

**Office of Medical Education**

**Division of Learning and Teaching**

**Case-Based Learning Activity Observation of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

This informal report summarizes my observations and comments on your CBL. These are entirely confidential – you may choose to use any part of this report in a teaching portfolio, if you have one, or develop one in the future. Feel free to contact our office with any questions, comments, or for further discussion. Most importantly, I hope you find this information helpful.

**Pre-Observation Meeting**

We discussed the following items during our pre-observation meeting: CBL case, group dynamics, and facilitation skills. Regarding your group, you expressed adequate satisfaction with the group learning process given their previous exposure to CBL and other small group activities. You expressed concern for a few quieter students, asking that I focus on your skills in engaging them.

**Observation**

**Learning Environment: Strengths**

You warmly and enthusiastically greeted the group and set a very positive tone for the session—all learners seemed comfortable in your presence and ready to engage in the learning process with you.

You evidently “met your group of students where they were” at the beginning of the session, acknowledging a plausible need for debriefing since they had just received feedback on their performance on a previous test (OSCE). Although the group declined your offer to check-in, the fact that you identified that need demonstrated your awareness of an external factor that could potentially affect the CBL session.

Your instructions about a slight change in the CBL process for the day (you had them do an individual exercise on generating a differential diagnosis) were succinct and clear.

Your role as **facilitator of learning** was marked and strong: students directed their own learning as they deemed best, yet readily and quickly listened to your interventions, demonstrating implicit understanding of their role in CBL and your task as facilitator.

**Learning Environment: Suggestions for strengthening facilitation skills in this area**

*None*

**Learner Engagement: Strengths**

You used excellent non-verbal language that engaged students in conversation with each other:

* The use of hand gestures to signal conversation direction from one student to another other was very effective, especially when bringing the group to consensus about the different clinical presentations of mononucleosis.
* Several times during the session, students looked at you for affirmation on their hypotheses. You appropriately remained neutral, forcing them to consult with their peers to ratify their thinking (“I don’t know; what do you all think?”, “ask someone else!”).
* Whenever appropriate you affirmed with welcoming and positive facial expressions the quieter students, which invited them to contribute more throughout the session.

You asked the “why” question at least seventeen times during this CBL session—well-done—and, whenever appropriate, tagged it to more specific questions to steer the conversation in the right direction (“why is the consistency of the lump important?”, “why are you asking about time course—what will that tell you?”)

You probed and encouraged each and every learner equally to participate in the discussion.

You modeled critical thinking by asking questions to help the group reason through different hypotheses (“when I think about infectious diseases that could present with these symptoms, I simultaneously ask myself, ‘what on physical examination would help me determine….’”)

Overall, you used the probing questions effectively to engage the learners in further exploration of the case, allowing them to discuss plausible answers among themselves before steering them in the right direction to ensure achievement of case learning objectives. You were very effective at stepping back and letting students wrestle with misconceptions, trusting them to use their collective intelligence to clarify understanding (e.g. they had several differing definitions for “lymphadenopathy” but eventually arrived at a common, correct definition on their own). When required to steer the group, you also used questioning to get them to reason correctly and arrive at the answer rather than simply feeding them the information (e.g. “so what other organisms can cause mono-like symptoms?”). This demonstrated your skill in pushing learners to make connections between what they already know and what they are discussing.

**Learner Engagement: Suggestions for strengthening facilitation skills in this area**

Several times during this session, you pulled together the group’s thoughts by intervening with, “It sounds like what you are saying is…” While this may indeed be a necessary intervention during a CBL session, consider engaging the students in that synthesis process: “Jane, would you summarize what the group is saying about this condition/question/test/etc.?” This may be a good opportunity to bring the quieter students into the conversation (you may consider telling them in advance that they will be tasked with “wrapping up” the group’s thoughts at times throughout the session), and it will also encourage the other students to be paying attention more closely, since they might be called on to summarize the conversation at any point.

**Session Management: Strengths**

Given the learning method (CBL), your initial probing of the group to get started with the differential diagnosis followed by a period of silence was very effective in allowing students to take ownership of their learning experience. The group responded to your silence cue appropriately (one student volunteered to read and one to scribe without you asking them). You continued to do this throughout the session with every part of the case—well-done.

You effectively and appropriately sign-posted time for students throughout the session (“you have two minutes”, “let’s spend 3 more minutes on this condition and then…”, “we have already spent too much time talking about this, so let’s move on to the next item…”), achieving overall organization in the session and a clear sense of flow.

**Session Management: Suggestions for strengthening facilitation skills in this area**

*None*

**Post-Observation Meeting**

We discussed your strengths and innate ability as a facilitator and talked briefly about the suggestions to strengthen facilitation in specific areas, which have been included in this report.