Facilitator manual peer-to-peer (P2P) coaching

Please do not hesitate to contact Juliette Hopman (j.hopman@erasmusmc.nl) or Reinoud de Jongh (r.dejongh@erasmusmc.nl) if you have any questions.

1 Background information

1.1 What is peer-to-peer (P2P) coaching?

P2P-coaching is all about PhD students sharing experiences, getting advice on the problems they encounter, and reflecting on their personal and professional development. The facilitators' main mission is to create a safe environment, in which group members are encouraged to share their successes and their vulnerabilities, their questions and their advice. To make sure sessions will be more than the mere exchange of stories, group members are encouraged to formulate a question they want to ask their peers: which specific problem would they like advice on? Each session, two or three group members can introduce a problem. Group members decide together which experiences will be elaborated on.

Group members explore the context of the situation using the Incident method, which we will discuss below and is summarized in Appendix 1. They share their perspective on the essence of the problem and give advice to their peers on how to deal with it.

As a facilitator of P2P-coaching, you will support one group consisting of 8 PhD students. During their first year, students attend three P2P-coaching sessions, at which you are present. After that, students will proceed autonomously as a P2P-group. They may consult you once a year and ask you to join them.

As a facilitator, you encourage group members to ask questions that go beyond what the student did or said in a specific situation, and that include their capabilities, values and beliefs. You reinforce students' efforts to reflect on different points of view and think of alternative solutions. You provide structure to their exchange of experiences, intending to give insight.

1.2 Learning objectives

To be able to reflect on their own actions and skills during their PhD research, P2P-coaching teaches students the following skills:

- Putting their own actions, thoughts and feelings into words in a concrete manner;
- Analyzing their own actions in such a way that it leads to a better understanding of those actions;

- Generalyzing their actions in a specific situations to other situations, and drawing conclusions from this;
- Responding to the advice from peers and testing this advice for usefulness;
- Asking clarifying questions to peers sharing their experiences;
- Analyzing the experiences of peers;
- Advising peers based on this analysis;
- Giving and receiving feedback;
- Taking responsibility for the group process.

1.3 Meeting online

Because of the covid19 precautions, peer-to-peer coaching sessions (P2P-coaching) may be offered as online meetings. Online meetings differ from face-to-face-meetings. In order to facilitate interaction between group members, please see Appendix 4 for tips & tricks. Also, please share helpful suggestions and experiences with the facilitators' community by sending them to Juliette Hopman (j.hopman@erasmusmc.nl) or Reinoud de Jongh (r.dejongh@erasmusmc.nl).

1.4 Group members' preparation

As a facilitator, you can ask the group members to think about the case they would like to discuss a week before the meeting, or even to submit their cases beforehand.

1.5 Facilitators' preparation

For the first meeting, it's good to read this manual and familiarize yourself with the incident method and Bateson's pyramid. For subsequent meetings, you can prepare by reading the minutes of the last meeting.

2 Manual

2.1 First meeting

- Start with a round of introductions (starting with yourself), and ask about the research project they're involved in, their background etc, and their experience with P2P-coaching.
- Ask about the ground rules that the group members agreed upon during their first meeting and practice round of P2P-coaching, relating to privacy and what is expected of the facilitator, the chair and the participants.
- Talk about logistics, such as:
    - How to schedule meetings from now on;
    - How meetings are structured, for example starting with a check in (how is everybody doing?), followed by reviewing the cases that were discussed last time (what did the students do with the advice they got? How did it work out?), followed by P2P-coaching;
    - Whether or not students submit their cases beforehand, for example a week before the meeting, or are asked to think about the case they would like to discuss a week before the meeting;
    - How to decide who will chair each meeting, and who will keep minutes (see Appendix 3);

2.2 Peer-to-peer (P2P) coaching

The method for P2P-coaching is summarized in Appendix 1, and will be discussed in more detail below.

Step 1 Inventory of the cases students would like to discuss
The chair asks the participants to briefly introduce their case, preferably in one or two sentences. It should be personal, work-related and concrete. If the case is chosen, they can elaborate on the context during step 2. The chair asks someone to note down the cases, for example on a whiteboard.

The group decides which two cases to discuss. This can be based on:

- Urgency: one of the cases is urgent because it requires a solution acutely, or because it causes a lot of problems for the student;
- Voting: which two cases are most interesting or relevant to the whole group?
- Further down the line: who has never had their case discussed?

When starting with the first case, the chair asks the student to elaborate (What was the situation? What happened? What did you do? Etc), and to conclude with a question: what would they like to get advice on?

Step 2 Exploring the case
Participants ask (open-ended) questions, without giving their opinion and without giving advice.

This is often the most important step in the process, because asking the right kind of questions can already lead to insights into how the student looks at the problem, or into their own behavior or assumptions. For this to happen, questions should be asked at different levels of Bateson's pyramid (see Appendix 2). <u>If you, as a facilitator, notice that the questions are restricted to the lowest levels, you can stimulate the students to ask questions at higher levels, or lead by example by doing so yourself.</u>

<u>The chair (and the facilitator) also has to make sure the questions are open-ended, and do not contain an opinion or an advice. If this is not the case, they could for example intervene by asking "Is there a question in all this?" or hammer on their table and say "Objection your honor! Leading the witness!".</u>

Step 3 Identify your opinion about the problem
Participants get two minutes to think about and answer for themselves the following questions:

- What is the core, the essence of the problem? How do you look at the situation? What were the causes? What role did the student play? Or simply by completing the sentence: This is a problem for x because…
- How would you solve this problem (first person point of view, present tense)?

Step 4 Share your solution
Each participant shares their solution with the group, while the participant who introduced the problem listens and takes notes. There is no discussion about the solutions that are being proposed!

