REQUESTING, RECEIVING AND GIVING FEEDBACK, THIS IS HOW YOU DO IT!

A guide for you as a student

GUIDE: REQUESTING, RECEIVING AND GIVING FEEDBACK - THIS IS HOW YOU DO IT!

A guide for you as a student

In this guide, you will find out how to ask for, receive and give targeted feedback. This gives you control over your own learning process and helps you work in a focused way on your personal and professional development.

Why is feedback important?

Feedback is more than merely providing you information for your learning process. It provides information about how you function or perform in your learning, regarding the learning outcomes. You will learn what improvements you can make to successfully demonstrate mastery of the learning outcomes. This information may come from fellow students, lecturers or professionals in the field of work. You gather this information purposely - for example, through targeted and specific questions - to continue developing yourself. By interpreting feedback, making it open to discussion and translating it into concrete actions, you improve the quality of your working and learning process (Speltincx & Vanhoof, 2021). So, feedback is not a one-way street, but an ongoing process in which you take the lead. It involves requesting, receiving and giving feedback. Sometimes a follow-up question may be needed to make sure you have understood the feedback correctly. You then decide which next step is suitable and feasible (Carless & Boud, 2018). By also giving feedback to others, you develop your own capacity for assessment and reflection, and contribute to a collaborative learning culture.

In short: requesting, receiving and giving feedback are crucial skills for your personal and professional development.

Requesting feedback

Feedback helps you understand where you stand, what you are already doing well and what improvements you can make to successfully complete the learning outcomes. By deciding for yourself what kind of feedback you want and from whom, the feedback will better align with your learning process. This helps you develop further in the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1994) (see Figure 1). These development zones indicate that learning takes place in the space between what you can do alone and what you can do with help. Good feedback questions position you exactly in the zone of proximal development. They prevent you from ending up in the panic zone and help you grow from your current level of development ('I can do this myself'). Understanding these zones provides insight into your current development, which skills you have already mastered independently and in what areas you can ask for help. By understanding and processing feedback and converting it into action (Carless & Boud, 2018), you take ownership of your learning process and actively work on your personal and professional development.

Figure 1: Zones of development (Vygotsky, 1994)

Who can you ask for feedback and give feedback to?

You learn in a learning community in which you collaborate with other students, lecturers and professionals in the field of work (learning triangle, figure 2). By deciding for yourself what kind of feedback you want and from whom, you ensure that feedback better matches what you want to learn. By gathering feedback from different perspectives, you gain a better understanding of where you are now and where you want to go. This is how you work on your personal and professional development in a focused way.
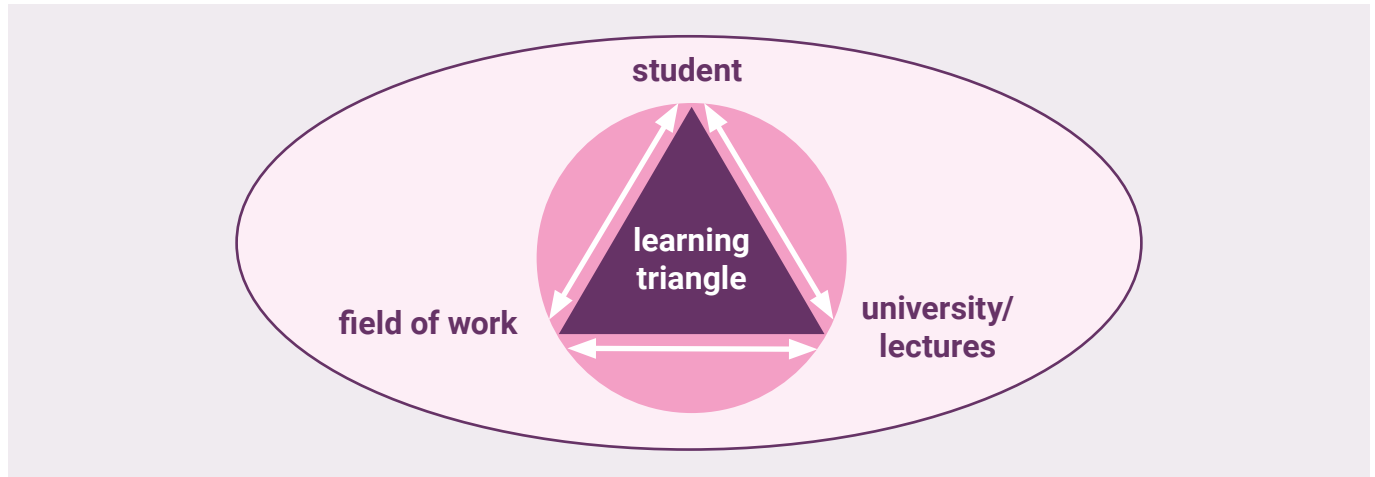

