Coaching on the Run

Instructions: below are a series of situations where students come up to tutors with a question. The aim of this exercise is to help tutors to strategize answers they can give “on the run”.

To run the exercise, divide tutors into small groups. Each tutor receives a copy of the situation and has 60 seconds to come up with an answer. The other tutors in the group then comment on his/her answer and offer their own answers. The script suggestions can then be read out to see if they offer alternative options. You can also develop a larger bank of scripts by asking tutors to contribute new situations based on their own experiences.

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 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 review 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.

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**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.

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**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 University? 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.