Developing Student Team Coaching Skills

RESOURCE PACK
This resource guide helps you deal with student team coaching. It is designed to be read in conjunction with the 2-hour training module on team coaching conducted by one of the lecturers.

The coaching resource guide is set out so you can learn about what it means to be a coach, what types of actions you can take to increase your effectiveness and ways in which you can communicate to develop and motivate your student teams. We are especially interested in helping you develop your feedback skills, both formally and informally, as well as your coaching repertoire. The last section also provides you with some diagnostic tools to assist you to intervene in teams with performance issues.

We welcome feedback on this resource guide and suggestions for improvement. If you have any comments, please feel free to contact us.

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Recently there has been an increase in the use of coaching in teaching and training. Coaching is ‘direct, time-appropriate interaction with a team that is intended to shape team processes to produce good performance’. This requires tutors to be able both to build more effective teams and, where necessary, to help teams address particular problems. We want to assist you – and students – to develop a deeper understanding of group processes and their effects on performance outcomes. Being deliberate about developing your skills and knowledge is an important way to be proactive about student team effectiveness.

You will operate as ‘team coach’. Since team work is an essential part of the assessment and as many students are unprepared for working as part of a team, we try to provide as much support as we can to enable teams to be effective. First, we provide a supportive organizational context (see Figure 1) through the way we teach and assess the subject. Second, we help tutors to develop the necessary skills to enable them to act as expert coaches. However, to be successful, teams must be designed effectively: they need a compelling direction, a structure and a project that meaningfully employs the skills within the team. Without these three elements, no amount of expert coaching is going to improve team performance. So, part of your work as a team coach will be to help the team to develop an enabling structure and a compelling direction and to function as a real team by meeting regularly and communicating effectively.

For some of you, coaching may be a new role. Effective coaching empowers students and encourages them to do better than they think they are capable of.

*I think the best thing about that coach, was it was like he expected more of me, than I did of my self. And this was daunting, but it was also inspiring. Because he helped me achieve so much more.*  
(Ayrin, 19, Finance Student)

Effective team coaches also focus on process, rather than content: helping with the way in which team members work together.
Our coach was awesome, even though we had 5 very different people in our team, she knew exactly how to make sense of all of our issues – it was kinda like she translated! At the end of the day, it was about how the team worked, not what we knew!

(Matthew, 21, Management Student)

Coaching allows you to watch the students improve and shows you how your ‘teaching’ makes a difference.

Whereas once you go into a classroom for an hour a week, for 12 weeks, you don’t really get to know your students? What drives them, what is important, why they zone out in class! But with the coaching you really get to know them, so their successes are your successes. That’s really cool

(Polly, Faculty Tutor)

In this resource guide, we discuss the life cycle of a team and the need to move from motivational to consultative coaching. We then discuss how coaches can intervene to help teams. Finally we present some of the communication skills that you will need to develop to be an effective coach.

coaching and the team life cycle

Team coaching takes different forms depending on the stage of the team life cycle (see Figure 2). We focus first on motivational coaching and then consultative coaching. The educational component occurs when students have the opportunity to reflect on their team experiences in an exam question.

Expert Coaching: Temporality

![Figure 2. Team coaching](Hackman, 2002)
Motivational Coaching: Managing Team Formation
& Goal setting

Motivational coaching is concerned with the initial stages of the team’s life – helping team members to come together as a team; to develop a contract that provides an enabling structure and to set goals that represent a compelling direction for the team.

Why Teams?

Team-based assessments are an increasingly important component of effective learning. They provide an important way to increase students’ knowledge and skills in relation to teamwork. The ability and confidence to participate effectively in collaborative learning as a team-member, while respecting individual differences, is one of the core attributes of a graduate from the University of Melbourne. In addition, professional bodies tell us that while they are satisfied with their technical skills, graduates lack interpersonal skills. Team-building skills are crucial for today’s managers since teams have become the basic building block of organisations and the ability to build cohesive teams in an environment of diversity and dispersed decision making is paramount. It is therefore important for students to realize that whatever career or job they are hoping to attain, their position responsibilities will include working effectively on one or more teams. In this section, we deal with how to help students form teams, prepare the team contract, and set team goals. This comprises the motivational role of the coach.

Team formation

Most students have no idea about how to form a team. So they need help from their tutors. Here is one suggestion, from a past tutor.

