



**Training Frontline Workers**  
**Young People, Alcohol & Other Drugs**

**Section**

**B**

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# Topic 1

# Introduction



## Overview

This module is designed to assist you undertake the training program for frontline workers, **Young People, Alcohol and Other Drugs**. It will help you identify your preferred learning style, the resources available to support your learning and opportunities for workplace learning. It will also provide you with the tools required for developing a learning plan.

The module highlights the challenges of maintaining skills and knowledge in today's workplace and explores the important role that learning plays in managing and adapting to workplace change.

The module is divided into three sections:

- Lifelong learning
- Workplace learning
- Developing a Learning Plan

Part 1 explores the concept of self-directed learning and the learning process. An activity is included to help you identify your own personal learning style.

Part 2 contains a definition of work-based learning and explores a range of learning strategies and resources. Opportunities and constraints for work-based learning within your own organisation are considered.

Part 3 focuses on the individual learner – you. You will undertake a number of self-analysis activities to help identify your needs and priorities. You will then work through the stages of developing a Learning Plan.

This module also includes a number of exercises that will require you to actively research and analyse learning opportunities and options.

## 1.2 Learning outcomes

When you have completed this module you will be able to:

- LO Identify personal learning processes
- LO Identify personal learning needs in relation to practice improvement
- LO Identify learning resources
- LO Develop a learning plan.

It is suggested that you remind yourself of these learning outcomes as you work through the module. At different stages ask yourself whether you think you have achieved each of the learning outcomes. This will help you keep track of your progress to date, and what you still need to learn to successfully complete the module.

## Topic 2

# Lifelong learning



### Key Issues

-  Adapting to change
-  Lifelong learning
-  Self-directed learning
-  The cycle of learning
-  Learning styles

## 2.1

### Adapting to change

As a frontline worker working with young people, there is an expectation that you have a level of knowledge, skill and confidence based on your position and area of expertise. However, we know that working with young people can be as demanding and overwhelming as it can be stimulating and rewarding.

For example, a proportion of the young people that you work with may experience alcohol and other drug problems. The alcohol and drug field has undergone major changes in recent years. The range of substances available as well as the range of treatment and intervention approaches has changed and expanded dramatically. The issues that young people are facing are complex and ever changing. So how do we manage to keep abreast of this in our work?

Clearly, there is a need for a skilled and responsive workforce who can keep up to date with new information and ideas. Change is constant in every aspect of our work. We live in times of unprecedented technological and social change that has profound implications for us in our workplace and working lives.

## Task



There is a need for both individuals and organisations to engage in continuous adaptation, enhancement and innovation. So, how do we manage ongoing change and the associated demands?

**Q** *What are some of the general qualities and skills that you think people need in today's rapidly growing workforce (e.g. an ability to use initiative and make decisions?)*

**A** *(Write your answer here, then check the possible answers on the next page.)*

**A** Possible answers include:

- an ability to adapt to change; flexibility and adaptability
- an ability to communicate effectively with others
- problem-solving skills
- an ability to transfer skills from one area or situation to another
- an ability to work as part of a team
- an ability to learn new knowledge and skills
- a commitment to quality.

However, a key concept that underpins such abilities is the capacity for ongoing learning or **continuous** learning. The notion of continuous or **lifelong learning** is an important concept so let's explore this in more detail.

## 2.2

# Lifelong learning

In the past we have made rather clear distinctions between places where we learn (schools, college and university) and places where we work. On the other hand we know that we learn throughout our lives and in almost all situations. Some of this learning is incidental and largely subconscious, such as finding a new route to work. However, a large amount of our learning is purposeful – we identify a learning need and plan to address this need. This is known as lifelong learning.

One of the most profound areas of change in most people's lives occurs in the world of work. For example, in your work a number of specific learning challenges may include:

- the requirements of the Supported Accommodation Assistance program with its emphasis on case management and the 'continuum of care'
- the emphasis on innovative models of intervention such as community-based care and outreach support
- the increasing use of standards, accreditation and regulations in the sector
- the use of sophisticated databases and websites for finding and using information.

When practices and processes can change so rapidly, knowledge and skills learnt at school or in formal education can quickly become obsolete. How do we manage this increasing complexity and never-ending change?

### Task



**Q**

***What are some of the strategies that you use to adapt to the shifting circumstances and demands in your workplace?***

**A**

*(Write your answer here, then check the possible answers on the next page.)*

## **A Possible answers include:**

- Establishment of networks with other colleagues to share information
- Use of supervision/staff appraisal process to identify and address your professional development needs

## **The dimensions of lifelong learning**

It is important to stress that lifelong learning is not lifelong schooling or studying! The concept stresses the importance of us taking responsibility for our own learning and there is a wide range of ways that we can do this.

The lifelong learner is someone who recognises the need for ongoing learning, is motivated to engage in the process, and has the necessary confidence and learning skills. Lifelong learning includes the following dimensions:

- learning is active, not passive
- learning occurs in formal and informal settings
- people learn with, and from, peers
- people integrate ideas from different fields
- learners locate and evaluate information from a wide range of sources
- people use different learning strategies as appropriate
- learning addresses real-life issues
- the process of learning is as important as the content
- people identify, plan and monitor their own learning
- learners engage in reflection and self-evaluation
- feedback is critical for change and improvement.

Many of the above strategies stress the role of the individual learner taking responsibility for their own learning.

This brings us to the second central theme of this module – **self-directed learning.**

## 2.3

# Self-directed learning (SDL)

In lifelong learning, we have seen the importance of taking responsibility for our own professional development. In **self-directed learning (SDL)**, learners are actively involved in critically analysing, reflecting on, and responding creatively to, their situations. Probably the most important skill for today's rapidly changing workforce is skills in self-reflection. The highly motivated, self-directed learner with skills in self-reflection can approach the workplace as a continual classroom from which to learn.

SDL can be described as a process in which learners:

- take the initiative
- use the support and collaboration of others
- diagnose their learning needs
- formulate relevant learning goals
- identify human and material resources
- choose and develop appropriate learning strategies
- reflect on and evaluate their learning.

Of course, the transition to self-direction and self-management does not happen overnight. The journey towards self-direction will require a number of strategies. It will also require an understanding of the process of learning.

## 2.4 The cycle of learning

### The experiential learning cycle

So what is 'learning'? Basically learning is about:

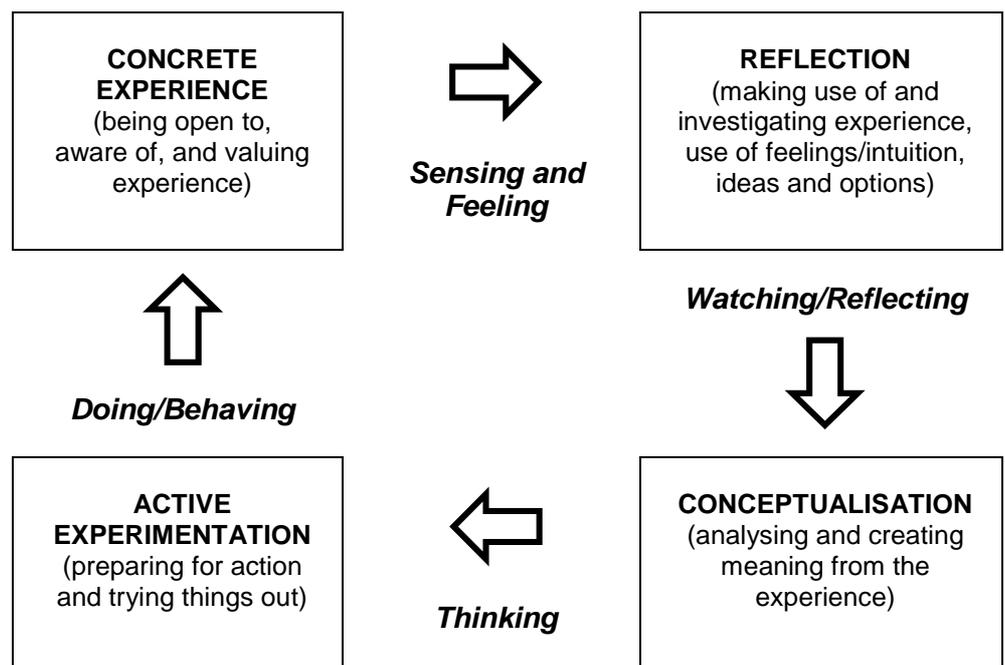
- Growth – in knowledge
- Development – of skills
- Change – in attitudes, values and perceptions

Given the range of human diversity there are no formulas or packages that can totally encompass the complex process of learning. However, let's spend some time exploring the **Experiential Learning Cycle** developed by Kolb (1984).

The Kolb learning model describes learning as a never-ending cycle comprising four stages. It shows how experience is translated through reflection into concepts, which in turn are used as guides for active experimentation and new experiences.

These stages follow each other in the learning cycle.

