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4th edition

SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

personal development and employability

STELLA COTTRELL

million copy bestselling author

Skills for Success

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The PhD Writing Handbook
The Postgraduate's Guide to Research Ethics
The Postgraduate Research Handbook (2nd edn)
The Professional Doctorate
Structuring Your Research Thesis

Skills for Success

Personal Development and Employability

4th edition

Stella Cottrell

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Companion site materials

Chapter 1 Taking charge of your future

- Do I need personal development planning?
Self-evaluation
- What are my PDP priorities?
- Priorities whilst a student. What do I want to gain from my time at university/college?

Chapter 2 The vision: what does success mean to you?

- The long-term vision
- Evaluate whether your PDP goals are SMART-F
- Personal action plan for PDP
- Benefits and costs of achieving your goal
- Attributes needed to achieve your goal
- Does it all add up?

Chapter 3 Know yourself

- Top 40 strong points
- Seven significant changes
- Using your personal expertise
- The impact of choices: the road walked
- The impact of choices: the road unwalked

Chapter 4 Improving your personal performance

- Find your SHAPES for academic study: snap profile
- Find your SHAPES for academic study: rate yourself for skills, habits, attitudes, preferences, experience and strategies
- Map your SHAPES profile (2 charts)
- Your Personal Performance Profile
- Identify significant features of your Personal Performance Formula (PPF)
- Your Personal Performance Formula (PPF)
- Your Personal Performance Formula (PPF) for task 1
- Your Personal Performance Formula (PPF) for task 2

Chapter 5 Successful self-management

- Learning from mistakes
- Attitude to challenge
- Identifying your sources of support
- Student Day Planner

Chapter 6 People skills

- Balloon game
- Changing a recurring situation
- Monitoring my effectiveness in improving my people skills

Chapter 7 Teamwork

- What I can contribute

Chapter 8 Develop your leadership capacity

- Step up to responsibility
- Being an effective leader

Chapter 9 Managing tasks and projects

- Priority organiser
- SWOT analysis
- Advanced SWOT analysis
- Evaluate your targets as SMART-F
- Action plan
- Project schedule

Chapter 10 Thinking creatively and productively

- Evaluate your creative thinking skills
- Mindfulness meditation
- Boost your creativity

Chapter 11 Practical problem-solving

- Problem-solving: the 'back of an envelope' approach
- Evaluating multiple solutions

Chapter 12 The art of reflection

- Critical event incident
- Core model for reflection
- Personal model for reflection

Chapter 13 What do employers really want?

- Written communications competence sheet
- Oral communication competence sheet
- People skills competence sheet
- Task-management planners and templates

Chapter 14 Getting the job you want

- Recognise personal change
- Gaining insights from the workplace
- Preparing your job application
- Preparing for the job interview
- After the job interview

Chapter 15 Building a professional identity: reputation, personal profile and records

Competences

Tools for evaluating performance

- Improving personal performance
- Evaluating progress on learning goals
- Competitiveness audit

Personal records

- Contents list for portfolios/ personal records
- Record of education and training
- Evidence of learning
- Record of work history
- Learning through work
- Evidence of skills and personal qualities for employment

Competence sheets

- 1 Evidence of competence in teamwork
- 2 Evidence of competence in working independently

- 3 Evidence of competence in exercising responsibility
- 4 Evidence of competence in leadership
- 5 Evidence of competence in persuading others
- 6 Evidence of competence in negotiating a compromise
- 7 Evidence of competence in problem-solving
- 8 Evidence of competence in project or task management
- 9 Evidence of competence in commercial awareness
- 10 Evidence of competence in managing a difficult situation
- 11 Evidence of competence in working under pressure or to tight deadlines
- 12 Evidence of competence in equal opportunities
- 13 Evidence of competence in managing change
- 14 Evidence of competence in taking calculated risks
- 15 Evidence of competence in learning from my own mistakes
- 16 Evidence of competence in written communication skills
- 17 Evidence of competence in oral communication skills
 - Pro-forma for mapping other competences
 - Health and safety

Links to

- 'Want to know more?': Recommended further reading and resources
- Useful apps (Appendix 1)
- Useful websites (Appendix 2)



List of abbreviations

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPD	continual professional development
CV	curriculum vitae
CVCP	Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals
HEAR	Higher Education Achievement Record
HE	higher education
HEI	higher education institution
IiP	Investors in People
PDP	personal development planning
PI	performance indicator (also: KPI, key performance indicator)
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency

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Foreword

Skills for Success was one of the first books designed to support university-level students and recent graduates to prepare for graduate-level employment. The first three editions have been used by students all around the world as well as by employers and employees outside of the education sector. Despite the greater focus on career planning and employability in recent years, a recent report of student and employer views illustrates a disconnect between what students think employers want and what employers say they are looking for (Uffindell et al., 2020). Of students responding to the survey on which that report is based, less than half were confident about achieving a graduate job or being prepared for the world of work. Support for students, and resources such as *Skills for Success*, are still essential.

I have been fortunate to have worked with thousands of fantastic, inspiring students across my career. I have been humbled by the efforts they put into their time as students – not just with their course, but with jobs, volunteering, caring, creativity and CV-building. So many want to do well for the benefit of others: to be great professionals, to bring new skills to the workplace, to contribute usefully to society, to inspire others, to be role models. Similarly, I have been impressed by so many academic and professional support staff going that extra mile to help students to achieve their life aims and to gain the best possible next step on the career ladder.

The first edition of this book arose from requests from teaching staff in higher education who, in the face of gaining new responsibilities for improving student employability and integrating personal

and professional development into courses, had no resources to call upon. I wrote *Skills for Success* so that teaching staff as well as students had some practical starting points for working together.

This fourth edition of *Skills for Success* has been influenced by having had senior responsibility for student success and employability as Head of School at one university, and overall at two other large universities. I have also drawn on my own experience as an employer, board member, mentor and executive coach. I have read thousands of job applications and interviewed hundreds of job applicants at all levels from recent graduates through to CEOs. I have observed, first-hand, what works and what does not when people apply for jobs. I have also talked to employers from around the world about what they want in employees, especially in new graduates. I have asked graduates 'what they wished they had known' before leaving their courses or taking on new and work-related responsibilities. I have also received a huge amount of comment and advice from student representatives and teaching staff in diverse disciplines about what they consider matters most for their students.

All of these insights I have endeavoured to incorporate into the current edition. I hope that, as a result, this edition assists both academic and professional support staff with their students. Above all, I hope it goes some way towards helping students and graduates to gain confidence, recognise their incredible potential and harness their diverse talents to achieve their ambitions.

Dr Stella Cottrell

Introducing *Skills for Success*

Is this book for you?

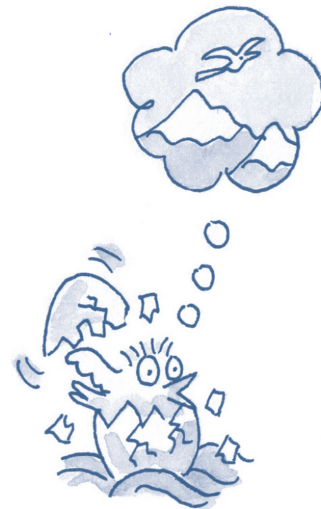
Whether you are aiming at your first job, a new or better job, a promotion at work, a change of career or a good workplace appraisal, you are likely to find this book has something for you. It focuses on skills, behaviours and ways of thinking relevant at most levels of study and of value throughout working life.

Although *Skills for Success* was originally designed for university-level students, it is used in many other contexts in both education and employment. It is especially relevant to those who want to feel more confident about what is expected in the world of work and who want to make more considered decisions about their futures.

Shape your future

As well as practical guidance, the book provides an opportunity to pause and consider crucial questions about you, your future and the kind of person you want to be – questions such as:

- ★ What does 'success' mean for me: as a student, for working life and my life in general?
- ★ Which skills, experience, and qualities do I need in order to achieve such success?
- ★ How will I get from where I am now to where I want to be in the future?
- ★ What could I be doing now that would be helpful to my future self?