Example

I usually start with this question:
So who really enjoys group work – who has had great experiences? Who has had lousy experiences? (At which point I raise MY hand). Yeah ... I really reckon that group work sucked for me at uni, part of that was I was always stuck with students who had no interest in working hard for marks, and I didn't have the skills to work in a team. One thing we know now is that employers are all making it a core hiring criteria – preference is given to candidates who know how to work in teams and we've designed this course so that you develop your team skills and we provide you with a lot of support in managing your group work.

One of the things you need to think about in teams are a) grade expectation, b) preference for communication, c) how many times a week members are on campus. To find out the answers, ask students to stand up and join the appropriate group.

- All of those students who are keen to work extremely hard and get an H1 or H2a move to the right hand corner of the room.
- All of those who are looking forward to a really easy semester and just getting by move to the left hand corner of the room.
- All of those who wouldn’t have a clue what they can accomplish and are prepared to work hard and reap the rewards cluster in the middle.
This gives a visual idea of grade expectations. To find out other preferences, you can ask the following questions to learn about other people in a light hearted way.

- Hands up/Move to the left/right of the room if:
  - You spend more than 3 hours a day on SMS or MSN
  - You have a Flickr/Myspace profile
  - You can speak at least two languages
  - You work (outside Uni) more than 25 hours a week
  - You think that the subject is going to be really interesting
  - You’ve lived somewhere other than Australia

Now give students the following directions:

- Find somebody in the room that is NOT in the same degree as you.
- Find somebody in the room that is NOT in the same degree as you and NOT from the same country.
- Find somebody in the room that is NOT in the same degree as you and NOT from the same country AND is in the same grade expectation group.

Now tell students that they have 5 minutes to finalise their assignment group, keeping in mind moderately diverse groups tend to be more effective.

I also keep an eye out for the really shy students who are looking lost and facilitate their interaction with one of the groups.

You can also use the following form to facilitate the development of teams and reward team diversity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of a Diverse Team</th>
<th>Points Awarded</th>
<th>Points Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The team has an even split of male / female members</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The team has at least one member of the opposite sex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The team has no more than 2 members from the same country</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The team has no more than one member from each country</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The team has some-one who has worked for a large organisation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The team has no more than 2 members who live at home with their family</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The team has no more than 2 members who are enrolled in the same major (e.g., accounting, finance)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each person in the team is doing a different degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The team has no more than 2 members schooled in the same state for secondary schooling</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The team has somebody who plays in a sporting team</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The team has somebody who plays a musical instrument</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The team has somebody who DOES NOT have a MSN account</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everybody in the team has bought the textbook</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

YOUR TOTAL DIVERSITY SCORE

The Team Contract

Once the team is formed, members have to develop a contract with each other about how the group will function. Teams **must** bring the team contract with them when you meet with them for their first coaching session. Your role then is to review the contract – noting the areas that may need to be refined.
Team Contract

Teams usually have unwritten rules when it comes to delegating work, assigning roles within the group, communicating, decision making, conflict resolution, etc. For the purposes of the assignments, teams will agree to a written ‘contract’ which sets out these rules. The contract enables members to agree on roles and the division of work, as well as ways of operating as a group before work on the assignments begins. This should enable the team to function more smoothly because it highlights different preferences and assumptions before misunderstandings and conflicts arise. The following questions will help you to set up your team contract. The value of the contract is not the answers per se but the fact that the members of the team have worked through these questions and come to some understanding and consensus about how to work together effectively.

The written team contract should be up to five pages long and address each of the five questions below:

1) Who are we?
What are the key similarities and the key differences among the members of your assignment team? How can you capitalize on these similarities and differences to enhance the effectiveness of your team?

2) What do we want to accomplish?
What are the common goals your group has agreed upon? Given your other demands and constraints, what grade are you trying for on your team assignments in this class?

3) How will we organize our team to meet our goals?
What work structures have you agreed upon? What roles have you agreed upon and who will fill these roles? What norms have you established? Think about the procedures for each of the assignments (tutorial preparation, team assignments, and final exam preparation).

4) How will we operate as a team?
How will you establish team meeting agendas and make decisions as a team? Will you have a team leader? A meeting facilitator for each meeting? How often will you meet or communicate? When are outlines, drafts, final versions of assignments due?

5) How will we help each other to continuously learn and improve as a team?
When and how will you assess individual contributions and team performance? How will you deal with violations of the team contract? What rewards will you allocate to yourselves for effective performance?

The contract should address the common behaviours that cause problems in a team i.e., how do you propose to deal with situations where a member does not engage in regular communication with other members, does not do their allocated share of the work, does not hand in work on time, is not respectful to other members, does not turn up to meeting, or plagiarises material and puts the whole group at risk of receiving zero for the assignment? For example, you may choose to have a ‘no show policy’. That is, you may allow members to miss one meeting without being sanctioned but missing more than one meeting will not be accepted.