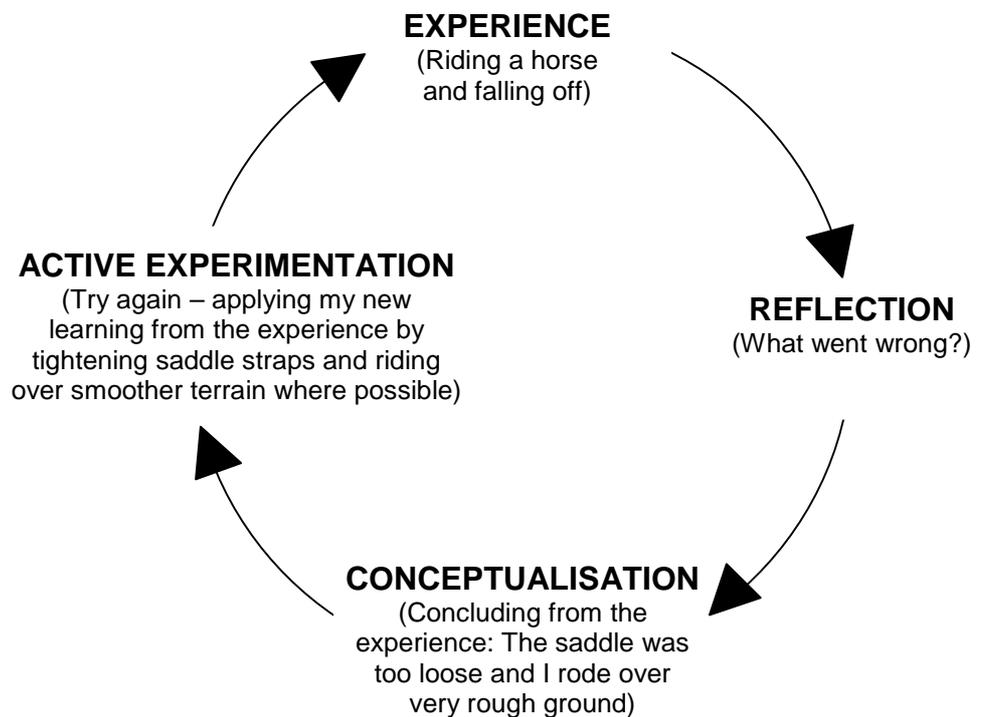
### The Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle



While the cycle may be entered at any point, the stages should be followed in sequence. The learning cycle thus provides **feedback**, which is the basis for new action and evaluation of the consequences of that action. As learners ideally go through the cycle several times, it may be thought of as a **spiral of cycles**.

Let's use a simple example of how we can use the cycle:

### Example: Riding a horse and falling off



### Key dimensions of the cycle of learning

Kolb's model explains how we link theory to practice. The model highlights:

- that **experience** is a critical part of our learning
- that learning cannot take place without **reflection** - it results from making sense of our experience
- the importance of **feedback** to reinforce learning.

Let's consider these points in more detail.

## Experience

Kolb (1984) suggests that learning starts with experience. However, the model explains that experience alone is not sufficient for us to learn. We need to **reflect** on our experience:

- **concrete experience** - having an experience
- **reflection** - reviewing the experience
- **conceptualisation** - concluding from the experience
- **active experimentation** - planning the next step

## Critical reflection

A central part of self-directed learning is the capacity to reflect. What does this actually mean? Reflection is an essential part of the learning process because it results in making sense of or extracting meaning from the experience. **Critical reflection** or critical thinking focuses on becoming aware of our own faulty assumptions and thinking processes.

To engage in critical reflection requires moving beyond the acquisition of new knowledge, to a questioning of existing assumptions, values and perspectives. Of course, critical reflection can lead to self-doubt and feelings of isolation and uncertainty. Learners who engage in activities to facilitate critical reflection must be supported in their efforts.

Engaging in reflective practice takes time and effort but the rewards can be great. The following list summarises **reflective practice processes** (Roth 1989):

- Questioning what, why, and how one does things and asking what, why and how others do things
- Seeking alternatives
- Keeping an open mind
- Comparing and contrasting
- Seeking the framework, theoretical basis and/or underlying rationale
- Viewing an issue from various perspectives
- Asking 'what if...?'
- Asking for others' ideas and viewpoints
- Considering consequences

- Hypothesising
- Synthesising and testing
- Seeking, identifying, and resolving problems

### Feedback

Feedback plays an important part in the reflection process and is an important aspect of professional development. Feedback is necessary to check your progress towards your goals. **Self-assessment** is one way of receiving feedback but it is important to involve others as well.

Of course, there is no point in asking others to give you feedback unless you are prepared to be open to it and consider comments which differ from your own perspective. Here are some of the characteristics of a good receiver of feedback:

- **be explicit** - Make it clear what kind of feedback you are seeking. If necessary indicate what sort of feedback you do not want to receive.
- **be attentive** - Concentrate on what is being said. Focus on what the person wants you to know, not on what you would like to hear.
- **be aware** - Take note of your reactions, both intellectual and emotional. Note any reactions of rejection on your part. Do not dismiss the viewpoint if it is different to yours. It is important to be aware of the reactions of others even if you think they are wrong.
- **be silent** - Don't even begin to frame a response until you have listened carefully to what has been said. Don't be distracted by the need to explain or correct factual errors. If you need to give an explanation, do it after the feedback session once you have attended to all that has been said.

This ongoing cycle of learning and reflection is known as action learning. **Action learning** is an approach to the development of people in organisations and it is based on the premise that there is no learning without action and no purposeful action without learning!

Another important feature of the learning cycle theory is that different stages are associated with distinct **learning styles**. Recognising that individuals differ in their preferred learning styles is the first stage in raising your awareness of alternative possible approaches which will help you to become more flexible. Let's look at these learning styles in more detail.

## 2.5

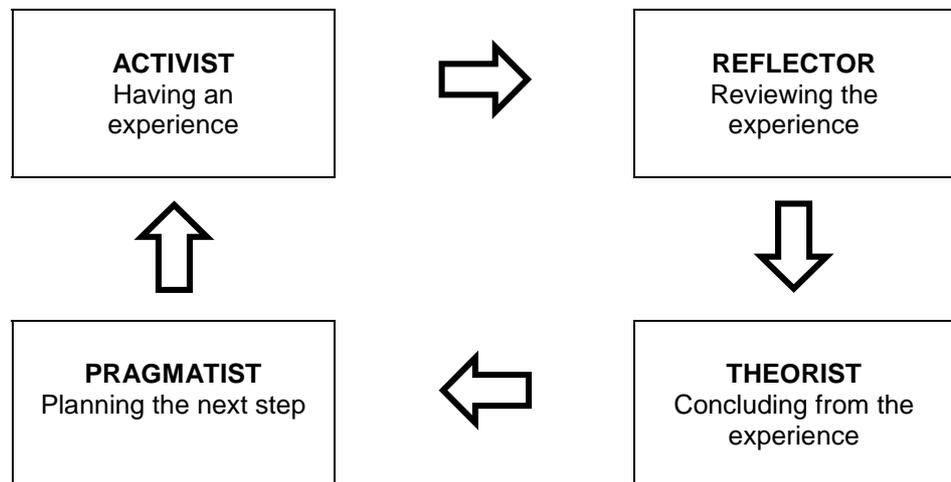
# Learning styles

### Identifying your personal learning style

We're now going to spend some time thinking about how we, as individuals, learn. It is important to distinguish between learning and training. **Training** is often conceived as something that is 'done to' the learner whereas **learning** is the process by which the learner takes responsibility for the 'doing'.

People differ from one another in maturity, knowledge, motivation, responsibility and learning skills. This impacts on the way that they learn. Think about some of the training courses that you have attended with a group of colleagues, all with similar experiences and a desire to learn as much as possible. At the end of the course, some may have thought that it was a most enjoyable and useful experience. Others may have thought that it was a waste of time. How can this be? Different people have different ways of learning. The course would have catered for the preferred learning style of some of the participants but not others.

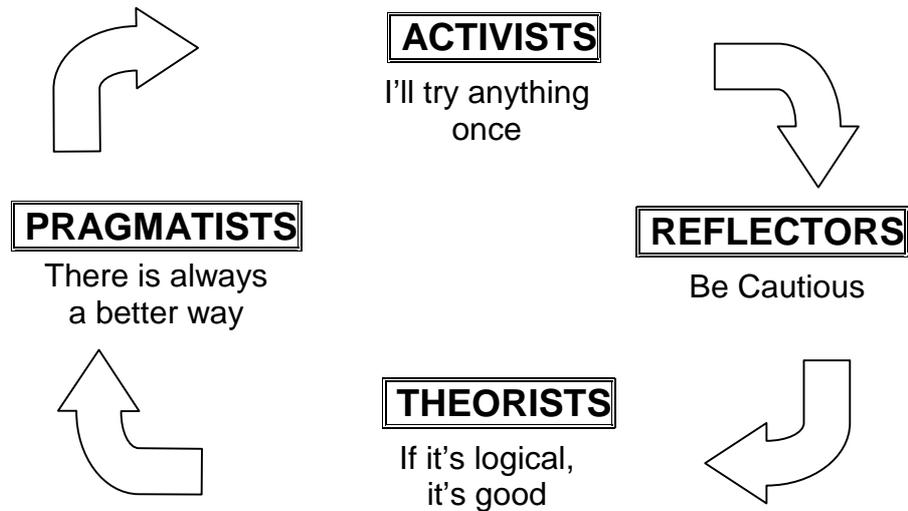
There are many different models of how people learn. Honey and Mumford (1992) have built on Kolb's model using more everyday language:



The four different ways in which people prefer to learn that Honey and Mumford have identified, relate to a different stage in the learning cycle. These are Activist, Reflector, Theorist and Pragmatist.

