

What is PDP?

Personal Development Planning can be defined as a process that helps you to think about your own learning, performance and/or achievements and to plan for your personal, educational and career development.

PDP, therefore, makes you aware of how you are progressing and this awareness brings a number of benefits. For example, it will be easier to identify to tutors areas of concern and it will help you to demonstrate to prospective employers that, through PDP, you have acquired strategies that make you a desirable, well motivated and focussed individual. Furthermore, PDP processes can motivate you when your interest starts to wane.

The main PDP processes that help learners think about their learning and to plan for the future usually include:

- **Reflection** – pulling different thoughts and ideas together to make sense for a particular purpose
- **Recording** – thoughts, ideas, experiences; you can keep records in written form or use audio, video, etc.
- **Action planning** – setting out a plan means more likely achievement of a goal
- **Executing** – carrying out activities referred to in the action

However PDP is presented and practised, the responsibility is on **you** as an individual to plan your learning, to act on the plans and to generate evidence of what you have achieved.

Practising PDP

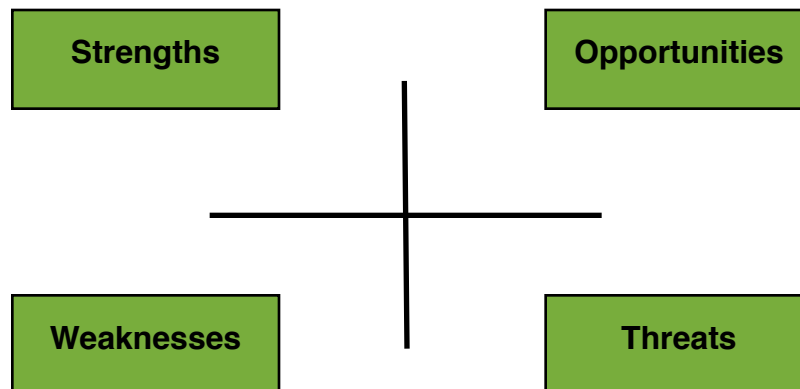
PDP processes should help you to write things down and develop a clear picture of where you want to go. Being able to **reflect** on what you are doing through your writing is a key skill central to the notion of PDP. Reflection is a form of deep and focussed thinking and essential to critical thinking and self-assessment – both important features of university level study.

To practise PDP it helps to have a structure to guide you. The following steps provide a useful framework, with reflection needed at every stage:

Step1 - Take a Skills Audit

This is a useful starting point for PDP because it acts as a 'stocktaking' exercise to systematically analyse your strengths and weaknesses.

You could also do a **SWOT** analysis – a common problem solving method which summarises your **strengths**, **weaknesses**, **opportunities** and **threats** on a grid.



Once you become aware of where you are now, you can think about where you want to be and how you will get there through action planning.

Step 2- Write an Action Plan

Action Planning helps you to identify and set targets, documenting a thought out strategy. A well written action plan will be clear in its intentions, unambiguous and focussed. A useful rule of thumb is to ask yourself if it is **SMART**, i.e.

- **Specific:** e.g. 'I will identify and practise good time management techniques to reach my project deadline steadily and without panic', *rather than* 'I will learn how to manage my time'
- **Measurable:** e.g. I will set myself a weekly schedule of things to do
- **Achievable:** e.g. I know there are workshops and books on time management and I will use these to identify good practice
- **Realistic:** e.g. I know I have some free time every Thursday morning and I will use this time to work on my techniques
- **Time-Bound:** e.g. I will work towards the project deadline, setting weekly targets

You are recommended to set yourself a few clear goals, ranking them by preference, and then set clear sub-goals. These sub-goals will help you to measure your progress *en route* and help you to consider the various steps ahead so that you won't be tempted to set unattainable targets.

It is often useful to talk through goal setting with another person, who may help you to think things through and maybe pick up on something you may have missed. Your personal tutor is a good person to ask.

Step 3 - Keep a Record

Auditing your skills and action planning will themselves generate written documentation. You also need to document which skills you've developed and how you have evaluated this. It is important to keep written records for a number of reasons:

- helps you to measure your progress
- provides information to draw upon when applying for jobs
- offers a source of information to share with your tutor
- helps you to think about how plans could be improved

Now do a PDP workout!!!!