Aims of *Skills for Success*

Skills for Success aims to help you to develop the attitudes, confidence, understanding, habits and generic skills associated with success in the world of work. It does this by:

- ★ Encouraging and enabling you to focus in depth on you and what you want for yourself in life
- ★ Offering practical guidance to develop skills, habits, behaviours and ways of thinking that promote and support success
- ★ Providing insights from the world of work on what is expected and how to go about securing the kind of jobs you want – building on your successes, avoiding common errors and turning setbacks to your advantage
- ★ Structured reflections, observations, self-evaluations and activities to stimulate ideas, support your thinking process and guide action
- ★ Resources to support you in recording your personal history, experience, skills and reflections so that they are ready and easy to use when applying for jobs.

Getting started

Below, is a set of recommendations for where to begin in using this book. You don't have to follow this, of course. If you do, you can keep track of what you have done so far by checking this off as you go.

Action	Rationale	Done <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Browse quickly	Check what the book covers and gain a sense of where to find what you need.	
▼	▼	
Read this Introduction: <i>Introducing Skills for Success</i>	Gain a sense of the book, its purpose, layout and contents. Familiarise yourself with the icons used in the book (see page xviii).	
▼	▼	
Take a look at the companion site (pages x and xxiv)	Familiarise yourself with the wide range of resources on the site to support your use of the book and your personal development planning (PDP).	
▼	▼	
Make a commitment (page 25)	Make the decision to put time and energy into your personal and professional development. Write this down. Decide what will motivate and support you to follow through on this commitment.	
▼	▼	
Plan time slots into diary (page 131)	Use your diary, calendar or planner to put aside regular slots to consider where you are in your PDP, and what to do next.	
▼	▼	
Start to capture your thoughts (page xix)	Develop the habit of giving time to developing your thoughts – in writing or using audio, video or graphics.	
▼	▼	
Read Chapter 1: Taking charge of your future (pages 3–28)	Find out what is meant by personal development planning, and why it is considered important for students and in professional life. Gain a steer on how to derive most benefit from PDP.	
▼	▼	
Use Chapter 1	Identify your PDP priorities.	
▼	▼	
Follow up	Use other chapters, or parts of chapters, to follow up on your interests and personal priorities.	

Skills for Success: the approach

All about you

This book is about you – about the kind of person you want to be and the sort of future you want. It provides information, guidance, prompts and activities to stimulate your own thinking and to help you filter what you really want amidst the clamour of many choices and everyone else's interests and needs.

Improved decision-making

Good decision-making boosts well-being and generally makes life easier. However, it is not unusual for people to make important life decisions without really thinking them through. This leads to wasted time, missed opportunities and unnecessary complications.

You can use the guided reflections, observations and other activities in *Skills for Success* in order to consider in more depth the 'whys' and 'hows' of what makes you 'you', what influences the way you think, feel, choose and behave – so you are better placed to make the right decisions for you.

Time for thought

Skills for Success encourages you to devote some space in your busy life just to thinking about you and your future. This is important as, generally, we tend to be easily distracted from thinking deeply on fundamental questions about ourselves – such as:

- ★ What do I *really* want, value, need?
- ★ Why do these things matter to me?
- ★ What would *really* be best for me?
- ★ How does all this affect the way I should be thinking and planning for the future?
- ★ What will I do to bring about what I want?

Although these thoughts might cross our minds occasionally, it is easy to become caught up in our day-to-day lives so that weeks or years pass without our giving them the time they deserve. This book supports you in making that time. Many of its activities are short and can fit into a bus or train ride, lunch break or a spare twenty minutes.

Emphasis on action

Whilst it is important to think things through, ultimately it is essential to put your thoughts and plans into action. This book provides practical guidance and resources to help you take steps in planning towards what you want to achieve.



At last, Sybil had enough ideas to launch into action

Employability focus

Whilst many of the skills and attitudes covered by *Skills for Success* are applicable to academic study, the main focus of this book is on preparing for success in working life – whether in your current line of work or future jobs. It helps you to consider such questions as

- ★ What is meant by 'employability'? What do employers look for?
- ★ Should I be self-employed – or an employer myself?
- ★ What kind of actions should I be taking now to improve my work or career prospects?
- ★ How can I enhance my personal profile and performance so I 'stand out from the crowd'?

How to use *Skills for Success*

Locate what you need

The following design features are provided to help you find material quickly and easily,

- ★ A contents page and Index.
- ★ A list of the resources available on the book's companion site (pages x–xi).
- ★ Learning outcomes listed at the start of each chapter, so you know what to expect.
- ★ Page headers and large headings for topics, to assist rapid browsing.
- ★ Icons to signal particular activities.
- ★ Summaries at the end of each chapter to highlight their key messages.
- ★ Visually distinct pages, with illustrations and graphics to help you locate and recall material more easily.

Icons used in the book

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Self-evaluation |  Observation |
|  Reflection |  Activity |
|  Apps are available (see pages 379–80) |  Companion site materials available (see pages x–xi) |
|  Want to know more? Further resources | |

Do it

Select and personalise

Skills for Success is designed so you can choose to use it in different ways, to suit you at any given time.

- ★ Browse and choose what interests you.
- ★ *or* Identify your priorities; go directly to those sections.
- ★ *or* Pick chapters relevant to where you are at a given time in your course or work history.
- ★ *or* Work through the book systematically to build self-awareness, confidence and ability.
- ★ *or* Use a combination of the above.

Use the self-evaluations

Most chapters include a self-evaluation. These serve several purposes:

- 1 to increase awareness and stimulate reflection
- 2 to highlight component parts or steps that contribute to complex tasks or skills; this deepens understanding of what is involved
- 3 to pinpoint specific aspects of your current performance that would benefit from more attention
- 4 to help you prioritise your planning and development.

Give it time

Be prepared to give yourself the time you need to investigate, reflect upon and evaluate yourself, your studies and your future. Create time for it in your diary.

Experiment

- ★ Apply strategies, skills, models and ideas from the book to your studies and workplace, adapting and combining these to fit your circumstances and preferences.
- ★ Use these as a springboard for investigating new ways of doing things.
- ★ Become more aware of what works best for you and your circumstances.

Become more observant

Use the guided observations and activities in the book to help you to become more aware of:

- ★ various aspects of the world of work, such as what employers say they want and changes occurring in the labour market and your professional area
- ★ what others around you are doing to advance their own futures
- ★ what kinds of approaches are effective for getting things done in your context(s)
- ★ what other people want and need: being alert to these can help your own success.

Reflect

It is recommended that you maintain a personal blog, vlog, journal, diary, folder, ideas book or similar – to support your development over time.

Start a 'reflective journal'

Use your journal to:

- ★ complete reflective activities from the book
- ★ capture your thoughts, insights and inspiration
- ★ develop your initial thoughts in more detail
- ★ consider your attitudes, feelings, habits and behaviours, and the implications of these for you and others
- ★ identify helpful and unhelpful responses to events
- ★ look back over earlier entries and consider how your perspective changes over time
- ★ generally think things through.

Giving attention to your experiences helps clarify your thinking and understanding. Put time aside regularly to record your reflections – and to reconsider previous entries. For more about effective reflection, see Chapter 12.

Take action

Follow up your evaluations and reflections with decisions for action. The resources in the book and on its companion site can help you to:

- ★ decide your priorities
- ★ plan out what you will do and when
- ★ carry out what you decided
- ★ keep track of your actions
- ★ consider what worked – and what to improve.

Follow up topics of relevance to you. Further reading and resources are recommended throughout the book and on pages 390–8 (refs).

Compare 'then' and 'now'

Save completed self-evaluations, reflections, priority lists and planners for future reference.

- ★ Compare your actions and outcomes with your original intentions.
- ★ Compare your initial responses with how you feel, think or behave later.

Overview of the chapters

Part 1: Self-management

Self-awareness is key to everything else. Part 1 helps you to deepen your understanding of what lies beneath your current choices and performance – and to use your insights to gain more control over your actions and your life.

1 Taking charge of your future

Chapter 1 introduces personal development planning (PDP) as an important strategy for preparing for the future. It clarifies what PDP is, why it matters, its challenges and benefits. Use it to identify your current PDP needs and priorities.

2 The Vision: What does 'success' mean to you?

Most students make sacrifices to put themselves through college or university and expect a better future as a result. Despite this, many are vague about what to do once their course finishes. Whilst that doesn't have to be a problem, it is useful to give thought to what you want in life so that you have a greater sense of direction, make coherent choices and are better positioned to make use of the right opportunities for you as these arise.

