

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

Unit code: DV5E 36

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to enable the candidate to develop autonomy and self-direction in learning and to take personal ownership of the processes of planning and reviewing their own experiences and development. It is also designed to develop skills in reflecting holistically, and on a continuing basis, on experience and learning within a given context over an extended period. The candidate will be expected to exercise autonomy and initiative in carrying out the Personal Development Planning (PDP) process and demonstrate a critical understanding of his/her development needs.

On completion of the Unit the candidate will be able to:

- 1 Analyse own existing capabilities, learning styles, needs and opportunities.
- 2 Create, implement and evaluate a personal action plan.
- 3 Review own experiences and learning on a continuing basis.
- 4 Use the Personal Development Planning process to learn by critically reflecting on experience.

Credit points and level: 3 HN Credit at SCQF level 9: (24 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 9*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: A candidate should have the ability to think analytically together with well developed communication skills. Both of these are important to ensure that he/she is able to reflect on his/her experience, to learn from his/her experiences and reflections and give an account of this process of experiential/reflective learning.

Core Skills: There are opportunities for developing the Core Skills of Problem Solving at SCQF level 6, Communication at SCQF level 6 and IT at SCQF level 5 in this Unit although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

Context for delivery: If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

Assessment: This Unit is suitable for holistic assessment in the form of a reflective account that draws evidence from on-going review and evaluation of the learning experience.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, knowledge and/or skills, and evidence requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the knowledge and/or skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Analyse own existing capabilities, learning styles, needs and opportunities

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ The principles and rationale for self assessment
- ◆ Methods of self assessment
- ◆ Different learning styles/preferences and study skills
- ◆ Strategies for problem solving
- ◆ The nature and level of personal transferable skills
- ◆ Principles and applications of situational analysis

Evidence Requirements

This Outcome will be assessed holistically with Outcomes 2, 3 and 4 by a reflective account that is based on candidate experience covering at least 200 hours of learning and which incorporates evidence that the candidate can:

- ◆ use one or more self-assessment technique to analyse own abilities, achievements, interests and aspirations
- ◆ provide a rationale for choice of self-assessment technique(s)
- ◆ complete an analysis of own existing learning style(s) and preferences
- ◆ complete an analysis of existing personal transferable skills and those that require development for next stage of learning/career path
- ◆ apply a problem solving strategy to a specific situation
- ◆ complete a situational analysis and identify the factors that might help or hinder meeting of goals

Assessment guidelines

Holistic assessment is the most suitable approach for this Unit. It is recommended that this evidence should form part of an on-going portfolio upon which the candidate will base his/her reflective account. If this approach is adopted the reflective account should satisfy the evidence requirements of this Outcome.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

Outcome 2

Create, implement and evaluate a personal action plan

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Principles and stages of action planning
- ◆ Time management and personal organisation
- ◆ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-related (SMART) targets
- ◆ Risk analysis and contingency planning
- ◆ Progress review

Evidence Requirements

This Outcome will be assessed holistically with Outcomes 1, 3 and 4 by a reflective account that is based on candidate experience covering at least 200 hours of learning and incorporates evidence that the candidate can:

- ◆ prioritise his/her own learning and development needs
- ◆ devise an action plan, incorporating SMART targets
- ◆ use his/her own learning preferences, study skills and problem solving abilities to inform the action plan
- ◆ take responsibility for achieving his/her own personal action plan over an agreed period, including the effective management of the available time, opportunities and resources
- ◆ undertake regular progress reviews
- ◆ seek and use regular feedback
- ◆ revise and adapt the plan as necessary to meet unforeseen/changing circumstances and feedback
- ◆ gather appropriate and sufficient evidence to evaluate the plan and its implementation
- ◆ retain and manage evidence of the above

Assessment guidelines

Holistic assessment is the most suitable approach for this Unit. It is recommended that this evidence should form part of an on-going portfolio upon which the candidate will base his/her reflective account. If this approach is adopted the reflective account should satisfy the evidence requirements for this Outcome.

