

**Submission**  
**2015 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators**

**1) Title of Proposal:**

Face-to-face teacher-student performance appraisals

**2) Abstract:**

Within this discussion session, we will review the benefits and drawbacks of conducting face-to-face performance appraisals between teacher and student. I will share my experiences practicing a “performance appraisal week,” wherein I participated in individual dialogues regarding student performance and development with 70 business majors and minors. We will talk about the trouble we have with giving and receiving feedback, to and from students, and how to improve student responses to different types and sources of feedback within the limitations of a semester’s class.

### **3) Keywords:**

Performance appraisals, teacher-student feedback, student-teacher feedback

### **4) Format**

- Activity or exercise
- Discussion roundtable (60 minute only)
- General discussion session

### **5) Time Requested:**

- 30 Minutes
- 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)
- 90 Minutes

### **6) Planning Details:**

No special requirements for space or materials.

### **7) Learning Objectives or Goals for the Session:**

1. Participants will reflect on research relating to challenges in the feedback process related to student development.
2. Participants will respond to the presenter's experiences and offer ideas on how to improve face-to-face feedback sessions.
3. Participants will leave the session with ideas on how to improve written and verbal feedback relating to student performance and development.

## 8) Management or Teaching Topics:

Performance is a construct studied in all business disciplines albeit with different definitions. Within the disciplines of organizational behavior and human resource management, performance is studied on the individual and group-levels as a product of motivation and ability. Motivation theories used to predict increases to employee performance are vast and diverse in focus, but one unifying construct of importance is feedback. To improve performance, employees require some type of feedback regarding their performance to help them focus their abilities and motivation toward the achievement of more challenging goals (e.g., Locke and Latham, 1993). How employees use that feedback varies based on the theory, but feedback remains a crucial variable in predicting future performance of an individual or group. Although academia is very different from a typical employment context, assessing student performance and providing feedback is a necessary and important appraisal process assumed to play a role in student development much the way that appraisals in employment are assumed to play a role in improving productivity or efficiency.

Recent articles critiquing business education claim that business schools fail to provide rigorous and relevant learning opportunities to prepare students for future employment (i.e., AACSB, 1999; Berggren & Soderlund, 2011; Samuelson, 2006). The field of performance appraisal research knows much about how to create and administer effective performance appraisal and feedback processes to help maximize perceptions of fairness and minimize negative emotional reactions to performance assessment and feedback. However, many practitioners fail to put best practices into place due to politics, fear of conflict, time, or a lack of competence. It only makes sense that, to be rigorous and relevant when we teach about performance appraisals, we should engage students in a performance feedback structure likened to that we teach is most effective in industry with the goal of helping students gain confidence in the process. But, we do not...

### Politics

Employees and employers do not respond well to feedback requirements. Performance appraisal systems are notoriously regarded as frustrating, difficult, inaccurate, and mostly inadequate. Within the context of academia, the obstacles for providing effective and holistic feedback for our students are similar to industry. Instructors may be fearful of losing their credibility or status if they engage in dialogue regarding student performance, or they may fear making individuals experience emotional reactions they are unable to manage. Next, instructors may avoid giving students timely and constructive feedback for political reasons. Specifically, instructors may time feedback dissemination to maximize student evaluations of a teacher/course. For example, instructors may not release exam or paper grades and commentary until after course evaluations are completed, and they may avoid developmental conversations with students during the semester to avoid potential negative student evaluations linked to promotion and tenure decisions.

### Fear of conflict

In higher education, each instructor understands that s/he is responsible for assessing each student's learning, and instructors are given the academic freedom to assess that learning. However, in the guise of academic freedom, the trend appears that most instructors ignore effective feedback practices and choose to use practices that minimize potential conflict. Specifically, instructors tend to provide performance assessment feedback in the form of points and written commentary, but written feedback is often ignored or invalidated by students. For example, students may not read commentary because they may not see it as instructive on how to perform better on the next test or assessment—they do not see a perceived connection between assessments (Jonsson, 2013). Additionally, the timing for feedback is too often delayed for students to derive use or meaning. Next, students dislike feedback that is not self-validating and avoid written feedback that is negative. Thus, students may simply avoid reading comments and just look at the final grade (e.g., Ferguson 2011). In the end, students are not likely to engage with written feedback in a meaningful way.

### Time

Jonsson (2013) suggests that we combine audio commentary with written feedback as a way to help students identify important development opportunities and reach those who would otherwise simply ignore written commentary. The communication literature makes it clear that when conflict and severe consequences are expected or experienced (such as in a performance review), discussions need to occur using a rich communication channel (e.g., face-to-face meeting) rather than a lean channel so that the appraisee would have the opportunity for dialogue and discourse (Daft & Lengel, 1984). However, the time it takes to provide adequate and effective feedback to improve performance and commitment from students is a huge burden for faculty. It seems like faculty are always facing time constraints, and if faculty have other reasons to not want to change how they currently provide performance feedback, then they will definitely not be motivated to put in the time necessary to do something they do not want to do in the first place, especially if tenure and promotions are not objectively tied to spending increased time on student feedback.

### The Session

Thus, it is the objective of this discussion to help participants think of new ways to improve upon teacher-student and student-teacher feedback loops while embracing our current challenges. Within this discussion session, we will review common obstacles faced by educators regarding this topic and practice. Next, I will present my experiences conducting one-on-one dialogue sessions with 70 business (majors and minors) students during the spring semester of a Principles of Management course. Finally, we will explore techniques instructors could use to improve their feedback processes and provide a rigorous and relevant learning experience related to managerial performance appraisals.

