

Assignment 8 - Evaluate your coaching skills - Reflection Report

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As the pandemic continues and lessons continue online, my primary concern is that students are getting the support they need and feeling supported. Following the experiences during BDB and with finally beginning the period(s) during which I teach students, I've discovered a number of points which I should remind myself of regularly as preparation for each lesson.

Points of Attention

Given that my lessons continue to be online, I find myself quite concerned about whether or not students are getting enough support and personal attention, and receiving it in ways that work optimally for them. I know that students can feel significantly isolated with working from home constantly, and that I want to ensure that I'm a friendly and accepting person that they feel comfortable contacting when they have issues. Specifically I've heard occasionally that I go too quickly and sought their suggestions for how to fix this—I don't notice it unless someone says it, and I'd rather they say it at the time it's happening.

Questionnaire

I designed the enquête to measure a couple aspects of this communication:

- Preferred method(s)
- Preferred interaction modalities
- Their experiences as students in my class
- And their feelings on my interactions with them until now.

These aspects I found to be particularly important to me and my interactions with students. I elaborated these with the following survey design:

Question Aspect		Text
1	Question	How comfortable do you feel discussing course questions, issues, programming questions via
1	Description	Example questions include: where's the course recording, why is my code failing, what do you mean I need to import that first
1	Answer	A choice matrix of [Email, Teams Text Chat, Teams Video Chat, In person] and [Please no!, If I must, Meh, It's ok, Yes please, My preferred way!]

Question Aspect	Text
2	Question I find online classes
2	Description 1 = They work great for me! 5 = It's so exhausted I hate it here
2	Answer Likert-type scale (1-5)
3	Question How do you feel about
3	Answer Choice matrix of [Breakout rooms, being randomly called on, being predictably called on, Kahoots / Competitive quizzes] and feeling matrix of [Hate it, Meh, It's fun]
4	Question Helena wants to discuss my solution in front of the class, that makes me feel
4	Answer Free text
5	Question Some of you have commented I go too quickly, how can we address this?
5	Description I'm guessing you don't want to publicly speak up? Would you want to message the TOA who can ask me to slow down? Is there something I can do to make you feel ok asking me to slow down in front of your peers? (I need the reminder, I get too focused on covering content, for sure.)
5	Answer Free text
6	Question I feel like part of the class when ?
6	Description i.e. specific types of activities (and that I'm getting something more useful out of being here rather than doing chores or something else.)
6	Answer Free text
7	Question Any other remarks?
7	Answer Free text
8	Question Are you getting the support you need? Do you have the resources you need?
8	Answer Likert-type scale with stars (1-5)
9	Question Final Remarks?
9	Answer Free text

Results

Question 1: This focused on communication, which gave rather optimistic responses for the second year of a pandemic, as seen in Figure 1.

Question 2: Students overall rated online classes as an ok experience (min=1, mean=2, max=4, sd=1), only one student gave a higher rating of 4 out of 5 (five being they're exhausted and hate it online), but this shows suboptimal study design as I've conflated "lack of enjoyment" and "exhaustion" which I expect many of us are experiencing, and it's unclear *why* the student responded like they did.

1. How comfortable do you feel discussing course questions, issues, programming questions via:

[More Details](#)

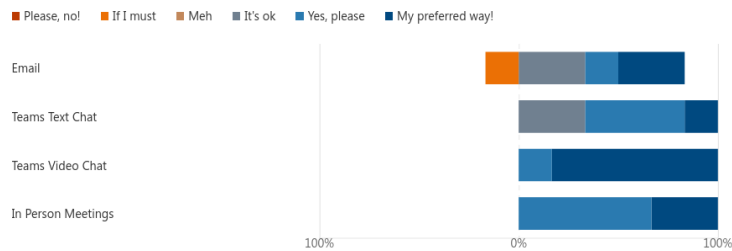


Figure 1: Students seem to be extremely comfortable with online communication, many just want to see a face clearly as video chat was rated even more highly than in-person meetings which is expected for my section of students as they were the half of the class which did not require in-person learning in a start of period survey.

Question 3: This question answers an important point for me, that students are enjoying the new teaching methods implemented and discussed in Assignment 10, breakout rooms where they do pair-programming. Results in Figure 2.

3. How do you feel about

[More Details](#)

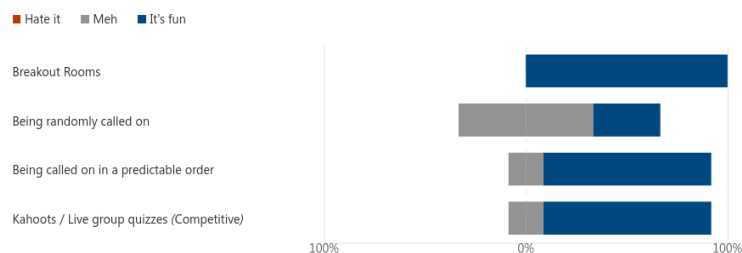


Figure 2: How do you feel about: a selection of activities and methodologies

Question 4: The variety of responses have been interesting to say the least. To summarize the main points of the students:

- Some worried because they were beginners, and know that their answer won't be correct.
- Some feel very seen, that the teacher takes time to interact and discuss their answer.
- Most felt ok with it, knowing that it was a necessary part of the learning process.

