


Being an Effective Tutor

TUTOR DEVELOPMENT TEAM



Attitude

 The tutor is a role model for the students, and the attitude of the group will mirror the attitude of the tutor. An effective tutor strives to be positive, interested, enthusiastic, and humble. Respect is shown for the students, faculty, administration, patient-oriented case problems, and MUSM educational programs. In return, a tutor expects respect from students. The tutor should communicate purpose and relevancy of the subject, maintain a sense of humor, be accessible to students, and invigorate the tutorial process. Wherever possible, the tutor fosters the students' idealism, excitement for learning, and loyalty to one another.

A good tutor is:

- Positive
- Interested
- Enthusiastic
- Humble
- Respectful
- Accessible
- Idealistic

1. A good tutor displays a **positive** attitude by:
 - invigorating the group learning process
 - emphasizing the “wonder” of the subject
 - helping students understand the advantages of the BMP and other MUSM programs
 - reassuring anxious students
2. A good tutor displays **interest** by:
 - engaging in the discussion
 - offering insight in areas of expertise
 - getting to know the group members as individuals
 - continuing to learn along with the group
3. A good tutor displays **enthusiasm** by:
 - showing personal delight in the subject matter
 - helping students see the relevance of the material
 - challenging the students
4. A good tutor displays **humility** by:
 - admitting areas of weakness
 - a willingness to ask others for help
 - allowing students to shine
5. A good tutor displays **respect** by:
 - maintaining an appropriate professional demeanor in relationships with students
 - treating all students equally
 - refraining from disparaging remarks about students, colleagues, administration, medical school programs or the university
 - acknowledging differences in backgrounds and beliefs
6. A good tutor displays **accessibility** by:
 - encouraging student inquiry
 - maintaining an approachable demeanor
 - motivating discussion of topics and answering questions in a non-threatening manner
 - enthusiastically setting aside office hours or extra time for students
7. A good tutor displays **idealism** by:
 - conveying the concept of altruism for group learning
 - promoting the success of the group while encouraging the individual
 - encouraging students to help and support each other
 - discouraging cynicism

Medical Knowledge

Application of Knowledge and Experience in Group



“knowledgeable” tutor possesses an adequate fund of phase-related information and, in addition, is familiar with the study guide, case objectives, and overall phase goals. The tutor has expertise in a particular subject area and seeks to acquire additional conceptual and factual information in the context of phase/case learning objectives. Although not expected to be a content expert in all phase disciplines *per se*, a knowledgeable tutor demonstrates an ongoing willingness to become facile with phase material in order to facilitate group goals.

A knowledgeable tutor:

- Prepares for group by staying current with phase material
- Understands the goals and objectives of the phase and cases
- Understands the role of a basic science foundation in a clinical setting
- Is aware of psychosocial, patient care, and/or ethical aspects of phase material
- Is cognizant of personal limitations

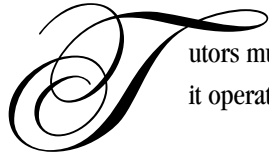
1. Prepares for group by staying current with phase material:
 - Reviews, as needed, material recommended for phase and/or case
 - Promotes synthesis, associations, and connections among phase/case material
 - Attends and participates in tutor meetings
 - Updates content in area(s) of expertise on a regular basis
2. Understands the goals and objectives of the phase and cases:
 - Is aware of aspects of each case that apply to specific goals and objectives
 - Maintains an adequate knowledge base such that synthesis, associations and interconnections can be promoted in the group setting
3. Understands the role of a basic science foundation in a clinical setting:
 - Appreciates the interrelatedness of basic science and medicine
 - Is aware of the need for a solid basic science foundation for clinical aptitude
 - Understands the clinical setting paradigm in which basic science is applied
 - Helps students recognize the applicability of information beyond the case

4. Is aware of psychosocial, patient care, and/or ethical aspects of phase material.
5. Is cognizant of personal limitations:
 - Seeks to be helpful without being misleading
 - Understands availability of resource materials and individuals

Additional helpful behaviors

- Ask pertinent questions to facilitate group interaction
- Reframe difficult questions or issues to promote student learning
- Attempt to keep the group within boundaries of goals and objectives
- Recognize inaccuracies in group discussion

PBL and the Tutor



tutors must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the problem-based teaching methodology and how it operates within the MUSM curriculum.