Outcome 3

Review own experiences and learning on a continuing basis

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Principles of critically reviewing progress
- ◆ Gathering and organisation of evidence
- ◆ Uses of evidence
- ◆ Evaluation of evidence

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

Evidence Requirements

This Outcome will be assessed holistically with Outcomes 1, 2 and 4 by a reflective account that is based on candidate experience covering at least 200 hours of learning and incorporates evidence that the candidate can:

- ◆ gather and use evidence that contributes to on-going review, eg feedback from tutors, peers, comments on assessment
- ◆ produce an analytical account of his/her own experiences and learning, which includes critical review and evaluation

Assessment guidelines

Holistic assessment is the most suitable approach for this Unit. It is recommended that this evidence should form part of an on-going portfolio upon which the candidate will base his/her reflective account. If this approach is adopted the reflective report should satisfy the evidence requirements for this Outcome.

Outcome 4

Use the Personal Development Planning process to learn by critically reflecting on experience

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Principles and processes of learning from experience
- ◆ Reflective accounts
- ◆ Reprocessing evidence for critical reflective learning

Evidence Requirements

This Outcome will be assessed holistically with Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 by a reflective account produced by the candidate which draws on candidate experience covering at least 200 hours of learning and which is based on his/her own experience of completing the activities, reviews and evaluations associated with this Unit. The candidate must show that he/she has:

- ◆ reviewed, analysed and evaluated her/his personal/developmental experience
- ◆ reflected on a range of experiences and learning, which must include one formal and one informal/experiential learning experience
- ◆ revisited and reprocessed the activities, reviews and evaluations undertaken earlier in the PDP process
- ◆ arrived at and justified conclusions from in-depth reflection
- ◆ recognised and applied lessons learned in, and about, the PDP process, including:
 - lessons regarding his/her strengths
 - lessons related to development needs and priorities
 - lessons about the nature, operation and value of the PDP process

The reflective account must make **explicit** reference to, and be **supported** by, evidence gathered by the candidate and which meets the evidence requirements for Outcomes 1, 2 and 3.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

Assessment guidelines

This Unit is most suitable for holistic assessment as the evidence generated for Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 is required to support the reflective account.

Administrative Information

Unit code:	DV5E 36
Unit title:	Personal Development Planning
Superclass category:	HB
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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 120 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This is a substantive Unit both in terms of SCQF level and credit points.

This Unit has been allocated 24 SCQF credit points. This reflects three major tasks that candidates have to undertake and which in other programmes may be taken separately. For example, in DE3R 34 (Personal Development Planning — SCQF level 7), creating, implementing and evaluating a plan is the main purpose of the Unit, which has been allocated 8 SCQF points, and in higher education learning styles are sometimes covered by a single module.

For this Unit, the three major tasks are:

- ◆ An analysis of learning styles, abilities and needs. This will require candidates to research different models of learning and then apply these appropriately to their own learning over a period of time.
- ◆ Personal development planning. This will require candidates to devise a personal development plan, implement the plan and then evaluate the Outcomes of the plan. This will be based on candidates' current context of learning and their future aspirations and plans.
- ◆ Reflective thinking. This is probably the most difficult skill for candidates to acquire, develop and apply. It is also a continuous process and therefore candidates will need time to be able to demonstrate that they are able to think reflectively about their own learning and development.

In this Unit, these tasks have been combined in order to allow candidates to take a holistic approach to their personal development and to provide the opportunity to integrate learning, personal development planning and reflective skills rather than build these skills as entities.

Furthermore, the review of learning should be on-going and then this review should be the basis for further integrated and holistic reflection. The period of time covering learning and review will need to be substantial enough to generate evidence of on-going review and further reflection.

At SCQF level 9, candidates will be expected to know and apply key models and techniques to their own learning and development. They will also be expected to exercise autonomy and initiative throughout the PDP process (although some support will be required at appropriate stages in the process). In critically evaluating their own development, candidates will need to draw on a range of sources to make judgements about their own achievements and needs and how these relate to future plans for transition — whether this is to further study, employment or other personal development. This in turn will entail use of routine and specialised skills in communication and ICT, where appropriate. For example, they may use feedback sessions with subject tutors to gather evidence about their development or use software tools to carry out an analysis of core and transferable skills.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

The critical aspect of the PDP process at this level is that candidates should be reviewing their learning and experience on a continuing basis and from a variety of contexts — educational, vocational, social and personal. Moreover, candidates are expected to carry out a further holistic review of the learning that has taken place, and been reviewed, over an extended period of time. It is this element that is crucial to the reflective thinking skills that the Unit seeks to develop.

