Coaching Online Faculty

You may choose traditional coaching where a faculty member leads their own goals, direction, and development with your support, or manager-led coaching focused specifically on performance improvement, depending on your circumstance.

- Use 1:1 coaching, small groups, or large groups (in small and large groups, be careful not to identify participants as having performance deficits in front of the entire group).
- Set up sessions using a scheduling tool (Calendly, www.TimeTrade.com, or www.booklikeaboss.com).
- Invite the person you’d like to coach to a conversation. Send your calendar link for ease in scheduling and follow up to confirm upcoming appointments.
- Invite or require attendance, depending on circumstances.
- Host the call or virtual session (in Zoom, Adobe Connect, or other virtual space).

During the coaching visit:

- Build rapport and trust with faculty. Be positive and authentic.
- Together, identify the specific problem, challenge, or goal to focus on during your session, and acknowledge what is going well.
- Specifically identify the problem or opportunity. Ask open-ended questions to help the faculty member determine what the issue really is, what impact it may have on students and themselves, and why resolving the issue may be desirable and undesirable.
- Use Open-ended questions to explore ideas and guide faculty to create solutions; help your faculty member explore his/her own thinking and validate responses.
- Develop strategy together, focused on the faculty member’s ideas about resolving the problem or challenge, or meeting the goal. Questions you may consider include: What are some of the options you must focus on this area? What barriers may be preventing you from resolving this issue? What will it look like when the issue is resolved? What will it take to achieve the goal?
- Create action plans with measurable goals. Questions you may consider include: What is your plan to act on the issue today, next week, and next month? What additional steps will you take after your initial efforts? Ask if the faculty member agrees to take action. If hesitant, ask what further barriers may prevent taking action, and whether support is needed.
- If support is needed, consider providing tools or strategies that can help the faculty member move beyond barriers, or direct the faculty member to tools and strategies (examples might be time management tools, grading tools like GradeAssist, idea management tools like www.facultyfiles.com).
- Determine when and how accountability will be reported. Questions you may consider include: How will you hold yourself accountable? When would you like to receive additional support/feedback from me or schedule another coaching visit?
- Maintain consistency for all situations, and flexibility when necessary. Recognize crisis situations with faculty. Consider what next steps might be valuable or needed if goals are not met and improvement doesn’t occur with repeated coaching. Before closing the call, be sure to discuss what steps you both would like to take when performance is improved as well as potential steps that may need to be taken if performance is not improved.
UNLEASH THE POWER OF THE ACADEMIC LEADER AS COACH
FOR FACULTY AND ORGANIZATIONS
Bethanie Hansen, PCC, DMA bhansen@apus.edu, and Jaclyn Fowler, PhD
OLC Innovate Workshop, Thursday April 14, 2022; 9:45—10:30 a.m. CT

Suggested sequence during the conversation:

1. Set the stage (Establish goal(s))
   a. What do you want?
   b. Ask open-ended questions.
   c. Listen for both clear and hidden messages in the conversation.
   d. Help faculty member explore his/her own thinking.

2. Define the real opportunity or problem (Focus on awareness)
   a. Why do you want it?
   b. Ask open-ended questions.
   c. Acknowledge the faculty member’s thinking and validate their ideas.
   d. Help faculty member become self-aware and reflect.

3. Analyze options (Conduct curious conversation/ask open-ended questions)
   a. What are the options and/or obstacles?
   b. What is stopping you from getting it?
   c. How do you overcome what is stopping you from getting it?
   d. Help faculty member expand thinking about the situation and see afresh.

4. Develop an action plan (Plan for action)
   a. Moving forward, what is the plan?
   b. What are you going to do? By When?
   c. How will you know when you get it?
   d. Help the faculty member plan future actions and steps in the process.

5. Hold accountable (Accountability)
   a. How will you hold yourself accountable?
   b. How and when would you like to check in on your progress?
   c. If you do not make progress, what next steps will we take?
   d. If you do make progress, what next steps will we take?
   e. Determine who will reach out and when, throughout the process, to continue the coaching relationship as needed.

After the coaching visit:
- Request participant(s) send you an e-mail summary of the goals, accountability measures, and future dates to meet for follow-up—or—you send a recap of the visit with conclusions and future dates/observations or coaching sessions.
- Consider sending additional e-coaching support, tools, or encouragement at intervals after the coaching (1-week later, monthly, etc.).
- Follow up with observations of online teaching & feedback within 2-3 weeks if relevant to the coaching and requested, or with any other support or accountability your coachee would like.
Additional suggestions for coaching faculty:

- Schedule regular coaching with all online faculty, or schedule for minor teaching concerns.
- Set a routine to coach, follow up, and coach again; determine how accountability will be reported, observed, or measured, and when faculty exit the process.
- Develop e-coaching messages for specific skills used online or coaching topics (institutional norms, grading strategies, welcome notes, etc.) to further support online faculty.
- Communicate your process, follow it, and be consistent. Schedule your plan on your calendar.

