

Guide to Planning your Professional and Personal Development

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What is a Personal Development Plan?

A Personal Development Plan (PDP) is a structured process undertaken by an individual to reflect on their learning and development needs and to plan how they can fill their learning gap. Personal and Professional Development Planning is part of being a 'reflective practitioner' and should be part of regularly reviewing your professional knowledge and skills to ensure they are up to date and relevant.

Some professional bodies require personal development planning and continuing professional development to be kept up to date as a condition of maintaining a professional status.

Why do I need one?

It is important that everyone takes an interest in and responsibility for their own development. A PDP will help you to:

- Work effectively and achieve goals that are important,
- Keep yourself updated and prepared for future changes,
- Proactively seek and use opportunities available,
- Contribute to the objectives of your team and
- Comply with any CPD requirements of your profession.

How do I write one?

Before you can complete a plan you need to analyse your current situation. The stages outlined on the next page will help with thinking this through:

PDP Process

Establish what you want to achieve – what are your role requirements/objectives and career ambitions

Consider... what are your objectives for the forthcoming year?

Will you be involved in any projects?

Will you be taking on a new or increased management role or level of responsibility / decision making?

Determine your current position

What do you consider to be your strengths?

What have been your key achievements over the last year? What skills do you have that are not currently being utilised? What development have you undertaken?

Identify areas for development

What are the gaps between what you are currently doing and the expectations of you in your role / your career aspirations? What new tasks / responsibilities will you be taking on?

Are there any aspects of your role that you think you could do better?

Select the appropriate development activity

Prioritise your development needs – what do you need to address first?

What development activities are available & the associated costs/resources /time for them all?

Consider workshops, mentoring, job shadowing, action learning, reading etc. Which is the most appropriate? (See page 7 for details of the options.)

What will you do differently

How will you know the development has been successful? What will have changed, what will be the benefits? Think about the difference that you will make in the workplace.

Decide on the support you may need to achieve your objectives and set an achievement date

What support / approval do you need?

When will you undertake the development?

Agree on a timescale.

Using a Learning Log

Learning logs help to capture formal and informal learning that has helped you to achieve your development plan. It is also a structured way to develop your reflection skills. A learning log also helps you to consider using ad hoc learning opportunities, so they are not lost as formal learning rarely provides everything that you need.

How do we learn?

It is important to recognise how we learn before we embark upon development planning and the process of reflection. We all learn in different ways, some of us like to actively take part and learn from the experience whilst others like to read and prepare well before they learn. Kolb and Fry (1975) suggest that we go through a number of stages in the learning process whereas Honey and Mumford (1992) suggest that we have a preference for a particular learning style and if we are aware of this we can take action to improve based upon this learning style preference.

Learning Styles - Kolb and Fry

Kolb and Fry (1975) suggest that as we go through the stages in the learning process that we need to acknowledge the cyclical nature of learning. Kolb and Fry provide useful insight into the nature of learning. They demonstrate that there is no end to learning but only another turn of the cycle; that learners are not passive recipients and need to actively explore and test the environment, the cycle specifically identifies the importance of reflection and internalisation and it is a useful way of identifying problems in the learning process i.e. do we go through all of the stages in the cycle before we take action?

Starting with a Concrete Experience we move on to Observe and Reflect, we Form Abstract Concepts and finally Test our theories in new situations, before returning once more to having a new experience, but this time taking our previous learning with us.

Kolb further suggests that experiential learning will enable managers to cope with change and complexity.

Learning Styles - Honey and Mumford

Honey and Mumford (1995) identified four main learning style preferences. By thinking about your preferred style, you can try and apply this to learning new things. If you're able to use your natural style, you're likely to find learning much easier and quicker.

You will complete a Learning Styles questionnaire during the programme, which will help you to identify your preferred learning style(s). Further information about learning styles is available on the Moodle site. Below are the four different learning styles:

Activists:

Activists like to be involved in new experiences. They are open-minded and enthusiastic about new ideas but get bored with implementation. They enjoy doing things and tend to act first and consider the implications afterwards. They like working with others but tend to hog the limelight.

