

A response to Paula Murarescu's critical thinking / feedback session

This is a valuable session for stage 1 students. This cohort is new to university culture and it is commonplace for first year students to find the critique and feedback element of assignments complicated and stressful. Often they worry about the validity of their own opinions; often it's a fear of upsetting friends; often it's a concern about how to respond to feedback that has been offered to them—what to do with this information?

The aims of this session are thoughtfully considered to soften the students' negative impression of, and anxiety around, giving and receiving feedback. This perception change is difficult, but also a necessary and important ambition that first year teaching staff should engage with.

Through role-play, staff example, reflective practice and student interaction, the students are given clear direction on the distinction between 'good' and 'bad' feedback, recognising the value of good feedback and forming more useful and complex critical commentary as a result. With the playlist intervention, students offset their concerns into more familiar and 'friendly' territory from which they re-approach criticism with fewer hangups and concerns from what they perceive as a less aggressive angle.

This session offers a neat solution to a vexing problem, and one which has enabled the students to perform better (more productively and with more focus) across the course. This is a clear, defined five-step programme that students recognise as responsive to issues they have raised at APT and which better prepares the students for further study.

Students have responded positively, and this work is indicative of the intelligence that Paula brings to her role as module leader and First Year Tutor. An excellent session which I hope to see rolled out again in forthcoming years.



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