

Taking a Coach Approach to Teaching and Learning Consultations

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What is coaching?

The coach and coachee are active collaborators...This is a relationship –in fact, an alliance–between two equals for the purpose of meeting the coachee’s needs. (Kimsey-House et al., 2018, p.3)

Partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential, which is particularly important in today’s uncertain and complex environment. Coaches honour the client as the expert in his or her life and work and believe every client is creative, resourceful and whole. (International Coaching Federation)

The goal of coaching is to get clients to stop and question the thoughts and behaviors that limit their perspective so they can see a new way forward to achieve their desires. (Reynolds, 2020)

Coaching is at its essence a nurturing structure, but it is also one where there is always a subtle push for change. It grants space for emotions, but doesn't linger in feelings; our intention is to address them, process them, and then move on. Coaches encourage us to explore our core values, behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being and compel us to venture into new behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being. (Aguilar, 2013)

Some benefits of coaching

Research has found that coaching can improve skill development, well-being, coping, performance, and work experiences, even when coaching occurs across a small number of sessions. Additional benefits include guiding individuals to:

- discover their own solutions
- adapt to challenge and change
- uncover and reframe assumptions and beliefs
- develop problem-solving skills
- strengthen self-awareness and metacognition, and
- identify a meaningful path forward

(Pandolfi, 2020; Theeboom et al., 2014).

Coaching approaches encourage deep understanding, critical reflection, and transformation. Much of this also aligned with our work as educational developers.

Coaching Competencies

Below you'll find a list of coaching competencies, as determined by the ICF. We have modified the definitions to be more applicable to teaching and learning consultations (for the official definitions, see the [ICF Competencies](#)).

1. Demonstrates ethical practice
2. Embodies a coaching mindset: Is open, curious, flexible, learner-centered
3. Establishes and maintains agreements: Partners with instructor to determine goals of the consultation.
4. Cultivates trust and safety: Creates a supportive environment
5. Maintains presence: Is fully present with instructor
6. Listens actively
7. Evokes awareness: Facilitates insight and learning.
8. Facilitates growth: Transforms learning and insights into action

Breakout Room Activity

Introduce yourselves and then, as a group, select a competency to discuss.

Prompts for discussion:

- What does this competency look like/feel like in a consultation? (You can reflect on this from your perspective and/or the instructor's perspective)
- What are some practical strategies for implementation?

For example: Demonstrates ethical practice

What this looks like/feels like in a consultation

- I maintain confidentiality as relevant
- I am sensitive to, and aware of, the instructor's needs
- I am clear about the limits of my expertise
- I feel a big sense of responsibility

Practical strategies for implementation

- I let the instructor know that this conversation is private
- I refer out to another colleague if there is something that is outside my area of "expertise"
- I take a big breath before I begin the consultation

Example structure and questions for a coach-approach to individual consultations

How should you structure an individual consultation? What questions should you ask? Like coaching, there is no one ideal structure for an individual consultation. Below is an example structure based on [three components](#): 1) creating trust and clarifying focus; 2) engaging in curiosity-driven and solution focussed dialogue; 3) helping people succeed and find their path forward.

1. Co-creating Trust & Clarifying Focus

- What do you need to do to transition into this conversation?
- What did you want to work through today?
- What is most important about this?
- What would you like to leave our conversation today with that would help you move forward as an instructor?

2. Engaging in Curiosity-driven & Solution-focussed Dialogue

- What results/changes do you really want to see?
- What are you (or the students you are teaching) doing or not doing to support these results?
- What strengths do you bring? What strengths do the students you teach bring to this situation?
- What values do you hold about teaching and learning in higher education that may inform how you might approach this?
- What's your responsibility as an instructor? What is the responsibility of the students you teach?
- How might you see things differently? What else might be true?
- If you could zoom out from this issue from afar, what might you notice?
- What are some possible paths forward? What other options come to mind for you?

3. Helping People Succeed & Find their Path Forward

- What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about your situation? How will you use this learning going forward?
- What's the right next step for you? What commitment (or micro-step) will you make to move forward?
- What resources or supports do you have to draw upon?
- How do we close this time together?

Resources and References

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If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to be in touch!

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