

BEST PRACTICES FOR CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Providing feedback to faculty and staff is vital to fostering a healthy department. Feedback should be descriptive, specific, and about behavior. Below is a list of examples that illustrate appropriate feedback.

Descriptive Feedback

Be descriptive instead of evaluative. Using descriptive language will reduce defensive responses.

Example: “In your graduate class last semester, students indicated that you did not give them a chance to ask questions about the materials being presented and you were unavailable after class for clarification. What can you tell me about that perception?”

Specific Feedback

Offer personalized and relevant feedback, this adds credibility to your feedback.

Example: “As noted in our Annual performance review last year, you anticipated that three articles would be published in peer reviewed journals this year, but only one has been submitted and it has not yet been accepted for publication. We had discussed that, for promotion, you would be expected to publish two papers per year, on the average, over your first four years at RIT.”

Behavioral Feedback

Use terminology that indicates behavioral traits that could change and NOT personal traits that might be more fixed.

Example: “It has been noted that you have not shown up for meetings that your student advisees have scheduled with you. In addition, it has been reported for the two courses you taught this last year, you were often late in arriving for the class. It is important that you manage your schedule and commitments better to meet the needs of our students.”

Additional Tips

Use feedback that addresses both the needs of the department and the needs of the faculty member receiving feedback. The feedback needs to be bi-directional and the faculty members receiving feedback needs to be able to address his/her issues.

Example: “It was noted that over half of the lectures in your 401 course last semester were given by your senior research associate, Dr. Smith. I assume that you were closely mentoring him. Was this to give him experience in teaching?”, “I know that you were out of town quite a bit last semester and many of these trips were to present papers and visit with your collaborators, and I support those activities. I assume you remained in close contact with Dr. Smith while you were away?”, “I want to point out that you were responsible for this course – that the syllabus was followed and that the students enrolled received quality instruction. So, I wanted to discuss how you worked with Dr. Smith in this course.”

Use feedback to both share information and solicit input from the faculty member receiving feedback.

Example: “Based on evaluations from your XXX 101 class, students indicated that you did not give them information about how the course would be graded. Was the grading scheme in the syllabus and discussed early on in the class? Did you provide this information in myCourses? I should point out that, according to the code of Teaching Responsibility, the course syllabus should include the grading criteria and methods used to determine the final course grade.”

To ensure clear communication, explain or restate the feedback in multiple ways to make sure what you express is understood by the receiver to reduce chances of disagreement with the message you intended.

Example: “Are you providing sufficient time to the graduate students in your lab to help guide them in their research projects? Because you have been out of town a significant amount of time during this last year, have you set up a mechanism to communicate with your students? Do you have a senior research associate who is overseeing some of the junior graduate students?”

Discuss the consequences of the feedback with the faculty member.

Example: “I am concerned that you have not submitted a grant for external funding over the last three years to support your research program, and you have not had external funding for the last 5 years.”, “I note that you are a very good teacher, and your innovative techniques in the classroom are valued and appreciated. Thus, if you do not secure a grant this next year, your teaching load will go up by one course, and if you do not secure external funding within the next three years, your teaching load will be increased by an additional second course and your research space will be decreased in size. This decrease in research productivity and increase in teaching activity will be reviewed and reevaluated every year during the annual performance evaluation process”.