

# WHEN EXPECTATIONS COLLIDE ...

By Christine Ling Bee Fong

**Are there any differences between tutors' and learners' expectations? I asked a few OUM tutors throughout the country on how they perceived tutor-learner expectations and how the unmatched expectations were reconciled. I would like to share their stories here with the hope that these will serve as a source of knowledge and inspiration for you.**

"I expect that learners have read through the required topics before coming to class. I would also need the learners to think of issues that may arise from their reading to be discussed during tutorials or online.

I would be happy if learners could give fewer excuses and be more independent in learning, honest, consistent, accountable, productive and on time with their obligations.

They expect me to be available, helpful, fair, kind, patient, understanding, consistent, knowledgeable, on time and considerate in awarding grades.

In that sense, our tutor-learner expectations do collide. But I am still firm when it comes to grades. I tell them early in each semester that I will not stoop low and will not compromise on grades."

*Basil Surin  
Kedah Learning Centre*

"Very often, adult learners expect tutors to provide them all the information they need for assignments and exams with the excuse that they are busy part-time learners with little resources available to them. Worse, they expect to do well with only the information provided.

I expect them to be mature enough to take the initiative to look for the needed information, besides relying on modules and tutors. I also expect them to enjoy the process of learning rather than just focusing on marks.

For certain learners, their expectations are not aligned with the tutors' expectations. It takes a lot of effort to communicate and educate with the learners.

We must have a give-and-take attitude to reconcile our differences. It requires time and effort. To improve the service quality of OUM, it is important for both tutors and learners to play their roles effectively."

*Dr Chai Bui Khiun  
Sarawak Learning Centre*

"Tutors' expectations from adult learners:

- Ask sensible questions if in doubt;
- Be more independent and take the initiative to acquire more knowledge;
- Possess excellent time management skills to meet deadlines; and
- Possess a good learning attitude as they are paying for their studies out of their own pocket.

Adult learners' expectations of tutors:

- Be an expert in the field of teaching;
- Give guidance when needed;
- Prepare notes for them;
- Be less stringent in enforcing rules related to deadlines such as assignment deadlines; and
- Don't just read the text during tutorials.

So far, I have not encountered any major problems in meeting expectations. My only main concern is the poor time management skills of some adult learners. However, I have managed to pull through in the past few years as it is my duty as a tutor to guide them."

*Chen Nguk Fa George  
Sibu Learning Centre*

“I expect learners to:

- Be accountable for all the activities pertaining to their learning environment;
- Read the module before coming to tutorials. (This is the most difficult task that till now I am facing problems with. This is in spite of the many strategies I have introduced such as forming groups, asking learners to prepare a set of questions based on their reading, etc.) Most of them attend tutorials without reading the module and expect the tutor to teach them 100% from the module;
- Take part and be responsible in online discussions; and
- Seek help immediately if faced with any difficulty (Good interpersonal skills would be useful).

Learners expect me to:

- Possess good communication skills, be simple and speak clearly;
- Be experienced and possess sound knowledge in the subject taught;
- Provide additional and appropriate learning materials;
- Actively and promptly respond to all messages in the forum;
- Discuss and give proper guidance for assignments;
- Have a sense of humour;
- Be friendly and approachable;
- Provide real-time examples; and
- Be easily contactable via telephone and e-mail.

To date, I have yet to face any problem with my adult learners. All of them have accepted my approach well including postgraduate learners. Many of them still keep in touch with me and occasionally ask me for ideas, such as whether to pursue higher education and so on. This clearly shows that I have achieved my goal to impart my knowledge and experiences. This is my great achievement.”

*Segar Raja M  
Kedah Learning Centre*

“I expect learners to participate actively in discussions and give a lot of ideas. They must go through the module before each tutorial.

They expect me to guide them and make the conclusion brief and accurate.

Our expectations do collide. I resolve this by motivating them and being well-prepared so that they feel it is worthwhile to attend my tutorials. Sometimes, my strategies are successful but they also depend on the subject matter. Some subjects are just theories, therefore a bit boring.”

*Ling Hau Ching  
Sibu Learning Centre*

“Learners expect us to do all the assignments and questions for them. They also expect us to give them exam questions. They want to just memorise the answers and get As. On our part, we expect them to know how to learn independently, find out what they do not understand and ask for explanation.

Sometimes, we have to guide learners to solve difficult past-year questions through explanation and some model answers. The learners do appreciate to a certain extent what we do for them.

I have learned how to face the different types of learners at OUM. I have a lot of praise for hardworking learners.”

*Vincent Teng Hie Ping  
Sibu Learning Centre*

“I expect learners to read up and search for the relevant information in the Internet or digital library. Furthermore, they should be able to discuss issues, share ideas and give opinions based on the module as well as their working experience in order to demonstrate their understanding of what they have read from the module; rather than just rely on me to tell them what the issues or concepts are all about.

In return, they expect me to provide them with all the information that they need to know. So, I have to tell them and answer their queries.

I'd learnt from the different expectations that I need to always remind them that at the tertiary level, we should not expect to be spoon-fed all the time and that we need to spend time to read widely besides just reading the module only.”

*Koay Soon Yuan  
Taiping Learning Centre*