Reflectors:

Reflectors like to stand back and look at a situation from different perspectives. They like to collect data and think about it carefully before coming to any conclusions. They enjoy observing others and will listen to their views before offering their own.

Theorists:

Theorists adapt and integrate observations into complex and logically sound theories. Thinking problems through in a step by step way. They tend to be perfectionists who like to fit things into a rational scheme. They tend to be detached and analytical rather than subjective or emotive in their thinking.

Pragmatists:

Pragmatists are keen to try things out. They want concepts that can be applied to their job. They tend to be impatient with lengthy discussions and are practical and down-to-earth.

Understanding your preferred learning style(s) and the implications of this will help you to plan the most appropriate development activity to meet you and your team members' development needs and with your learning and reflection.

Personal Development Plan

Status	Development Objective <i>What aspect of my knowledge, practice, skills or behaviours do I want to develop?</i>	Development Activity <i>How will I achieve this? What are the most appropriate development activities?</i>	What will I be doing differently? <i>How will I know I have been successful? What key differences do you aim to make in the workplace?</i>	Support Needed? <i>What additional resources or support will I need? Who and/or what resources can help?</i>	Date for Achievement <i>Target Dates for review /completion</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Planned <input type="checkbox"/> In progress <input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Reflection					Start Date: Pick Date Review: Pick Date Completion: Pick Date
<input type="checkbox"/> Planned <input type="checkbox"/> In progress <input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Reflection					Start Date: Pick Date Review: Pick Date Completion: Pick Date
<input type="checkbox"/> Planned <input type="checkbox"/> In progress <input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Reflection					Start Date: Pick Date Review: Pick Date Completion: Pick Date

Reflective Learning Log

What is reflective practice?

Reflective practice is an evaluative tool used as part of the learning process associated with personal development and growth. Having an experience does not necessarily mean that learning has taken place, it is only through internalising the experience that you can then begin to make sense of the experience.

What is Reflection?

- Reflection on the process of learning
- The building of theory
- Problem solving, sometimes unexpected outcomes and ideas present themselves
- Emotional development in some form
- Reflection can bring about change, growth and development
- Awareness of uncomfortable feelings and thoughts

Reflective Learning Logs

Reflective logs are personal and unstructured (Bolton 2001) and contain stories, descriptions of events, personal anecdotes but should also contain deliberate thought and analysis. Often individuals find that keeping a personal reflective journal of events that happen either in the workplace or outside of the workplace helps them to reflect and understand situations, particularly as to why they happen and what they might have been able to do differently to affect a more satisfactory result.

Additionally, when things go well it is helpful to record this and work out why this was a positive experience and what can be learnt from this to transfer positively to other situations.

It is important to recognise that the journal should not simply be a personal diary or just a story but should explore your actions, feelings and the learning that was derived from the experience. A reflective log can help us challenge our own beliefs and values and help us to clarify issues that are bothering us to deal with the issue and move on.

The Importance of Reflection for Managers and the Support Available

In the ever-changing world of work managers need to continue to learn from new experiences and develop new skills or transfer existing skills to new situations. The practice of reflection can assist managers in continuing professional and personal development.

A mentor is usually an experienced member of staff who can give help to the person being mentored to find new meanings in work and practice. They may help you to consider your personal strengths and areas of development and provide feedback and help prompt you to consider the next stage in your development. The mentor would not normally be your line manager.

Remember that the responsibility for completing the Reflective Learning Logs within the workbook lies with you, your mentor/ line manager/ tutor is there to facilitate and guide the learning process when appropriate prompting you to consider your next course of action.

Writing Your Reflective Learning Log

The following template has been developed to help you to structure your reflections. Based on Kolbs learning cycle, an explanation of how to approach it is included in the example on the next page.