The tutor should:

- Be able to describe the problem-based teaching system/theory to faculty and students
- Be familiar with the rules and regulations of the MUSM curriculum committee
- Realize the facilitative nature of being a tutor
- Understand the dynamic nature of group and the need to evaluate, adjust, and focus

1. Tutors should be able to describe the problem-based teaching system/theory to faculty and students:
 - Seek help/counsel from other tutors and administrators about PBL
 - Seek information about education topics
 - Understand the role of LCME in evaluating the education program
 - Be aware of national issues in medical education
2. Tutors should be familiar with the rules and regulations of the MUSM curriculum committee:
 - Understand the curriculum as a whole and where a particular phase fits within the larger structure
 - Understand other curricular responsibilities of students during a phase
3. Tutors should realize the facilitative nature of being a tutor:
 - Recognize the role of the study guide, phase, and case objectives
 - Recognize different leadership roles within a group and how to lead others effectively
 - Recognize the different personalities within a group and how to direct them effectively for learning
 - Recognize the need for resource sessions to complement the group process
4. Tutors should understand the dynamic nature of group and the need to evaluate, adjust, and focus:
 - Effectively use formative and summative evaluations as appropriate feedback mechanisms
 - Be aware of different leadership approaches for different types of group settings

Professionalism



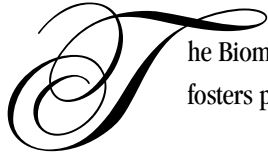
MUSM faculty member serves as a role model for all students and embodies the characteristics of professionalism: altruism, accountability, excellence, duty, honor, integrity, and respect.

Professionalism attributes occur when the faculty member:

- Demonstrates a commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and academic excellence
- Demonstrates a positive attitude and behavior toward all colleagues, including students, and institutional expectations
- Demonstrates and demands respectful behavior when addressing all curricular or extracurricular issues
- Addresses both appropriate and inappropriate behaviors of an individual student or the group in a timely and constructive manner
- Ensures adherence to BMP Program policies and guidelines

1. Demonstrates a commitment to the continued pursuit of knowledge and academic excellence.
2. Demonstrates a positive attitude and behavior toward all colleagues, including students, and institutional expectations:
 - Approaches the attitudes and behaviors of colleagues in a courteous and considerate manner
 - Displays a supportive attitude and respectful behavior toward students
3. Demonstrates and demands respectful behavior when addressing all curricular or extracurricular issues:
 - Limits discussion of extracurricular issues to those that are clearly related to the educational goals
4. Addresses both appropriate and inappropriate behaviors of an individual student or the group in a timely and constructive manner:
 - Relates expectations for acceptable individual and group behavior verbally and through action
 - Delivers and receives constructive criticism in a responsible and respectful manner
 - Refrains from verbalizing cultural, gender or racial prejudices or encouraging group members to do so
5. Ensures adherence to all BMP Program policies and guidelines:
 - Holds all group members to the adherence of a group attendance and tardiness policy through both action and verbal communication
 - Demonstrates respect of group time and limits distractions

Patient Awareness



The Biomedical Problems Program does not aim to teach patient care but is patient based. The effective tutor fosters patient awareness and instills in students some of the most fundamental aspects of patient care.

The tutor:

- Periodically directs group discussion back to the patient
- Encourages consideration for the patient as a person, not just a name on a piece of paper or a disease process
- Consistently emphasizes the necessity for treating all patients in a caring and professional manner, and at all times respecting their dignity and privacy
- Encourages the students to discuss a patient's background, appearance, actions, compliance with therapy, etc., in terms of how they might affect a physician's attitude and actions toward that patient
- Discourages frivolous or disparaging comments aimed at the patient or the patient's problem(s)
- Fosters discussion of the impact that a disease and therapy might have on the patient's life

Tutoring Tips

First Day of Group

Introductions and Establishing Clear Ground Rules

A successful group experience begins on the first day. Many members within the group may already know each other either from previous groups or from non-group related activities. In most situations, the tutor will be new to the group members. Introductions and establishing clear ground rules are appropriate. Ground rules can be suggested by the tutor or group members but should be agreed upon by all. Clear expectations at the beginning can facilitate a smooth and productive phase.

