

Guidelines and Examples for Educators for Written Assessment of Student Performance in Foundations 1 Small Groups

ASSESSMENT & GRADING IN THE BRIDGES CURRICULUM

Your feedback on students' communication, knowledge, and professionalism in small groups is important to guide students' learning. It is used by students and coaches to inform students' professional development. This document provides guidelines on construction of high-quality written feedback to small group students.

The approach to small group assessment enacts the Bridges curriculum philosophy: to ensure that students achieve expectations in the course and progress in the UCSF MD competency milestones, and to promote assessment for learning – the use of feedback and assessment data to promote further learning and improvement. For students whose performance is determined as 'does not meet expectations', further makeup work may be required.

Please see resources for [Assessment and Grading in the Bridges Curriculum](#) and for [Avoiding Stereotypes and Bias in Assessment of Learner Performance](#) before submitting your assessment.

It is important for evaluators to avoid bias in written evaluations. Examples of potentially biased language and alternatives:

- “*Student was quiet.*” The adjective “quiet” can be associated with gender or race/ethnicity. Therefore, describe what the student did well in behavioral terms, such as “*Student listened well; student participated thoughtfully.*”
- “*Student was overconfident.*” The distinction between confident (good) and overconfident (bad) is a judgement prone to bias. Describe specific behaviors observed in small group instead.
- “*She is mindful not to dominate the group.*” This language could represent bias around which students should or should not demonstrate leadership in the group.

Below are examples of high-quality written assessments and examples of feedback in need of improvement. (Please note that these are meant as general examples and **not as copy/paste options.**)

High quality feedback comments are:

1. Specific
2. Competency-based
3. Based on direct observation of performance
4. Inclusive of strengths and recommendations for next steps
5. Free of bias

CIC/Inquiry Immersion: High-Quality Assessments

CIC/Inquiry Example #1

“[Student Name] contributed to each small group and large group discussion. She was a very central member of this group, always willing to take on leadership roles (student leader, scribe) and carrying these out with poise and insight. Her presentations were well researched and always included evidence from the literature, particularly for approaches focused on community-based health promotion. She had a nuanced approach to each article assigned, and quickly poked holes in the less well-designed studies. Since she already possesses strong leadership skills, I recommend she grow and expand on her teaching and presenting skills, specifically working on making presentations more focused and succinct.”

CIC/Inquiry Example #2

“[Student Name]’s natural compassion and empathy came through in his thoughtful questions. He held a balanced perspective, considering both the strengths and limitations of biomedicine and whole healing models of care. He questioned if a wider, inclusive lens of accepted healing frameworks could address the gaps in each model to increase treatment options. He also expressed insightful comments on the importance of whole-person assessment for therapeutic alliance and increasing accessibility of treatments. He gave an excellent presentation surveying the evidence for XX in the treatment of XX (assigned research topic presented in dyads). As he has a sincere desire to further learn how to bridge complementary therapies into biomedicine, we would encourage him to continue exploring training opportunities in integrative health care, education, and research.”

CIC/Inquiry Immersion: Assessments that Need Improvement

CIC/Inquiry Example #1

“Thanks for being in the class!” “Appreciated your questions and involvement.”

Minimal and nonspecific: This feedback, though positive, is vague and too brief. *How to improve this feedback:* provide specific examples of the student’s performance and progress on competency milestones; provide suggestions for future development.

CIC/Inquiry Example #2

“[Student Name] will be the type of doctor that is desperately needed in health care, as I know he will use his scientific background to better the future of medicine and health IT. He brought unique perspectives to the course and his final project addressed a problem that is relevant and important in modern day health care. Look forward to what he will do next!”

Speculation and cheerleading rather than based on observed performance: Though this feedback is positive, it is speculative: it is not focused on the student’s performance but on the evaluator’s hopes for

the student's future. *How to improve this feedback:* Include competency-based examples of the student's performance and offer ways the student could further develop or explore his interests.

CIC/Inquiry Example #3

"[Student Name] stood out from her peers for her thoughtfulness and self-reflection throughout the two weeks of this mini-course. In this regard, she exceeded expectations. The only disappointment was that her excellent insights and ideas were limited to her written reflections. I wish [Student Name] would speak up more in the group setting."

Comparisons to peers, vague about strengths, emotional about weaknesses: This assessment uses comparison to peers rather than focusing on this student. Feedback is framed in negative emotional responses toward the student ("disappointment/I wish XX would speak up more.") *How to improve this feedback:* Frame suggestions for improvement in nonjudgmental, concrete ways; provide additional examples of the student's activities and competency-based performance.

Foundational Science Blocks: High-Quality Assessments

FS Example #1 (Student with no performance concerns)

"[Student name] is a bright, hardworking, and capable medical student who approached this small group series with diligence and attention. The group responded well to his calm demeanor, and his interpersonal skills reflected his maturity and thoughtfulness. I greatly appreciated his enthusiasm for the work, and he asked excellent questions to enhance his understanding of metabolic acidosis. He was a true asset to our group, and an absolute pleasure to work with during this small group series."

FS Example #2 (Student met competency in the domain of interprofessional and communication skills, but not in professionalism.)

"[Student name] often invited others to speak and asked the group if everyone was ready before moving on. When there was a silence, she offered to read the question/case vignette. She used Zoom screen share effectively and used chat to share relevant documents or raise a question. Professionalism, in particular preparation, is an area of improvement as 4 out of the 5 sessions we had together, she was not prepared, which she stated during check in. Overall, she was a good asset to our small group."

FS Example #3 (Student was borderline in the domain of interprofessional and communication skills.)

"[Student name] was prepared for all 5 sessions we had and was full of enthusiasm in each of the small group discussions. They were often the first one to answer several of the questions, asked probing questions and jumped in first to start check in. This really enhanced our group's energy level. One area of improvement is listening. In group, they provided an alternative perspective on use of a particular word and then were asked numerous times not to use that word. However, they continued using the word."

Foundational Science Blocks: Assessments that Need Improvement

FS Example #1

“Keep up the good work. Great job!”

Minimal, nonspecific: This feedback, though positive, is vague and too brief. *How to improve this feedback:* provide specific examples of the student’s performance and progress on competency milestones; provide suggestions for future development.

FS Example #2

“Unfortunately, we only had a brief opportunity to interact. Difficult to evaluate in Zoom sessions.”

Minimal, nonspecific, observation/feedback not provided: Evaluator did not provide any comments on observations or feedback of/for the student. *How to improve this feedback:* as an evaluator, develop a system or ask for guidance from the course director on how to make competency-based observations of every student in your group, even those you might not have directly interacted with but only observed. If the Zoom format is challenging, ask for guidance on how to evaluate/observe students participating via Zoom. Offer comments on observed competencies and provide suggestions for future development.