Goal Setting

Goal setting helps team members identify achievable team goals and develop a clear vision for the team. Start, by letting groups state their goals in general terms. Then put these general goals into a SMART formula, by which we mean Specific, Measurable, Agreed upon, Realistic and Time-bound goals. From this, the group will be in a stronger position – especially with your help – to identify
the next steps they need to take. Goal setting matches nicely with the team contract and answers questions 2-4 outlined in the contract.

### Examples of Goals

1. We want to efficiently achieve in both the production process and output. In more specific terms, each member of the group has mutually agreed that the target grade is an H1.
2. We want to foster a positive working environment with a great working culture which will in turn create high-quality relationships within the team. We will motivate each other to perform our best by having good communication practices, trust and commitment to the project.
3. We need to gain more knowledge and understanding of organizational behaviour and its contents, as well as becoming skilled at managing and working within an effective and productive team.
4. We would like to satisfy the expectations of our tutor and lecturers by achieving a H2B.

To summarize your role in the early part of the team’s life cycle is to provide motivational coaching that helps students form a team; develop a team contract; and set achievable goals.

**consultative coaching: developing high performance teams**

This section focuses on the *consultative* role of the team coach – the interactions you have with the team during the semester as you focus increasingly on performance strategies that enable the team to improve its performance. One of the markers of an effective coach is one who can move a team from a satisfactory performance to being high performers. One of the ways to do this is through the feedback that you give on team assignments. Often as tutors we focus on feedback that shows where the students ‘went wrong’, or where they ‘lost marks’. As a coach you shift this focus a little and, instead, identify areas that need improvement, but then ‘feed forward’ to indicate how students can improve in their next piece of assessment. There are two ways to do this; one is through formal developmental feedback on assessment; the other is more opportunistically.

**Giving Developmental Feedback on Performance**

Providing formal performance feedback can be a difficult task for a number of reasons. Sometimes it is difficult to discern between grades. If you are a new tutor, it may be difficult to tell students they have not done so well. Rest assured this is part of the process of developing your skills as a tutor. The important thing is to provide students with feedback on how to do things differently in the future in a constructive manner.

One way to work out how to do this is to use the ‘sandwich’ technique. Start with a positive statement, state the problematic areas, and following with concrete suggestions on how to improve, as in the example below.
Example: Formal Developmental Feedback on Assignment

Overall, you have done a good job of correctly identifying some of the key issues in relation to stress at the company. However, the structure of both your analysis and solution sections needs to be improved. Here are some suggestions for you on how to do this in the next assignment due in four weeks:

Analysis

- First you need to be very clear about what the focus of your paper is – it would seem to be more about causes of stress rather than moderators. You need an opening sentence or two that clearly signposts to the reader what your focus is and the issues/topics that will be covered.
- It is important you define all key terms before you elaborate on them or apply them to the case. For example what is a moderator? What is role/work overload?
- One way to also tighten your focus would be to ensure that each paragraph is just about one specific issue. So for example one paragraph on role conflict, one paragraph on role overload. If you have more than one paragraph on a topic make sure that they are sequentially ordered – i.e. all the paragraphs on role overload come one after the other. At the moment you start off by talking about role overload, you then move onto role conflict and then jump back to role overload. This is confusing for the reader.

Solution

- You need to start your solution section by making a link back to your analysis section and again providing a broad overview of the topics that will be covered. For example: The previous analysis section highlighted that many of the key problems in relation to high stress at the company were due to issues of job design. In this section we discuss the 3 key solutions, X, Y and Z, we suggest the company implements to address the high stress problem.
- The structure of this section could also be enhanced through the prioritization of your solutions. This would also help you to demonstrate that you understand that not all solutions will necessarily be equally effective. Remember in the stress week we talked about primary, secondary & tertiary interventions.
- You also need to draw on the results of empirical research to support your suggested solutions. For example, what research evidence is there that social support is a good mechanism for reducing the stress caused by interpersonal conflict?