Step 5 Respond to the solutions
The student who introduced the problem responds to each solution, and tells the group what he/she intends to do. Questions to ask during this step:

- Which questions caused you to think about the problem differently?
- How do you look at the situation now?
- Which advice appeals to you the most?
- What will you apply tomorrow? What do you need to think about first?

Step 6 Evaluate the process
Participants look back and share their take-home message. The chair (or the facilitator, if it's the first meeting) thanks the student for sharing their case and evaluates the process:

- What was it like for the student who's case was being discussed?
- What was it like for the participants?
- What did you get out of it as a participant? What is your take-home message?
- Are there any questions about the method that was use?

It's possible that the student who's case was being discussed feels like it was 'blown-up' (maybe even out of proportion), made bigger than it actually was. This is true, and is called the 'iceberg-model'. The case started with the part of the iceberg that was above the surface, (the situation, the behavior of the student). By asking questions, the part below the waterline also becomes visible (such as the values, beliefs and capabilities of the student).

2.3 Attendance and keeping minutes of the meetings

Students receive 1 EC if they've attended all meetings, so you have to keep track of their attendance. The easiest way to do this is to (ask students to) keep minutes (see Appendix 3).

2.4 Talking to students 1-on-1

Because you'll get to know the PhD students in your group well, they might approach you with personal problems which they might not want to discuss during P2P-coaching. Alternatively, you might worry about a student based on what you hear during the meetings.

As a facilitator, you can talk to students to clarify their problem, and refer them to the proper channels:

- Counselor: Adriaan van 't Spijker (a.vantspijker@erasmusmc.nl)
    - In case of personal problems.

- Ombudsman: Mario Buijk (ombudsman@erasmusmc.nl; m.buijk@erasmusmc.nl) https://www.eur.nl/erasmusmc/campus/studiebegeleiding/ombudsman
    - If their working environment is unsafe, for example because of (sexual) intimidation, discrimination, or bullying.

If you want advice on how best to help the student, please contact Juliette Hopman (j.hopman@erasmusmc.nl) or Reinoud de Jongh (r.dejongh@erasmusmc.nl).

Appendix 1 The incident method

Step 1	Inventory of the cases students would like to discuss	Participants introduce a problem and question to the group, group members select one participant's problem
Step 2	Explore the problem	Participants ask (open-ended) questions, without giving their opinion and without giving advice. Try to avoid asking: "Why…?"
Step 3	Identify your opinion about the problem	Participants think about: - What do you think is the core problem? This is a problem for x because… - How would you solve this problem (first person point of view, present tense)?
Step 4	Share your solution	Each participant shares their solution with the group, participant who introduced the problem listens
Step 5	Respond to the solutions	Participant who introduced the problem responds to each solution, and tells the group what he/she intends to do
Step 6	Evaluate the process	Participants look back and share their take-home message

Appendix 2 Exploring the problem: Bateson's pyramid

Examples of questions at different levels of Bateson's pyramid:

Environment

What happened exactly? Who were involved? What was the other person's intention? What was the atmosphere like?

Behavior

What did you do/say exactly?

Capabilities

What do you need to make a difference? What do you need to talk about this issue with the other person?

Values & beliefs

What did you think/belief about this issue? How do you feel about people who think differently about this issue? Why is this issue important to you?

Appendix 3 Keeping minutes of the meetings

Participants	09-02 15:30-17:00	20-04 15:30-17:00	22-06 15:30 - 16:00
XX	-	-	x (case)
XX	x (case)	x	x
XX	x (case)	x	-
XX	x	x (case)	x
XX	x	-	x (case)
XX	--	x (case)	x

Minutes Session X [date] (Teams)
Attending participants: [names]
Feedback: what happened after last session?

Participant 1
[feedback with regard to case last session, participant informs group members about what happened next]

Participant 2

a. **Sharing cases students would like to discuss**; please see appendix 1
b. **Questions:**

- What…
- How…
- Who…
- Etc.

c. **What is the core/essence of the problem?**

- Group member 1: perspective on what is the problem + his/her advice
- Group member 2: perpective + advice
- Etc.

Appendix 4 Online sessions: Tips & tricks

- When addressing group members, look into your camera instead of your screen so you mimic direct eye contact;
- Encourage students to turn on their cameras and to turn off their microphones. Discuss how students let each other know they want to say something. For instance, they can use the online tools such as “raise your hand”, or they can raise their actual hand. Students may prefer to use the chatbox instead. When students turn off their camera, ask if there’s a reason why their camera is switched off. It may be a valid reason. Ask what students need to feel involved in this session;
- Pace yourself when speaking. Internet connections may be slow, you don’t want to repeat yourself too often;
- Suggest multiple coffee breaks, for instance every 30 minutes;
- Facilitating sessions means you provide structure. When online, provide even more structure than you’re used to. Communicate regularly with your students. Throughout the session, continue to communicate which step you’re at, your expectations of the students, and remind them of the tasks and goals of this session;
- It may be helpful to ask a specific student to pose a question or share their perspective on the problem or possible solutions, quicker than you might do so in face-2-face sessions. “Mary, I would like to ask you first to share your opinion about Steve’s situation, if that’s alright with you”, instead of “who would like to share their opinion about Steve’s situation?”. It keeps the pace of online meeting appealing to students;
- You may like to vary ways you ask students to contribute to the session. For instance, you can ask them to give a thumb up when they agree with what is being discussed. You can ask them to get a piece of paper, write down in two or three words what they think and show it to the camera. Zoom and Teams offer online facilities to ask people to participate in a poll. You can use Mentimeter.

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