Figure 2: Learning triangle (Duvekot, 2016)

What feedback questions are effective?

To ask effective, targeted feedback questions, it is important to first be clear on what aspects you want to be assessed. You can formulate those starting points, or criteria, through an inquisitive attitude, for instance based on the literature or previous feedback moments (Munneke et al., 2024).

A tool for asking effective feedback questions are the acronyms Power, Closer, Blind spot and Super (de Kleijn, 2023). You can use these acronyms (Figure 3) as mnemonics to ask for targeted feedback during your learning process and as a tool to formulate your question powerfully and clearly. It is important to learn to use these questions instead of asking general questions such as: What should I do?, Is this (good) enough?, What can I improve? and Is it okay now? By going through each acronym, you learn to analyse your own situation and communicate the feedback you want in a focused way.
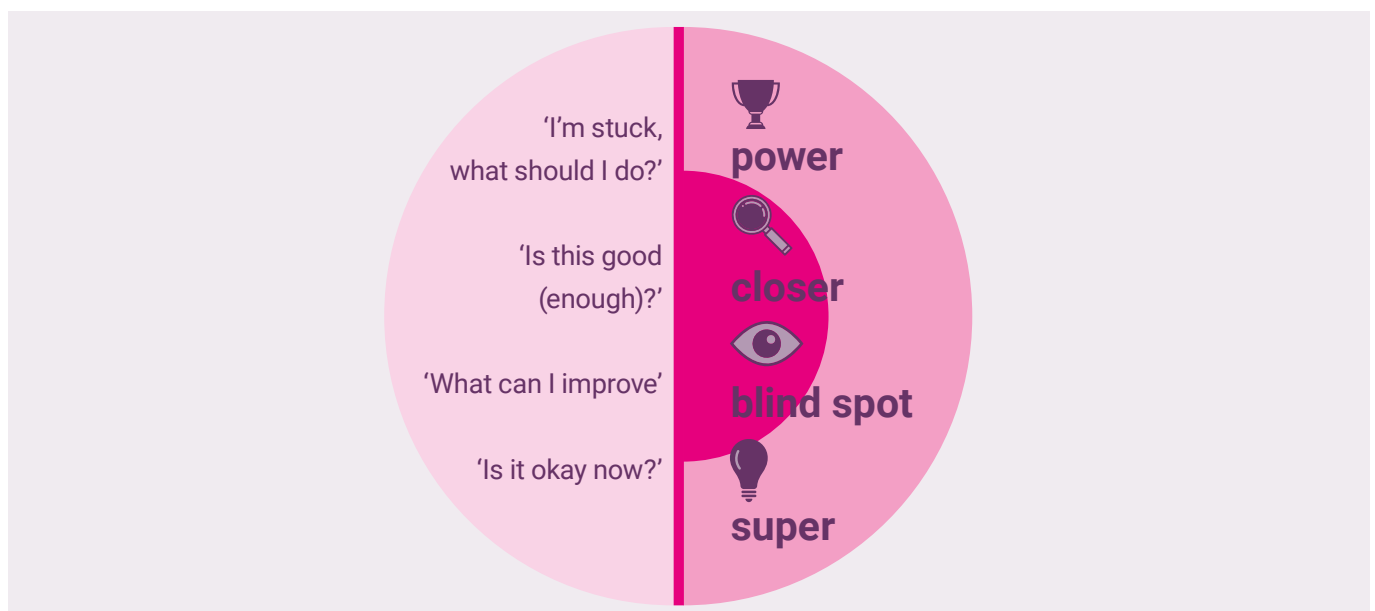