Welcome:

- Introduce yourself and give contact information
- Express your enthusiasm for BMP Program/tutorial system in general
- Express your enthusiasm for the current phase

Getting to know you:

Starting with yourself and proceeding around the table, each person gives his/her name and a brief bio, basically outlining their path leading to MUSM.

Tutor philosophy:

Give students a brief explanation of your expectations of how the group should work along with your facilitating style or role in group learning.

Expectations:

- Present
- Punctual
- Prepared
- Participate

General guidelines:

- Ask students to notify you by phone or email, if they will be absent or late.
- Group starts at 9:00 AM, and generally lasts until noon, +/- a few minutes.

- Breaks occur at some natural stopping point, usually in the 10:15 AM - 10:30 AM time frame, and last approximately 15 minutes.
- No cell phones.

Tutor pet peeves (food, drink, gum, etc.) should be negotiated at the beginning. Compartment: no feet on table; no inappropriate (distracting) attire; no distracting behaviors.

Case discussion guidelines:

- Notes should be for primary discussion. Books should be used to resolve specific facts in question during discussion.
- Issues are developed, prioritized, and discussed for each case.
- Cases are wrapped up; the timing and degree of this will vary depending on the particular case, the flow of discussion, and related cases.

Group Process

*N*ew tutor training and co-tutoring experiences are essential to a better understanding of the process. To prepare for tutoring, faculty members may find helpful the formal description of the Biomedical Problems Program in the MUSM BMP Manual. The manual provides the goals of each phase as well as the general process of facilitating a group learning experience. Briefly, important sections include the following:

Goals (BMP Handbook, Section II, pp 5-6)

- Basic Medical Science Knowledge
- Learning Skills
- Independent Learning Skills
- Group Learning Skills
- Higher Cognitive Skills
- Oral Communication Skills

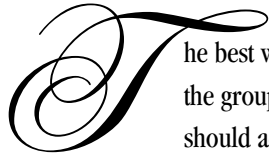
Group Process (BMP Handbook, Section VIII, pp 31-35)

- Reading the Biomedical Problem
- Generation of Issues
- Discussion of Issues

Link:

http://medicine.mercer.edu/files/bmp_manual.pdf

Challenging Scenarios



The best way to avoid difficult scenarios is to address them directly and as early as possible. Consequences to the group and individuals should be made clear. Should these behaviors occur during the phase, the tutor should address them in a timely manner with the student(s) either in group or individually.

There are several types of student behaviors that may have negative impact upon group process.

Unprepared – individuals or the entire group are unprepared for case discussion.

Suggestions for Tutor:

- The tutor should meet with the student and indicate that being unprepared is unsatisfactory behavior.
- The tutor should address this with the group at the end of the session in which it occurs.
- The tutor can keep weekly notes on students to track phase participation.

Notes might include areas such as

- Students providing demonstrations for group (posters, board work).
- Students leading discussions.
- Students participating in active discussions where many are participating.
- Students making comments that are not content rich. The tutor can bring this to the table as unsatisfactory group behavior.

The tutor may dismiss group when the group is unprepared for discussion. Group should be aware of consequences of being unprepared in the future for the amount of time remaining in the phase.

Under-prepared – individuals or the entire group are prepared for part of the morning but are not prepared sufficiently for the entire morning. Often this presents as a strong effort before break and a struggle after break.

Suggestions for Tutor:

- The tutor can bring this to the table as unsatisfactory group or individual behavior.
- Being under-prepared may be an issue of insufficient preparation, inadequate depth of preparation, preparation on different topics, or inadequate generation of issues. The group or student should identify the problem and decide how to avoid this problem in the future.

Under-participation – members of the group either do not participate or participate in an insignificant way.

Suggestions for Tutor:

- The tutor should meet with the student and indicate that meaningful participation is required for a satisfactory evaluation. The student may need suggestions for how to better participate:
 - Start the morning discussion by leading the first issue.
 - Ask the student to take the next issue.
- Suggest to the group that a strategy be used to arrange the issues.
- Suggest that a new or different issue be added to the next day's preparation and encourage the students to follow through with being prepared on that issue.