Personal Development Planning is a process that is now extensively used in a wide range of settings - occupations, higher education and in the professions — as a mechanism to encourage and support individuals to take responsibility for their own learning and continuing development. It is described as *'a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development'* (Universities UK 2002)

The PDP process is advocated on the grounds that it can help individuals to maximise their academic achievement, their personal development and their employability. By completing this Unit candidates will demonstrate to themselves and to others - such as employers, academic selectors and admissions tutors that they can:

- ◆ self-evaluate
- ◆ think critically about their own development needs
- ◆ plan and take appropriate action to meet their development needs and achieve their personal, educational and career goals
- ◆ review and reflect on a range of experiences and learning

This Unit has been designed to help candidates undertaking Group Awards such as Higher National Certificates and Diplomas or Professional Development Awards programmes to benefit from participating in, and reflecting on, the processes of personal development planning but it can also be taken as a stand-alone Unit or as part of other Continuing Professional Development.

SQA has produced a Tutor Guide and a Candidate Guide to support the delivery and holistic assessment of this Unit. The Candidate Guide provides a seven-step structure and framework for the PDP process together with support materials. Tutors are strongly advised to refer to the guides and support materials.

The Unit is intended to enable candidates to develop autonomy and self-directed learning; to take personal ownership of the processes of planning and reviewing their own experience and development; and to build specific skills in reflective thinking. In this, it utilises and encourages approaches to experiential and reflective learning.

In completing the Unit candidates will analyse their own existing capabilities, learning styles, needs and opportunities and, on the basis of their self-assessment and analysis, they will create, implement and evaluate a personal action plan. Systematic personal review and reflection are on-going requirements throughout the PDP process. Through this recurring process of review candidates not only address their identified development needs but they also gain experience of, and competence in, experiential and reflective learning. In addition to on-going reflection, candidates will be required to reflect in a holistic way on their experiences by revisiting and reprocessing lessons learned through earlier reflection.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

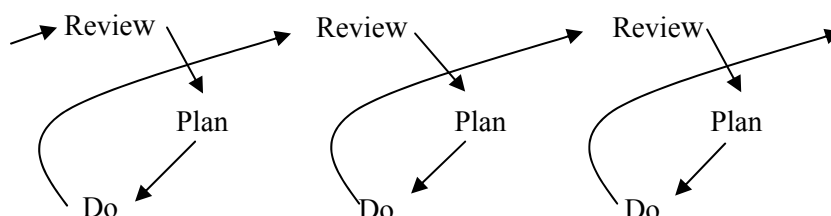
Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

Detailed advice and support for the delivery and assessment of this Unit is available in the Tutor and Candidate Guides developed by SQA.

To complete the Unit a candidate must undertake a cycle of activities involving:

- ◆ reviewing
- ◆ planning
- ◆ carrying out a development plan and
- ◆ reviewing again

In PDP the cycle recurs:



The candidate will have to:

- ◆ review and reflect on his/her education and training experience to date
- ◆ identify his/her current strengths and development needs (knowledge, skills and personal attributes) by using a variety of self assessment tools
- ◆ identify, analyse and plan how to develop his/her:
 - learning styles and preferences
 - approaches to problem solving
 - enterprise, work and time management skills
- ◆ identify his/her personal, educational and career goals and aspirations
- ◆ identify priority areas for learning and development, in order to meet his/her goals and aspirations
- ◆ create, implement and evaluate an action plan
- ◆ create and maintain a personal development portfolio
- ◆ review and reflect on his/her experience and learning associated with the Unit
- ◆ on the basis of his/her experiences, reviewing and learning, produce a reflective account which demonstrates that the Outcomes of the Unit have been met.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

The review, planning and evaluation activities associated with the Unit should provide sufficient opportunities for candidates to generate and gather the evidence they require to show that they have met the Outcome requirements of the Unit.

Candidates should be encouraged to recognise that experience and reflections can be recorded, stored and presented in different ways. This might involve a range of audio, video and IT approaches eg video/audio diaries.

The Unit should be assessed holistically. It is recommended that the evidence used to support the reflective account should be taken from a wider portfolio that the candidate would be encouraged to keep throughout the Unit. The portfolio could record and store the experiences and learning arising from the Unit activities. Although the portfolio *itself* would not be assessed, the candidate could use some of the information in it as the supporting evidence for the reflective account, which underpins the whole Units. It is the reflective account that is assessed and which must be supported by evidence. It would be the candidate's responsibility to identify and present from their portfolio the items of evidence that support their claim of having met the Outcome requirements of the Unit. For the purposes of this Unit, a Portfolio is a folder/file in which the candidate stores and organises information and evidence of achievement and development.