Figure 3: Acronyms for feedback questions (De Kleijn, 2023

POWER - I'M STUCK, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Instead of "I'm stuck, what should I do?", you can also show how far you have come yourself and only then ask for feedback from fellow students, lecturers and/or professionals in the field of work, for example.

- **P**roblem: on what am I getting stuck?
- **O**ptions: what have I tried?
- **W**eighing: what are the pros and cons?
- **E**ncourage own choice: what would I do myself?
- **R**equest advice: what do you think of my approach?

Use POWER as a building plan: from analysis to concrete feedback question.

CLOSER - IS THIS (GOOD) ENOUGH?

Instead of "is this (good) enough?", it is important to make clear to your feedback provider what the context is in which you are asking for feedback. For example, it makes a difference whether you feel you are almost ready or whether it is a first rough draft. By first providing your own assessment (self-evaluation), you increase the likelihood of receiving useful and in-depth feedback. Be clear about what kind of feedback you want and why it is important to you.

- **C**ontext: where am I in the process?
- **L**earning outcome: what conditions must this work meet?
- **O**bject: on what do I want feedback?
- **S**elf-evaluation: what do I think of this myself?
- **E**valuation question: what do I want to know from the other person?
- **R**equest advice: what tips do you have for me?

CLOSER helps you provide context so that feedback better matches what you need.

BLIND SPOT - What do I need to improve?

When you ask: "What do I need to improve?", you run the risk of receiving more feedback than you can process at that time or that the feedback is too general. By wording your feedback questions carefully, you specifically want to get the key areas of improvement clear at that time, without being overwhelmed by a flood of well-meaning feedback. This prevents you from feeling further adrift or panicking.

- As a feedback giver, what do you think are my main blind spots right now?
- What am I not yet seeing and where can I improve?
- How does this influence my next step: what do I want or need to do with this feedback?

Use this if you really want to gain new insights about your approach or product.

SUPER - IS IT OKAY NOW?

If you've already asked for feedback and taken actions, you will then want to know whether it is (good) enough now. Keep in mind that the feedback giver, who probably supervises several students, may not always remember exactly what feedback you previously received and what steps you took in response.

As the recipient of feedback, you are the owner of this process. It is your responsibility to process the feedback, work with it and monitor your own development. In doing so, rely on your own understanding and skills. By dealing with feedback consciously and independently, you demonstrate ownership and work on your professional growth.

- **S**ummary: what was the previous feedback?
- **U**ptake: what did I do with that feedback?
- **P**roduct: how does that show?
- **E**motion: how did that feel?
- **R**equest advice: have I grown?

💡 *SUPER helps you complete a feedback cycle and show what you have learned.*

In this way, you not only steer your learning process, but also show that you are working on your development as a professional. Together, these acronyms are a toolbox you can use to actively guide your learning.

Receiving feedback

Receiving feedback can sometimes be confrontational and affect you emotionally. In that case, you may not be immediately open to the content of the feedback and will be less likely to take targeted action based on it.

Take the time to process the feedback and let the feedback giver know how it affects you. At a later time, you can revisit and analyse the feedback. In doing so, ask yourself the following questions: Which parts of the feedback do I recognise or not recognise? Why does this feedback affect me so much?

If you notice that you receive certain feedback more often but you don't recognise it immediately, you can ask the feedback giver to give specific examples. This offers you more insight and helps you understand the feedback better. In doing so, also ask yourself the question: What does this feedback say about me? Do I want or need to do something with it? and Who can support me in this?

Receiving feedback is an active skill involving self-reflection, openness and ownership.

