

APEs in the classroom

How clarifying expectations enriches and enhances the educational experience

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Example Check-in

- Connect
 - Introduce yourself to each other with information that helps everyone know who they are sharing the table with.
- What assumptions are you making about
 - Neil?
 - This session?
- What are you expecting
 - From Neil?
 - From other participants?
 - From yourself?
 - From this session?
- Managing expectations...yours and mine
- How are we going to work together?



Example shared principles for an experiential module

**be real
be honest**

**honour
confidentiality**

**listen to
understand**

**own your story
and opinions**

**respect each
other's stories
and opinions**

**be generous in
what you share**

**be mindful of
your impact and
curious about
your responses**

**give and receive
caring
constructive
feedback**



Cultivating a thriving learning environment

- Our APEs shape our experience.
- Check-in provides opportunity to examine our APEs and co-create a contract that supports the development of a thriving learning environment and can reimagine the relationship between students and educators.

- Assumptions
 - an unexamined belief
- Perspective
 - / Perception/ Preferences/ Preconceptions/ Permissions
 - Our lens on the world
- Expectations
 - a set of criteria against which the experience [of module/ tutor/ peers] will be judged





Contracting for learning

- As educators we create and hold a space within which learning occurs (a container).
- We co-create the nature of that space.
- Contracting allows us to:
 - Do this explicitly
 - Actively surface assumptions and expectations.
 - Understand who is in the room so that we can adapt/ tailor the learning experience to meet their varied needs.
 - Establish a shared framework or set of “ground rules” conducive to learning.
 - Clarify the parameters, boundaries, behaviours, and goals of the relationship.
 - Address [in part] the implicit power dynamic in the classroom.



Ethos

- “Building relations with students implies agency, efficacy, respect...and allowing the experiences of the [learner] to be recognised in the classroom.”
- “Developing relationships requires skill by the teacher...listening, empathy, caring, and having positive regard for others.” ([Hattie, 2009, p.118](#))



Benefits for all

- Promotes the co-creation of a positive and inclusive culture that celebrates diversity.
- Aims to create a safe space for all, where individuals feel heard, valued, and respected.
- Creates an open and transparent environment that is more conducive to learning.
- Encourages co-construction, listening to students' voices, and joint discovery.
- Establishes clear roles and responsibilities.
- Leads to greater learner autonomy and clearer accountability.
([Lemieux, 2001](#))



Shifting Perspectives

- Student-educator relationship shapes the learning journey and student engagement ([Thornberg et al, 2022](#))

From Teacher and expert	To Collaborator and coach
Didactic	Dialogic
Teacher-centric	Learner-centric
Unidirectional flow	Active engagement
Dependent learners	Empowered proactive learners
Lower order thinking	Enhanced critical and creative thinking



Challenges

- The entrenched influence of the conventional power dynamic often experienced by learners, is likely to inhibit the effectiveness of this approach.
- May be seen as high risk by some [students and educators].
- Questions regarding scalability of this approach to meet the demands of increasing class sizes.

- A key strategy is the cultivation of an institution-wide coaching culture, aimed at building meaningful relationships, enhancing academic achievement, and fostering a uniform student experience.
- Recognise that dialogic approaches “can produce significant gains in cognitive learning as well as social and emotional benefits through more personalised forms of learning.” ([Hardman, 2009](#))



Conclusion

- The coaching contract emerges as a promising tool to formalise this shift, empowering individuals to reach their full potential. ([Ralph, 2024](#))
- A coaching-style contract
 - Represents a significant step towards fostering a collaborative and empowering educational environment.
 - Challenges extant beliefs and assumptions made by students and educators alike.
 - Redefines classroom dynamics and promotes shared responsibility for learning.



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