Chapter 2 enables you to think through what 'success' would mean to you. It is a chance to reflect on your ambitions, goals, motivations and values – and about the kind of life you want to find yourself living 10 or 20 years from now.

3 Know yourself

Use Chapter 3 to gain a deeper understanding of the part you play in your own life story. It is a chance to reflect on what has shaped you as a person, as well as how you respond to circumstances now, the expertise you have developed so far, and how you could draw on that in new contexts.

4 Improving personal performance

We are each distinct in what we need to perform at our best – and in what holds us back. Chapter 4 enables you to:

- ★ evaluate whether you would benefit most from working on your skills, habits, attitudes, preferences, experience or strategy (SHAPES)
- ★ analyse the factors that have a significant impact on your own performance
- ★ identify your own personal 'formula' for performing at your best
- ★ use your insights to put into place the conditions you need in order to perform well.

5 Successful self-management

Effective self-management is expected of adults and essential in most graduate jobs and responsible positions associated with career success. Although we might have a good idea of what this means, it isn't always easy to act like a responsible grown-up. It can be especially challenging to manage our emotions and follow through on good intentions when we feel stressed or are coping with change and uncertainty.



Tom refused to recognise his inability to take personal responsibility for his actions

Use Chapter 5 to consider:

- ★ your ability to use your initiative and take on responsibility
- ★ where and how your energy gets blocked – and where to focus in order to charge your energy
- ★ the important roles played by self-belief and hope for those who achieve success
- ★ your emotional intelligence and ability to manage emotions in uncertainty or distress
- ★ practical steps in organisational self-management and using time effectively.

Part 2: People and Task Management Skills

Being more skilful in how you approach tasks and interactions with others makes study more enjoyable and less stressful. It enables you to be more effective in most situations you will encounter as a student or in work. Attributes associated with managing people and tasks are always in great demand from employers and are useful in all areas of working life.

6 People skills

Good people skills mean that all interactions in daily life, work and during study can run more smoothly and everyone gains consideration, encouragement and respect. Such skills enable us to create more effective, enjoyable and efficient environments and to manage difficult situations better – which is why so many people and employers place such a high value upon them. Most graduates need people skills soon after graduation, if not before. Chapter 6 helps you to identify and develop abilities that contribute to good people skills, such as:

- ★ establishing rapport, gaining allies and forming useful networks
- ★ active listening skills
- ★ assertiveness and negotiation skills
- ★ giving and receiving constructive criticism
- ★ managing difficult and unwanted recurring situations.

How do I manage people?
Usually my presence is enough but sometimes I roar and if all else fails ... I eat them.



7 Teamwork

Teamwork is an essential skill for most jobs and research careers and, increasingly, features as an aspect of student assignments. Good emotional self-management and people skills contribute enormously to good teamwork. Chapter 7 looks at:

- ★ how to create great teams and be a constructive, effective team member
- ★ roles and functions that people play in teams, and the value of including and involving all members effectively to the benefit of the team
- ★ understanding team dynamics, such as at different stages in a group's formation, and during moments of conflict
- ★ using conflict and confrontation constructively
- ★ drawing on your experience so that you can present your teamworking ability well to employers during job application processes.

8 Develop your leadership capacity

Understanding about leadership is useful to many contexts, whether in the work place, for student projects, or in the community. It is essential in most graduate jobs. Whether you consider yourself a natural leader or take on leadership for other reasons, there is always more to learn about how to be a better leader. Use Chapter 8 to

- ★ understand what is meant by leadership, including different models and styles
- ★ decide what you value in leaders
- ★ prepare for leadership roles and/or develop as a more effective leader.

9 Managing tasks and projects

Being familiar with a range of typical task-related and project-management strategies will help you take on almost any new task with more confidence. Use Chapter 9 to:

- ★ apply the OPAL strategy to help you conceptualise new tasks more precisely and to navigate the processes involved
- ★ develop organisational and planning skills, such as setting goals, priorities, SMART-F targets and evaluation criteria
- ★ understand the characteristics of projects as a distinct type of task – and factors that enable their success
- ★ consider how good communications will help the success of your project – and enable you to gain most from the experience.

Part 3: Extending your thinking

Creative and reflective thinking abilities are becoming ever more valued, both for academic study and for employment. They deepen your understanding of what you learn from study or experience and of how to apply this to new contexts.

10 *Thinking creatively and productively*

Many people doubt their own creativity, assuming that this is just for artists and performers. Creativity is essential to problem-solving and task completion. It is the 'spark of creativity' that brings the right idea to mind at the right time. Chapter 10 looks at ways of nurturing creative-thinking skills and using the brain productively. Use it to:

- ★ develop confidence in your creative abilities
- ★ help your brain to function more effectively
- ★ try out a range of activities to hone your creative-thinking processes.

11 *Practical problem-solving*

Problem-solving ability features as one of the key skills sought after by employers, as well as being central to academic study and professional life. The word 'problem' can be anxiety-provoking. It can be daunting to be faced with new problems to resolve, and frustrating to live with intractable and recurring problems. That doesn't have to be the case. Use Chapter 11 to:

- ★ find ways into new problems, so that they become more familiar and easier to resolve
- ★ use processes such as problem definition, problem statements and problem-structuring to help clarify the nature of a new problem or task to yourself and others
- ★ use similarity-finding, multiple-solution generation and criteria-based evaluation to help you decide on solutions to problems
- ★ use Action sets in order to resolve problems using mutual support processes.

12 *The art of reflection*

Many professions now require their employees to adopt a reflective practitioner approach. Your course tutors may also require you to reflect upon your

performance. But what is 'reflection'? How do you go about it? How do you write about it?

As you work through the book, you will find many opportunities for structured reflection. Chapter 12 outlines different methods and approaches, along with guidance on the kinds of structured reflection typically required for marked assignments in higher education. Browse these and select those methods that suit you and your course.

Part 4: Employability and enhancing your career prospects

Surveys of students show that their main objectives in pursuing higher education are associated with finding a graduate job or improving work prospects. This may include:

- ★ gaining professional qualifications or equivalents
- ★ enhancing their career through promotion, changes of role or moving to a better job
- ★ gaining greater job satisfaction and expertise in existing employment
- ★ embarking on their first substantial job – as a first step on the career ladder
- ★ gaining more experience of employment through internships or a graduate scheme.

The skills developed throughout the book are those especially associated with graduate careers. The following chapters consider the issue of 'employability' from the perspective of both employers and students.

13 *What do employers really want?*

The process of gaining a job can seem rather mysterious. When there is a lot of competition for work, it can feel hard to find a job without experience – and hard to gain such experience. Even if you have been in employment for some time, it is not always obvious how to go about gaining a promotion or better job.

Chapter 13 considers 'employability' from the perspective of employers and what they look for when taking on new employees. Use it to:

- ★ gain a sense of what matters to employers
- ★ identify skills always in high demand



Not all the applicants for the job had really considered what the employer was looking for

- ★ understand how employers make use of diverse sets of skills in work contexts
- ★ articulate your skills, including academic skills in ways employers understand
- ★ weigh up potential benefits, risks and responsibilities of self-employment and/or being an employer in your own right.

14 Getting the job you want

Chapter 14 considers employability from the perspective of you as a potential employee going through the process of applying for jobs. Use this chapter to help you:

- ★ think through what you really want from your first, or next, job
- ★ enhance your career prospects through the process of personal development planning
- ★ make informed choices when looking for jobs
- ★ make effective job applications, including a winning CV and well-mapped competences
- ★ prepare well for interviews and assessment centres, so you can approach these with greater confidence
- ★ gain deeper insights into the world of work, through reflection on the contexts in which you find yourself – to help build business acumen and achieve your longer-term goals.

15 Building a professional identity: reputation, personal profile and records

The information you provide to employers as well as that available to them about you in the public domain or through third parties all contribute to your professional reputation. Chapter 15 helps you consider how to nurture and protect the integrity of your professional identity – to the benefit of your short- and longer-term employment. That includes constructing the best possible profile of yourself online as well as ensuring that you maintain reliable, easy-to-access records that support accurate and effective job applications.

