

Learning how to learn

Personal development planning

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To be successful in this ever-changing world, every individual needs to keep informed and up-to-date in his field of practice. Personal development planning (PDP) is one effective strategy to satisfy this need.

What is PDP?

Personal development planning is "a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development." ⁽¹⁾.

What is it for?

PDP is intended to help individuals ⁽²⁾:

- Become more effective, independent and confident self-directed learner
- Understand what and how they are learning and relate their learning to a wider context
- Improve their general skills for study and career management
- Articulate their personal goals and evaluate progress towards their achievement
- Encourage a positive attitude to learning throughout life

How to develop your personal development plan (PDP)?

There are four main steps to achieve this:

Step 1: define your goal and objectives

The central step in PDP is to articulate clearly your goal and objectives (what do you want to be in the future?!).. If you have no clear goal and objectives, it will be extremely difficult to develop a PDP

Step 2: analyze your current situation

Get to know where you stand currently to identify your potentials and challenges. You can use SWOT

analysis to define your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Step 3: identify your own training needs/gaps

Conduct an exercise of training needs assessment (TNA) based on the analysis of the previous two steps (your objectives read in conjunction with your current situation). This will help you identify your gaps in terms of knowledge and skills.

Step 4: decide on how to satisfy your training needs

This is based on making use of opportunities for professional development such as courses, seminars, conferences, on-the-job experience, mentoring, etc...

To make your life easy, you can split your task into short-term, medium-term and long-term objectives. This will motivate you to continue as you achieve small victories on your way to reaching the final goal.

References

1. London Metropolitan University. Personal Development Planning. [online] 2005. Available from <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/library> [Accessed on 23 May 2008].
2. Guidelines for HE Progress Files, QAA, UUK, SCOP, Universities Scotland. [online] May 2001, available from: www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressFiles/guidelines/progfile2001.pdf [Accessed on 20 May 2008].