

***Framework for Filtering the Expectations of Common Behavior and Standards in
a Highly Diverse Student Environment***

Michelle J. Cummings-Koether, Deggendorf Institute of Technology, Germany
Franziska Durner, Deggendorf Institute of Technology, Germany
Ayelen V. Toscano Juanes, Deggendorf Institute of Technology, Germany

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Abstract

The European Campus Rottal-Inn (ECRI), which is a part of the Deggendorf Institute of Technology, is considered to be one of the most culturally diverse campuses, with one of the highest international student populations, in Germany. The highly diverse and international environment of the campus, which is set in a rural area of Bavaria, offers an exceptional opportunity to study in a diverse and intercultural setting. However, it also means that the students, staff, and the local community often have differing expectations of behavior, interaction, and tolerance. The *Group Expectations Framework*, a framework for determining common expectations, was developed through various workshops and surveys that were conducted with the students, staff, and local community participants. The framework allowed for responses from the participants of differing interest groups to be analyzed and to determine how these fit into the of the different categories of subcategory of expectations, their norming or forming character, and if the expectations were seen as voluntary behavior or were seen as a code of conduct with a regulatory character.

Keywords: Expectations, Large Diverse Groups, International Students, Group Expectation Framework

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Introduction

Human life is driven by expectations, particularly in situations regarding to plan future steps of education, career planning or to stay abroad. These expectations are either aimed towards ourselves, towards others, or both. The tricky thing is to identify thoughts on these topics as expectations, to structure them and finally verbalize them.

As early as 360 b.c. Plato wrote, that “each man possesses opinions about the future, which go by the general name of Expectations” (Bury, 1967/1968, *Plato Laws*, 1.644c). Curtin (2019) argues humans form expectations automatically, sometimes conscious, and sometimes unconscious, with passion or reason. They can be based on information from private surrounding or public influences. This includes all kind of influences. Even today’s social media platforms might have an impact. They may even be a crucial driver in modern times.

Students at the ECRI campus in Lower Bavaria come from more than 80 different nations. The interaction between staff and students showed that there were noticeable and often very specific expectations the students had towards the university staff, their education, their fellow students, and the general public of the local community around them. The conditions at the campus are unique in this sense as the surrounding area is very rural and traditional, but nearly all the students were socialized in cultures other than Germany and even Europe. In order to make their study experience a successful and positive one, the decision was made to create an overview which contains all common expectations from students and other stakeholders at the campus. This overview was meant to function as a guide or Code of Conduct.

The challenge was to capture the expectations of the large diverse group, which was not only ethnically and culturally diverse, but also to be able to capture the correct definitions or types of expectations. How expectations are formed is dependent on the upbringing, cultural background, personal and social influences, and these varied greatly between our stakeholders (Rieger, 2018). So, in the first step, it was important to conduct a survey to collect the actual meaning of the word “expectation”. In the second step, a workshop was held to collect data about the specific expectations from the stakeholders towards themselves and others.

A very basic definition of “expectation” can be found in the Cambridge Dictionary: “The feeling or belief that something will or should happen” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). The Oxford English Dictionary explains that an “expectation” is “the action or fact of anticipating or foreseeing something; the belief that something will happen or be the case” (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). Both definitions are oriented towards the future and should give the person expressing the expectation a plan or certainty. James (2011) defines two kinds of expectations: predictive and normative expectations. Whereas predictive expectations are formed based on the past, normative expectations are not. Latter imply what is seen as reasonable and desirable.

Research on groups has shown that people connect themselves by shared goals and most of us share expectations of respect, openness, and empathy (Forsyth, 2017). It was determined that a filter would be required to distinguish the different kinds of expectations mentioned by the research participants, and to be able to determine the possible differences in subjective meaning. The literature review concluded that there is not yet a framework that categorizes expectations of large diverse groups in terms of their motivational and binding character for

all members of the said group or community. This led to the decision to create a framework for this purpose.