In this model Mumford and Honey describe the learning styles as a continuum that one moves through over time. However, over time, people usually come to prefer and rely on one, or more, style(s) above the others. Research has shown that there is no evidence that one preference is better than another – indeed the diversity of our learning styles adds value to team work and organisational functioning.

### Preferred styles of learning



**Activists** – Activists involve themselves fully and without bias in new experiences. They enjoy the here and now and are happy to be dominated by immediate experiences.

**Reflectors** – Reflectors like to stand back to ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives. They collect data, both first-hand and from others, and prefer to analyse them thoroughly and think about them from every possible angle before coming to any definite conclusions.

**Theorists** – Theorists like to analyse and synthesise. They assimilate and convert disparate facts and observations into coherent, logical theories. Their philosophy prizes rationality and logic above all.

**Pragmatists** – Pragmatists are keen on trying out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with applications.



Do you know your preferred learning style? Can you guess your learning type from having read the brief descriptions above? Once you know your areas of strengths and weaknesses, you are in a much better position to choose learning experiences and opportunities that suit you, as well as strengthen your weaker styles.

### **Learning styles questionnaire**

***Take some time to review your preferred styles by completing the following questionnaire.***

*This questionnaire is designed to find out your preferred learning style(s). Over the years you have probably developed learning 'habits' that help you benefit more from some experiences than from others. Since you are probably unaware of this, this questionnaire will help you pinpoint your learning preferences so that you are in a better position to select learning experiences that suit your style?*

*There is no time limit to this questionnaire. It will probably take you 10-15 minutes to complete. The accuracy of the results depends on how honest you can be. There are no right or wrong answers. If you agree more than you disagree with a statement, put a tick by it (✓). If you disagree more than you agree with a statement, put a cross by it (X). Be sure to mark each item with either a tick or a cross. The statements are purposely broad and general, to encourage you to make some general judgements about yourself.*

- ( ) 1. *I have strong beliefs about what is right and wrong, good and bad.*
- ( ) 2. *I often act without considering the possible consequences.*
- ( ) 3. *I tend to solve problems using a step-by-step approach.*
- ( ) 4. *I believe that formal procedures and policies restrict people.*
- ( ) 5. *I have a reputation for saying what I think, simply and directly.*
- ( ) 6. *I often find that actions based on feelings are as sound as those based on careful thought and analysis.*

- ( ) 7. *I like the sort of work where I have time for thorough preparation and implementation.*
- ( ) 8. *I regularly question people about their basic assumptions.*
- ( ) 9. *What matters most is whether something works in practice.*
- ( ) 10. *I actively seek out new experiences.*
- ( ) 11. *When I hear about a new idea or approach I immediately start working out how to apply it in practice.*
- ( ) 12. *I am keen on self-discipline, such as watching my diet, taking regular exercise, sticking to a fixed routine, etc.*
- ( ) 13. *I take pride in doing a thorough job.*
- ( ) 14. *I get on best with logical, analytical people and less well with spontaneous, 'irrational' people.*
- ( ) 15. *I take care over the interpretation of data available to me and avoid jumping to conclusions.*
- ( ) 16. *I like to reach a decision carefully after weighing up many alternatives.*
- ( ) 17. *I am attracted more to novel, unusual ideas than to practical ones.*
- ( ) 18. *I do not like disorganised things and prefer to fit things into a coherent pattern.*
- ( ) 19. *I accept and stick to laid down procedures and policies so long as I regard them as an efficient way of getting the job done.*
- ( ) 20. *I like to relate my actions to a general principle.*
- ( ) 21. *In discussions I like to get straight to the point.*
- ( ) 22. *I tend to have distant, rather formal relationships with people at work.*
- ( ) 23. *I thrive on the challenge of tackling something new and different.*

- ( ) 24. *I enjoy fun-loving, spontaneous people.*
- ( ) 25. *I pay meticulous attention to detail before coming to a conclusion.*
- ( ) 26. *I find it difficult to produce ideas on impulse.*
- ( ) 27. *I believe in coming to the point immediately.*
- ( ) 28. *I am careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly.*
- ( ) 29. *I prefer to have as many sources of information as possible – the more data to mull over, the better.*
- ( ) 30. *Flippant people who do not take things seriously enough usually irritate me.*
- ( ) 31. *I listen to other people's points of view before putting my own forward.*
- ( ) 32. *I tend to be open about how I am feeling.*
- ( ) 33. *In discussions I enjoy watching the manoeuvrings of the other participants.*
- ( ) 34. *I prefer to respond to events on a spontaneous, flexible basis, rather than plan things out in advance.*
- ( ) 35. *I tend to be attracted to techniques such as network analysis, flow-charts, branching programs, contingency planning, etc.*
- ( ) 36. *It worries me if I have to rush out a piece of work to meet a tight deadline.*
- ( ) 37. *I tend to judge people's ideas on their practical merits.*
- ( ) 38. *Quiet, thoughtful people tend to make me feel uneasy.*
- ( ) 39. *I often get irritated by people who want to rush things.*
- ( ) 40. *It is more important to enjoy the present moment than to think about the past or future.*
- ( ) 41. *I think that decisions based on a thorough analysis of all the information are sounder than those based on intuition.*

- ( ) 42. *I tend to be a perfectionist.*
- ( ) 43. *In discussions I usually produce lots of spontaneous ideas.*
- ( ) 44. *In meetings I put forward practical, realistic ideas.*
- ( ) 45. *More often than not, rules are there to be broken.*
- ( ) 46. *I prefer to stand back from a situation and consider all the perspectives.*
- ( ) 47. *I can often see the inconsistencies and weaknesses in other people's arguments.*
- ( ) 48. *On balance I talk more than I listen.*
- ( ) 49. *I can often see better, more practical ways to get things done.*
- ( ) 50. *I think written reports should be short and to the point.*
- ( ) 51. *I believe that rational, logical thinking should win the day.*
- ( ) 52. *I tend to discuss specific things with people, rather than engaging in social discussion.*
- ( ) 53. *I like people who approach things realistically rather than theoretically.*
- ( ) 54. *In discussions I get impatient with irrelevancies and digressions.*
- ( ) 55. *If I have a report to write I tend to produce lots of drafts before settling on the final version.*
- ( ) 56. *I am keen to try out things to see if they work in practice.*
- ( ) 57. *I am keen to reach answers via a logical approach.*
- ( ) 58. *I enjoy being the one that talks a lot.*
- ( ) 59. *In discussions I often find I am the realist, keeping people to the point and avoiding wild speculations.*
- ( ) 60. *I like to ponder many alternatives before making up my mind.*

- ( ) 61. *In discussions with people I often find I am the most dispassionate and objective.*
- ( ) 62. *In discussions I am more likely to adopt a 'low profile' than to take the lead and do most of the talking.*
- ( ) 63. *I like to be able to relate current actions to a longer-term, bigger picture.*
- ( ) 64. *When things go wrong I am happy to shrug it off and 'put it down to experience'.*
- ( ) 65. *I tend to reject wild, spontaneous ideas as being impractical.*
- ( ) 66. *It is best to think carefully before taking action.*
- ( ) 67. *On balance I do the listening rather than the talking.*
- ( ) 68. *I tend to be tough on people who find it difficult to adopt a logical approach.*
- ( ) 69. *Most times I believe the end justifies the means.*
- ( ) 70. *I do not mind hurting people's feelings so long as the job gets done.*
- ( ) 71. *I find the formality of having specific objectives and plans stifling.*
- ( ) 72. *I am usually one of the people who put life into a party.*
- ( ) 73. *I do whatever is expedient to get the job done.*
- ( ) 74. *I quickly get bored with methodical, detailed work.*
- ( ) 75. *I am keen on exploring the basic assumptions, principles and theories underpinning things and events.*
- ( ) 76. *I am always interested to find out what people think.*
- ( ) 77. *I like meetings to be run on methodical lines, sticking to laid-down agendas, etc.*
- ( ) 78. *I steer clear of subjective or ambiguous topics.*
- ( ) 79. *I enjoy the drama and excitement of a crisis situation.*
- ( ) 80. *People often find me insensitive to their feelings.*

### Learning styles questionnaire – scoring

You score one point for each item you ticked (√). There are no points for items you crossed (X). Look back over your responses and circle those questions you ticked in the lists below:

	2	7	1	5
	4	13	3	9
	6	15	8	11
	10	16	12	19
	17	25	14	21
	23	28	18	27
	24	29	20	35
	32	31	22	37
	34	33	26	44
	38	36	30	49
	40	39	42	50
	43	41	47	53
	45	46	51	54
	48	52	57	56
	58	55	61	59
	64	60	63	65
	71	62	68	69
	72	66	75	70
	74	67	77	73
	79	76	78	80
Totals				
	<b>Activist</b>	<b>Reflector</b>	<b>Theorist</b>	<b>Pragmatist</b>

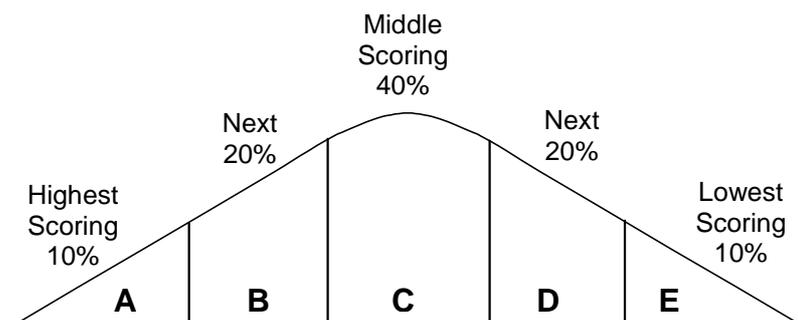
## Understanding your learning styles: Questionnaire result

Before we proceed, it is assumed that you have already completed the questionnaire and scored it. You therefore have four scores, ranging from nought to twenty, for Activist, Reflector, Theorist and Pragmatist. The question is: what do these four scores tell you?

Since the maximum score for each style is 20, at first sight you might conclude that the highest of your four scores indicates your predominant learning style. This, however, is not necessarily so. Before drawing a conclusion you need to view your scores in relation to those obtained by other people who have completed the questionnaire. Norms, as they are called, have been calculated for various groups of people and you need to decide which group you will select to compare your scores. If in doubt use the general norms below which are based on the scores obtained by well over a thousand people. The norms are calculated on the scores obtained by:

- A. The highest scoring 10 percent of people
- B. The next 20 percent of people
- C. The middle 40 percent of people
- D. The next 20 percent of people
- E. The lowest scoring 10 percent of people

The general norms are as follows:



	Very Strong Preference	Strong Preference	Moderate Preference	Low Preference	Very Low Preference
<b>ACTIVIST</b>	13 - 20	11 - 12	7 - 10 (mean 9.3)	4 - 6	0 - 3
<b>REFLECTOR</b>	18 - 20	15 - 17	12 - 14 (mean 13.6)	9 - 11	0 - 8
<b>THEORIST</b>	16 - 20	14 - 15	11 - 13 (mean 12.5)	8 - 10	0 - 7
<b>PRAGMATIST</b>	17 - 20	15 - 16	12 - 14 (mean 13.7)	9 - 11	0 - 8

To illustrate how to use norms to interpret your LSQ result let us suppose your scores are Activist 11, Reflector 11, Theorist 11 and Pragmatist 11. (We have chosen these scores deliberately because they admirably demonstrate the importance of using norms to reach an interpretation). The norms give the identical raw scores of 11 different weightings as follows:

A score of 11 for Activist falls in the B range indicating a strong preference for this style.

A score of 11 for Reflector falls in the D range indicating a low preference for this style.

A score of 11 for Theorist falls in the C range indicating a moderate preference.

A score of 11 for Pragmatist falls in the D range indicating a low preference.

## **Learning styles - general descriptions**

### **Activists**

Activists involve themselves fully and without bias in new experiences. They enjoy the here and now and are happy to be dominated by immediate experiences. They are open-ended, not sceptical, and this tends to make them enthusiastic about anything new. Their philosophy is 'I will try anything once'. Their days are filled with activity. They tackle problems by brainstorming. As soon as the excitement from one activity has died down they are busy looking for the next. They tend to thrive on the challenge of new experiences but are bored with implementation and longer-term consolidation. They are gregarious people, constantly involving themselves with others but in doing so they seek to make themselves the centre of all activities.

**Activists learn best from novel experiences, from being encouraged to 'have a go' and from being thrown into things. They enjoy relatively short 'here and now' learning activities, like business games and competitive team exercises.**

Activists learn least well from passive situations like reading, watching, or listening to lectures, particularly those on concept or theory. They do not enjoy solitary work, repetitive tasks, situations that require detailed preparation, or being asked to review their learning opportunities and achievements.

## Reflectors

Reflectors like to stand back to ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives. They collect data, both first hand and from others, and prefer to think about it thoroughly before coming to any conclusion. These they postpone as long as possible. Their philosophy is to be cautious. They enjoy watching other people in action and prefer to take a back seat in meetings and discussions. They think before they speak. They tend to adopt a low profile and have a slightly distant, tolerant, unruffled air about them. When they act, it is part of a wide picture, which includes the past as well as the present and others' observations as well as their own.

**Reflectors learn best from activities where they are able to stand back, listen and observe. They like to have a chance to collect information and be given time to think about it before commenting or acting. They like to review what has happened.**

**Reflectors learn least well when they are rushed into things with insufficient data or without time to plan, when they are forced into the limelight by being required to role play or chair a meeting, or when asked to take shortcuts or do a superficial job.**

## Theorists

Theorists adapt and integrate observations into complex but logically sound theories. They think problems through in a vertical, step by step, logical way. They assimilate disparate facts into coherent theories. They think problems through in a vertical, step-by-step, logical way. They tend to be perfectionists who will not rest easy until things are tidy and fit into a rational scheme. They are keen on basic assumptions, principles, theories, models and systems thinking. They tend to be detached, analytical and dedicated to rational objectivity. They feel uncomfortable with subjective judgements, ambiguity, lateral thinking and anything flippant.

**Theorists learn best when they are offered a system, model, concept or theory, even when the application is not clear and the ideas may be distant from current reality. They like to work in structured situations with a clear purpose, and be allowed to explore associations and interrelationships, to question assumptions and logic and to analyse reasons and generalise. They like to be intellectually stretched.**

**Theorists learn least well when asked to do something without apparent purpose, when activities are unstructured and ambiguous, and when emotion is emphasised. They do not learn well when faced with activities lacking depth, when data to support the subject are unavailable and when they feel 'out of tune' with the rest of the group.**

### **Pragmatists**

Pragmatists are keen on trying out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They positively search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with applications. They are the sorts of people who return from training courses bursting with new ideas, which they want to try out in practice. They like to get on with things and act quickly and confidently on ideas which attract them. They tend to be impatient with ruminating and open-ended discussions. They are essentially practical, down-to-earth people who like making practical decisions and solving problems. They respond to problems and opportunities 'as a challenge'. Their philosophy is 'There is always a better way' and 'If it works, it's good'.

**Pragmatists learn best when there is an obvious link between the subject matter and their current job. They like being exposed to techniques or processes, which are clearly practical, have immediate relevance and which they are likely to have the opportunity to implement. Pragmatists learn least well when there are no immediate benefits or rewards from the activity, and the learning events seem distant from reality.**

## Task



### Understanding your learning styles

So, how does this information relate to our own learning and your professional development?

***Ask a friend or colleague to complete the learning style questionnaire. Discuss and compare your learning styles using the Cycle of Learning process:***

- 1. Reflect on the activity***
- 2. Draw your conclusions from the process***
- 3. Consider what this means for the future (What will you do differently?)***

### Comments

*Take some time to record your comments in the space provided.*

Understanding your learning styles can help you understand your weaknesses and strengths. Your responses may have included:

- seeing and appreciating that others may learn differently
- matching and seeking out ways to learn best
- being aware of the importance of creating opportunities for reflection
- building on and enhancing your learning styles.

You will recall that the Cycle of Learning involves:

- doing something – experience
- thinking about what has happened – reviewing/reflecting
- drawing some conclusions – concluding
- deciding what to do in a similar situation – planning.

If your questionnaire result shows you are already an all-round learner (i.e. no single style predominates - all four styles are virtually level) you are likely to manage each stage of this process consciously and well. Your Activist tendencies will ensure you have plenty of experiences. Your Reflector and Theorist tendencies will ensure that afterwards you review and reach conclusions. Your Pragmatist tendencies will ensure that you plan future implementation.

But what should you do if you have a strong preference for one style or another? You must make best use of the strengths of that style, but the real answer has to be that if you want to be fully equipped to learn from experience you will need to develop styles which at present you do not use. The following suggestions provide advice on how to set about this. It is best to concentrate on the suggestions which focus on your areas of weakness.

## **Learning opportunities**

### **Key questions for Activists**

- Shall I learn something new, i.e. that I didn't know/couldn't do before?
- Will there be a wide variety of different activities? (I don't want to sit and listen for more than an hour at a stretch!)
- Will it be OK to have a go/let my hair down/make mistakes/have fun?
- Shall I encounter some tough problems and challenges?
- Will there be other like-minded people to mix with?

### **Key questions for Reflectors**

- Shall I be given adequate time to consider, assimilate and prepare?
- Will there be opportunities/facilities to assemble relevant information?
- Will there be opportunities to listen to other people's points of view - preferably a wide cross-section of people with a variety of views?
- Will I be under pressure to be slap-dash or to 'think on my feet'?