General Comments

- Both your analysis and solution section lacks a critique of the theory/model. Remember no model or theory will be able to completely explain an organizational situation. In your analysis section you need to comment on how the model does not fully account for the high stress situation at the company. What other important factors does it fail to capture? In the solution section as part of your critique you need to give some thought to what possible unintended consequences your suggested solutions might have. Your critique here should also draw on the weaknesses of the theory/model that you identified in your analysis section.
- Try and limit the number of direct quotes you use – if you can put the idea/definition into your own words you demonstrate higher levels of understanding.
- You should be citing stress literature – preferably in the form of journal articles. Currently your reference list consists mainly of text books none of which are specifically on workplace stress.
- I suggest you also get an independent individual to proof read your work. I picked up quite a few grammatical errors.

Opportunistic Feedback

Opportunistic feedback typically occurs during the tutorial with informal check-ins (e.g., so how are things going with the team?), passing students in the corridor, during consultation or via student initiated emails. Sometimes it is helpful to use your active listening skills (in reverse!) to encourage the students
to move from ‘where did I go wrong’ to ‘how can I do better’. So ask the student ‘so what did you understand this comment to mean?’ Here are some of the key messages that past tutors have used to reinforce good performance in a second year management subject. Don’t forget, empower, encourage and then direct to more useful practice.

**Example: Opportunistic Feedback**

- You need to spend some time collectively editing and integrating the different sections to give your piece a logical structure. It’s not always productive to divide the assignment up into sections and work on the different sections independently and then just cut and paste the different sections into one document.
- Don’t submit your first draft….proof read, proof read, proof read.
- Make sure you read the assignment criteria sheet – use this to make sure you have covered all the necessary requirements.
- Read example of an H1 assignment on the subject homepage.
- Ensure you read the case study thoroughly.
- Focus on the ‘how’ and ‘why’ and not the ‘what’ in your analysis.
- Don’t just state theory – make sure you explain it thoroughly and link it back to the case.
- Go through the feedback on your previous assignment and make sure you have addressed the comments you were given in this assignment – i.e., don’t make the same mistakes twice!
- Go deep rather than broad – select a theory and go into detail, rather than trying to discuss lots of theories superficially.
- Learn how to use the online journal databases in the library and then draw on the research evidence in the articles you find to support your arguments.

### the challenges of being a coach: intervening effectively

In this section, we deal with one of the major challenges that faces coaches – how to intervene when a team gets into difficulty. We have developed a series of scenarios that tutors have encountered in the past. In each example you will find a scenario with some suggested ways of responding, that will help you handle team performance “on the go” i.e., in an unplanned way and in response to spontaneous questions from students. We then discuss more formal interventions to manage conflict.

**Handling Team Performance on the Go**

**The dominator**

At the end of Week 3’s lecture one of your students comes up to you and says, ‘I’ve got a bit of a problem with my group Miss and I was wondering if you have any suggestions. We’ve got this student in our group who’s always saying things like ‘that won’t work’ or ‘Is that what they teach you in commerce? You’d never be able to do that in Engineering’. 
Some script suggestions for the dominator
Options:
1. How do others here feel about this?
2. Well we are in Commerce so lets re view what is required in the project.
3. I think that before we come up with a final solution we need to discuss this a bit further…
4. Ask other team members individually about their views. Probe to gain a deeper understanding.

The quiet team member
You’re just about to start your tutorial and Melanie comes up to you and says ‘we’ve got this really quiet international student in our group Sven, he never says anything. What can we do to bring him out of his shell?’

Some script suggestions for the quiet team member
Options:
1. Hey Sven what do you think about this matter?
2. Hey Sven is there anything you’d like to contribute to the discussion? I’m sure you’ve got some good ideas.

The latecomer
Gerri, a good student, meets you in the lift and you start a conversation which leads to how their group is going and she says ‘fine except for Tim who always arrives late, then he proceeds to send text messages through out the meeting.’ She ends by saying ‘how rude is that!’

Some script suggestions for the latecomer
Options:
1. Announce an odd time for the meeting (11.46 am) to emphasise the necessity for promptness. Stop talking until the latecomer finds a seat.
2. Establish a ‘latecomer or mobile phone kitty’ for snacks
3. Ask whether you should have a chat…
4. Ask Gerri if she has actually spoken to him directly about this?
5. Have a look at the team contract

The early leaver
You receive an e-mail from Arun one of your students asking your advice on the following matter. Hi, I’m writing to you because we have this group member—Johnny who’s always in a rush and leaves our group meetings early. This means that we have to e-mail him and tell him when the next meeting is and what he needs to have done by then. Arrgh…what can we do – He’s such a taker!! Teams = misery.

