrey Young, AAMC Senior Director, GSA Student Affairs and Programs, gyoung@aamc.org.

Acknowledgments

This is a publication of the Association of American Medical Colleges. The AAMC serves and leads the academic medicine community to improve the health of all. www.aamc.org.

For more information about this publication, please email GSApro-develop@aamc.org.
Association of American Medical Colleges
655 K Street, NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20001

This guide provides key information, guidelines, and tips to help you, a GSA professional to, proactively **reflect and respond** to your own performance, as well as to those you supervise or mentor. It can serve as a valuable resource to help you support effective feedback practices and performance recognition.
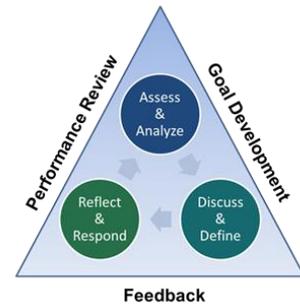
Feedback Basics

Feedback is a critical factor in confirming progress toward achieving professional development goals, and determining whether you are meeting appropriate performance expectations. Whether we realize it or not, we continually send and receive feedback verbally and non-verbally, directly and indirectly.

Feedback is used to for two general purposes:

- **To motivate or encourage** – Information is shared to reinforce progress in thinking and behavior. Positive feedback affirms effort, and builds and sustains momentum and enthusiasm.

- **To develop or redirect** – Information is shared to clarify expectations, and adjust thinking and/or behavior. Constructive feedback facilitates development, acknowledges intention and effort, and realigns expectations for more favorable results.

Feedback is best when it is timely, relevant, and provides information to the recipient in a safe and thoughtful way. It should be specific and collaborative, allowing the recipient to share his or her point of view. The following basic feedback Do's and Don'ts will get you off to a good start.

Feedback Do's
• Make comments specific to observed behavior and impact
• Compare performance to clear expectations, focusing on observed facts and feelings
• Focus on the problem and resolution and avoid blaming
• Aim to provide a balance of positive and constructive insights on performance
• Deliver feedback while the details are fresh and there is opportunity to make improvements and celebrate
• Listen empathically with a focus on understanding and learning from the discussion, by asking questions with care and confirming what you heard
• Show support verbally and non-verbally during the discussion, by choosing your words carefully and appropriately, and being aware of your body language
• Set ongoing and two-way feedback as an expectation and opportunity for everyone to learn and grow, and to be recognized

Feedback Don'ts
• Avoid giving feedback…just look the other way or assume everything is fine
• Compare performance and observations to someone else. "You should do it like Howard."
• Draw conclusions prematurely and/or without having the facts. "I know we didn't discuss this but I already concluded…"
• Use indirect information. "I heard through Jim…"
• Label people. "You're a nervous type, aren't you?"
• Make accusations. "You didn't get the assignment because of the work you did three months ago…didn't I tell you?"
• Make unfounded statements. "It didn't feel right to give you the job yet."
• Be vague. "I just don't like the work you do." "Good job."
• Omit suggestions for improvement. "You just need to do the work better."
• Make it about you. "I remember when I was in the exact situation…"
• Only give feedback, don't ask for it

Feedback Techniques:

Listening and thinking before you provide and respond to feedback is a proven strategy for more effective feedback interactions and better results. Applying one of the techniques described below will help ensure that you are incorporating the feedback Do's and leaving out the Don'ts, and experiencing more collaborative conversations.

Three Plusses and a Wish

The supervisor begins the feedback session by asking the professional to state three positive behaviors or qualities they already demonstrate. After the professional identifies "three plusses" they state one behavior or quality they would like to develop. For example, "Three ways in which I believe I add value are… If I could have one wish to increase my capabilities and contributions I would most like to…"

By using this approach, the supervisor encourages the professional to acknowledge their strengths and positive contributions, and focus on specific ways to further develop, thereby balancing the discussion.

Note: It is fine to only have two plusses and maybe even more than one wish. The goal is to use a structure that focuses conversation, balances feedback, and enables a shared understanding and open dialog.