Building a bank of information about your experiences and skills provides you with an invaluable resource for making good applications and preparing for interviews. You are likely to draw upon it for many years to come. Materials and templates are available on the companion site to help you make such record-keeping easy.



Raise your game to get ahead of the pack!

About the companion site



The companion site for *Skills for Success*

A bank of resources is provided for your personal use through the companion site that accompanies this book. You can use these to:

- ★ record and collate key personal information, evaluations and reflections
- ★ set personal priorities
- ★ create detailed action plans for tasks or for professional development
- ★ track and monitor your progress on tasks
- ★ track and monitor your progress towards personal and professional goals
- ★ prepare for job interviews
- ★ follow up recommended links to further reading, information, podcasts, talks, videos, practice materials, activities and other resources.



This icon indicates that templates such as planners and checklists are available on the companion website.

See pages x–xi for a list of materials on the companion site.

Visit the companion site at: www.macmillanihe.com/cottrell-skills-for-success-4e

**Enjoy
the book**

**I hope you enjoy using
this book – and achieve
all your ambitions!**

Stella Cottrell

PART 1

Self-management

Self-management skills are essential to success. They provide a solid foundation upon which to build all other skills and to take action to achieve our ambitions. At some point, all successful people learn to understand, manage, and lead themselves well in order to achieve effectively.

Part 1 is designed to help you to:

- ★ clarify what is meant by Personal Development Planning (PDP), its benefits for you, and how to get started with a relevant personal action plan
- ★ envisage the kind of life you want for your future and clarify your goals and ambitions
- ★ consider what makes you the person you are now – and who you want to be
- ★ pinpoint factors that enable you to perform at your best
- ★ manage your time, resources and energies to best effect to achieve what matters to you.

Personal development planning

Personal Development Planning (PDP) is the process that enables us to identify what we really want – our ambition for ourselves – and what we need to do in order to achieve that. The richness of that process, and where it leads, are down to each of us, depending on what we put into it.

Knowing yourself

It is easier to shape a vision for the future, set goals, stay motivated, and adapt to changing circumstances if we build from a solid base. That comes from gaining a deep understanding of ourselves – not just the

superficial, obvious things that first come to mind but the more profound insights that arise from recurrent, structured self-reflection, self-questioning, broadening of experience, learning from new challenges, being open to feedback – all leading to greater self-awareness and self-confidence. It is easier to be successful in working towards our goals when these really excite us, when they match our ambitions, values and interests, and when we are being true to ourselves.

Personal performance

When we understand the multiple factors that impact on our own performance, we are in a better position to create the ideal conditions to achieve well in the most efficient way and with least stress – whether for study, work or for personal goals.

Chapters in Part 1

- 1 Taking charge of your future
- 2 The vision: What does success mean to you?
- 3 Know yourself
- 4 Improving your personal performance
- 5 Successful self-management

Chapter 1

Taking charge of your future



Learning outcomes

This chapter offers you opportunities to:

- ✓ understand what is meant by 'Personal Development Planning' (PDP) and what it involves
- ✓ recognise the potential benefits and challenges of PDP
- ✓ consider the relevance of PDP to your future career and ambitions
- ✓ decide your PDP priorities
- ✓ identify opportunities open to you now
- ✓ plan your course of action for taking forward your personal development.

What kind of future?

Your time as a student is a major step in your professional career. When you graduate, you will be competing with millions of other graduates from around the world. Like you, they will be looking to stand out in a graduate employment market that is increasingly global. The time you spend now in gaining a good degree, in nurturing your talents and building a distinctive personal profile can make a difference in how far you achieve what you want.

Make it happen



Aspire. Be ambitious for yourself. Aim high, considering the portfolio of jobs you might have over many years.



Plan. Map a route towards achieving your ambitions – whether academic, professional or personal.



Investigate. Be well informed about the range of career and life options open to you – and what is needed to be successful in those areas.



Personalise. Adapt your strategies to suit your individual combination of ambitions, abilities, experiences, interests, needs and preferences.



Reflect. Increase your self-awareness: develop good habits of introspection and constructive self-questioning. Become more attuned to what matters most to you.



Achieve. Take action. Follow through on your plans, adapting them as opportunities arise and as your interests and ambitions change.



Decide. Think through the implications of potential choices – and then choose a direction. Making decisions brings focus to your planning and studies.

Getting started with Personal Development Planning (PDP)

Below, is a set of recommendations for taking forward your personal and professional planning. You can keep track of what you have done so far by checking this off as you go.

Step in the process	Rationale	Done <input type="checkbox"/>
Find out what is meant by 'PDP' (pages 5–9)	... so you can make sense of this for your own context.	
▼	▼	
Consider the challenges (pages 14–15)	PDP doesn't tend to happen spontaneously, as is evident from the students' experiences on pages 11–12. Give thought to where the challenges would lie for you so you can address them.	
▼	▼	
Identify the benefits to you (pages 16–17)	Motivate yourself to give PDP the time it deserves – such as by identifying why and how it can be useful to you.	
▼	▼	
Decide: 'Do I need PDP?' (page 18)	Use the self-evaluation on page 18 in order to decide whether PDP is relevant to you now.	
▼	▼	
Identify your PDP needs and priorities (pages 19–24)	Complete the self-evaluations on pages 19–24 to tease out your own PDP needs and priorities, using a rounded approach.	
▼	▼	
Identify opportunities (pages 26–7)	Give active consideration to the opportunities available to you, so that your planning is dynamic, realistic and focussed. Include opportunities you could create for yourself.	
▼	▼	
Make an action plan (page 208)	Draw up a plan. Make a schedule to take this forward (pages 208–9). Review, fine-tune, and update this regularly to keep it live, relevant and realistic.	
▼	▼	
Plan into diary	Use your diary, calendar or planner to map out when, exactly, you will undertake the first few actions. Follow through: do what you plan.	
▼	▼	
Check out the companion site (page xxiv)	If you wish, you can use the templates provided for PDP self-evaluations and planners – or adapt these to suit your own purposes.	

'PDP': What is it?

You and your aspirations

Personal development planning (PDP) is about you. It is about thinking ahead and taking the right steps now – to give yourself the best possible range of choices later. It encompasses consideration of:

- ★ who you are now – and want to be
- ★ your likes, dislikes, ambitions, goals, values, motivations and uncertainties
- ★ what you thought you might want from life – and how your interests might change
- ★ the jobs and life options open to you – and what these would entail
- ★ work-related knowledge and skills so you develop a soundly based confidence about the world of work
- ★ what to do to benefit from opportunities and achieve your own aspirations.

Taking stock

In working life, employers typically use PDP processes such as staff reviews or appraisals. When conducted well, employees are supported in pausing to take stock of their work targets, career goals, training and development needs. This contributes to personal and business planning for the months or years ahead.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for higher education in England advocated similar processes for students at every level and stage of study. This was to help students to prepare for working life and, if already employed, make better use of opportunities available to them. The QAA stressed the importance of PDP as:

Structured and supported processes to develop the capacity of individuals to reflect upon their learning and achievement, and to plan for their own personal education and development. (QAA, 2000)

Such reflection and planning are most effective when undertaken regularly and over time – because we, our circumstances and the world around us are changing all the time. It is also useful to pause occasionally to check that we still want the same things, are on track with our plans, and to recognise what we have accomplished so far.

Guiding your destiny

However much others might take an interest in you, your studies and your future, ultimately it is up to you to make things happen. That might seem daunting, but it can also be reassuring – you can take charge and make a difference. PDP can be energising if staged thoughtfully, over time, as part of a planned process. PDP helps you to:

- ★ structure your thinking
- ★ steer your investigations
- ★ make the right decisions
- ★ clarify your direction and goals
- ★ formulate plans to guide your choices and actions.