Some script suggestions for the early leaver
Options:
1. Before starting the meeting, announce the ending time and ask if anyone has a scheduling conflict.
2. When setting the meeting time confirm that everyone can make it.
The no-show

Keith, comes up to you at the end of the tutorial and says ‘we’ve got a bit of a phantom team member, Chris, he does his work via e-mail but never shows to team meetings. What should we do?’

Some script suggestions for the no-show

Options:
1. When you set up the next meeting ask if there are any scheduling conflicts. Note that Chris has been unable to attend the meetings and whether there is something specific preventing him from attending. Explain why meetings are important e.g., decisions are being made.
2. Set a meeting time and engage Chris while you are doing so.
3. E-mail asking for reasons as to why he did not attend meetings.
4. Do you have Chris’ telephone number?

The free-rider

You’re sitting in the lecture waiting for the lecture to begin and Carrie and Samantha come up to you and say ‘look we’ve just about had enough, Peter just hasn’t contributed to the project, it’s due in a week and the way things are going he won’t do anything but he’ll get the grade that we worked hard for. It’s just not fair. Can we vote him off the team?’

Some script suggestions for the free-rider

Options:
1. Get the facts and ask them to make a time to meet with you along with Peter and ask them to fill out a team diagnostic form.
2. How about yourself, Peter and I arrange to get together. I’ll set up the meeting.
3. It’s too late. You should have come to me earlier.
4. I’m sure that collectively we can find a fair way forward.

Team apathy

You open up your e-mail and you read the following message: Hi, We met for the first time yesterday and we really can’t decide who’s going to do what on the project. We just don’t seem to be able to make headways and it’s due in 10 days. What should we do?

Some script suggestions for apathy

Options:
1. Ask them to come up with their goals and time plan. Suggest that they can use brainstorming and multi-voting to generate ideas and make decisions. Ask them to e-mail this to you within 24 hours.
2. Suggest they list the tasks that need to be done, and link them up with the people who are interested in those areas.
3. Why don’t you organize a meeting to establish goals and a time line. Get back to me if it doesn’t work.

The know-it-all

You are on your way to your tutorial room when you meet Naomi, one of your students walking to class. She says to you: ‘Oh, brother we’ve got this person in
our team, Caroline who seems to be an authority on everything! She’s always saying things like, at Accenture we’d always have a list of deliverables for a project and I’ve worked on similar project in Accenture and this is what we did…… I’m at the end of my tether what can I do?’

Some script suggestions for the know it all

Options:
1. It's important to remember what is required of us in this subject.
2. Interesting point. Help us understand how it relates to our project.
3. Caroline has experience, why don’t you get others to talk of their experiences related to the field of discussion.
4. Explicitly ask for any other points of view.
5. Let Caroline know how you’re feeling; that there are issues with the ‘team’ dynamics.

Cultural sensitivities

You’ve just got back from running your team meetings and there’s an e-mail waiting from one of your students Albert. Hi, Thanks for meeting with us today. No doubt, like me, you had problems understanding Stan, our international student team member. Don’t get me wrong he’s a really nice guy and comes to meetings on time and everything but whenever he talks I can’t understand what he’s saying. Aren’t they supposed to know English before they come to Uni? I’m worried he can’t write either. Gosh I bet he’s going to be a BIG drain on the team! Didn’t you have trouble understanding him?

Some script suggestions for the cultural sensitivities

Options:
1. Albert, recognise that if there are different cultures and languages represented in the team, the diversity will benefit the team.
2. Maybe you can spend some more time with Stan so that you can understand him better. You can help him if you don’t use complex or slang language or if you meet in places that have minimal noise and distraction.
3. Every person in the team has their own strengths and weaknesses. A good team works towards each individual’s strengths. If you are a good writer then you might need to take the lead in writing and editing the team report; but that doesn’t stop you using Stan’s strengths in say doing the research or in incorporating his experiences into your assignment.
4. Why don’t you assign buddy pairs in the team – local and international – so you can help each other out.
5. No I don’t have trouble understanding Stan. Why don’t you come in and we will discuss the issue.