Seeing these responses, and given that this is a technical course where we have a significant amount of control over where the students execute code, I've asked my TOA to look into automating the collection of student solutions to a given problem in a way that I can use it dynamically during class. That will allow me to discuss student solutions with the class anonymously and maybe achieve everyone's objectives: no hurt feelings, no uncomfortable attention, and the student's solutions we review will still feel seen.

Question 5: This again gave food for thought on potential options to slow down, some more actionable than others

- All steps should be repeated twice.

- It's unclear when steps are something we need to run, or just for explanation.
- I don't want to slow down just for me, knowing other people have the same issue helps
- Sometimes you make a mistake, and catching up is tough, but the recording helps.
- No problem with speed.

Question 6: Here I interrogated their community spirit, in case there was anything I could do to help there

- Answering questions together (x3)
- Breakout rooms & Exercises (x3)
- People speak up

I really appreciated the insight of one student's response there:

People need to be more interactive. Nobody responds when you ask a question. [...] But I think it also can be frustrating for you that nobody is responding.

Which I have to concur with.

Question 7: This had the most important point for me

- Lessons are great, sometimes a bit too fast
- I really think you are a great teacher already to be honest!
- I found it difficult to do the assignments with you 1:1, because I don't understand the assignments immediately and sometimes can feel like I am too slow.

That third point will be a focus of the reflection section below.

Question 8: Students were absolutely getting the support they need (min=4, max=5, mean=4.666, stdev=0.47)

Question 9: The final other remarks section and not well responded to, which is expected given that many people expressed opinions in 6.

Reflection

Situation: Review

Numerous students across numerous questions, in this survey and the previous, noted issues with the speed of lessons. Here either they needed more review of individual things I mentioned (repeating instructions) or more in depth discussion of the exercises which students worked through on their own. While those exercises have solutions available to students as they work through them, some additional discussion is clearly beneficial.

Looking Back: During the times this happened during class I saw no indication it was needed. No students reported it, the TOA didn't mention it to me, and during exercises the students appeared to be completing them at the expected pace and with the expected success

rate. I thought it was going ok for everyone, however their survey results indicate they don't feel the same.

Awareness: To me this feels somewhere between an abject failure (not knowing well enough what is going on with the students) and perfectly acceptable (students won't get things immediately, and will need to practice more later). This leaves me feeling a bit confused as to what the real situation is. I value being approachable to students which feels bad if they don't feel comfortable speaking up in front of their peers when it's too fast.

Alternatives: In the future I can interrogate students more regularly as to how they're feeling. This comes at the cost of precious class time, but if the students answer and can give a more accurate assessment of their feeling, then it's worth it. Additionally I can embed more anonymous methods for feedback within the course days (either via Teams or otherwise) to let students indicate their feelings of the speed of the content and their understanding which comes at the expense of more work, more setup time for classes required. However again, maybe it produces a useful result which will make the extra time worth it.

Trials: I will start by going through the steps of every exercise twice to help the students who feel like they got lost along the way. Additionally I'll start regularly sending MS Forms polls in the chat to ask how students are feeling and if it's an ok pace or too fast or slow. I need to see if I can automate this, because it takes a bit of time to setup which distracts from the class. I want to watch out that it's actually an issue of me going too quickly, and not just students keeping up but needing more review time than was available during class.

Situation: Experience Gap

During one class we had an odd number of students. I have been doing breakout rooms exclusively with duos, as I wanted them to learn the corporate skill of pair programming. Given the odd student count, I decided I'd pair with the leftover student myself so they could be included in the activity. I paired with two different students during that class period, so, thankfully the student remains anonymous:

I found it difficult to do the assignments with you 1:1, because I don't understand the assignments immediately and sometimes can feel like I am too slow. It would have helped if I got a bit more time to try it myself and read the question I think. (The 1:1 itself doesn't bother me tho)

I should have paired them with someone on their own level, rather than attempting to participate due the huge disparity in skill levels which naturally led to blindspots where they did not understand the exercise and I continued forward.

Looking Back: At the time I should have noticed. I attempted to 'play' an equal who wouldn't be confirming their understanding

and would expect them to ask about questions they had. This was a suboptimal choice.

Awareness: This feels like a small failing as a teacher, I should have known it would not work successfully and either put them in a trio, or let them lead the entire experience rather than trying to stay to pair programming. It was the obvious thing that would happen, when pairing two people of vastly unequal skill levels, that one would feel the desire to push forward no matter what. It goes against my core values to give this student a poor learning experience and environment, especially if they didn't feel comfortable enough to ask for more time to understand the exercises.

Alternatives: In the future avoiding the situation in the first place would be the most ideal option, to avoid any biases creeping into the conversation or exchange. Given that it was a practice period, the skill gap is insurmountable and impossible to address, so other options must be sought. If trios (with more evidence) proves suboptimal, then I can pair with students and allow them to lead the entire exercise, maybe that will go more easily?

Trials: I will start by avoiding this situation where possible while I collect more data on if trios are better or worse than duos. If trios turn out to be worse, then I will start pairing them with the TOA (for a smaller skill differential) and failing that with myself, but in either of the latter two cases I will recommend the student drives the exercise, and the TOA/teacher simply acts as facilitator.

Action Points

Based on the results obtained in this brief survey, I've formulated a number of points of attention to focus on during the period:

- Go through questions at the end of each exercise section.
- Go through student solutions anonymously and discuss common problems.
- Do not pair with students, the knowledge gap is too significant, instead have them form trios.

These seem relatively easy things to control and focus on, which in my opinion bodes well for the coming semester. If this is all that the students disliked, then, it's probably going ok.