Questions for self-reflection

- How will I coach online faculty?
- How will I schedule sessions and follow up?
- How will I include the COI as a reference to help faculty monitor their own performance?
- At what intervals will I follow up, observe, and provide additional coaching or tools?
- What actions will I take when faculty make improvement? (Will I send celebrations via e-mail? Will I exit them from the process? Will I record documentation of the process in some way?)
- What actions will I take when faculty do not improve? (If this is my responsibility in a leadership role, what and how will I communicate to the faculty member?)
The Community of Inquiry (COI) Model

The Community of Inquiry (COI) model is a framework online educators and institutions can use to focus on quality teaching. It was introduced by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer in 2000 and identifies three areas that bring the instructor and learners together to overcome the gap of being separated by time and physical proximity, and it can be used to help focus on specific aspects of the online experience from the instructor viewpoint.

![COI Image](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=32442058)

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Coaching with the COI Model
Coaching online faculty members to improve skills might focus on one or more areas of the COI model: Social, Teaching, and/or Cognitive Presence.

- The COI model can help faculty measure their own performance by illustrating areas in which they can focus teaching and growth.
- The COI model can substantiate manager observations made of faculty performance.
- The COI model can be used to help diagnose relatively weaker areas of online teaching that might benefit from development.

**Examples of social presence:**
- Instructor bio is posted in the classroom.
- Announcements include instructor’s personality and guidance.
- Instructor and students regularly participate in the dialogue throughout the week in forum discussions.
- Tone is open and encouraging throughout communications, promoting exploration of topics and inquiry.
- Instructor posts a photo or video to support his or her bio, audio or video feedback on assignments, or other evidence of persona.

**Examples of teaching presence:**
- The course is prepared and set-up in advance.
- Assignments, discussions, and other course components are present, and instructions for completing assessments are provided.
- Regular announcements and communications from the instructor are provided throughout the course.
- Guidance, tips, and/or tools are provided to help students in preparing assignments.
- Rubrics and grading methods are provided and explained in advance.
- Assignment feedback is specific, guiding, and personalized.
- Grading feedback is returned in a timely manner.

**Examples of cognitive presence:**
- Discussions explore ideas, move beyond the superficial, and include back and forth exchanges.
- Questions are posed to which others respond in depth.
- There is evidence that course participants share information, make connections, apply what they are learning, or grapple with concepts.
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Three “Ps” of Presence, Personalization, and Personality

Presence
Communicate regularly in your coaching. Because you’re working virtually with someone who is remote, they will need a sense that you are there guiding them over time, like the teaching presence they should demonstrate in a course. This might include a phone call, face-to-face visit, initial and follow up e-mails, a schedule when you are going to send them e-coaching tips, etc.

Personalization
Personalization you can provide in coaching is the connection to the other person’s situation and course. You might consider opening their classroom in Adobe Connect or zoom and viewing it together. Ask questions. Learn about this person’s unique situation, their strengths, and their goals. Tailor your questions to these aspects to help personalize the conversation and demonstrate that you’re understanding them.

Personality
Personality is your own version of social presence as a leader online. Let the person you’re coaching know who you are and what you care about. If you’re meeting remotely, use video during your coaching sessions to make the connection.

Questions for online faculty, using the three “Ps” of Presence, Personalization, and Personality:
- Presence: How can I be consistently present in teaching an online course?
- Personalization: How can I provide personalized interaction and feedback to students?
- Personality: How can I help students feel connected to me as their instructor, share my personality, and convey my expertise and experience? What can students learn most from me they cannot gain from others?

Questions for coaching online faculty, using the three “Ps” of Presence, Personalization, and Personality:
- Presence: How can I be consistently present in the coaching process over time?
- Personalization: How can I provide personalized support, coaching, and feedback to faculty that helps this person meet their objectives?
- Personality: How can I demonstrate partnership with this person, build a quality relationship, share my personality, and convey my confidence in their strengths? What can faculty learn most about their teaching through the coaching process with me they cannot gain from others?

Questions for self-reflection:
- How can I most effectively coach and support others in their teaching if they have had a recent change in routine, disaster, death in the family, or other interruption?
- How others experience me in normal work? And, in coaching conversations?
Coaching Tips

1. Establish rapport and build trust.
2. Consider the person being coached as the “expert” in their own life. Get curious about their goals and perceptions, rather than trying to change the person.
3. Position yourself as a partner. This is different from a supervisor, a mentor, a counselor, and a consultant.
4. Ask open-ended questions to explore, using only one question at a time.
5. Allow silence.
7. To reflect that you’re listening, re-state what the person has said to check understanding, or summarize their comments.
8. Release the need to “have all the answers.” You don’t need to come with answers or solutions.
9. Identify goals together.
10. Help create a development plan that is realistic, achievable, specific, and pleasing to the person being coached.
11. Follow up to encourage or provide support.
12. NOTE: If the person you are coaching is someone you also manage in a supervisory relationship, it may be helpful to mention that while coaching is meant to be helpful, it could lead to performance management long term if things don’t improve.
Sample Coaching Script:

1. **Open the conversation and “set the stage.”** This includes setting a basic plan for the conversation and building rapport.
   
