

# Fostering a positive learning environment in the classroom

Facilitated by Tehmina Gladman

Co-facilitated by Louise Beckingsale, Dale Sheehan, Joy Rudland, and Kayla Young

---

# Karakia Timatanga

Tukua te wairua kia rere ki ngā  
taumata  
Hai ārahi i ā tātou mahi  
Me tā tātou whai i ngā tikanga a  
rātou mā  
Kia mau kia ita  
Kia kore ai e ngaro  
Kia pupuri  
Kia whakamaua  
Kia tina! TINA! Hui e! TĀIKI E!

*Allow one's spirit to exercise its  
potential  
To guide us in our work as well as in  
our pursuit of our ancestral traditions  
Take hold and preserve it  
Ensure it is never lost  
Hold fast.  
Secure it.  
Draw together! Affirm!*

---

# Objectives

**By the end of this session you will be able to:**

Describe what constitutes a learning environment

Identify barriers and potential solutions to effective learning

Identify the teacher's role in establishing a safe & effective learning environment

---

## Plan for the day

### Our roadmap

Discussion of what we mean by learning environment

Small group activity: The features of positive and negative learning environments

Discussion of the why, what, and how of creating a learning environment

Final thoughts



---

# A question for you

What do we mean when we say “learning environment”?  
Please type your thoughts in the chat.

# Two definitions of the learning environment



**UNITED NATIONS**

Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization

## Quality Framework (2012)

Physical and psychosocial factors – physically safe, emotionally secure and psychologically enabling



2014

Diverse physical locations, contexts, and cultures

How teachers interact with students, students with teachers, and students with one another

Social and emotional dimensions

---

# Small group activity

**Think about a recent learning session you attended as a participant**

**Discuss with your group:**

Identify 3 features of the session that influenced your ability to learn

Choose 5 these features to report back to the main session

Why did they help or hinder your learning?

When you return the main room, please be prepared to tell us about the features you chose.

---

# Why create a positive learning environment?

"A positive classroom environment helps improve attention, reduce anxiety, and supports emotional and behavioural regulation of students. When educators foster a positive learning culture; learners are more likely to acquire higher motivation that leads to wonderful learning outcomes." (Verma, 2019)

# What are the components of a positive learning environment?

## Organisational quality

- Preparedness of all parties for student entry
- Space and resources

## Invitational quality

- Opportunities to participate and learn from work experiences
- Interaction patterns and student inclusion
- Student agency and engagement

## Pedagogical quality

- Autonomy-supportive environment
- Enhancing student reflective capabilities

The Undergraduate Clinical Education Environment Measure (UCEEM)

(Strand et al., 2013) <sup>9</sup>

# How do we create a positive learning environment?

## Some considerations

Physical (temperature, lighting, seating, audio, video)

Emotional (safe, nonjudgemental, caring)

Motivational (empowering)

Educational (useful, satisfaction, interest)

---

# Final thoughts

What have we learned



# Thank You!



Otago Medical School  
Te Kura Hauora o Ōtākou

## Do you know...

How to enhance the clinical setting as a learning environment?

DYK 11

I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn – Albert Einstein (attrib)

The Advanced Learning in Medicine years (4- 6) are embedded in the clinical workplace, a busy environment whose primary focus is the patient.

Such settings may not always seem to be effective for learning, but the workplace provides authentic conditions for students to apply their training.

#### ASK YOURSELF:

If you were a student, what would make the area you work in an effective learning environment for you?

Attempts have been made to measure the learning environment, each with varying degrees of success. For example, *The Undergraduate Clinical Education Environment Measure (UCEEM)*<sup>1</sup> is specifically aimed at the clinical learning environment and its underpinning assumptions can be used to guide your development of a positive learning environment (Box 1).

#### BOX 1

The UCEEM underpinning assumptions

Invitational quality

- Opportunities to participate and learn from work experiences
- Interaction patterns and student inclusion
- Student agency and engagement

Organisational quality

- Preparedness of all parties for student entry
- Space and resources

Pedagogical quality

- Autonomy-supportive environment
- Enhancing student reflective capabilities

#### RESEARCH AND THE CLINICAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Part of a questionnaire in one international study<sup>2</sup> posed the question: 'If you could change three things about medical school, what would they be?'

The resulting responses (Box 2) resonate with the feedback from our own medical students and some have implications for clinical teachers.

#### BOX 2

1. Be aware of the sharp learning curve for learners.
2. It is important to bear in mind that students during their clinical training need more constructive, empowering and empathetic feedback.
3. Many students may be unsure of their role and what to do in the clinical environment, and hence an induction phase or access to mentors may be helpful.
4. Establishing uniformity across curricula through internal consistency and external benchmarking is essential.
5. Be aware that students are under personal, academic and financial stress, and are likely to have multiple goals, such as social, intimacy, financial and career aspirations.
6. Learning is promoted by engaging constructive feedback, promoting empowerment and trust, establishing rapport building and encouraging positive role modelling.
7. Students appreciate access to study materials, such as reading, written documentation and the computer interface.
8. Establish independent student and teacher support systems to support and ensure functional learning.

A project<sup>3</sup> conducted by and among medical students identified the features students valued most in the clinical learning environment (Box 3).

#### BOX 3

- Structural factors: The organisation of the clinical placement
- Interpersonal factors: The 'Spectrum of Support' referring to support received on various levels from staff to peers
- Intrapersonal factors: The proactivity, preparedness and personality of each student
- Vocational development opportunities: Including practical experience or clinical exposure and teaching opportunities

---

# Evaluation

**We value your feedback.**

We value your thoughts on this session so will give you 3 minutes to complete a short feedback form that has just been dropped into the chat.

[https://otago.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eePdo501YFRfJmm](https://otago.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eePdo501YFRfJmm)

You can also email us any time with feedback at [edssu@otago.ac.nz](mailto:edssu@otago.ac.nz)



---

## References

DYK 11. How to enhance the clinical setting as a learning environment? (2015). <http://www.otago.ac.nz/medical-school/otago614733.pdf>

Partnerships, Great Schools. (2014). The Glossary of Educational Reform Retrieved March, 2017, from <http://edglossary.org/learning-environment/>

Strand P, Sjöberg K, Stalmeijer R, Wichmann-Hansen G, Jakobsson U, & Edgren G. (2013) Development and psychometric evaluation of the Undergraduate Clinical Education Environment Measure (UCEEM). *Medical Teacher*; 35: 1014–1026.

UNESCO. (2012). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Quality Framework, from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002204/220416e.pdf>

Verma G (2019). The Importance of a Positive Learning Environment. Retrieved 11 Jul 2022. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/importance-positive-learning-environment-geeta-verma/>

---

# Karakia Whakamutunga

Unuhia, unuhia  
Unuhia ki te uru tapu nui  
Kia wātea, kia māmā, te ngākau, te  
tinana, te wairua i te ara takatā  
Koia rā e Rongo, whakairia ake ki  
runga  
Kia tina! TINA! Hui e! TĀIKI E!

*Draw on, draw on,  
Draw on the supreme sacredness  
To clear, to free the heart, the body and  
the spirit of mankind  
Rongo, suspended high above us (i.e.  
in 'heaven')*  
*Draw together! Affirm!*