A creative process



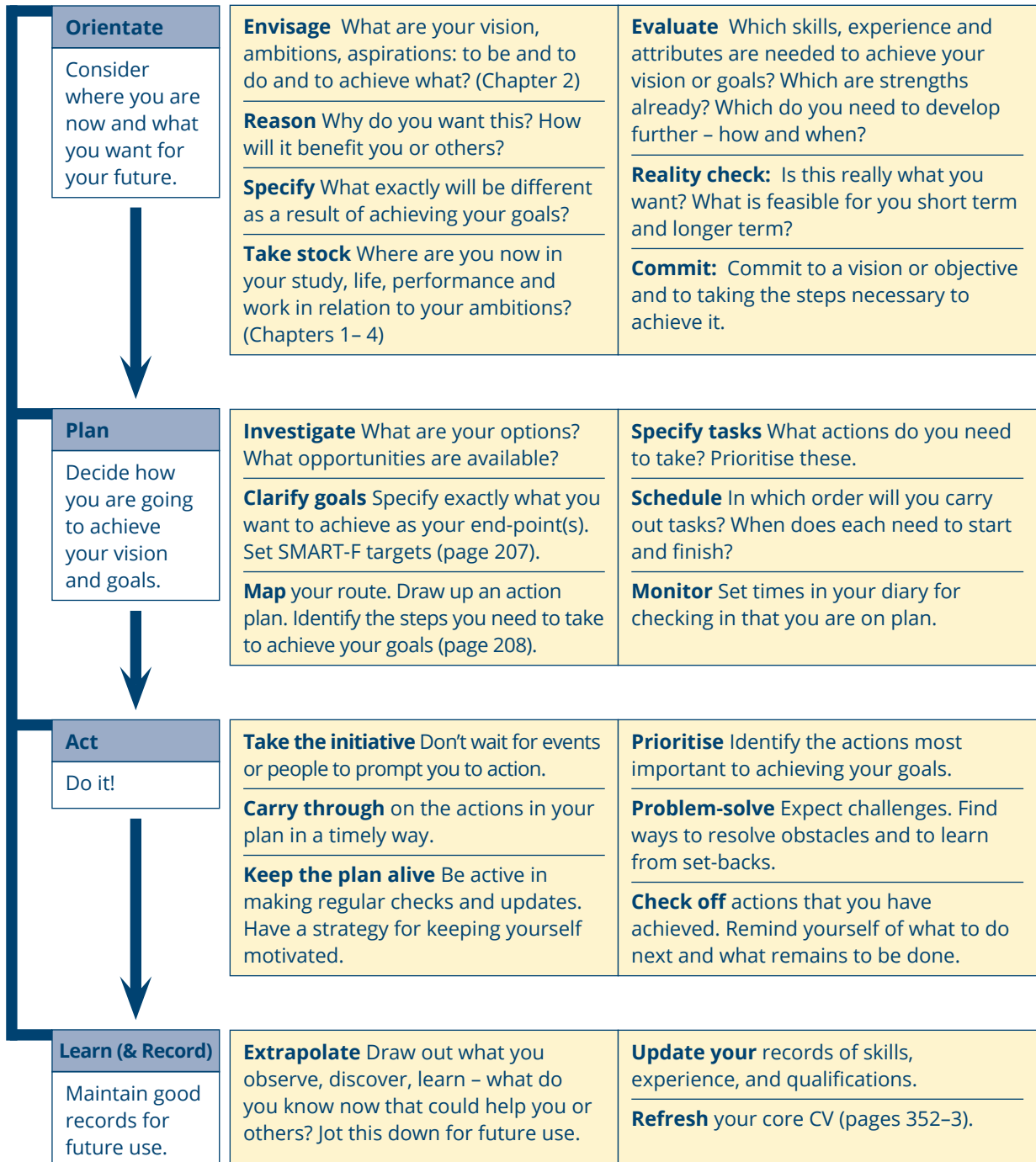
A journey of exploration and discovery

PDP is a creative process, requiring time, curiosity, enquiry, toying with ideas, looking for inspiration, taking risks, learning new skills, building strengths, trial and error, discussion, false starts, rethinking, and even soul searching. The more you put in, the more you get out. Key steps in that process are outlined on page 6.

PDP as a process

PDP is an ongoing process rather than a one-off event. This process is mapped below (see also page 202). The process can involve returning to any stage at any time, if needed.

Reflect (think through ...)



Personal development involves ...

Aspiring for your future

Whether you have clearly formed goals or vague ideas about how you want to live your life, your aspirations help to motivate and guide you. Feel free to dream – for now, for when your course is over, for the long-term. Then consider how to turn your dreams into reality. Chapter 2 investigates this further.

I'm prepared to go vegan if you give me a job in textiles



Bringing the right 'mindset'

Attitude is key to PDP. That means:

- ★ being determined to achieve what you set out to do
- ★ recognising what you can do already – and applying what you learnt from past success
- ★ taking setbacks in your stride so they don't deter you from succeeding in the long term
- ★ finding ways of using setbacks to good advantage – looking for positive aspects and learning from mistakes so that they benefit you in the future
- ★ persisting if you haven't achieved your goals – yet. Emphasise that word 'yet' to yourself.

Believing in yourself

Self-belief is essential. It is reasonable to assume there will be setbacks and disappointments along the way. At such times, you have to be able to inspire yourself to keep going – and to keep re-igniting your self-belief.

Whether progressing in a career, building a business or generally in life, you need others to put their faith in you – in your skills, attitudes, values. If you want others to believe in you, you must believe in yourself, too. That can mean:

- ★ giving yourself sufficient time to think and achieve
- ★ providing yourself with opportunities
- ★ finding the right support and guidance
- ★ being a good guide to yourself and following your own best advice
- ★ grounding your self-belief, by taking action and demonstrating your potential to yourself.

Increased self-awareness

Self-knowledge is invaluable to shaping your aspirations and to ensuring that you have a realistic plan in place to achieve your aims. It might seem self-indulgent or unnecessary to put time aside to think about yourself. However, happiness, contentment and a sense of fulfilment benefit from such introspection – and you are likely to make useful, unexpected self-discoveries, too.

Self-awareness helps in making decisions about:

- ★ the right study and work choices
- ★ how best to use your time now
- ★ which opportunities to pursue
- ★ how to cope with feelings, emotions, stress and the multiple demands on your time
- ★ managing relationships and interactions with others that affect life, study and work.

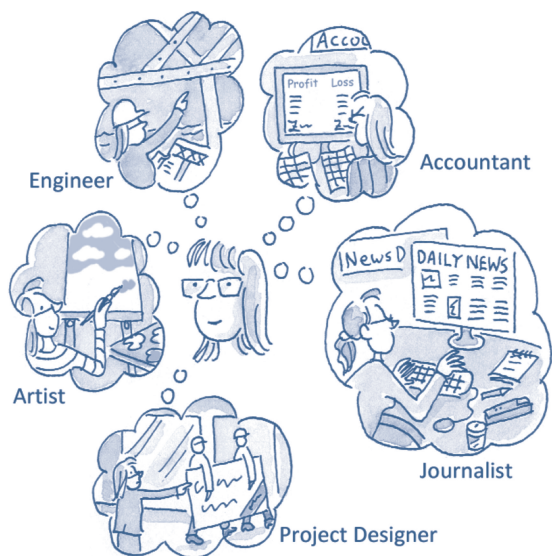
Thinking things through

It makes sense to think in depth about questions that affect your life and future, such as:

- ★ what kind of life you are leading and where you are heading
- ★ how you became the person you are today and what you can do or change in order to be the person you want to be
- ★ the consequences and implications of your thoughts, habits and actions – and how these either take you forward or hold you back.

Chapter 12 looks at this in more detail.

Decision-making



Whatever decisions we make, day by day and longer term, these have consequences, the full impact of which won't be evident for many years. Ideally, we will be pleased with the decisions we made, yet inevitably we will make mistakes, miss chances, make life harder than it need be.

That is where the PDP process can be of value. It provides space to pause and to:

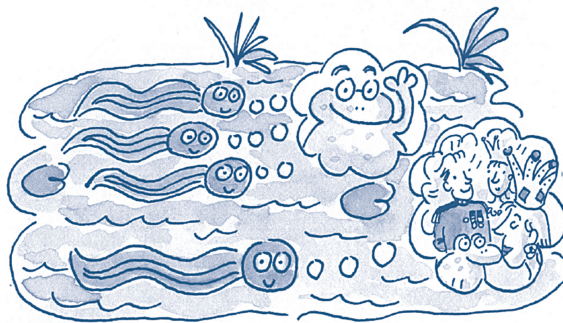
- ★ evaluate the impact of past decisions
- ★ weigh up costs and benefits of choices in the light of experience and investigations
- ★ recognise and manage pressures from others to pursue a future you might not really want
- ★ manage risks sensibly.