Models for expectations in other scientific fields were explored. Most of the existing models on expectation research cover fields such as customer feedback, market research, predictions of the effectiveness of medical procedures, and even medications for the patients (Zhang et al., 2021; Sheth & Mittal, 1996). One example, the ViolEx Model shows that expectations are formed based on three long-term factors, which is one step above the *Group Expectations Framework* as it filters already existing expectations and not their formation (Rief & Glombiewski, 2016). The *Group Expectations Framework* differs, in that it identifies three main categories, five subcategories and seven types of expectations that can be assigned to specific responses. It is also designed to identify the underlying motivation and to consider potential intercultural factors.

Current State of Research

Expectations are part of our daily life and formed on both a conscious or unconscious level (Fuchs, 2022). They can be built regarding a certain expected behavior from a person or outcome of a situation. Most of the times expectations are result of past experiences (Fuchs, 2022). Favero and Kim (2020) agree with that statement and explain that past performances and past satisfactions have an influence on current expectations. Further expectations seem to be sturdy over time, as good experiences have been made before.

Leung et al. (2009) stated that expectations are oriented towards the future and people think they can influence the outcome by their current behavior and status. Therefore, expectations impact the goals people set for the future and how they plan it. Expectations have a guiding character for future behavior and development (Bandura 2001; Nurmi 1991; Seginer 2008). Howard (2005) determines a close connection between expectations and how students filter information and in a consequence make decision (as cited in Pike, 2006).

Types of Expectations

In general expectations can influence the behavior of people in and outside of their educational or professional setting. For this reason, expectations are not only influenced by the socialization of the individual but also vice versa (Pike, 2006).

Current discourse on the topic has shown different ideas to categorize and define expectations depending on how they were formed. Four types have been discussed so far which are relevant for the research described in this paper: *adaptive expectations*, *implicit expectations*, *explicit expectations*, and *rational expectations*. Adaptive expectations lie on the foundation of previous experiences made in a similar situation. The expected outcome may or may not occur as expected. Implicit expectations are not directly expressed and based on an assumed behavior of the other person, whereas explicit expectations are articulated through guidelines that allow people to act accordingly and consequently the outcome can be demanded. Rational expectations are based on past experiences like trends and are based on existing knowledge. Although these definitions are not evidence-based, they are helpful to think about and better explain why people have expectations and how they can differ from each other (Peterson et. al, 2016; Gertchev, 2007; Young & Darity, 2001).

Expectations of Groups

Expectations do not only concern individuals, but also groups often build shared expectations based on the facts which they form common goals, tasks, categorization, and systems (Forsyth, 2017). Participations and interactions of group members are dynamic processes which define the nature of the group itself and how the groups connect with other groups, other individuals, or larger institutions (Cartwright & Zander, 1968).

The literature mentions common expectations in group settings are respect, openness, being heard and seen, tolerance, support, and acceptance (Forsyth, 2017). Based on the characteristics of expectations mentioned above, the motivation for expressing expectations is not always clear. With diverse groups in particular, culture might influence the subjectivity of the expectation (Rieger, 2018). Expectations are dependent on the cultural background of a person as well as the context of the situation. It is important to consider, as an individual or a group, to be sensitive and open towards expectations from others (Kim & Goldstein, 2005).

Communicating Expectations

Communication plays a crucial role how expectations are expressed. It can be difficult when differing cultural background underly expectations (Katz et al., 2001). Curtin (2019) argues that if expectations are communicated in or to a group, they need to be expressed in a very clear and precise manner using short messages. One must be flexible enough to try to understand the cultural backgrounds and prejudice to be able to understand expectations in a large diverse group (Kim & Goldstein, 2005). Although spoken language is often the focus, body language must be included as well (Zhang et al., 2010). If the ability of intercultural communication is hindered or lost, apprehension, prejudice, and the lack of interest in the importance of spoken words are often the reason. Language skills play a crucial role in expressing expectations (Kim & Goldstein, 2005). In this context two verbal styles of indirect and direct communication must be considered. In individualistic cultures people tend to prefer direct talk and messages, whereas indirect talk is preferred in collectivistic societies (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2019). If students communicate who have different linguistic backgrounds this can lead to misunderstandings in the intention of the counterpart. Using direct communication styles the speaker's intentions are clearly expressed, for indirect communication the opposite is the case (Toomey & Dorjee, 2019). As shown above, expectations need to be expressed in a precise manner with a clear sentence structure. This will definitely be harder to achieve by students from an indirect verbal background.

