

Handout 4.3: How to run effective feedback and review sessions

Feedback is one of the most powerful ways of motivating a learner. Given formally every two to four weeks, it is a labour-intensive activity but should be seen as a learner's entitlement.

Guiding principles

- The feedback and review process should be conducted in a way that says to the learner 'this is your entitlement'. Any indication – spoken or through body language – that implies otherwise could undermine the process.
- Feedback is not confined to designated sessions. It should be given informally whenever a tutor believes it would be helpful. Feedback can be a powerful motivator.
- A feedback session should be a two-way activity, with a tutor inviting comments from the learner as well as making assessments about the learner.
- The focus in the feedback is on the behaviour, not the person, and concerns areas that can be changed or developed, not those that can't.
- The feedback should lead to an agreement between learner and tutor about the learner's priority development areas.
- Identifying priorities leads to discussion of strategies.
- Learners should experience choice about the targets they agree to. If the targets can't be agreed in the same session as the feedback, the tutor should offer the learner the chance to reflect and meet again later.
- SMART targets negotiated with learners should incorporate strategies for development of priority areas.

Planning

- Think carefully about what you want to say. Gather together evidence about achievements as well as areas for improvement.
- Choose a private comfortable place in which to have the conversation. Sit at an angle to the learner, not facing them directly, nor putting a desk between the two of you.
- Choose a time when you and the learner are both likely to have the energy and time to concentrate on what's being discussed.
- Aim to give formal feedback to each learner every two to four weeks. Give informal feedback at the time, or at short notice.