Formal interventions

The majority of teams will function well and deal with the problems discussed above. However, you may find that you have one or two teams that are having greater difficulties and require a formal conflict management intervention. This section contains an overview of how to deal with difficult teams. The key principles are problem identification and solution generation. Make sure the students complete the diagnostic sheet for teams before seeing you: Figure 3 provides an overview of the diagnostic process.
Problem Identification

Acknowledge there are difficulties
- Ask students to complete team diagnostic
- Select the most appropriate setting
- Propose a problems solving/solution focused approach

Maintain a neutral posture
- Assume the role of facilitator, not judge
- Be impartial towards students and issues
- If correction is necessary do it in private

Manage the discussion to ensure fairness
- Focus discussion on conflicts impact on performance
- Keep the discussion issue related, not personality oriented
- Do not allow one person to dominate. Ask directed questions to maintain balance

Solution Generation & Action Plan

Explore options by focusing on the interests behind the stated positions
- Explore the why’s behind arguments and claims
- Help team members see commonalities among their goals, values & principles
- Use commonalities to generate multiple alternatives
- Ensure that all parties support the agreed upon plan

Establish a short term goal and follow-up within three days

coaching communication skills

Effective communication is integral to successful coaching. Without highly developed communication skills, tutors are not able to engage with students and develop a safe learning environment in which to set goals, monitor progress and assist in team dynamics. The main communication skills that coaches require are to be able to observe a team in action and identify team communication styles. Coaches then need interpersonal skills such as active listening, and empathetic and supportive communication in order to intervene.

Task-related Communication

1. Initiating: Gets a conversation going.
   So, we’ve all read the case, what do we think are the main points?

2. Information giving: Drawing out information from others; sharing relevant information.
   Well, I was able to find this article; did anybody else find something that supported this position?
3. *Opinion seeking*: finding out the views of all team members.
   What does everyone else think about prioritizing this part of the essay?

4. *Clarifying and elaborating*: Clears up confusion.
   Well, I would include this source, only if it is linked to the final summary.

5. *Summarizing*: Pulls together what’s been said.
   So in summary, we are happy with the final product, but we all agree that
   it needs better structuring before submitting.

6. *Consensus testing*: Moves the group toward decision.
   Do we all agree that this draft should be finished by Sunday night?

*Maintenance-related Communication*

7. *Harmonizing and compromising*: Reduces tension, works out disagreements.
   I’m sensing that there is some disagreement on the priorities. Jill, if you
   focus on the front end, Jake, can you source the references?

8. *Gate keeping*: Helps keep communication channels open.
   What do you think we need to talk about so that we can successfully
   complete the project?

9. *Diagnosing*: Looks at the process, how people are feeling about the group.
   So how are we feeling about the division of labor?

    Given that we all have multiple assignments due at the same time; I think
    it is important to set down some guidelines for how to work.

*Dysfunctional Communication*

    I think you are all missing the point, and I won’t do any more unless
    some-one starts making some sense.

12. *Dominating*: Talks more than his/her fair share.
    This one doesn’t really need an example, it becomes obvious!

    This student doesn’t say much at all, you notice this more than what they
    say.

14. *Self-seeking*: oppresses others with one’s own personal needs.
    Well I have athletics training to go to, and I need to catch up with a friend
    first, can we hurry up?
One of the skills that you can develop is the ability to observe groups in action and to identify the pattern of communications. Is it balanced, or is the group overly task-oriented? Is it focusing more on harmony than getting the task done? Are there members who are being dysfunctional? Once you have observed and identified some of the key problems you will need to employ active listening and supportive communication in intervening. The next section looks at some of the communicative tactics of active listening.

**Active Listening**

Active listening is a communication skill where, after listening to your student, you provide a response which demonstrates your understanding of what they said. It can be done in a number of ways. Below, we provide an example of each method of active listening and some sample scripts for use with your teams.

**Empathetic Responses**

Empathy is the ability to understand things from the other person’s point of view. Empathetic responses communicate acceptance and your willingness to listen to the speaker. Use empathetic responses when you want to convey acceptance and establish rapport or you want to encourage the speaker to continue talking.

**Example**

*Speaker: I am really tired of being told that team work build synergy when clearly I am doing all of the work by myself.*

Your script/listening suggestions for conveying empathy:

- **Oh, I can imagine how it feels…** this discrepancy can be so frustrating – on one hand you can see the potential of teams, but on the other hand you feel like you are doing everything by yourself.
- **That must be very frustrating –** Do you have anything you can do/an anyone to talk to about this situation?
- **I understand your situation as I often feel the same way myself.**
- **I think I know what you mean.** I’ve been in situations that… and it made me feel…
- **I see where you are coming from, tell me more about it.**
- **It sound like you are really frustrated**
- **I understand that you feel as though you are doing everything by yourself.** I would really like to find out what you think some of the issues are so that we can work on them together.

**Restatement**

Restatement is a repetition of part of the speaker’s own words, to show the speaker you have received the information being communicated. Use restatement when you want to ‘check out’ the meaning of something the speaker has said or you want to encourage the speaker to explore other aspects of the matter at hand and discuss these with you.
Example

Speaker: Based on these comments, I don’t think we will do any better with the next assignment. We’ll never get it done in time.