The following situation was observed at the campus. While the official language of the campus is English, for most of the students and staff members it is their second language. Misinterpreted, or mis-expressed expectations can lead to disappointment and the feeling of not being heard. Students need to be provided with a safe space where they can share and question their own assumptions in order to successfully communicate with others (Jin, Cortazzi, 1997).

Seo and Koro-Ljungberg (2005) pointed out that high quality higher education can only be provided if cultural identities and the heritage is considered. To avoid disappointment, which can be a consequence when expectations are not met, it was decided to research about what the students at ECRI expect, what motivated these expectations, and how they expected others to deal with them.

Influence of Culture on Expectations

Expectations form based on culture, upbringing, education, media, historical and societal circumstances. Ethnicity plays a role as well as generational influences (Rieger, 2018). Observations from staff and previous feedback from the students at the campus have shown, that they seemed to have developed expectations from the campus community as well as from themselves.

Drew (2023) located different situations in which individuals, depending on their cultural background, have certain expectations. These can, for example, concern the behavior in a classroom setting, behavior in libraries and situations outside a university. In general expectations concern our daily actions in interaction in various situations, places, and with other people (Drew, 2023). Members of a large diverse group expect different behaviors on public transport, greeting procedures, privacy and space rules, and gender norms. In all these situations different expectations can arise due to the cultural background and social upbringing (Drew, 2023).

Although there are different expectations depending on the group and the situational setting, there are certain values that can be found universally such as respect, openness, and honesty (Hackman, 2022). At workplaces or in universities, professional communication, constructive feedback, avoiding negative gossip, and clean shared spaces, such as common used classrooms or office spaces, are defined and verified expectations (Drew, 2023). These findings go along with the results from the research carried out at the international campus. Professional communication is expected between professors and students while simultaneously giving feedback in a respectful manner.

Measuring Expectations

Previous research provided different scales to measure expectations such as the Verona Expectations for Care Scale (VECS) or the Verona Service Satisfaction Scale (VSSS), but most of them concern either the public sector or medical fields (Ruggeri, Dall'Agnola, 2009). The latter measures patients', relatives', and professionals' expectations and satisfaction with the provided care. Another model from Zhang et. al deals with the satisfaction of citizens with public services. The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Model provides data on the correlation between expectations being exceeded and the impact on satisfaction (Zhang et.al, 2022).

The ViolEx Model shows expectations are formed based on three long-term factors: direct prior experiences, social influences, and individual differences (Rief & Glombiewski, 2016). Yet again the model is established in the field of clinical psychology.

Current research has numerous answers on the identification of expectations, how they are expressed or measured in medical, business, and consumer-oriented areas, but a method to filter them according to the underlying motivation is missing. The two most common qualitative methods for measuring expectations are focus groups and interviews, while observational studies are also a frequently used method, too (Ayala & Elder, 2011).

The research presented in this paper shows the process of the design for a framework created to code and filter the expectations of a large, diverse group, specifically, the groups of stakeholders found at ECRI and the relevant findings of the research. The main research

question that was asked was: “How can expectations of large diverse groups be filtered through a framework to identify a set of expectations or shared expectations among the campus community?”. Further important aspects were to understand the motivation behind the expectations of the students as well as the community and how people deal with them, especially if they were not met. Lastly, the clear understanding of the group expectations will presumably lead to improved group dynamics.

Methodology

The *Group Expectations Framework* was created by employing a qualitative methods approach that aimed to explore the expectations of all stakeholders of the international campus, as a sample to represent, a large diverse group. The expectations were to be measured in their relation to the functioning of the campus, the expectations regarding interaction among stakeholders, and their general expectations about the services that should be provided. The research design consisted of two forms of data collection: an online survey and a public workshop.