### **Key questions for Theorists**

- Will there be lots of opportunities to question?
- Do the objectives and program of events indicate a clear structure and purpose?
- Shall I encounter complex ideas and concepts that are likely to stretch me?
- Are the approaches to be used and concepts to be explored sound and valid?
- Shall I be with people of similar expertise to myself?

### **Key questions for Pragmatists**

Will there be ample opportunities to practice and experiment?

- Will there be lots of practical tips and techniques?
- Shall we be addressing real problems and will it result in action plans to tackle some of my current problems?
- Shall we be exposed to experts who can demonstrate it themselves?

It must be stressed that no one style is better than another. It is also important to note that there are a number of different learning style models other than Honey and Munford. If you are interested in undertaking further self-analysis about your learning style, personality type etc, there are numerous resources and activities available on the Internet that you can undertake. See [www-distance.syr.edu/resource.html](http://www-distance.syr.edu/resource.html) as a starting point.

Does the concept of lifelong learning fit into your expectations? Do you see yourself as a self-directed learner or do you want more information and ideas about this learning approach? How are you feeling about the experiential learning cycle? Did you identify your predominant learning style(s) and will this make a difference in how you plan your learning in the future?

## Task



**Q**

*Spend a few minutes thinking about the relevance of this topic to your own experience and make a few notes in the space below.*

**A**

In this topic the changing demands of the workplace have been addressed together with the shift to a broader understanding of learning that recognises the need for **continuous** or **lifelong learning**. A key component of lifelong learning is the learner taking responsibility for their own learning – **self-directed learning**. You looked at the **cycle of learning** and the role of **experience, reflection and feedback**. You looked at the different types of learning within the cycle and worked through an activity that helped you recognise your own, natural **learning styles**. You have also begun to consider the implications of these styles for your learning and development.

In the next topic you will start to apply these concepts and theories in planning for your own professional development.

## Topic 3

# Work-based learning



### Key Issues

-  What is work-based learning?
-  Identifying work-based learning strategies
-  Mentoring
-  Analysing your own situation for work-based learning
-  Identifying learning resources
-  Force field analysis

### Overview

As well as recognising the need for continuous or lifelong learning, there has also been an increased awareness of the role of work-based learning in our professional lives. In this topic we'll begin to take a self-directed learning approach in which you'll undertake a range of activities that require energy, creativity and initiative!

## 3.1

# What is work-based learning?

Work-based learning is the term used to describe a relationship between learning and work. It emerges from the demands of work, rather than from formal educational programs (Gore, 2001). Workplace (or on-the-job) learning is much more than a training course or a single on-the-job activity. It exists in a variety of forms (such as teamwork, coaching, mentoring and computer-based learning) which we will be exploring in this module.

Over the years, it has become increasingly clear that training is only a part of learning and a number of factors are likely to influence the effectiveness of learning. These include:

- policies and procedures
- organisational and management structures
- resourcing levels
- organisational culture
- professional supports.

The value of our everyday experiences in skill development is becoming increasingly apparent and the role of work-based learning has expanded accordingly.

### Learning opportunities

When you went through the process of identifying and analysing your learning style(s) you may have recognised that you do not always make full use of the opportunities available to you - very few people do! The emphasis we have given to on-the-job learning arises from our recognition that there are many more opportunities in the workplace than there ever will be for off-the-job learning. There is no problem 'transferring' what you learn on the job as there is from, say, a training workshop. The range of opportunities that exists in the workplace, includes:

- unplanned learning through current job
- planned, created learning within current job responsibilities

## Task

- planned learning through additions to current responsibilities
- planned learning through special assignments
- planned learning by experience outside work
- planned learning from boss or colleagues.

**Q**

***What are some of the benefits of work-based learning?***

**A**

*(Write your answer here, then check the possible answers on the next page.)*

**A Possible answers include:**

- allows for flexibility
- acknowledges the learner as active and responsible
- can accommodate selective and strategic learning
- learning is directly relevant to the work
- can promote a culture of learning
- can accommodate employees' learning styles and objectives
- allows for practice and consolidation of skills
- can promote the transfer of training (in formal courses)
- learning relates to 'real life' projects.

Workplace learning provides the opportunity to work experientially, that is to experience, reflect, analyse, plan and test out new ideas (remember the cycle of learning?). Of course, it is important that we critically analyse the potential of work-based learning according to our own, individual situations.

## 3.2 Identifying workplace learning strategies

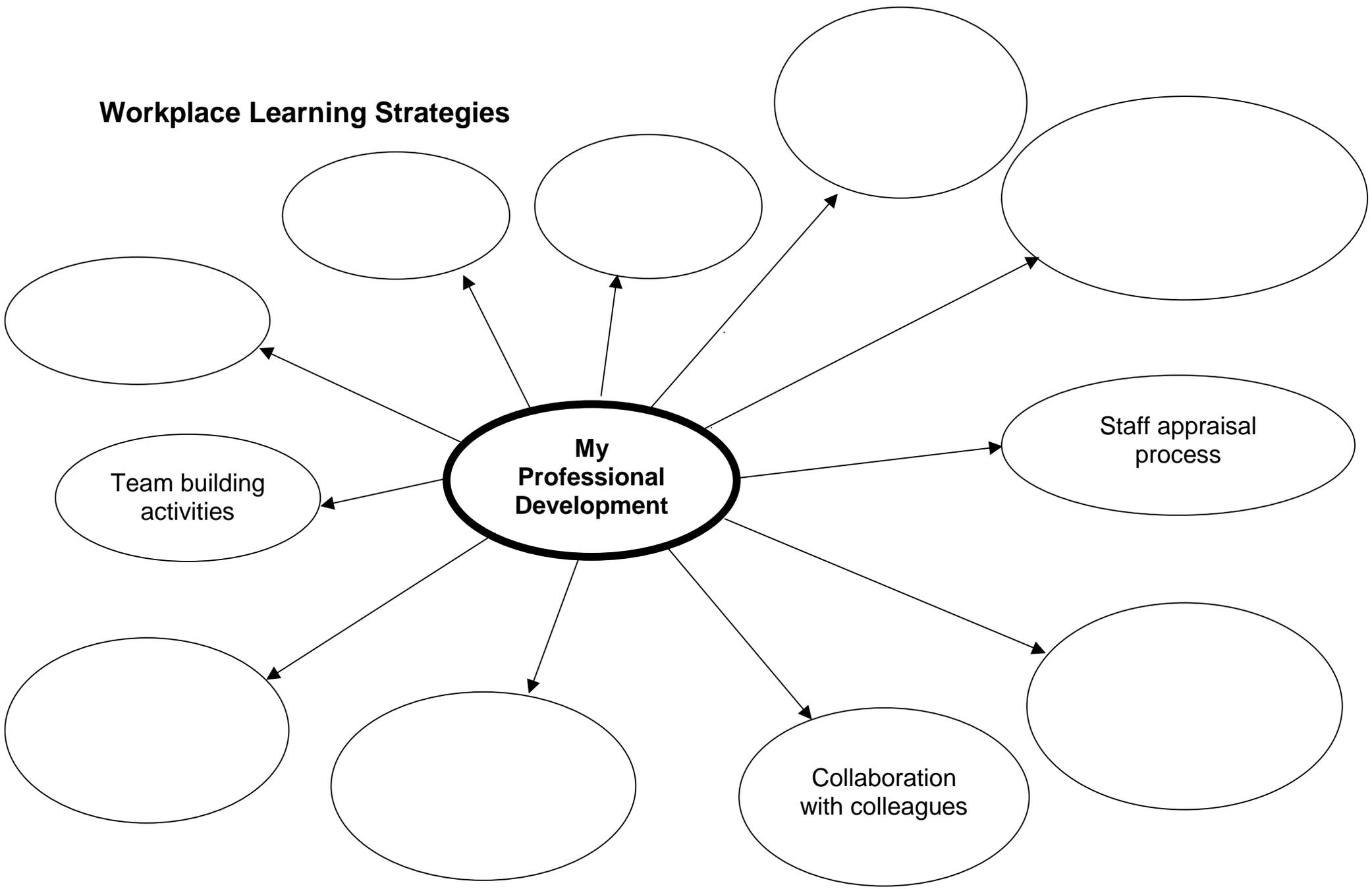
We'll begin by exploring the range of learning strategies available to us.

### Task



- **Research the range of the strategies that can assist you in your ongoing professional development, both on and off the job, (e.g. supervision, seminars, computer-based learning, co-working). You may wish to talk to other work colleagues, learning peers or anyone who you think may be useful!)**
- **Record your strategies using the mind map on the next page. You'll build on this map as you work through this topic.**

# Workplace Learning Strategies



You have probably identified a number of possible learning strategies. There is certainly a wide range of ways that we can learn. Sometimes, the simple and immediate ways are extremely effective e.g. observing and listening to other, more experienced, colleagues or co-working on a project with a colleague who uses a different approach to you.

There's a number of ways that we can achieve our learning goals and some of these are listed below.

