

Adapting Your Action Plan



Part 4: The Adaptive Action Plan, continued

So, now that you've created an Adaptive Action Plan, how do you make it really work? True to the name, you must build in time and strategies for checking in and adapting the plan to suit the progress being made.

Regular Meetings

Set a dedicated time each week for you and your mentee to reflect on the progress you've both made toward your mapped out milestones. These meetings should provide informational inputs so you can revise or sharpen your strategy, or even adjust what the milestones are (or both!). This exercise is central to reflection, iteration, and learning through the process of science. What works best? Determine the time and place, and no matter what, make it official and stick to it! Be sure to bring your Adaptive Action Plan, and make adjustments each week as necessary.

Example: Maybe you can meet in the conference room for 20 minutes directly before or after your weekly lab meeting time? Or maybe you meet by your nearby coffee/tea spot first thing on Friday mornings?

Practical Strategies for Assessing Progress with Your Mentee

Your weekly meeting should not be the only time that you assess your mentee's progress. There are some pedagogical tips and tools that provide an opportunity to elicit feedback from your mentee ongoing. Many of these

are typical strategies borrowed from high school (and, in some cases, undergraduate) classrooms, and therefore, your students are likely to be used to this language and direction. Some of these communication and feedback strategies include:

Daily Digests or Do Nows:

Many students will be familiar with this structure for kicking off the beginning of a class at school. Essentially, you have prepared a prompt for your mentee to work on when they first arrive in the morning. It is not a "quiz" per say, but a way to help them focus on relevant material for the day, or even help them reflect on a skill or goal they are working towards. With a small amount of prep, this can help your mentee be productive when they first walk in the door without requiring you to drop what you're doing to get them started.

Example: Reviewing your notes from yesterday's experiment, summarize the steps in DNA extraction and try to articulate any outstanding questions.

Exit Slips:

Many students will be familiar with this structure at the end of a class at school. It may consist of the same general questions



every class, or different, more specific questions aligned with that day. Either way, the goal is to leave 10-15 minutes at the end of the day for student reflection. You may want to do these daily or just a few days a week, but they can be a great way to enhance communication and feedback in both directions, particularly if either of you is introverted or intimidated. You may consider asking both about content and about progress toward goals or benchmarks.

Examples:

- What’s something you learned today?
- What’s something you’re confused about?
- One objective we spent time on today was _____. How would you rate your current level of mastery of this objective? What should you work on further? Explain.
- Did your group work well together? Y/N

Directly ask for feedback:

At your weekly meetings, or perhaps more often, ask for feedback from your mentee. This can include feedback on your Adaptive Action Plan, on your instruction, on the project you’ve laid out for them, etc. They may say nothing the first few times you ask and that’s okay, but it opens the door for more communication and demonstrates that feedback can go both ways. This hopefully can make it easier for you to offer feedback to them along the way, as it’s not just a top-down thing.

The challenge is often accepting and reflecting on the feedback. If the student offers some feedback that surprises you, all you need to do in the moment is thank them for the feedback. Then, take a moment yourself to reflect on that feedback and decide how you’ll act on it. At that point,

follow up with your mentee so they know you took their feedback seriously.

Listen Carefully:

What your mentee does (and does not) say can be a powerful set of information. Don’t fill in the blanks — ask questions and reflect back what you hear.

Adjusting your Action Plan

Work together with your mentee to rework your Action Plan and adjust your expectations. Have your mentee help estimate what things they will get more efficient at and what things they will continue to need more time on. More important than getting through a certain amount of stuff, your mentee can learn how to manage and reflect on their own productivity. This helps to build your mentee’s metacognition, a skill that is increasingly valued for its impact on life-long learning. Equally to learning opportunities, celebrate when something is accomplished in the expected amount of time!

Together, you help your mentee to use the time that they have to make productive progress on their project. As the data come in, be sure to leave time for individual reflection by your mentee as well as reflection together—this can take a lot of time and is often initially overlooked! Finally, keep notes on this project so that you can reflect the next time you are designing a project for a mentee as well.

Others helpful resources include:

[COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR MENTEE](#)

