

Guidelines - Facilitating a Group Discussion/Tutorial

Introduction

Facilitating a small group discussion or a tutorial group effectively involves the acquisition of a skill set not often learnt during undergraduate or postgraduate studies. It is, however, a vital element in being a good educator and for this reason is one of the core elements in the scholar role requirements for fellowship.

Evaluation

It is intended that observing and evaluating the trainee facilitating a group discussion, provides valuable feedback to the trainee to enable them to more confidently lead tutorials, small workshops or chairing meetings during training, and after becoming a fellow.

It is recommended that the trainee and Departmental Scholar Role Tutor (DSRT) meet prior to the activity to discuss the trainee’s plan.

When observing the trainee, the DSRT considers each of the items on the form and determines: whether significant improvement is required; whether the item has been addressed, though some improvement is required; or whether the item has been satisfactorily addressed. If multiple items require significant improvement it may be helpful for the trainee to be observed and evaluated again. If there are one or two items that the trainee requires some improvement on, it is recommended that the assessor discuss these with the trainee, including how the trainee might improve when facilitating a group discussion in the future.

Once the activity has been completed satisfactorily, the DSRT should confirm completion in the training portfolio system.

Planning and Preparation (Set)	
The trainee is expected to set the scene for the session. The trainee must make explicit the relevance of the session to the participants and link this to the stated objectives of the session.	
Documents an appropriate learning plan (incorporating set/body/closure format)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This element may be evaluated in a planning session prior to the actual activity. Has the trainee adequately prepared? Is the structure appropriate to the activity? Does the plan include reference to preparation of the environment, resources required, human factors (e.g. are additional facilitators required) and the mechanism to determine if planned learning has occurred?
Identifies learning needs of participant/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there evidence the trainee took steps to gain an understanding of the learning needs from the participants’ perspective (e.g. survey, conversation)? Is the plan targeted at the appropriate level of detail for this individual/group and does it take into account individual diversity?
Defines the desired learning outcomes of the session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning objectives should be clearly stated (SMART – Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Timed) and relevant to the needs of the participants in the group and the training program.
Selects methods for teaching and learning appropriate to the content and group size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the trainee justify the method(s) chosen for this particular content and group? Is the chosen method likely to enable all participants to be able to achieve the stated objectives?
Selects or plans educational material (i.e. pre-reading, handouts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the trainee provide relevant materials for participants to prepare in advance? Was the educational material chosen likely to contribute to the planned learning? Did the trainee provide appropriate rationale for the use or non-use of supportive educational material?

Ensures teaching venue is suitable and resources are ready to use (i.e. audio visual equipment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the trainee take responsibility for ensuring the teaching venue was prepared for use and the necessary equipment functioned? • Was the set-up of the room conducive to facilitating a group discussion (i.e. in a semi-circle without barriers) and/or a tutorial?
Teaching (Body)	
Content delivered supports achievement of learning outcomes and is current and evidence based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the material relevant to the identified needs of the participants and aligned to the learning outcomes? • Was the material up-to-date and adequately referenced? • In a small group discussion, did the trainee draw out the relevant content required for achievement of the learning outcomes? • Did the trainee encourage the spirit of critical inquiry?
Content is suitable for level of participants, adjustments are made if required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the exercise pitched at the appropriate level of training and learning needs of the group? • Did the trainee facilitate a process to explore content related to the leaning objectives? • Did the trainee make adjustments where different levels of learner were in the same group? <p>Note: Where pre-session work has been provided the trainee should be encouraged to aim the level of learning as planned and not necessarily adjust to meet the needs of the poorly prepared participant(s).</p>
Utilises educational resources to enhance learning (e.g. visual aids)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the trainee use the available resources appropriately? • If there is a PowerPoint presentation, was it necessary and if so were the slides appropriately formatted and understandable? • Was the trainee able to justify the use of any educational resources used? • If technology is used, was there evidence of testing prior to the session should be expected?
Uses questions effectively to engage and challenge participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group sessions are more effective when the recipients are actively engaged. The group are participants, not an audience. Questions should help the session to achieve the set aims. • Did the trainee use open questions (clear, non-ambiguous) and wait time? • Did the trainee listen, acknowledge, and redirect the participants appropriately? • Did the trainee allow participants to answer the questions (rather than answering the question themselves)? • Did the trainee ask the group for any questions at the end of the body section of the session and prior to closure?
Establishes and maintains effective functioning of the group, encourages active participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trainee should demonstrate an ability to enable active participation. • Did the facilitation provide opportunity for inclusiveness and contribution from all? • Did the trainee utilise techniques to engage quieter participants and/or manage the over participator (if applicable)?
Uses time efficiently and effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the stated learning objectives achieved within the allotted time? • Did the trainee allow time for material to be discussed at appropriate depth? • Were techniques/strategies used to move dialogue along when either too detailed or off topic? • Was any time wasted during the session?
Provides a supportive, non-threatening learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the trainee engage the participants in an appropriate manner designed to encourage rather than threaten or embarrass? • Did the trainee create an engaging, motivating, and intellectually stimulating learning experience? • Did the trainee model a warm, tolerant and positive attitude? • Was there evidence of clear expectations, a consistent approach throughout, fairness, relevancy, patience and mutual respect?

Feedback and Summary (Closure)	
Acknowledges participation, encourages reflection on key learning points and their application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the session appropriately summarised at the end, with acknowledgement of the participants' role, contribution/achievement and related back to the learning objectives of the session? • Was there evidence that the trainee encouraged participant reflection?
Encourages further learning (i.e. pursue literature to answer questions, suggests relevant reading)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the trainee provide guidance regarding further learning and/or suggest/recommend suitable resources to encourage further learning?
Summarises key issues and concludes the session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the trainee closes the session with two or three key points and take home messages relevant to the specific learning outcomes?

Resources

Further information is available in Networks under Anaesthesia learning in the Scholar role support resources network. Located in Learning and teaching, the Facilitating a group discussion folder includes an e-learning module that shares an approach for facilitating a small group discussion, including links to further resources and reference lists for suggested reading.