- Formal education (university and TAFE)
- Training courses (in house and external)
- Conferences/seminars
- Secondments and job rotation
- Supervision
- Agency visits
- Staff appraisal process
- Learning journals
- Tools for reflective practice (e.g. a form allowing for reflection on the work completed with exiting clients which is jointly filled out at team meetings)
- Peer supervision/support systems or networks
- Access to specialist advice and support through networks and consultancies
- Review of current work-based learning practices
- Mentoring and coaching
- Networking
- Computer-based learning
- Feedback mechanisms among staff
- Staff development/team building activities
- Professional development plan.

You may also have identified a number of learning 'techniques' such as:

- brainstorming
- categorising and ordering
- comparing and contrasting
- reflection
- analysing
- testing hypotheses
- problem-solving
- observing and listening
- self-assessment
- discussion.

So, what are the benefits of the various strategies and tools, and which ones will suit your learning style? Let's explore one particular strategy – mentoring.

## 3.3

# Mentoring

Mentoring can be done by anyone, at any time, and in almost any place. Many of you will be able to recall a rewarding professional relationship that informed and enhanced your learning and development. In this section we'll explore the formal mentoring relationship.

### The mentoring process

Mentoring is usually defined as a relationship between an experienced and a less experienced person in which the mentor provides guidance, advice, support and feedback to the mentee. It can be a focused, planned relationship where the mentor assists the mentee achieve greater self-awareness, identify and plan alternatives and initiate and evaluate actions. Mentoring relationships have a clear start, evolution and ending.

Coaching is the more specific process of learning from or about a task while actually performing it. Coaches can be supervisors, experienced co-workers or colleagues.

Mentoring is a learning process which supports much of what is currently known about how individuals learn, including the importance of experiential and work-based learning. Technology is also assisting mentoring in organisations, as mentors and mentees connect through electronic mail and videoconferencing. The trend towards group mentoring, in which the mentor is the learning leader of a 'learning group' is also proving popular.

### The mentor relationship

Mentoring can be viewed as a partnership, with both parties freely contributing to the discussion as equals working together. The relationship is based on mutual respect, cooperation and acceptance.

The mentor relationship can be:

- flexible
- one-off, short or longer term
- formal or informal
- structured or unstructured.

Your mentor may be:

- a supervisor
- colleague
- respected person outside the workplace.

### **What are the key skills of a good mentor?**

Mentors should have a high level of competence and a willingness and commitment to help another person develop. Some of the key skills of a good mentor include:

- strong expertise in their specific area
- organisational knowledge
- strong interpersonal and communication skills
- status and prestige
- ability to share credit
- patience and risk-taking
- willingness to share responsibility for learning and personal development
- ethical practice
- strong supervisory skills.

### **What are the responsibilities of the mentee?**

The mentee's role in the mentoring relationship is an active one in which they take a large degree of responsibility for their own learning. This requires the mentee to:

- identify their own learning needs
- be willing to seek challenging assignments and new responsibilities
- be receptive to feedback and coaching.

## Task



### What are the benefits of mentoring?

*Working with a colleague, identify and discuss the potential benefits of a formal mentoring relationship. Record your ideas in the space below*

The **benefits** of having a mentor are numerous. They can:

- facilitate your workplace learning
- provide information and insight
- discover and develop talent and skills
- tap into informal communication channels
- explain the 'unwritten rules'
- teach specific skills and share knowledge
- coach in effective behaviours
- encourage and support you to achieve goals
- assist in goal-setting and planning
- provide new or different perspective
- model skills and behaviour
- challenge in a supportive way
- encourage critical reflection
- provide feedback on observed performance

In short, you have a personal guide to assist you to set and reach your goals.

### **What can go wrong?**

It takes work to develop a successful mentoring relationship. Possible pitfalls include:

- mentors fail to give sufficient time and attention to mentee
- mentees become too dependent on mentors
- mentees are unable to take responsibility for their own development.

A number of problems can be avoided by setting clear guidelines for the relationship at the outset by negotiating a mentoring agreement.

### **What is a mentoring agreement?**

The mentoring agreement will:

- specify the learning objectives which the mentee would like to achieve and an action plan for how this can be achieved
- outline the duration of the relationship
- clarify roles and responsibilities of the mentee and mentor
- outline agreements on time and frequency of meetings and feedback sessions
- outline the types of contact (e.g. this can include face-to-face meetings and contact by telephone and e-mail)
- agree how sensitive issues will be handled (e.g. confidentiality)
- specify the procedure for dealing with difficulties that cannot be resolved between the mentor and mentee
- set dates for reviewing the mentoring relationship.

There may be a number of other learning strategies in which you have a particular interest and the following exercise will provide you with the opportunity to explore some of these.

### **Personal Review**

*Return to your learning strategies 'mind map' and undertake the following exercise.*

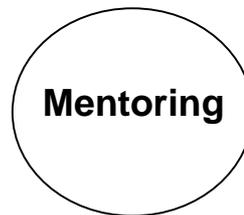
## **Task**



- 1. Select five or more of the learning strategies in Topic 3.2 which you consider may be useful.**
- 2. Reflect on these strategies and identify some potential benefits and drawbacks of each.**
- 3. Write these up in your mind map (see example below).**

#### **Benefits**

Goal-setting  
Different perspective  
Feedback  
Support  
Modelling  
Reflection time



#### **Drawbacks**

No mentor available  
Mentor does not have the skills  
Lack of support by organisation

## 3.4 Analysing your own situation for work-based learning

As part of the process of analysing, and planning for your ongoing development it is important to acknowledge the range of factors that can impact on your ability to function effectively and continue to develop. These include educational and training opportunities, organisational policy, systems, workplace practices and organisational culture. Of course, this is also dependent on your own personal circumstances, including your level of motivation and commitment. Let's undertake some further analysis of your situation.

Some of you may be familiar with the process of **Force Field Analysis**, which was developed by Kurt Lewin (1951). Force Field Analysis is used to analyse the forces that impact on goal attainment. To analyse the field of forces affecting a particular goal, you simply list the helping and hindering factors as arrows pushing against two sides of a vertical line. This tool allows you to visualise all the forces helping and hindering you in the accomplishment of a goal.

The following activity allows you to apply this concept. It will help you to identify the learning **opportunities** and **barriers** that impact on you personally.

**NOTE:** Before attempting this activity find out about your organisation's training and development policies.

## Force Field Analysis



*To meet my learning needs in the organisation*

<b>HELPING FACTORS</b> →	← <b>HINDERING FACTORS*</b>
<i>e.g. mentoring scheme, study leave policy, accredited in-house training</i>	<i>e.g. lack of motivation, unaware of professional development policies, unsupportive supervisor</i>

## Task



**Q**

***What are the forces that can help in achieving your goal?***

**A**

**Q**

***What are the factors that may hinder achievement of your goal?***

**A**

***Review the hindering factors and identify those over which you have some level of control (e.g. lack of time, lack of motivation).***

***Cross out the factors that you have no control over (e.g. no easily accessible library).***

## Task



**List strategies (at least five) to overcome these hindering factors.** (Remember to draw on the helping factors when developing these strategies e.g. a helping factor may be the existence of policies on professional development; a hindering factor may be that you are unaware of the detail. So, develop a strategy to overcome this.)

**A**

This process can be helpful in identifying and articulating the constraints and opportunities to your ongoing learning. Did you find it useful? No doubt you have come up with a fairly comprehensive list of possible barriers to your learning. There may be some particular areas that you wish to discuss further with your module facilitator/coordinator.

Clearly you need to have an understanding of yourself, and your environment, if you are to seriously address your ongoing learning and development. You can then realistically plan within the context of your personal and professional life. You also need to think about what resources can assist in your learning.

## 3.5 Identifying learning resources

There is an ever-increasing range of resources available to support us in our learning including:

- electronic networks
- journals
- web-sites
- books
- videos
- individuals, teams and organisations
- organisational intranet, library scheme, inter-library loan schemes
- workbooks.

As you work through this module it should be apparent that a range of skills are needed to maintain learning. A key skill is the ability to **locate and interpret information**.

### Information gathering skills

The use of research findings to inform daily practice is an ongoing process. Taking the time to identify quality resources that meet your individual needs in terms of content and relevance requires a range of skills. An increasingly important source of information is the World Wide Web. There is a vast range of search tools and techniques available for you to utilise. Learning the scope and functionality of relevant databases, web search engines and meta-sites is becoming a necessary skill.

Key organisations and services are other important sources of potential information. This is where your networking skills can be particularly beneficial.

## Task



### Personal review

***Develop a list of learning resources available to you. This can include individuals and organisations as well as a list of books or manuals.***

## Summary

In this topic you have begun to take a self-directed role in your learning. You have explored potential work-based learning strategies and you have critically reflected on their benefits. You then undertook a force field analysis of your organisation and yourself and developed a number of strategies to manage some of the constraints you may face in your ongoing learning. You then considered potential resources and the need for strong information gathering and networking skills.

## Topic 4

# Developing a learning plan



### Key Issues

- 🔑 Identifying your values
- 🔑 Analysis of skills, strengths and weaknesses
- 🔑 Action planning

### Overview

You have looked at the need for lifelong and self-directed learning, explored the cycle of learning, identified a number of available strategies and resources available and analysed the opportunities and constraints for learning in your own organisation.