Excessive participation – members of the group who monopolize or dominate discussions and actions of the group.

Suggestions for Tutor:

- Monopolizing discussions or other dominating behaviors are not good. These students need to learn new skills for their own personal growth as well as development of group process.
- The tutor can help students recognize how to lead other members into discussions.
- A student can encourage others to start or take over a discussion.
- The tutor can ask students to refrain from initiating discussions during a period of time, such as the first hour or before break.

These behaviors are also damaging to group learning if a student contributes inaccurate or misleading information. For these students, the tutor, or possibly the group, can question the student about the source of the information and whether the information sounds consistent with other information being presented.

Disruptions – activities or behaviors that decrease the effectiveness of group progress.

Suggestions for Tutor:

- Sidebar conversations
 - The tutor, or a group member, should bring the discussions back to the topic.
 - Non-case related material is best discussed at the beginning of group or just after break when everyone is settling in and getting ready to start.
- Cell phones and pagers
 - These should be for emergencies only.
 - These should be on “vibrate” only or left with a secretary or other person not in group.
- Personality issues
 - The tutor should meet with the students involved and address the professional behavior expected during group.

Distractions – activities or behaviors that are less severe than disruptions and may affect only one or a few group members.

Suggestions for Tutor:

- Tardiness
 - The tutor should close the door and start group on time each morning and after breaks.
 - If a student is repeatedly late, the tutor should address this with the student as an unsatisfactory behavior.
- Reading in group rather than participating
 - The tutor may wish to express on the first day that books are references and should not serve as the primary source of notes.
 - The tutor may ask a student who is reading to contribute to the discussion or lead a discussion on a topic.
 - The tutor should tell the student it is inappropriate to read in group.
- Individual behaviors such as dress, feet on table, noises, comments
 - The tutor and group should agree on what kind of attire is appropriate for group.
 - The tutor may request feet not be on the table during group.
 - The tutor may counter particular comments by requesting that unprofessional or inappropriate comments be restrained.

FAQ's

When and how long should break be?

Break generally occurs at a natural point about halfway into the morning. Discussion on an issue has either finished or something has become so confounding that a break is needed to get outside information. Generally breaks occur between 10:15 AM and 10:45 AM. They last approximately 15 minutes.

Must we cover the cases in the order presented?

The Phase Coordinator and tutors need to establish this at a pre-phase meeting. Students requesting to do cases out of order should be provided with the rationale for the order the cases are presented.

Can groups meet early and finish early?

Groups should begin by 9:00 AM Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and continue until noon. Beginning a little early will usually not conflict with a resourcing schedule; sometimes it will. More importantly, changing the time of group may impact morning schedules of students and tutors who have family or patient responsibilities. All members should agree to an occasional change.

Do groups have to stay until noon?

Groups should be discouraged from ending early on a regular basis. This demonstrates insufficient preparation or superficial discussion of topics. When groups do finish early, this time can be used to evaluate group process, close cases that were left open, discuss what is going to be prepared for the next set of issues, etc.

Can groups meet on other days and times than what is scheduled?

Groups may choose to meet at additional times but these should 1) not replace scheduled group time, 2) be at the request of the group, and 3) not interfere with any other scheduled educational activity. Proceed with caution. Check with the BMP directors.

If the tutor cannot be present, who is responsible for a substitute?

The tutor is responsible. However, the Phase Coordinator should be notified and consulted about who might be appropriate to ask. The PC may also maintain a list of appropriate substitutes. For emergencies, contact the PC or BMP directors as early as possible.

Must we meet on the last Monday of the phase? Even if the students have not missed a group?

Yes. Each day of group is a required session.

Tutor Development Team

Dona L. Harris, PhD, *Chair*

Linda R. Adkison, PhD

Sebastian R. Alston, MD

Michael D. Brown, PhD

Fred S. Girton, MD

Charles R. Reagan, PhD

Allison P. Scheetz, MD

Samuel D. Shillcutt, PhD

Tina L. Thompson, PhD

Jerome P. Tift, MD

Anna N. Walker, MD

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