Your script/listening suggestions for restatement:
- So you believe that the necessary changes will take a long time?
- So the changes are greater than you expected and they’re going to take time to implement.
- So you think that the entire assignment needs to be redone. This will take a few days. Do you think that there is any way around it? Do you think this is overly time consuming?
- So you’re saying that there will be a need to re-do the assignment? How can you reduce your workload?
- What are the changes that are most difficult? Which part of the assignment needs the most work?

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing involves stating, in your own words, your interpretation of the speaker’s message. Use paraphrasing when: you want to confirm that you understand the speaker’s feelings, and their relation to the content of the communication; you want to help the speaker evaluate his/her feelings about the matter at hand; you want to help the speaker reach a solution to a problem.

Example

Speaker: I’m working in a team with two international students and they might be good at some things, but they are not the easiest people to work with.

Your script/listening suggestions for paraphrasing:
- So you’re suggesting they are not cooperative?
- I can see that there might be some difficulties, but they may be very useful in certain areas of the assignment.
- So is it you don’t want to work with them, or is it that you haven’t worked out what is the best way to work with them?
- So you feel the two students are good at some things – what are they?
- So you’re saying that the students are competent, but just not that easy to work with? How can we address this issue?

Summative Statements

Summative statements condense large portions of what has been said, highlighting the key ideas. Use summative statements when: you want to focus the discussion; you want to confirm mutual understanding at a particular point in the discussion; you want to get agreement on certain points that have been raised, in order to close the conversion.

Example

Speaker: I have some problems with team effort. Few of us have been at every meeting, fewer still complete their action items, and we seem to be going nowhere.

Your script/listening suggestions for summative statements:
- So you’re not happy with the team’s progress so far and you don’t hold the highest hopes for the future?
- So you think the team is dysfunctional?
- So there are problems with the team’s commitment to meetings and action items. Why do you think this is? Do you think this can be improved?
- It seems as if Susan is concerned about the teams effort in terms of attendance at meetings, tasks completed and team direction. Does everyone feel this way? How can we move forward from here?
- You have identified a few motivational hurdles…
Questioning Techniques

Questioning techniques are key tools in active listening. In particular, when the listener uses open-ended and ‘specifier’ questions in combination, it can help the speaker express feelings and thoughts about a problem. Asking questions sends the message that you are willing to work at understanding.

Example

Speaker: The other day I heard that one of our group members might pull out.
Your script/listening suggestions for using open-ended questions:
- How did that make you feel?
- What were the reasons…? What was the impact…?
- What exactly did you hear?
- What is the timeframe for this?

Non-verbal Behavior

Finally, don’t forget to use non-verbals to demonstrate that you are listening. Use frequent, but not intense eye contact and a shift in posture to tell the speaker that you are listening. Visually scan the rest of the group to see what their non-verbals are showing. Observe the speaker’s non-verbal behavior and mentally note its message. It is important to check your interpretation of the non-verbal of the speaker.

Example

Speaker: Sitting a few feet from the conference table with his body facing away from the others, the speaker gives input only when solicited and in short, one- or two-word phrases.
Your script/listening suggestions for non-verbal communication:
- So it looks like you are quite disengaged from this process, would you mind coming in closer to the table and facing the other team members.
- When x said y, it looked like you were concerned, is this true?
- Eye contact – visual scanning.
- Openness. Encourage people to face one another.

Supportive communication

After employing active listening, you are in a better position to intervene. Some of the team interventions are difficult and it is best to use a supportive communication style. This means you acknowledge the difficulty of the situation, label, it and focus on moving forward to a better team outcome.

Stay problem oriented

This means focusing on the problems and solutions not the personal traits of the people involved. So rather than focus on a student being lazy, talk about the problem of lack of commitment to the team goals.

Congruence between what the tutor is thinking and feeling

Be careful to have your verbal and nonverbal action in sync. If you are clenching your jaws in annoyance, the calm voice will not be believable.
Avoid making judgments
Do describe the issue or behaviour that needs correction, but avoid making judgments. It is what it is. It does require correction.

Do validate the student
Validation creates feelings of self worth and confidence. If you are validating the frustration, or the disappointment, the student is encouraged to keep moving forward. If you invalidate the student, then they will not be confident in relating to you.

Keep Specific
Avoid using extremes, absolutes and generalizations e.g., ‘you always …’. When you get specific in identifying the behaviour e.g., when you withdraw from the conversation…it becomes possible to change the behaviour. If it is something they ‘always’ do, then the chance of change is limited.