Now it is time to put the spotlight on you. You now need to analyse your own learning needs and develop a plan for your ongoing learning. Remember that learning is a part of a cyclical process and the development and implementation of the plan will form the basis of analysis, reflection and further planning!

## 4.1 Identifying your values

If learning is to be more than just collecting new information, then you must involve yourself completely in your learning experiences. Unfortunately, too many training programs still operate from the assumption that the learner can somehow separate personal development from professional development. So you end up getting a great deal of information about project management or budgeting, but little help with stress and time management. True learning involves looking at every aspect of our lives, not just what's in our heads.

The following activity encourages you to reflect on your intrinsic values and aspirations.

# Task



**Rate the following values and conditions according to your personal values and aspirations. Tick the column which best suits your ranking:**

- High** – values/conditions that are core to who you are
- Medium** – desirable but not critical to your functioning
- Low** – of little intrinsic importance to you

Value or Situation	High	Medium	Low
Status			
Recognition			
Advancement			
Physical health			
Psychological health			
Strong family/personal relationships			
Peace of mind			
Freedom			
Autonomy			
Belonging			
Security			
Predictability			
Harmonious relationships			
Cooperation			
Loyalty			
Caring			
Helping the disadvantaged			
Equal opportunity for all			
Meaning			
Purpose			
Initiative			
Leadership			
Innovation			
Creativity			
Risk-taking			
Adventure			
Fun			
Leadership			
Professionalism			
Responsibility			
Satisfaction			
Self-confidence			

## Task



**Review the list and identify eight values or conditions that are important to you.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

**Q**

***Are you able to live by these values in your present position?***

**A**

**Q**

***To what extent?***

**A**

## Task



**Q**

*What sort of position would allow you to attain your key values/conditions?*

**A**

**Q**

*What implications do you think your identified values/conditions will have for your professional development?*

**A**

## 4.2 Analysis of skills, strengths and weaknesses

As well as considering your values, you need to analyse your current skills and skill gaps. This self-assessment is a crucial phase in self-directed learning. It is a forward-looking process that requires thought and honesty.

The following activity can help in this process.

### Task

**Spend time completing the following table.** Note that while we can often identify areas of skill deficit, we may find it difficult to identify our strengths - yet our strengths form the basis of our future planning and development.

Skills	Strengths	Weaknesses
e.g. technological skills, speaking to groups or interpreting legislation	e.g. seeks challenges, strong team player or learns quickly	e.g. can be disorganised; can take on too much; or can find it hard to maintain motivation

## Task



**Q**

***Are you utilising your skills and strengths in your current position?***

**A**

**Q**

***Referring back to the Force Field Analysis (Topic 3.4) what opportunities do you see to improve on your weaknesses?***

**A**

**Q**

***What skills, attributes and attitudes do you want to acquire, enhance and develop?***

**A**

How did you find this exercise? Were you able to identify some of the skills or attributes that you wish to develop? A learning need is the gap between where you are now and where you want to be in regard to a particular area of knowledge and skill.

There are numerous ways that you can begin to identify your learning needs. You may already be aware of certain learning needs as a result of a performance management appraisal or the long accumulation of evidence about yourself. The process of determining learning needs can be a negotiated one between yourself and your supervisor, mentor, peer etc. Feedback can also play a key role in determining learning needs.

## 4.3

# Action planning

Action planning is a form of learning. It is a method for identifying needs, establishing goals and developing strategies to reach those goals. During implementation of the strategies you monitor, and if necessary modify the plan and take time to explore and reflect on what you are doing and why.

### Key purposes

Action Planning serves several key purposes:

1. It takes a cyclical view of learning (plan-act-review) and requires the application of critical reflection and self-assessment in the management of change and self-renewal.
2. It aims to develop self-motivated learners who are proactive in their learning and utilise skills in analysis (of self, workplace and external forces), problem solving, communication and research.
3. It is the key to continuous improvement. It can be used to address new learning needs or to consolidate the transfer of your learning from a formal training program into your everyday workplace.

It is important to acknowledge the problems you can face in bridging the gap between the training environment and the workplace. For example, how will you transfer your learning from this program back into your everyday practice in the workplace? How will you get support and practice in motivational interviewing skills learned in a training program if you don't often get the chance to practise these skills in your workplace?

You will recall that we identified a number of helping and hindering factors to our learning in the Force Field Analysis (Topic 3.4). So, how can we anticipate and plan for these challenges in transferring our skills back in the workplace? Action planning, the process of preparing an individual action plan at the end of a training workshop or program, can assist in promoting this transfer of learning.

Let's now look at the development of a **learning action plan**.

## The learning action plan

A learning plan is a detailed statement prepared by the learner, sometimes with the support of a mentor. It is developed after learning needs have been diagnosed and most commonly includes details about what will be learned, how it will be learned, by when, what criteria will be used to evaluate the learning and how the learning will be validated.

Let's look at a sample learning action plan and consider each of the key components:

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Evidence guide</b>	<b>Review date</b>	<b>Review comments</b>
<i>What do I want to learn?</i>	<i>How am I going to learn?</i>	<i>What resources will I use?</i>	<i>How will I know learning has occurred?</i>		

### Task



**Q**

***Spend a few minutes thinking about developing a Learning Action Plan. What do you see as potential advantages? What do you see as potential difficulties?***

**A**

Firstly, let's think about the benefits of the process. You probably had some of the following thoughts:

- It is a highly visible way to identify my needs and track my progress
- It makes me really think about what I am doing
- I can focus on the issues that are of concern or interest to me as an individual
- It provides a measurable way to record and celebrate learning achievements
- It encourages me to be self-managing and self-directing
- I can be more proactive in my learning, to gain control over my own learning
- It increases my autonomy as a learner and this in turn can increase my motivation.

**Q**

***What are some of the challenges you may encounter in developing and implementing a learning plan?***

**A**

- Developing the plan can be time consuming
- It can be challenging when we're used to being directed in our learning by supervisors, trainers etc
- It can be difficult to establish clear and detailed assessment criteria.

We'll now work through each of the components of the learning action plan. Remember that, as part of your formal assessment, you will be required to develop such a plan so take advantage of the activities you will undertake to contribute to your plan.

## Developing your learning action plan

### Establishing your learning goals

Your first task is to develop a number of learning goals. Initially, no more than three or four goals should be chosen. If too many goals are formulated, the learning plan can become an overwhelming and unwieldy document that is difficult to use.

Goals should be prioritised in accordance with your current position and your identified learning needs. Goals must be SMART

<b>S</b>	-	Specific
<b>M</b>	-	Measurable
<b>A</b>	-	Action-oriented
<b>R</b>	-	Realistic
<b>T</b>	-	Time-targeted

**Specific** means detailed, particular or focused. A goal is specific when everyone knows exactly what is to be achieved and accomplished.

**Measurable** goals are quantifiable. A measurable goal provides a standard for comparison, the means to an end, a specific result. It is limiting.

**Action-oriented** means that the goals indicate an activity, a performance, an operation or something that produces results.

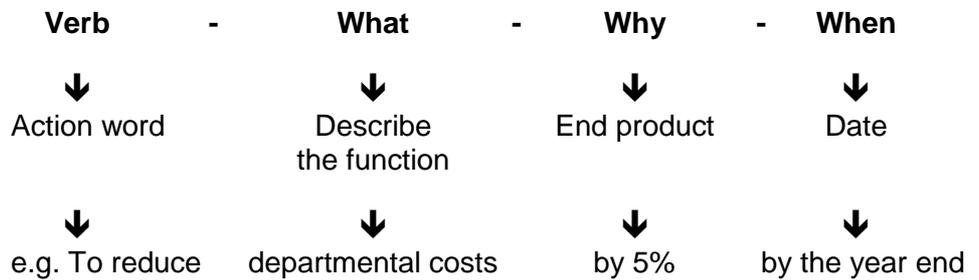
**Realistic** goals are practical, achievable and possible.

**Time-targeted** goals have a deadline.

The elements of a goal are:

- An **accomplishment** to be achieved
- A **measurable** outcome
- A specific **date** and **time** to accomplish the goal.

The following formula can be a helpful way of thinking about goal development:



In this way, goals are quantifiable and there is accountability for the results. Examples of verbs specifying goals includes:

define	prepare
identify	demonstrate
interpret	apply
explain	differentiate

Avoid words such as:

know	learn
understand	appreciate
be aware of	

Always try to describe the **outcome**, not the process:

e.g. 'applies the principle' rather than  
'gains knowledge of the principle'

Let's have some practice at this.

## Task



**Develop a minimum of three learning goals. Undertake this exercise with a colleague.** (Refer to the exercise you undertook in Topic 4.2 analysing your skills, strengths and weaknesses.)

How did that go? Do your goals comply with the SMART requirements mentioned above? Examples of possible goals are:

- Interpret and apply the relevant sections of education legislation to a parent regarding a child with special needs
- Identify the advantages and disadvantages of a proposed staff training program
- Demonstrate knowledge of group roles and identify these roles.