## **9) Session Description and Plan:**

1. Introduction: I will spend approximately five-ten minutes summarizing current research regarding instructor-student feedback struggles in a typical semester long management course and how these challenges are both similar and dissimilar to those found in performance appraisal research.
2. Review of “participation week”: Next, I will spend about fifteen minutes reviewing my method this past spring semester of conducting 70 twenty-minute performance dialogue sessions with my business students. I will go over format, timing, and bring up interesting anecdotes and takeaways.
3. Discussion: Participants will comment on what they think could have gone better or worse in the aim for student development and rigor, and they will brainstorm methods of improving instructor-student and student-instructor feedback loops in their own quarter, trimester, or semester classes.

## **10) For Activities and Exercises:**

For the discussion, I will pass around a few copies of the instruments I gave to the students before the individual feedback sessions. They include a self-evaluation and peer evaluations of group performance and class participation performance. See Appendix (section 14).

## **11) Implications for Teaching or for Teachers:**

This session will be helpful to those providing teacher-student feedback, those desiring constructive student-teacher feedback, and those teaching about performance appraisals.

## **12) Application to Conference theme:**

This sessions connects to the conference theme by 1) discussing a method which may help students connect their learning (of management practices and conducting performance appraisals) to their current experiences within the academic context and by 2) discussing how we can be more authentic by practicing what we teach (regarding effective feedback practices).

### **13) Unique Contribution to OBTC:**

This proposal is not currently review under anywhere else, and it has not been presented at OBTC before.

### **14) References and/or Additional Materials:**

#### **References**

AACSB (1999). Continuous improvement symposium continues to draw a crowd. *Newsline*, 30(1), 10-13.

Berggren, C. & Soderlund, J. (2011). Management education for practicing managers: Combining academic rigor with personal change and organizational action. *Journal of Management Education*, 35(3), 377-405.

Daft, R.L. & Lengel, R.H. (1984). Information richness: a new approach to managerial behavior and organizational design. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 6, 191–233.

Ferguson, P. (2011). Student perceptions of quality feedback in teacher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 36(1), 51-62.

Jonsson, A. (2013). Facilitating productive use of feedback in higher education. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 14(1), 63-76.

Samuelson, J. (2006). The new rigor: Beyond the right answer. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 5(3), 356-365.

## Appendix: Evaluations completed before individual meetings

### A. Student information sheet

[Several questions regarding student individual backgrounds were asked at the beginning of the semester. Two of their answers will be up for discussion during individual sessions: What are your career goals? What are your class goals? I will have their sheets at each session.]

### B. Self-evaluation: MGMT 350 Performance

Respond to the degree you agree to the following statements about your performance.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Indifferent	Agree	Strongly agree
My mid-term grade reflects my understanding of the class material.	1	2	3	4	5
My participation grade seems fair as a comparison of my efforts to my peers.	1	2	3	4	5
I come fully prepared for class (have read and tested myself on material).	1	2	3	4	5
My writing skills are excellent.	1	2	3	4	5
I come fully prepared for my group meetings (bring ideas and drafts on time).	1	2	3	4	5
What could you do to improve your grade or performance?					
What could you do to be a better group member?					
What improvements could the instructor make to help you reach your performance or professional development goals?					
What other resources would help you reach your goals?					

C. Peer assessment: Class participation

Indicate the extent to which each of your group members adds to class participation.

Group Member	Sometimes comes to class	Comes to class and adds some to our class exercises	Comes to class and adds much to our class exercises	Comes to class, adds to our exercises, and speaks up when asked a direct question	Comes to class, adds to our exercises, speaks up when asked, and often speaks up when not directly called upon
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5

D. Peer-assessment: Group participation

Below is a BARS scale which ranges from a maximum score of 30 points to a minimum score of 0 points, with specific behavioral anchors for 30, 20, 10, and 0 points.

On the right side of this form, fill in the names of your group members (just their first name will suffice if you do not know their last name). Assign each member a score from 0-30, based on how they compare to the descriptions in the BARS.

<p><b>30 points--</b> + + + + <b>25 points</b> + + + + <b>20 points--</b> + + + + <b>15 points</b> + + + + <b>10 points--</b> + + + + <b>5 points</b> + + + + <b>0 points--</b></p>	<p>The group member contributed as much (or more) than anyone else to the project. S/he attended all project meetings, was always prepared for those meetings, and consistently suggested valuable ideas. S/he worked well with the other group members, and practiced and prepared for the presentation. S/he was a definite asset to the group.</p> <p>The group member contributed a bit less than some of the other members. S/he attended most project meetings, but s/he was not always prepared for those meetings and did not always suggest valuable ideas. S/he worked well with some group members, less well with others. S/he did not spend much time preparing for the presentation, but did not really harm the group's performance.</p> <p>The group member contributed less than other group members. S/he rarely attended project meetings, was seldom prepared for any meetings actually attended, and rarely suggested valuable ideas. S/he did not work well with most other group members, and did not prepare for the presentation. S/he harmed the group's performance to some extent.</p> <p>The group member contributed the least of any member. S/he almost never attended project meetings, was never prepared for the meeting(s) actually attended, and never suggested valuable ideas. S/he did not work well with the other group members and did not prepare at all for the presentation. S/he definitely harmed the group's performance to a great degree.</p>
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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_