

Feedback Template
From Teacher's Manual for Learning from Supervision
Chapter 3 of Learning from Practice
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Whether you are a student, a supervisor, or an externship teacher, when you talk to each other about work you are giving each other feedback. (and "work" means not just your work product, but also your work ethic, attitude and approach, and interpersonal skills - all of which fall under the umbrella of professionalism). The literature on feedback is enormous and continues to develop. One book we recommend is Thanks for the Feedback.

While feedback is complex and layered, it is, however, possible to structure, elicit and interpret effective feedback, even without having the time to read widely in the field. Even though our focus in Chapter 3 is on "pulling" feedback, we believe that if you apply the basic template described here, you will have a framework that can help students and supervisors. It can help students fill in the gaps a supervisor sometimes leaves, and give and receive feedback as well. It can help supervisors focus on what they want to convey and how to convey it most helpfully as well as how to listen to the feedback students give to them.

Feedback template: Invited - Timely - Description - Prescription

Many people assume the *prescriptive* aspect of feedback, the "what you ought to do differently", is all there is to feedback. If, however, the feedback is not **Invited**, is not **Timely**, and is not **Descriptive**, then no matter how honest or valuable the feedback, the recipient is going to find it difficult, perhaps even impossible, to understand it, accept it, and build on it.

Invited: Does the person receiving the feedback want to hear it? In a teaching setting we assume the student wants to know what the teacher/supervisor has to say. That may be true, but there may also be factors that mean this not always the safe assumption, so check with your students.

Timely: Is the feedback close enough in time to the completion of the task that everyone has a pretty clear memory of what happened? If the supervisor has suggestions for improvement going forward, is there time for the student to act on the suggestions?

Descriptive/Specific: Is what is being said specific? Does it describe the action on which the feedback focuses? Does the process of description allow all parties to the conversation to agree what the feedback is about? Being descriptive without being judgmental, is a challenge. The product of an agreement conference, as discussed in *Learning from Supervision*, can provide a foundation on which to base descriptive feedback. As part of the description, the feedback may be easier to interpret when the giver includes their personal reaction to the "work".

Prescription: This is the advice component, time to reinforce aspects of the work that should be repeated in the future and make suggestions about how to improve in the future.

Example – Student giving feedback to supervisor

Student: *I understand you had a meeting with opposing counsel on the Jones case on Tuesday.*
Description

Supervisor: *Yes, we did.*

Student:

I'm really interested in seeing what happens in informal exchanges among lawyers.

Description

I was disappointed to miss it.

Personal Reaction

Will there be other meetings with counsel or in chambers coming up that I could attend?

Prescription

A couple of variables:

Supervisors says *No, the meeting is actually next Tuesday* (Description), in which case the student can ask to attend.

The supervisor might invite the student to sit in on the meeting (Prescription), before student even has to ask.