### **Strategies and resources**

The learning activities and resources required to achieve your learning goals are now developed. The strategies outline the steps that will be taken to reach the goal as well as the methods used.

You explored a number of potential learning resources and strategies in Topic 2 and it will be useful to refer to these. It is also useful to consider the learning cycle and your preferred learning styles – are there styles that you would like to strengthen and what strategies would assist you?

Some verbs relating to strategies are:

interview	research
observe	record
evaluate	analyse
collate	write
attend	tape/video record
role play	participate

You also need to identify the resources that you intend to use to support your strategies. This may involve information resources such as books, journals and the World Wide Web. It may also involve key individuals or organisations.

Example:

- Accompany a legal representative to a hearing (strategy)
- Review three current academic articles (strategy and resource)

## **Evidence**

Your goals and strategies should be assessable by a variety of means. Again, these must be as specific and concrete as possible. Use criteria that are observable whenever you can. This will create more objectivity when it comes to assessing whether your learning goals have been met.

Example:

- Observation by mentor
- Self-assessment against performance indicators
- Peer feedback.

It can take a long time to conceptualise your goals in a sufficiently specific and concrete manner. Thinking broadly initially has advantages; being too specific too quickly can result in narrow goals that may lead you to overlook other learning opportunities.

It is important to set goals that are meaningful to you and that are concerned with an area that you are really interested in and are motivated to learn more about. Even though the learning action plan is the major assessment, it should not become too rigid or inhibit you from spontaneous action and risk-taking. Unforeseen learning opportunities can pop up suddenly and these can be incorporated into the learning plan.

## **Some helpful hints**

As you shift into self-directed mode, the process can initially be uncomfortable and confusing as it involves a significant change in roles, values and assumptions. It is helpful, particularly in the early stages, to meet and discuss these feelings with your colleagues who will often be experiencing similar feelings. Writing a learning journal in parallel with the learning plan can also help validate the process.

After you have completed the first draft of your plan, you will find it useful to review it with two or three colleagues, supervisors, or other expert resource people to obtain their reaction and suggestions.

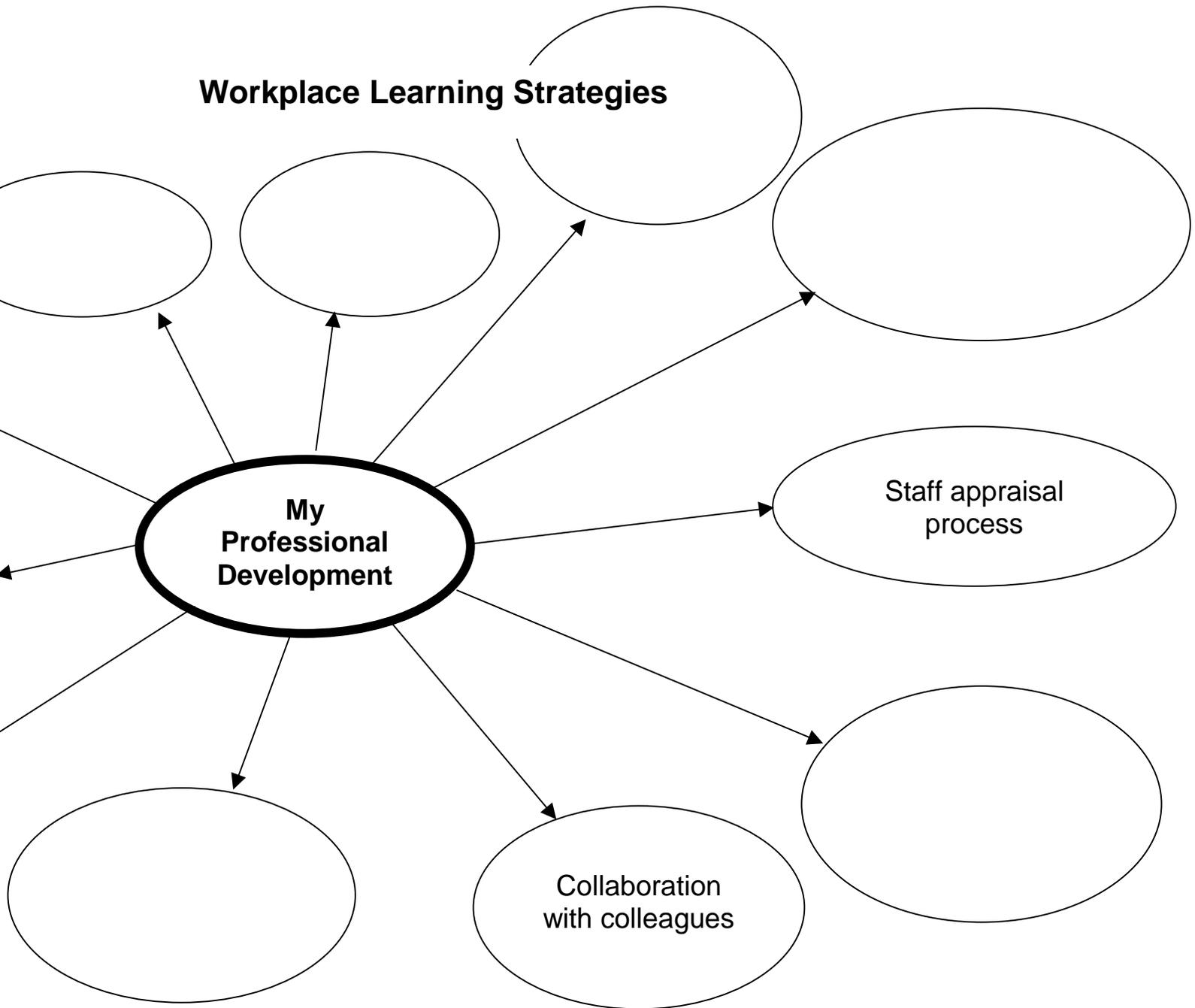
The following questions will optimise the feedback you receive:

- Are the learning goals clear, understandable, and realistic? Do they describe what you propose to learn?
- Can they think of other goals you might consider?
- Do the learning strategies and resources seem reasonable, appropriate, and efficient?
- Are there other resources and strategies you might consider?
- Does the evidence seem relevant to the various goals, and would it convince them?
- Can they suggest other evidence you might consider?

## Task

### Personal review

- Step 1:** *Develop a learning action plan (This will need to be approved by your module facilitator/coordinator prior to embarking on Step 2. A mind map, a force field analysis form and an example plan, are provided in the following pages).*
- Step 2:** *Implement your learning plan according to requirements detailed by the module facilitator.*



**Force Field Analysis**



*To meet my learning needs in the organisation*

<b>HELPING FACTORS</b> →	← <b>HINDERING FACTORS*</b>
<i>e.g. mentoring scheme, study leave policy, accredited in-house training</i>	<i>e.g. lack of motivation, unaware of professional development policies, unsupportive supervisor</i>

# Learning Plan

<b>Goals</b> <i>What do I want to learn?</i>	<b>Strategies</b> <i>How am I going to learn?</i>	<b>Resources</b> <i>What resources will I use?</i>	<b>Evidence Guide</b> <i>How will I know the learning has occurred?</i>	<b>Review Date</b>	<b>Review Comments</b>

## Topic 5

# Summary and Conclusion



### 5.1

Congratulations! In this module you have explored a number of new learning concepts. You have begun to analyse the opportunities and barriers to your ongoing learning at both a personal and organisational level. You have also developed a learning action plan. Remember, this is only the beginning of your learning!

At this point you should speak with your facilitator to assess together whether you can:

- Identify personal learning processes
- Identify personal learning needs in relation to practice improvement
- Identify learning resources
- Develop a learning plan.

If you have any concerns about meeting these learning outcomes you should speak with your facilitator.

Before you contact your facilitator, complete the Reflection Activity in this topic.

Remember that if you want to know more about action planning, a range of references are provided at the end of this module.

You could also contact your local health service that deals with drug and alcohol issues for further information.

## 5.2 Self-reflection activity

### Task



Take some time to reflect on what you have gained from your learning. Please take some time to do this. You may wish to share your insights with other learners or colleagues.

**Q**

***What aspect of this module do you feel is most relevant and useful in your work practice?***

**A**

**Q**

***What kinds of issues has this module raised for you in your work?***

**A**

**Q**

***Have you identified any further learning needs as a result of completing this module?***

**A**

**Q**

*If so, what are some ways you can achieve these learning needs?*

**A**

# References

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**Websites:**

Action Research

[www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arhome.html](http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arhome.html)

Centre for Learning and Work Research, Griffiths University

[www.gu.edu.au/centre/clwr/](http://www.gu.edu.au/centre/clwr/)

Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training

[www.rcvet.uts.edu.au](http://www.rcvet.uts.edu.au)

Society for Organisational Learning

[www.sol-ne.org/](http://www.sol-ne.org/)

Techniques, Tools and Resources for the Self-Directed Learner

[www-distance.syr.edu/resource.html](http://www-distance.syr.edu/resource.html)

The Thinking Page

[www.thinking.net/](http://www.thinking.net/)