The online survey, which was conducted in 2021, aimed to allow respondents to define and identify their personal understanding and definitions of expectations. This was done to start measuring possible cultural or stakeholder differences in what the term “expectations” could subjectively mean, and to identify different subcategory of expectations that a diverse group might have.

A public workshop, that was subsequently held in July 2022, was developed with design thinking methodology. Especially the first three phases of the design thinking process were relevant for the workshop. The focus was on the understand and observe steps, and the synthesis step (Scheer et.al., 2012). This was intended to provide an opportunity for all stakeholders, as well as the general population surrounding the campus, who was not included in the online survey, to voice their expectation regarding various aspects of the international campus such as behavior towards each other.

Research Design

The initial survey was created using an exploratory research approach and was designed to allow the participants the ability to define their own expectations. This phase served to collect the data needed for the subsequent workshop design. The workshop used a descriptive research method, allowing the answers from both the survey and the workshop to be used to create the framework in a qualitative methods approach.

Survey Design

The survey was designed to allow the respondents to identify and define what they believed expectations to be. Although the response rate was low (n=29), the responses helped to create the fundamental categories the framework uses. The responses to the survey were primarily from students.

The survey was conducted using an online survey platform. It was anonymous and all questions were optional. It was designed to allow for open ended responses, and there were no identifying demographics asked aside from their status at the campus (what type of

stakeholder). The survey was open to all stakeholders at the campus. The responses were used to establish the primary expectation definitions.

The survey was analyzed using thematic analysis to determine the framework structure. The answers were coded using a deductive coding technique to help interpret the data and form the initial aspects of the framework.

Public Workshop Design

The responses from the workshop that was conducted in July 2022, helped to fine tune the results. Again, the response rate was fairly low (n=58). The respondents included: professors and teaching staff, general staff, students, and the general population of the region.

There was a design thinking facilitator that was asked to accompany the workshop. The questions were designed to both gather expectations from all stakeholders at the campus, and to also allow for the further refinement of the framework. The workshop included questions regarding behavior, as well as expectations about the campus in general. The respondents were left to move about the room and answer questions that were placed around the room. Each question had a separate moderator. The questions were left in the room for several hours, so responses could be given with enough time for reflection from the participants. Each response was color coded, to allow the identification of the stakeholder type, but no other identifying information was collected.