Active investigation

- ★ Finding out all there is to know about the life and career options available to you
- ★ Researching the many spin-off careers and opportunities that your qualifications could open up for you – including the less obvious
- ★ Being aware of alternatives – in case the realities of particular jobs, roles or fields of works don't live up to your expectations.

There are rich resources available to help with this – online, through careers services, recruitment agencies and your institution.

Being open to possibilities



- ★ Recognising possibilities
- ★ Creating opportunities
- ★ Seizing opportunities as they arise
- ★ Trying out new things
- ★ Taking the trouble to ask
- ★ Seeking out advice
- ★ Planning for the medium and longer term
- ★ Being flexible, adaptable and resilient in the face of changing circumstances.

Devising a personal path

As the name suggests, personal development planning involves formulating some kind of plan, strategy or general route towards achieving our aims. The nature of this is highly individual, and will change over time.

If you are **on a given career path** that inspires you currently, there are likely to be set qualifications to achieve and roles to work through on the way to your ideal position. Your plan needs to include those – as well as other things that you want to accomplish in life.

If you are **changing your mind**, such as if you are on a professional pathway that is losing its charm for you, your plan should include considering options and alternatives that will engage your interest again.

If you are going to be **running your own professional practice**, whether as an artist, doctor, architect or otherwise, your plan might involve such steps as gaining investment, marketing your services and ensuring you are compliant with any legal responsibilities.

If you have no idea of what you will do when your course finishes, your plan might include such actions as investigating your options, gaining work experience and developing a wide skills portfolio, so that you give yourself the best possible range of options for graduate jobs. Part 4 (page 301) picks up on this in more detail.

Just 'being' — with mindful awareness

We tend to spend most of our time distracted by such things as work, social media, socialising, entertainment and almost anything apart from just sitting quietly with ourselves. That makes it more difficult to know ourselves – and to recognise the full significance of what occurs to us and around us.



Create space for insights to arise

Whilst PDP involves a dynamic process of reflection, planning and action, it also benefits from quiet time where we are not constantly chasing after answers and results. Time spent in stillness and quiet allows for different kinds of thoughts to emerge. These can give us unexpected insights into ourselves and our situation.

Aim to find a healthy balance between driving yourself to achieve your goals, and leading a healthy, fulfilling life in the current moment. You can find out more about this in Cottrell (2018).

Why PDP matters for students

More than just a degree

When students complete their qualification, they usually have a good understanding of their academic subject and have developed skills associated with their course. This is good, but is only part of the story.

Being at university or college provides opportunities to mix with a wide range of people, to take part in new activities, to manage positions of responsibility and to broaden your outlook. Most of these opportunities lie outside of the taught curriculum although, increasingly, courses are designed to enhance personal and professional development and increase employability and work readiness. Students are being encouraged to adopt a broad-based approach that uses their time and the curriculum imaginatively.

Why is PDP actively encouraged for students?

Typically, students regard their study as a passport to a better future – such as through a graduate job, career change or promotion. Such jobs require qualities and skills that take time, support and good planning to develop. Attributes and soft skills such as confidence, teamwork, leadership and task management cannot be acquired suddenly at the last minute or in isolation. In the past, many graduates were disappointed that they were not better prepared for time after study. Employers have long complained about students' lack of work-readiness. It has been recognised that students need structured opportunities to think about, and prepare for, their future.

Can you really plan for an unknown future?

Whilst you can't control the future – the unexpected will happen – you can prepare for likely eventualities. You can develop skills and attributes relevant to a wide range of contexts, opening up better life chances and enabling better decision-making.

Preparing for graduate jobs

PDP is about preparing now towards the kind of employment you will want in the future – whether that is working for yourself or others. It can encompass a wide range of soul-searching, investigating, experimenting, decision-making, planning, practising and learning from experience, as well as keeping personal records for future use.

Achieving academically

Usually, students want to gain the best possible academic outcomes for their time as a student. This is for their own satisfaction, and because employers often require a high Grade Point Average (GPA) or degree classification.

The PDP process can help you achieve better academically as it helps you to understand more about what hinders or enhances your performance. In addition, being clearer about where your studies might lead you later on can give a sense of purpose, assisting motivation.



PDP: what students say



My promotion – and my attitude!

I thought 'personal development planning' was a bit of a mouthful, so I just ignored it. That is a bit of a habit with me. Then, when I went for promotion at work, they asked me about my 'commitment' to my personal and professional development. I couldn't think of what to say. I even forgot to mention I was doing a qualification at university. I hadn't thought about how I was already using what I learnt at Uni in my job. My careers adviser has helped me to think about how to plan and prepare for promotion. He asked me whether my general attitude to things that sound complicated or difficult was helpful – which it obviously isn't ... so I'm working on it!

A 'return on my investment'

I have a huge loan for my study so I want a good job, a well paid job ... I told my personal tutor and she told me to make sure my CV looks outstanding and to put in more study hours so I get a good degree – both count. Basically, you have to think how you will look well-rounded and interesting to employers many years from now. So, I have really gone for it, like it is a full time job. One thing is ... I do a lot of organising of events and entertainment for senior citizens, and fund-raising for it as well. It takes up a lot of time but actually is quite a lot of fun and you learn a lot about managing events, marketing, and persuading people to get involved. I found out so much I wouldn't have picked up just by studying. I am more confident about getting on with people. I have also changed a lot. I do think I will have a lot of good experience to talk about when I apply for jobs.



Start early – or miss the chance

My tutor said: 'It really is up to you. Plan now for your future.' I thought 'OK – soon' and did nothing about it. Now I am in my final year, applying for jobs like everyone else ... and I see why I should have started preparing earlier. I feel I have wasted a lot of time so I am trying to catch up quickly. The jobs I am most interested in are overseas. If I had realised this earlier, I would have started to learn another language. I could have done that using my electives for three years ...

A rounded personal profile

To be honest, I only wanted a degree so I could get a better job. I picked up very quickly that you have to build your personal profile from day 1. I did this by getting involved with the student union. I became a course 'rep' and got a lot of training for this. I do kayaking and rowing. I do 'Global Studies' so I can talk about more than just my course (psychology). I competed in an enterprise prize ... I helped a project on science for school kids ... I can pretty much tick every box. The career I want is hard to get into without a really good degree. I am not all that strong academically so I am trying to pick up as much as I can about good study skills so I get better grades.



On the right course?

I wasn't sure what 'PDP' was and it seemed a bit of a distraction from my study. Anyway, we had to do some careers sessions as part of a skills module in the first term. I went to talk to a careers adviser and found out that I was doing the wrong course for the jobs I want. So that was a bit of a wake-up call ... Luckily, I was able to negotiate a change of study units. It was hard work catching up but if I pass these units, I can transfer next year to the course I need. It was scary how close I came to wasting three years of study.

PDP: what graduates say

Least wanted, most valued

The last thing I ever really wanted to do was open the PDP file (which I had labelled 'Me'). I didn't want to think about my career or waste time 'navel gazing'. I didn't want to think about 'work'. I didn't want to 'reflect' either. If my tutors hadn't made this a compulsory part of the course so I couldn't escape it, I am sure I would never have bothered.

Looking back, I think this was because, even though I was studying a professional course in petrology, I didn't have any idea what I really wanted to do after Uni. But then one day (maybe I had been reflecting!) it struck me that it was ridiculous to feel it wasn't worth spending time thinking about myself and my life so I started to take it more seriously.

The careers and PDP sessions got me doing things to put into my CV, and just looking at life differently. They were probably the most useful part of the course because without them, I doubt I would have got a place on the graduate programme that led to my first job.

Rahan, *Operations Manager, SME*

Checking out the 'dream' ...

All the way through school, I thought I was going to do a medical degree. I had a rather exalted view of what I thought that meant. When I found out more about the job, I couldn't see me living that kind of life. I am not good without sleep; when I realised that I would have to live for many years on 100-hour working weeks and constantly interrupted sleep, that put me off. I could see myself as a consultant, but not as a junior doctor. I didn't know then what I would do – but I was glad I found out early in my degree and could change my career path. I didn't at that point think that the volunteering work I did as a student would lead to a good career in the voluntary sector.