Situation-Behavior-Impact-(R)

The SBI(R) model is designed to encourage objective and developmental feedback, and to discourage subjective assumptions and interpretations. It also helps people recognize how behaviors affect others and the workplace in general.

Situation – Describe the circumstances in which the professional was performing to provide context for the behavior.

Behavior – Describe the professional's performance using action verbs. Be specific and focus on observable behaviors.

Impact – Describe the impact the behaviors have on others and the situation (e.g., colleagues, timelines, and budget). This helps the professional see the consequences of their behavior.

Recommendation – Provide a recommendation for more effective behaviors, as well as their potential impact on the situation. Because it's not always appropriate to include a recommendation the model includes the R in parenthesis.

The examples below illustrate the value of this tool.

Poor Examples	Good Examples
I was totally irritated when you didn't get me that report on time.	When I asked you for the status of the report on its due date, you said you needed two more days. Communicating this to me so late caused our team to incur additional costs in overtime and the need to follow up with a student who was not happy with our news. In the future, I need you to better anticipate potential roadblocks and proactively let me know if you expect delays.
As the project manager, it was assumed you were on top of the budget.	When you reported the project deliverables you made no mention of the budget overage, only later in an email did I hear of it. The budget overage on your project now limits the remaining budget for us to achieve another priority for the quarter. We have to now follow up and let others know that we cannot come through on our promise until next quarter.
I just love the way you proactively took appropriate action to resolve the student's issue.	Historically, managers have been most adept to handle this type of situation. You did a comprehensive assessment of the situation, student needs and priorities and then quickly provided a very creative and appropriate response to the student. Serving out students is our priority. You have positively impacted the student and our reputation. You also gave us further evidence of your professionalism and competence. Job well done.

Performance Recognition

Ongoing observation, reflection, and feedback discussions provide a broader perspective of performance, and progress made on goals. As trends in performance occur, and there is evidence of goal progression or achievement, it's important to respond by connecting the action and its impact. Whether you are a supervisor, colleague, or professional, it's important to recognize and reinforce successes.

When seeking and/or preparing to provide recognition, keep in mind the following guidelines:

- **Acknowledge for a purpose**. Provide recognition to highlight meaningful performance, progression, and impact. Doing it or requesting it just for the sake of doing it, or without a clear rationale, diminishes its value.

- **Consider the recipient**. Recognize in a way that is most appropriate for the recipient. It's important to keep in mind the recipient's specific interests and preferences. Meaningful recognition does not need to be extravagant to show appreciation.

- **Customize the recognition to match the achievement**. Be mindful of how to differentiate various levels of achievement, contributions and their impact. Recognizing all achievements in the same way may not communicate the right message.

- **Recognition consists of formal and informal acknowledgement**. Both formal and informal recognition, when used together, provide the greatest benefit. Timely and informal acknowledgement that focuses on performance is motivating and reaffirms positive performance. Formal acknowledgment is used to highlight more significant accomplishments.

- **Simple acts of appreciation go a long way**. Enough said.

- **Don't fear or avoid acknowledging performance**. Not acknowledging an opportunity may send the wrong message and lead to disengagement or misunderstanding. For example, "my supervisor didn't say anything so I must be doing a good job" or "I did an amazing job and no one said anything."

- **Encourage recognition and appreciation by all**. It's important to remember that everyone at any level needs support and reinforcement to stay on track and affirm the impact of their performance.

Recognition Opportunities

- Take time to be present, and greet colleagues and staff daily.

- Express gratitude. Write thank-you notes – within and across departments. Send a letter to a colleague or staff member's home to share accomplishments with family and friends.

- Read letters from satisfied students and their families at staff meetings.

- Volunteer to do your colleague's least desirable work task for a day.

- Write a note thanking your colleague(s) and put it in an "appreciation jar". Read the notes at a staff meeting.

- Give cards to mark celebratory occasions.

- Post recognition on a department bulletin board.

- Provide more of the kind of work the professional likes and less of the work they don't like.