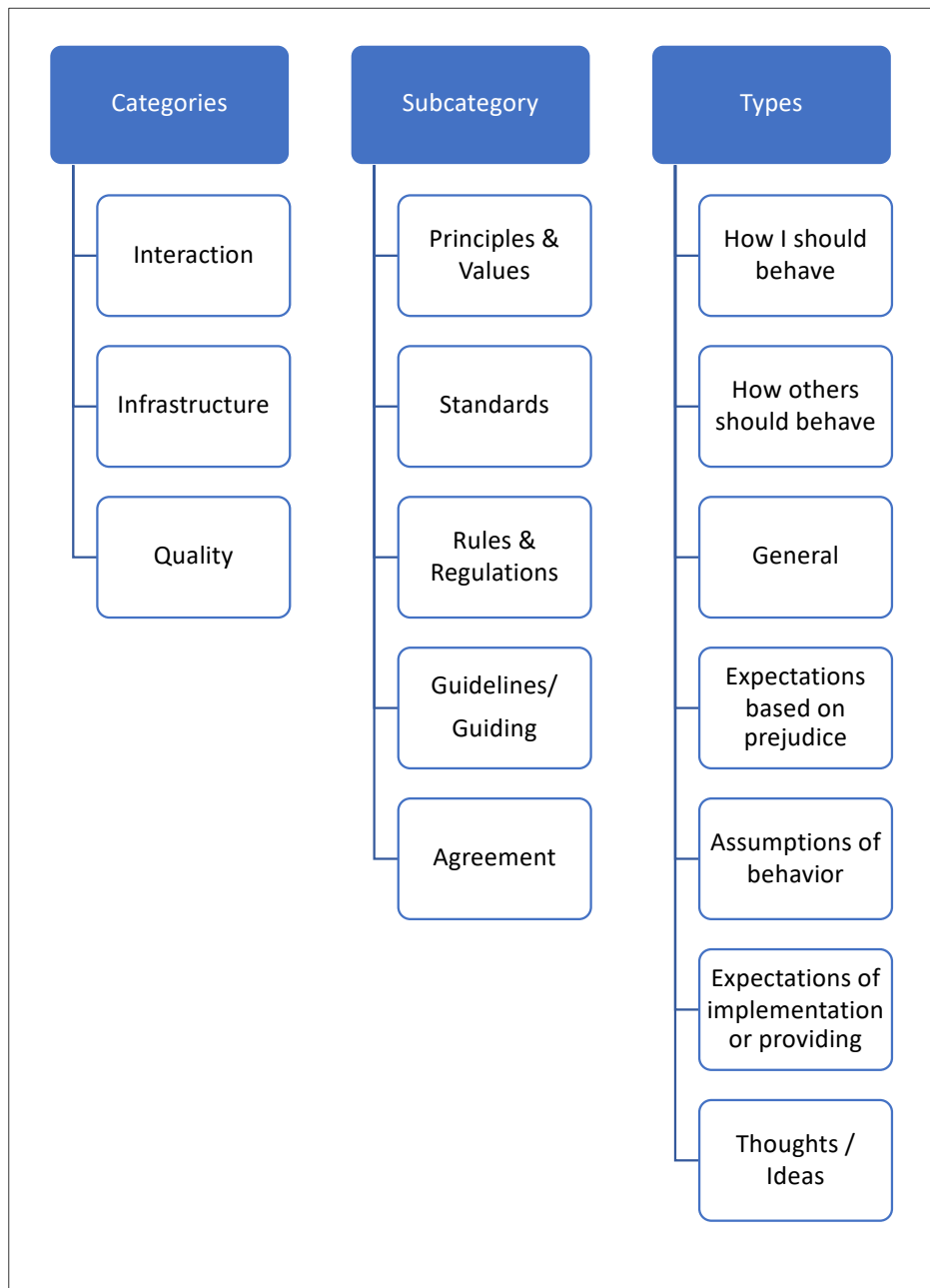
The workshop findings were analyzed by using a thematic analysis, that was partially based on the survey findings. The workshop was used to validate the framework and identify further categories, subcategories, or types of expectations, by identifying patterns of responses from all stakeholder groups.

Findings

The combined findings of the survey and the workshop helped to provide a diverse insight into the expectations that a large and diverse group can have within the context of an international campus. By including a variety of stakeholders, the response is designed to be representative sample of the campus population.

The analysis resulted in three categories of expectations, and five subcategories of expectations. The subcategory of expectations could be further divided into seven different types. The three categories are the main categories of expectations. Then the subcategories further define expectations by adding the reason for the expectation. Finally, the types identify the expectation and the motivation for it.

Figure 1: Full overview of Group Expectations Framework



Note: This figure shows all of the elements of the Group Expectations Framework

The three main categories of expectations that were identified were:

- *Interaction:* These are expectations that are primarily related to behavior.
- *Infrastructure:* These are expectations that are primarily related to the infrastructure that the respondents expect the university or community around the university to provide.
- *Quality:* These are expectations that the respondents had about the quality of teaching or services that the university provides, or of the quality of the students' work that the staff and teaching staff expect from them.

