

## Guidelines for Presentation Reviews

### ECE 47700 – Digital Systems Senior Design Project

Practicing engineers are often asked to provide feedback on other's work including designs, projects, and presentations. The ability to provide constructive and effective feedback in a helpful and positive manner is a useful skill that all engineers should learn. Good feedback can help identify critical errors in a project design that can potentially save many hours of design/debugging time. Good feedback can also help improve presentation skills which is a critical communication skill for engineers. Everyone, including your instructors and other professional presenters can improve their presentation skills, and effective feedback is essential for improvement.

What constitutes helpful and effective feedback is information that is goal-referenced, actionable, specific, and has immediate impact. It should also be constructive, descriptive, and nonjudgmental. A common mnemonic used to help provide effective feedback is SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely, and is described below in more detail as related to presentations.

- *Specific*: Avoid using ambiguous language. For example, "Your presentation was great." Be specific about what made the presentation "great," such as, "Starting your presentation off with a provocative question grabbed my attention."
- *Measurable*: Suggest quantifiable objectives to meet so there is no uncertainty about what the goals are. For example, "Next time, try a summary slide with one or two take-home points for the audience."
- *Achievable*: The goal of the presentation should be attainable. For example, "Trim your slides to no more than six lines per slide and no more than six words per line; otherwise, you are just reading your slides."
- *Realistic*: The feedback you give should relate to the goal the presenter is trying to achieve. For example, "Your first conclusion that algorithm A is the better choice for this project application would be more persuasive if you had provided some more algorithm comparison info previously in your presentation."
- *Timely*: Feedback given directly after completion of the presentation is more effective than feedback provided at a later date.

Other effective feedback tips are: (1) focus on description rather than judgment; (2) focus on observation rather than inference; (3) focus on observable behaviors; (4) focus on the most important points to improve future presentations; and most importantly; (5) state your feedback in a positive manner.



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Here are some examples of stating your feedback in a positive way:

- Don't say "you kept your hands in your pockets." Instead say "Hand gestures can be effective for emphasizing important points, you should try to use your hands more."
- Don't say "you mumbled through most of the presentation." Instead say "projecting your voice as if you are speaking to the furthest person in the room will help maintain the entire audience's attention."
- Don't say "your presentation didn't flow well." Instead give a specific example like "your transition from slide x to slide y might be improved if you discussed point A during slide x before you showed slide y."
- Don't say "you put too much stuff on slide x." Instead say "if you split the information on slide x into 2 slides, it would be easier for the audience to understand."

The ultimate goal of effective feedback is to help the presenter become more adept at relaying their work in an engaging and concise way, in order to maintain the audience's attention and ensure that they retain the information presented.