   Example “Thanks for visiting with me today for a coaching session. Before we begin, let’s discuss what we will accomplish during our visit. I’d like to get to know each other generally, address questions or concerns, learn what is important to you or what your goals are, and develop a plan. I’d like to make this as relevant and productive for you as we can.”

2. **Discover goals.**
   
   Ask open-ended questions to get to know your faculty member, learn about his/her motivations and goals, and identify areas on which to focus.
   
   - Tell me a little about you as an online instructor.
   - What is your background that led to teaching online?
   - What are your interests professionally?
   - What are some things you do well or that you feel your students appreciate about your teaching?
   - What are some concerns you have about your teaching, or areas in which you might like to explore additional strategies/approaches?

   Guide your colleague to explore their ideas, and occasionally summarize what was said to reflect active listening and check your understanding.

   If needed, sift through the ideas to help isolate one specific area that seems most important or concerning. Before a coaching conversation, one clear topic should be identified.

   - What is one thing that would really make a difference right now?
   - What area would you like to focus on today?

3. **Identify any work or effort already invested.** Explore current reality. Here, you’re acknowledging reality and effort, and together you’re looking at the present situation.

   - What have you already done toward your goal?
   - What is working?
   - What stands in the way of accomplishing it?

4. **Explore options.** This opens future possibilities and solutions.

   - What haven’t you tried that you think might work?
   - What is the simplest thing you could do?
   - What is the potential best outcome?
   - What is the potential worst outcome?
   - What is the most likely outcome?
• What is one thing you could do to begin working on addressing this goal or concern?
• What barriers or roadblocks do you see that could prevent you from making progress in this area or being successful?
• What could happen (both positive and negative) if you moved forward in developing the area of concern or progressing toward the goal?

5. Develop a strategy together, also known as a “way forward.” Create a plan of action with measurable goals
   • Of all the options available, what will you choose?
   • When will you take this action?
   • What would be a good day and time to follow up?
   • What steps would you be willing to take to work toward the goal?
   • What resources could you draw on to accomplish the goal?
   • Who could support you?

Example: “Now that you have an area on which you’d like to focus and some ideas of where this could lead, let’s develop a strategy to move toward that goal and a plan of action with measurable smaller goals, so that you don’t have to tackle the entire problem at once. I’ll check in with you along the way to see how it’s going and to ask questions to help you decide whether you’re making the progress you would like to see. If you were to list a few small steps that you’ll need to take to reach your goal, what might these look like?”

Example: “How often would you like to check in on your progress and have my assistance being accountable to yourself for progress toward your goal?” (Suggestion: a check-in every 1-2 weeks early in the process is more helpful, and once your faculty member is confidently moving forward, you may wish to meet once per month)

Request that the faculty member write the list of steps and check-in dates you both agree to during the call, and send a copy to you as a follow-up or summary of the visit.

6. Next steps

Example: “Thank you for visiting with me for our coaching session today. I’m looking forward to your progress toward the goal we’ve identified and visiting about this soon. It will help us both to schedule a few weekly (or bi-weekly/monthly) check-ins now so the time is set-aside ahead of time. Scheduling can be challenging, and I don’t want that to be a barrier to your progress.” (Discuss your method for scheduling, and set up future visits)

Example: “Do you have any additional questions for me before we end the visit today? What’s the best way to reach each other between now and our next conversation if
needed? When can I look for your e-mail with your list of steps or summary from our visit?”

7. Close

Example: “Thank you so much for visiting with me today. It’s been great to chat with you about your goals, your teaching, and areas you’d like to address. I look forward to speaking with you again soon!”

8. Additional future considerations

You may wish to schedule e-coaching messages after the call, weekly, or as needed to support the skills your faculty member is working to develop. Messages that are focused, encouraging, and request some kind of follow-up reply from the faculty member might lead to more success.

If you do not receive a reply from your colleague or faculty member, consider developing a brief summary to send out, and ask them to add any details you may have neglected to include.

Follow up regularly. In areas where faculty members want or need coaching, regular check-ins and support are helpful in guiding your faculty to focus on their own goals and direction, rather than being micro-managed in their practices.
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Your Toolbox for Additional Reading and Resources:

Helpful articles on this topic:


Helpful guide:

GROW Model details, from the Coaching Tools Company: https://www.thecoachingtoolscompany.com/the-grow-model-explained-for-coaches-questions-tips-more/#GROW-Model-Coaching-Diagram

Helpful books on this topic:


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