Henry, *CEO, voluntary sector*

Breadth of skills and knowledge

I was lucky because the year I started my engineering degree in the States, they gave us the option of combining this with business and professional studies. I took that option and it was the best decision. It was exactly what this company was looking for so it landed me my first job and then, eventually, this line of work. I think it's great when graduates can think beyond just one subject and can converse intelligently with colleagues from all fields.

Brett, *Senior Recruitment Officer, large international company*

Acting like a professional

I work in the health sector. Continual development is an integral part of what it means to be a professional here and for career advancement. It is expected that we reflect on our working practice. With technology changing the nature of our work so rapidly and research opening up new areas of knowledge and understanding, it is unthinkable that we could do our jobs without constant development. That means finding the time, making choices and planning ahead. I am grateful that my course insisted on PDP and reflection so I was used to them when I started work.

Rosa, *Nurse Manager*

Challenge fixed career views

I already had a job working as a children's care assistant. I thought, as I was a mother, and knew about children and had experience in that line of work, that was my life planned out. That was why I didn't go to any careers sessions in the first two years – I was sure it would be pointless. Then we studied juvenile offending and I started to become interested in that, especially the legal aspects. I gradually became interested in being a lawyer. This spurred me to study harder so I could get onto a post-graduate course. As a lawyer, professional development is an essential part of my job.

Sofia, *family lawyer*

PDP in employment

In work contexts, personal development planning is more likely to be organised to align self-development with business and organisational objectives. This can work to the mutual benefit of the individual and the organisation.

The individual can learn new skills and gain experiences that assist with effectiveness in their role and/or with career progression

The organisation benefits when their employees update and extend their skills.

It also means they are in a better position to promote staff internally, rather than recruiting new, untested staff.

Identifying PDP at work

In the workplace, PDP is usually tied into an annual process of appraisal, staff review or equivalent. It might be referred to by other names such as:

- ★ Professional Development
- ★ Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
- ★ Employee Development Planning.

PDP in work contexts

The general process in the workplace is usually similar to that outlined on page 6 above: identifying a vision or goals, evaluating current strengths and developmental needs, setting SMART targets, clarifying when and how you will undertake training and development, keeping records, and reflecting on learning.

- ★ It is usually obligatory to undertake CPD of some kind each year for the employer and/or to maintain professional status.
- ★ It is likely you will be asked for a rationale for the goals and training you identify, and to explain how these benefit the company.
- ★ Development and training are usually funded by the employer, so at the end of the year, you will be asked to account for how these helped you perform better in your role during the year or how they will benefit you in the year ahead.

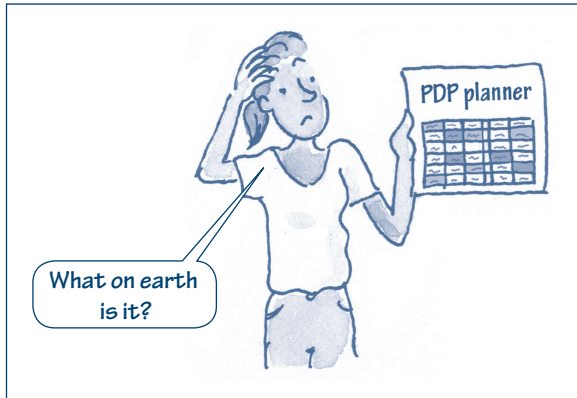
Using student PDP at work

If you already work for an organisation, you may be asked to undertake annual reviews, set goals and identify developmental targets in the workplace. In addition, you might be asked to produce PDP plans, a Higher Education Achievement Report, Progress file, Portfolio or equivalent for your college or university. Depending on your job, you might be able to make good use of PDP undertaken as a student whilst at work. For example:

- 1 In your workplace appraisal/review, consider whether it will benefit you to list the skills, qualifications, knowledge and experience gained on your course or as part of other student-related activity.
- 2 If you do this, give specific examples of how these are of benefit in your work role.
- 3 If relevant, clarify to your employer how your course and your development as a student, as well as your work-based learning, have prepared you for taking on greater responsibility in the workplace.
- 4 Be specific about how this would help you in more senior roles, so that they can see how you are preparing for promotion.
- 5 Use this conversation to ask about opportunities that might arise in the near future for promotion – or for undertaking work-based development opportunities that would assist future promotion.
- 6 If your course already benefits your work, check whether this warrants any promotion or pay-rise whilst you are still studying on it.

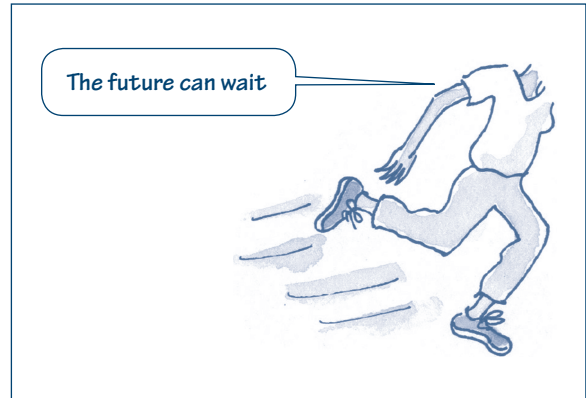
Managing the challenges

Focusing on your own development should be of evident value and interest, but PDP is not without its challenges. Many people find it hard to get started or to give it the time it needs. There are many good reasons for this, some of which are listed below. Consider which are most relevant for you .



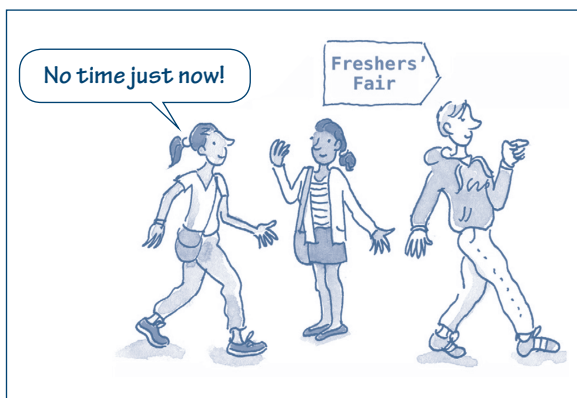
1 I am not clear what it is

Personal development planning, or PDP, can sound rather vague or abstract. Like many things, it gets easier with practice and familiarity. It is worth noting that for many job applications, you will be asked to demonstrate commitment to ongoing personal development. This also forms part of your annual appraisal in most jobs.



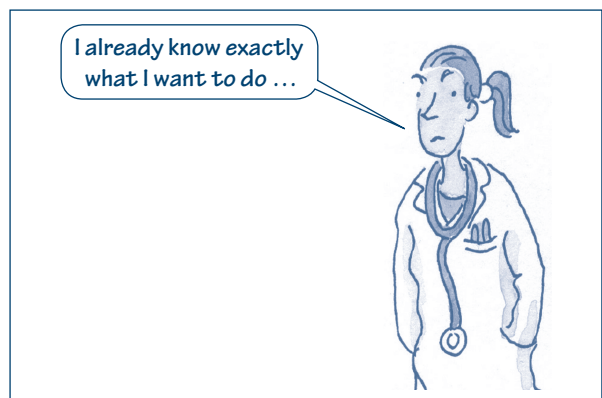
2 It's too early for me to think about it

It can seem as if the end of college is a long way off, and that career planning can wait until your final year, or even until after you have finished your course. It might feel difficult to imagine what you would want to do in several years' time. If so, you are all the more likely to benefit from a few visits to the Careers Service as soon as possible.



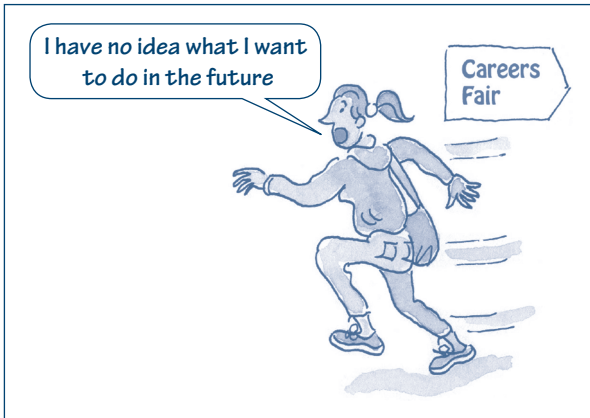
3 I am too busy

There can be many demands on our time which appear more urgent to deal with right now. Even with good intentions, it is easy to keep putting off the moment for thinking about your future. If this is true of you, schedule time into your planner at least once a month where you focus just on you and your future.