Possible pitfalls when receiving feedback

There can be pitfalls to receiving feedback, for example 'passively waiting for feedback', 'wanting to receive only affirmative feedback', 'asking for one-sided feedback', 'reacting defensively to feedback', 'analysing feedback superficially' or 'doing nothing with it'. It is perfectly normal to sometimes recognise yourself in one of these pitfalls. Figure 4 lists the common pitfalls in receiving feedback and concrete tools to better deal with them. Each pitfall is linked to a recognisable attitude, reflection questions and sample questions to ask yourself and the feedback giver.

	Pitfall	Keep in mind	Ask yourself	Ask your feedback giver
Ask no questions	**You passively wait for feedback** ↓ You receive no, little or unfocused feedback	• I am responsible for gathering feedback; both on what I do well and on what I can improve • I know that taking the time to ask for feedback is part of my work	• What feedback would help me develop professionally? • When and how can I ask for this specific feedback?	• My development goal is to []. Do you have feedback to help me with this?
Well done, right?	**You don't ask for feedback or only to receive a positive assessment** ↓ You receive no insight into your areas of improvement	• I see feedback as a means of continuing to develop, not to make an impression • If I can't do something well yet, it helps to ask for feedback on (precisely) that	• Why do I feel the need to make an impression? • Why am I afraid of feedback on what I can't do well yet?	• I am still struggling with []. How can I develop myself in this area?
What do you know about it?	**You only ask your manager or supervisor for feedback** ↓ You get a one-sided perspective on your professional actions	• Considering different perspectives contributes to the quality of our work • Colleagues, clients and students can give me different, and therefore valuable, feedback	• Which colleagues and other stakeholders (e.g. clients and students) see my actions? • What can I learn from the feedback from these specific people?	• I value and request your feedback specifically because []; can you give me feedback on []?
Yes, but...	**You react defensively** ↓ You are not open to the feedback	• Feedback is about my professional actions and development, not about me as a person • Emotional reactions are a normal part of receiving feedback; I acknowledge them and work with them	• (Why) do I feel the urge to defend myself? • What can I learn from the feedback from these specific people?	• Thank you: this makes me feel [], can we discuss this now/later?
Whatever...	**You do not analyse feedback thoroughly** ↓ You don't really learn anything	• Instead of simply accepting feedback, I analyse it to learn from it • Analysing conflicting or confusing feedback can be worthwhile	• How does this feedback relate to previous feedback and my own perspective? • Do I need further clarification?	• I don't fully understand your feedback on []. Could you explain that further?
Thank you, carry on!	**You do nothing with the feedback** ↓ Your work does not improve and you do not develop	• Feedback is meant to be used and I can apply it in other situations • I keep using feedback consciously, setting new goals and asking for new feedback	• How, where and when can I use this feedback? • What difficulties do I expect and what or who can help me?	• I want to use this feedback in this situation. Could you give me feedback on that afterwards?

Figure 4: Pitfalls of feedback (de Kleijn, 2024)

It is important to remember that feedback relates to your behaviour or performance and not to who you are as a person. By making this distinction and learning how to handle feedback professionally, you can continue to grow and develop yourself.

Giving feedback

Giving feedback is not only valuable for the person receiving it, but also instructive for you as the giver. By giving feedback, you learn to look critically at work, make connections between learning outcomes and performance, and develop your communication skills. You contribute to another person's learning and growth.

So by giving feedback, you not only help your fellow students progress, but also strengthen your own judgement, insight and learning process.

How do you give effective feedback?
Relevante feedback is specifiek, constructief en afgestemd op de behoeften van de ander. Het is belangrijk om niet alleen op de inhoud te letten, maar ook op de manier waarop je de feedback brengt.

Van den Berg, et al. (2014) developed the **ACC** rule. This rule implies that feedback is more effective when it is **A**ffirming, but at the same time **C**ritical and **C**onstructive.
Conclude with a question, such as: "Does this help you?" In this way, you invite the other person into a conversation and further reflection.

Summary
Effective feedback is a cyclical process of asking, receiving and giving. Through practice, you will develop feedback literacy and actively take charge of your learning process. This will help you grow as a student and as a future professional.

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