

Characterizing the feedback that learning assistants give to faculty

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Background:

Learning Assistants (LAs) are undergraduate students who facilitate learning in a classroom environment with the goal of engaging students.

Sabella et al. [1] and **Davenport et al. [2]** identified different relationships between faculty and LAs: mentor-mentee, faculty-driven collaboration, and collaboration. **Davenport et al. [2]** also built upon the work of **Sabella et al. [1]** and created a tool to analyze and label interactions between learning assistants and faculty members.

Jardine [3] found three **feedback categories**: course logistics and instructional materials, student behaviors and attitudes, and student ideas and conceptual understanding.

Data Collection and Analysis

I interviewed two professors and two LAs, using a protocol was adapted from the **Sabella et al. [1]** and **Davenport et al. [2]** protocols and my previous research.

From my recorded interviews, I identified excerpts about feedback and iteratively developed categories of types of feedback.

Findings:

We identified **multiple categories of feedback**: student experience, classroom content, classroom structure, accessibility, empathy, and broad.

Future Work:

Collecting more data from additional LAs and faculty will help us work towards a comprehensive taxonomy for types of feedback. By using a new form of data collection, like observations, we may be able to gather more examples of feedback.

Another area for future work is understanding the relationship between the roles learning assistants assume and the types of feedback they give. For example, our data suggest a possible connection between the student role (as identified by Jardine (2020)) and the feedback category of student experience.

During our research process, we found that broad feedback often leads to input that falls into other categories of feedback.

References:

1. Sabella, Mel, Andrea Van Duzor, and Felicia Davenport. "Leveraging the expertise of the urban STEM student in developing an effective LA Program: LA and Instructor Partnerships." *Physics Education Research Conference 2016*. Sacramento, CA: 2016. 288-291 of *PER Conference*. 12 Feb. 2021
<<https://www.compadre.org/Repository/document/ServeFile.cfm?ID=14250&DocID=4604>>.
2. Davenport, Felicia, Amezcua, Fidel, Sabella, Mel S., and Van Duzor, Andrea G.. *Exploring the Underlying Factors in Learning Assistant - Faculty Partnerships*. Retrieved from <https://par.nsf.gov/biblio/10108219>. *2017 Physics Education Research Conference Proceedings*. Web. <https://doi.org/10.1119/perc.2017.pr.021>
3. Jardine, Hannah Elizabeth. *Instructional Partnerships Between Science Faculty and Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Assistants: Implications for Formative Assessment*. Diss. 2019.

Feedback Category

Examples

Student Experience:

Feedback that is rooted in specific student experience whether it is based on personal experience as a student or based on actual student experience witnessed in the classroom.

Finn: Hey, as a student, when I was taking this class, I was also thinking like that. Maybe they have explained me about this part so it would have been easier to do diagram

Classroom Content:

Feedback that helps to create or improve classroom content, ranging from lecture slides to exam problems. This type of feedback should not be about a specific student experience from the classroom.

Professor Blake: One of [their class] assessments came from an LA idea. So we did a ... G2 pen, you could rearrange the parts in it and then kind of launch something out of it.

Classroom Structure:

Feedback that addresses the order or structure of the lecture.

Professor Blake: [My LA said] 'Maybe next semester you switch the order of these two activities, or maybe we should spend more time on blah, blah, blah, something like that.'

Accessibility:

Feedback that takes into consideration students' circumstances and designs for people who might be excluded

Finn: there was a video only on YouTube, so I just asked [the instructor] if there is any way they can download that video and then they can watch it on their own way rather than just every time going to the YouTube. Maybe some students have a poor WiFi, maybe their wifi is not that strong as other people

Empathy:

Feedback made by learning assistants that address the emotional and identity aspects of the learning process for students

Professor Blake: [My learning assistant] said a diversity, equity and inclusion kind of thing. So [they] was talking about how [they] switched from saying hey guys to hey y'all.

Broad:

Feedback that addresses multiple categories of feedback at once or a feedback that holistically describes the state of the class.

Kai: We had our prep meeting, she was asking, "Oh, what do you think? How do you think the students are feeling about this?" And we said... We were just upfront with her, we were like, "They're really confused,"