4 I don't need it

If you are already in a profession or on a particular career route, it might feel unnecessary to think about planning how to advance on your chosen career path, or to consider other possible careers. However, be wary of focusing too much on a single career route without investigating other options. You might find there is something that suits you much better.



5 Why bother before I make my mind up what I want to do?

If we don't have a clear direction, it can seem pointless, or even difficult, to think about the future. However, personal planning is about much more than simply heading down a single career path. It is more of a journey of discovery and about opening up possibilities for yourself.

6 I can rush through it at some point

Personal planning can sound like the easy option that can be put aside whilst you focus on your 'real' work. However, personal planning is about making time to think about you and your likely journey through life. It merits time. The more that people put into the process, the more they tend to value it.



7 I don't know where to start - so I don't

If you put off thinking about your future because you don't have an obvious starting point, rest assured that you are not alone. It can feel hard to get started. Generally, once you engage with the process, it becomes easier. There isn't a 'right place' to start. This chapter provides some ways for getting going.

Reflection



Attitude to personal planning

- ★ How, if at all, do the scenarios above match your own thoughts about personal planning?
- ★ Where do the challenges lie for you in undertaking PDP?

Good places to start

Identifying potential benefits
(pages 16–17)

Clarifying your needs
(pages 18–24)

Deciding a few priorities
(pages 19–20)

Identifying opportunities
(pages 26–7)

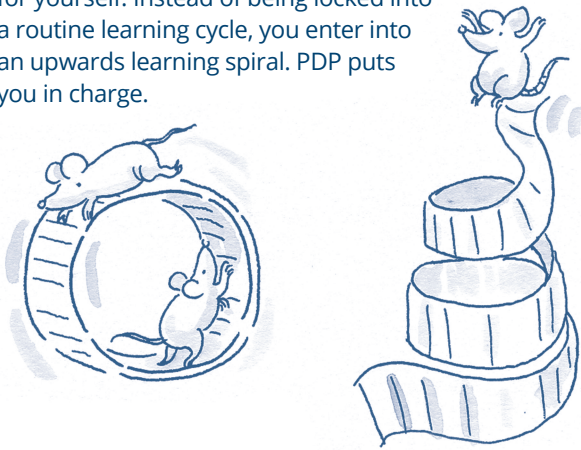
Making a commitment (page 25)

Identify personal benefits of PDP

Although it is easy to recognise PDP as potentially useful, it is harder to turn that recognition into action and into sustained good habits. One way of maintaining momentum is by sharpening your awareness of the benefits to you – and reminding yourself of these periodically.

An upwards spiral

When undertaken in supported and structured ways, PDP gives you a much deeper understanding of your performance. You develop abilities in evaluating this for yourself. Instead of being locked into a routine learning cycle, you enter into an upwards learning spiral. PDP puts you in charge.



Benefits to me?

Read through the potential benefits of PDP listed below. Identify any that you consider could be relevant to you. If there are others that are relevant to you and not on these lists, make a note of them.

1 Benefits to my study

Potential benefits of PDP for my studies are:

- providing a clearer focus for my academic work
- better understanding of the relative importance of academic achievement to future success
- more control over my personal motivation – and the ability to direct this to achieve my goals
- enhanced skills in self-management
- greater independence and confidence gained through a better understanding of how to improve my performance
- more enjoyment and less stress from my academic studies as I become consciously skilled

- greater awareness of how to apply what I have learnt to new problems and contexts
- reflective, strategic, analytical and creative thinking skills that strengthen academic performance
- greater clarity about how my academic studies can be made relevant to future life and/or work.

Others relevant to me?

PDP can have a positive impact on your academic achievement, especially when combined with attention to improving study skills relevant to the context of higher education. These are addressed in detail in companion texts by Stella Cottrell, such as *The Study Skills Handbook*, 5th edn (2019) and *Critical Thinking Skills*, 3rd edn (2017).

2 Benefits to my career/ professional life

Potential benefits of PDP for my career, work ambitions and/or professional life are:

- a better understanding of what to do to achieve my career or work ambitions longer term
- strategies for improving personal performance that could be applied to in working life
- a better sense of the life and work I want
- being better informed about work and career options open to me
- improved decision-making
- being better prepared for undertaking work place appraisals or reviews

- more confidence in the choices I make
- confidence in the skills, qualities and attributes I bring to the career of my choice
- being in a better position to compete for jobs and to discuss my skills with employers
- the positive attitudes, creative thinking and problem-solving approaches associated with successful professional life.

Others relevant to me?

3 Benefits to personal life

Potential benefits of PDP for my personal life are:

- gaining a better understanding of myself and how I 'tick'
- being in a better position to make appropriate choices to meet my life aspirations
- gaining a better sense of myself as an individual
- feeling I am more in control of my own destiny
- greater awareness of my needs and how to meet these
- greater awareness of the unique contribution I can make
- developing a positive, forward-looking approach
- developing skills such as reflection, strategic thinking, self-direction and self-evaluation, useful in most life contexts.

Others relevant to me?

Activity



Keeping benefits in focus

- ➔ Browse through the benefits you identified above. Decide which are most important to you.
- ➔ Jot down in your own words why these are meaningful for you. What difference will these make to your life?
- ➔ Consider how you will keep these benefits 'live' for you. For example, you could keep a list in your diary, planner, as a screen saver or on your mirror. Use this to help you stay motivated.

What PDP do I want/need?

The activities on the following pages enable you to evaluate:

- ★ whether you need PDP and where to focus
- ★ your current priorities for PDP

Do I need PDP? Self-evaluation

Rate your responses to the following statements. Note that *strongly agree* carries no score.

Rating: 4 = *strongly agree* 3 = *agree* 2 = *sort of agree* 1 = *disagree* 0 = *strongly disagree*

Statement	Rating
1 I am certain that I can keep myself motivated towards achieving my degree	4 3 2 1 0
2 I am very clear what my goals are for the next seven years	4 3 2 1 0
3 I am confident that I have an excellent plan in place for achieving my goals	4 3 2 1 0
4 I am very clear how my degree fits into my life plans	4 3 2 1 0
5 I am clear what employers are looking for	4 3 2 1 0
6 I can demonstrate that I have the skills and attributes employers are looking for	4 3 2 1 0
7 I am very clear about the importance of reflective activity to professional life	4 3 2 1 0
8 I am confident in undertaking structured reflection without guidelines	4 3 2 1 0
9 I am confident that I can develop an effective strategy to meet most circumstances	4 3 2 1 0
10 I am confident that I can set well-formed goals and/or targets	4 3 2 1 0
11 I have a clear understanding of how to evaluate my own performance	4 3 2 1 0
12 I am confident that I have good 'emotional intelligence'	4 3 2 1 0
13 I am confident that I know how to improve my performance in most circumstances	4 3 2 1 0
14 I know how to apply my expertise and skills in different contexts, beyond study	4 3 2 1 0
15 I am confident that I can see myself as others see me	4 3 2 1 0
16 I am confident that I have effective listening skills	4 3 2 1 0
17 I am an assertive person	4 3 2 1 0
18 I am a good 'self-starter'; I get on with tasks without being asked or directed	4 3 2 1 0
19 I am clear how I can make the most effective contributions to team work	4 3 2 1 0
20 I am confident at problem-solving	4 3 2 1 0
21 I am confident about assuming the lead and exercising effective leadership	4 3 2 1 0
22 I am confident that I will take a creative approach to most tasks/ problem-solving	4 3 2 1 0
23 I am confident I can make excellent job applications	4 3 2 1 0
24 I have developed useful, varied networks that can support and help me	4 3 2 1 0
25 I maintain a relevant, useful set of records to support my employability	4 3 2 1 0
Add up your score out of 100	Total

Available on the companion site:
www.macmillanihe.com/cottrell-skills-for-success-4e



Use your ratings to guide you on where to focus your efforts for PDP. If your score is anything less than 100, then there is room for development – and more so if your score is low. Your PDP needs to change over time, as circumstances change.