Smooth flow
Work on connecting the key messages and logical links. Think about your interventions as scaffolding. Start with the root cause; identify the consequence and then what that causes. Then move towards solutions in the same way. Don’t just jump from problem to solution; make sure consequences of both are included as well as validating what has occurred.

Take ownership
Be strong and take responsibility for what you say to your students. This encourages clear communication and prevents obfuscating the message. If you think you are getting ‘off message’ start a sentence with ‘what I mean is…’.

So now we have reviewed the fundamental skills of a coach, it is now time to look at the motivation role of the coach. This role involves getting the team started, initiating discussions around goal formation and team structure.
summary

We have come to the end of the resource guide. We have introduced you to the fundamental communication skills that underpin the role of coach. We have looked at the two functions of coach – the motivator and the consultant, and the roles they play at different stages of the team’s life cycle. As a motivating coaching you are primarily concerned with goal setting and assisting your teams to develop action plans. When you take on a more consultative role it is usually later in the team lifecycle and you will be either providing formal feedback, or opportunistic feedback. For some of you this is a very new skill and you might want to think about what insights have you gained about yourself. What makes you anxious about being a coach? And then what excites you about being a coach? We are sure that whatever your feelings are about this role, you will ultimately find it quite rewarding for both yourself and your students.

reference material


Each student is to fill out the following table independently prior to meeting with your team coach. Read the following statements and assess the extent to which your team is functioning on a 1-10 scale.

1 = ‘we don’t do this at all’  5 = ‘we do a fair job’  10 = ‘we do an outstanding job’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>Team functioning statement</th>
<th>Score your team from 1-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 A real team</td>
<td>Does the team have clear membership and is it stable over time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Clear direction Task interdependence</td>
<td>Are all members of the team clear on the outcomes the team wishes to achieve? To complete tasks do you need to rely on others?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Enabling structure</td>
<td>Does the team consist of 3 or 4 people?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Skills variety</td>
<td>Is there a sufficient diversity of skills amongst team members e.g., research skills, writing, analysis?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Goal Setting</td>
<td>Does the team have SMART goals that everyone agrees to?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Agenda</td>
<td>Are agendas being used effectively in meetings?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Group norms</td>
<td>Has the team established how it will work through the task and expectations of group performance norms?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Case</td>
<td>Does the team all understand what the central case issues are?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Use of theory</td>
<td>Does the team understand how to select and apply the theories?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Shared understanding</td>
<td>Do all the team members have a shared understanding of what the completed assignment needs to look like?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Supportive organizational context</td>
<td>Does the team have a reward system established?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Group commitment</td>
<td>Do all members of the group appear to be equally committed to the team goals?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Are all members equally engaged and performing at a high standard?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Team conflict</td>
<td>Is the conflict between the team members manageable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Are members comfortable in raising issues with each other?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Power and decision making</td>
<td>Are all team members having a say in the meetings?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Are decisions made with team agreement?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>How well is the multi-voting process working?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Communication</td>
<td>Is there difficulty in understanding each others’ ideas?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We’d like to know a little more…

Based on the diagnostic you’ve just completed what are the major issue/s facing your team? Focus on behaviours and consequences. Be specific and stick to the facts.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

What do you think are the main causes of these issues?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Brainstorm and generate multiple (at least three) alternative solutions to this problem? Completing the assignment separately is not a solution to the problem.

1.__________________________________________________________________________

2.__________________________________________________________________________

3.__________________________________________________________________________
Tutor Tip Sheet
Process Flow Chart for Team Meeting and Intervention

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

- Acknowledge there are difficulties
  - Ask students to do diagnostic
  - Select the most appropriate setting
  - Propose a problems solving / solution focussed approach

- Maintain a neutral posture
  - Assume the role of facilitator, not judge
  - Be impartial towards students and issues
  - If correction is necessary do it in private

- Manage the discussion to ensure fairness
  - Focus discussion on conflicts impact on performance
  - Keep the discussion issue related, not personality oriented
  - Do not allow one person to dominate. Ask directed questions to maintain balance

SOLUTION GENERATION & ACTION PLAN

- Explore options by focusing on the interests behind the stated positions
  - Explore the why's behind arguments and claims
  - Help team members see commonalities among their goals, values & principles
  - Use commonalities to generate multiple alternatives
  - Ensure that all parties support the agreed upon plan
  - Establish a short term goal and follow-up within three days