The five subcategory of expectations that were identified regarding *Interaction*:

- *Principles & Values (Flexible)*: Expectations that are built upon existing principles and values regarding behavior. These expectations are more generalized and often have a suggestive character, but a clear ethical or moral directive. The wording suggests flexibility regarding the implementation of these expectations.
- *Standards (Not flexible)*: Expectations built upon personal standards regarding behavior. The wording suggests that these expectations are not flexible and are to be implemented exactly as stated.
- *Rules & Regulations (Binding)*: Expectations that are considered as rules that need to be followed and are binding. The wording has the character of a codex and can be seen as expectations that can or should be enforceable.
- *Guidelines/Guiding (Non-binding)*: Expectations that are seen as suggestions are meant to guide others. The wording has the character of a guideline.
- *Agreement (Agreement from all response groups)*: These are expectations that are seen in all respondent groups and have a wording that suggests universal agreement across all cultures and respondent categories.

There were responses given that indicated expectations, but were not identifiable, either because of lacking context, lacking English skills, or because they were not decipherable. There were then out into a separate category:

- *Extras/Not identifiable*: Responses that are either not identifiable as expectations, or responses that are clearly not an expectation. This included statements, presentation of ideas that were not formulated to expect a response or behavior, or just not understandable in language or grammar.

All subcategories of expectations were identified and used in relation to the category of *Interaction*. However, expectations regarding Infrastructure and *Quality* primarily fell into the *Rules & Regulations (Binding)* and *Guidelines/Guiding (Non-binding)* subcategories.

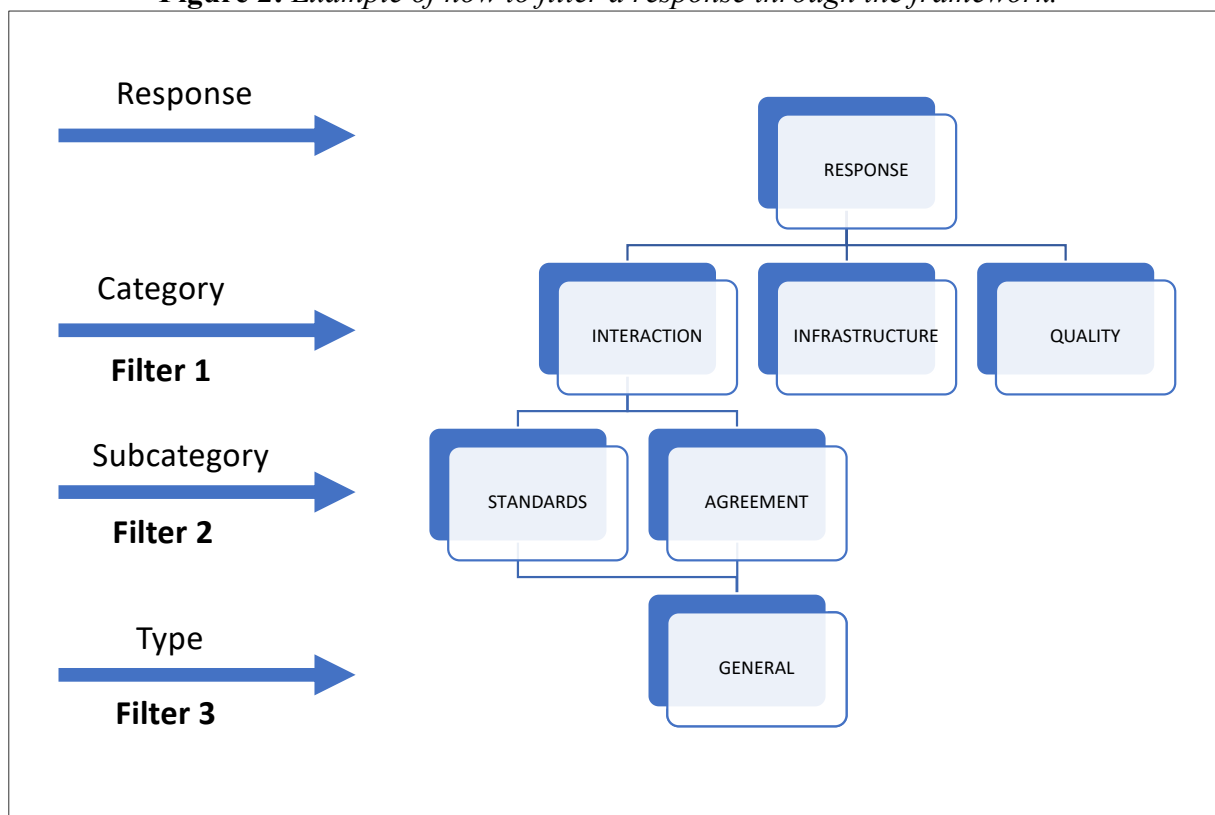
There were expectations that can overlap in their application or interpretation, and therefore the expectations were broken down further into seven types of expectations to be able to identify the intention or motivation even more accurately. The seven types were:

- *How I should behave (How to be)*: Expectations that are based on how one should behave towards others. This included other respondent groups or others in general.
- *How others should behave (To treat others/How I want to be treated)*: Expectations that are based on how others should behave towards either the respondent (group or individual) or others in general.
- *General (Expected behavior / Thoughts for understanding behavior)*: Expectations that are considered either as universal or have a character of a basic principle to help understand general expectations regarding behavior. There is some reflection towards others.
- *Expectations based on prejudice*: Expectations that are built on prejudice or bias towards others.

- *Assumptions of behavior*: Expectations that are built on the assumption that the expected behavior is the norm that should be followed by others, without any reflection towards others. The expectation is seen as universally understood or self-explanatory.
- *Expectations of implementation or providing*: Expectations that are based on the want or need of implementation to fulfill a need or desire or to provide something that is seen as necessary.
- *Thoughts / Ideas (not related to specific behavior)*: Expectations that are not related to behavior and don't seem to have any guiding character. These seem to be placed to help inspire action or a response, but do not define the expected result.

The framework is designed to be used as a filtering system, to allow the researcher to use a deductive approach in determining the types of expectations that a large, diverse group has.

Figure 2: Example of how to filter a response through the framework.



Note: This figure shows how the response “respect” was coded and filtered through the framework in three steps.

By filtering a response through the different aspects of the framework, it is possible to determine the motivation and possible expected response and or behavior to the expectation. In the example (Figure 1), the response was *respect*, which was a response from all stakeholders and was formulated as a standard. The context in which the response “respect” was given in both the survey and the workshop allowed for the identification of the term to be placed into the category of *Interaction*, Further context in the responses, particularly in the way the response was formulated in regard to expected behavior from oneself and the behavior of others, allowed for the response to be identified as a *Standard* and the responses regarding “respect” were so similar amongst all stakeholders, that it could also be identified as an *Agreement*. Even though the expectation of “respect” fits to two types, the sub-typing

allows this response to be seen as a general or universal expectation with a binding character for all.

Limitations and Further Research

This framework still lacks empirical validation. This is partially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which made it harder to examine expectations, especially as there was little campus life or interaction. The framework will be used for annual surveys of the campus population for the next three years, after which it will be examined again. Through this research, it is expected that the intercultural aspect of expectations will be more distinguishable as a direct influence on expectations. The data collected so far is not enough to clearly make this distinction yet. It is also expected that further empirical research will lead to the discovery of other forms of expectations, as a future data analysis will likely show expectations that have not been considered in this framework.

The framework will also be offered to other organizations with large, diverse groups, to further expand the respondent groups for this framework. This will happen both inside and outside the higher education sector. Further research may also add more to insights into expectations for individuals in diverse populations.

Conclusion

The Group Expectations Framework is a framework that can be used to code and visualize expectations of large, and especially diverse, groups in an academic environment. Further empirical research will validate the framework as a tool for the identifying differing expectations among stakeholders from different status, age or cultural backgrounds. This can help to create an overview of the expectation and motivation of the group. It allows the identification and visualization of the expectations that are seen as having a binding, non-negotiable, or rule characteristic, and could potentially be enforceable, as well as the expectations that are not seen as enforceable or that carry an expectation of implementation. Hence, the importance of certain expectations can be raised above others and potentially improve group dynamics.

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Contact email: michelle.cummings-koether@th-deg.de