Reflective Learning Log Description

Stage 1: Describe the learning activity

Describe in detail the development event that you are reflecting on. Include, for example, where were you; who else was there; why were you there; what were you doing; what were other people doing; what was the context of the event; what happened; what was your part in this; what parts did the other people play; what was the result.

Stage 2: Describe your Observations and Reflections

At this stage try to explore how you were feeling – what was going on inside your head. Describe how you were feeling when the activity started; what you were thinking about at the time; how did other people make you feel; how did you feel during and about the outcome of the event; what do you think about it now.

How did your feelings influence your behavior, i.e. what did you say or do?

Also, describe any 'key moments' or 'key observations', e.g. something someone said or something that was taught that had an impact on you or particularly chimed with you for some reason.

Describe why it was a 'key moment' for you. Key observations could include how you noticed others responded and/or they maybe a model or theory that made sense or helped you with your understanding.

Consider what was good and/or bad about the learning event or experience or what went well or worked well or didn't go so well for you.

Stage 3: Key learning points and conclusions

At this stage, describe the key learning points or outcomes for you, e.g. aspects of the activity that were particularly relevant or stood out to you.

What conclusions do you draw from the learning?

If the learning activity was a workshop, you should try to relate the learning to your practice in the workplace. By doing this you are likely to develop insight into your own and other people's behaviour in terms of how they contributed to the outcome of an event.

Remember the purpose of reflection is to learn from an experience. Without detailed analysis and honest exploration that occurs during all the previous stages, it is unlikely that all aspects of the event will be considered and therefore valuable opportunities for learning can be missed. During this stage you should ask yourself what you could have done differently.

Stage 4: So what? – Action Planning

During this stage you should think yourself forward into encountering the event or workplace scenario again and to plan what you would do – would you act differently or would you be likely to do the same? Here the cycle is tentatively completed and suggests that should the event occur again it will be the focus of another reflective cycle

Learning and Development Options

Listed below are a range of development options which can be considered when deciding how to meet a development need along with their associated pros and cons. Learning style preferences also have a bearing on the most appropriate development activity to meet your needs and the development needs of your team.

Financial implications are clearly a factor too when determining development activities, however, not all development solutions need be costly. Managers and individuals need to be creative when considering development options available to them. Also, being clear about how you will measure the success of any development activity is also key to identifying the right option.

Development Activity	Pros	Cons
Work shadowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to directly observe and ask questions throughout a process / activity. • Relevant to the learner (i.e. usually a task they need to learn to do) • Cost effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relies on experience and skill of the person being shadowed • Possible to pick up bad habits / practices
Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses specifically on the performance / requirements of the individual. • Requires people to transfer the learning to real work situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires skill on the part of the coach • Can be costly, if an external coach is used.
Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses specifically on the individuals needs • Opportunity to learn directly from someone with particular experience or knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires skill on the part of the mentor. • Generally longer term, so can be some time before benefits are experienced in the work place
Action Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves those who own problems and are best qualified to solve them • Good method for developing people in their organisation • It requires individuals to commit to take action, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It needs to be well structured and facilitated to work well. • Relies on people being open and prepared to share their situations. • Diary co-ordination of the group can be a challenge.
Delegated tasks and projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows trust and confidence in the individual • Frees the manager to do other work • Directly relevant way of developing staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires confidence and faith in others • Time commitment in the short term for longer term payoff • With heavy workloads, there can be resistance to take on delegated work
Reading assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost effective • Easy to access • Flexible in terms of when it is undertaken • Works well if supported by additional development, i.e. follow up discussions / de-brief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of interaction and opportunity to ask questions • No guarantee the learning will 'stick' • Might just have a one sided view

Development Activity	Pros	Cons
<i>Job deputisation or secondment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide reciprocal benefit to both parties if well organised. • Provides individuals with an accurate understanding of what another role entails and the associated skills and knowledge etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming if not directly beneficial to current role. • Can be difficult to co-ordinate. • Transfer of learning to current role may be limited.
<i>External training courses and seminars</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to fresh thinking and ideas • Chance to meet new people and share ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expense • Content may be too general • No guarantee that the ideas can be applied without support from the organisation
<i>E- learning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning can be carried out at a time to suit the individual. • Provides development to a wide number of people. • Cost effective • Very effective if supported by others forms of learning, e.g. coaching; training etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals need to manage their time well to fit in e-learning activities. • Might not be accessible to all members of staff
<i>Open / Distance Learning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can involve a range of development approaches, e.g. audio; video; workbooks; online tutorials etc • Support provided by tutors • Can be fitted in to suit individual circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires discipline to commit to the time • Some individuals can miss face to face interaction • Some packages may be too generic to an organisation • Cost
<i>Evening classes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance does not interfere with the working day • Individuals would generally gain a recognised qualification • Opportunity to network with externals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost • The course may not be entirely relevant to the workplace • Time commitment for individuals outside of work
<i>Voluntary work</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to work on 'real' projects. • Shared experiences / learning outside with people outside of the workplace. • Cost effective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning context may not be relevant to the workplace. • Time commitment
<i>Committee positions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to a range of senior staff and high level discussions and recommendations. • Individuals would gain a good understanding of the University decision making processes and the associated links between committees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals would need to have an established level of knowledge of the University and its structure before taking up a committee role. • Opportunities are limited to the requirements of committee groups.

Development Activity	Pros	Cons
Internal training courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content can be tailored to the organisation. Can help shape opinions and work towards changing attitudes. Promotes communication messages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People sometimes attend for the wrong reason. No exposure to 'fresh thinking' from outside the organisation. Requires the support of managers to ensure the learning is applied in the workplace.
Attending internal briefings and presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally short and focused. Opportunity to hear a specific update e.g. VC's address on the strategic agenda. Network opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals need to be available to attend (although many are recorded for the intranet). Sometimes the content of the briefing is too far removed from some individuals, so may need local discussion to clarify what that means for a team / individual.
Benchmarking visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide fresh ideas and approaches. Networking opportunity. Provide solutions focused to specific issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reason for benchmarking needs to be clear otherwise its value may be limited
Project Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be arranged and managed locally Usually has a defined time period and provided variety from day to day tasks Allows for real improvements to take place in the way a team or department is run 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can fail through lack of guidance, terms of reference or clear deadlines Time commitment required by people in addition to day to day responsibilities Needs to be supported, depending on experience of the individual.
Job-swap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides learning opportunity to two parties. Cost effective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be difficult to co-ordinate, i.e. needs to be a development need of two parties for it to be effective. Likely to require the support of third parties if either individual is unsure of the other person's role. Transfer of learning may be limited.
Accredited / Professional Qualifications, e.g. NVQ's, MBA's, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides direct benefit to an individual who gain a specific qualification which, if directly relevant to their career path, may enhance employability. May be more attractive to individuals as they are likely to gain from a qualification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be costly and/or time consuming. Not all the content may be of direct benefit within the current role. Can set an expectation with other members of staff.
Conference attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good networking opportunity. Opportunity to engage with a number of sessions and learn about different and new initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all session may be of direct relevance / benefit. Can be costly and/or time consuming depending on the benefit gained from attending.

Transfer of Learning

Whatever the method, managers should not assume that people will automatically be able to use their new-found knowledge or skills in their own role. It is not always that simple.

When considering any development needs, always be clear about what you expect an individual to do differently or what you expect that they will be doing that will confirm the development was worthwhile. This will enable you to select the most appropriate method of development to ensure that people are able to transfer the learning gained to their work situation.

When selecting a development activity, ensure that:

- The development activity and the development need are similar
- There is an immediate link between the development activity and the role requirement.
- There will be a benefit for using the knowledge or skills in the workplace, i.e. it will improve working methods / efficiency
- People are encouraged (by their manager or peers) to try our new skills and approaches sooner rather than later.