Delivery of Outcomes 1 and 2

Outcomes 1 and 2 require candidates to be given knowledge, skills and opportunities to review their existing capabilities and to create, implement and evaluate a personal action plan. For the purposes of this Unit a personal action plan is a set of specific aims and Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-related (SMART) targets.

The evidence presented for assessment by each candidate in the reflective account should show that he/she has acquired an understanding of the principles underpinning personal development planning and developed the skills/knowledge necessary to undertake a systematic review and analysis of his/her previous experience, achievements, learning, interests and preferences together with their development needs. It should demonstrate that he/she has seriously considered personal, educational and career aims and opportunities; has used this analysis to devise a personal development plan based on clear, measurable and achievable targets.

Candidates should be given opportunities to examine a range of instruments/frameworks for personal review and analysis such as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), Forcefield and Learning Styles analyses together with guidance and support in their use. However, the evidence presented by each candidate should show that he/she has been able to select and use the instruments that are most appropriate to his/her particular circumstances.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

The evidence should demonstrate that the candidate has been able to review what he/she has done in the past and what he/she would like to do in the future. Gathering, analysing, summarising and presenting evidence of this is a key feature of the personal development planning process, as well as being a requirement for this Unit.

Although a candidate portfolio is not part of the formal assessment, this is recommended as the best way of gathering the evidence which will support and illustrate the reflective account. A typical portfolio is likely to include:

- ◆ a personal account by the candidate of his/her review of previous experience — identifying achievements, interests and preferences — and a consideration of what he/she would like to achieve in personal, educational and career terms. This should include identifying:
 - achievements and existing attributes in terms of personal, social, sporting, leisure/cultural and educational contexts
 - interests and preferences, including learning/development styles
 - career/personal aims, together with implications for educational and other developmental requirements
- ◆ a description of his/her personal action plan, showing that it stems from the above review/analysis, and that it will lead to the achievement of the identified aims. It should also demonstrate that the candidate has been able to translate his/her aims into clear, measurable and achievable targets as a part of a personal action plan over a period of one/two academic sessions. This will require evidence of:
 - identifying/considering 'helping' and 'hindering' influences on achievement of aims
 - identifying appropriate short term targets and action points
 - considering priorities and planning how to use time effectively, including the use of deadlines and reviewing progress
 - identifying help/support required and where/how it can be accessed
 - producing an action plan
- ◆ a summary of the Outcomes from the review of the planning stages of the above process.
- ◆ an account/review of the implementation/evaluation of an action plan illustrating the candidates ability to, for example:
 - use the personal action plan to address his/her targets — including planning ahead, organising time, opportunities and reviewing progress
 - select and use different ways of working towards targets, including at least one formal learning and one informal/practical learning situation
 - review/amend the action points as appropriate/necessary — including the ability to respond to changing circumstances and unexpected difficulties
 - seek and use advice from tutors and others — including feedback on performance, advice on problem-solving and planning future action
 - gather, analyse, summarise and present evidence of the above

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

The Candidate and Tutor Guides to this Unit provide a suggested structure together with resource materials and case studies to support this process.

Delivery of Outcomes 3 and 4

To satisfy the requirements of Outcomes 3 and 4 the candidate needs to be able to show that he/she has been able to review and reflect on experience and learning throughout the Unit.

The candidate's reflective account should show that s/he has been able to:

- ◆ systematically and critically record and review their experience of the various tasks and activities in this Unit
- ◆ undertake a process of self evaluation that has provided a well evidenced understanding of their current strengths and development needs in respect of their personal, educational and career aims and aspirations
- ◆ devise, implement and evaluate a personal development action plan and reflect on the experiences, Outcomes and learning arising
- ◆ identify and record/gather evidence of his/her achievements
- ◆ evaluate the personal, educational and career options available
- ◆ monitor and amend, as appropriate, activities planned to achieve development objectives
- ◆ take responsibility for planning and achieving his/her/own development objectives
- ◆ manage the opportunities available to them

The principal quality that will be looked for in a reflective account will be the ability to learn by reflecting on experience he/she may have learned from it.

Although course and guidance tutors play a significant facilitating role, the evidence presented must demonstrate that the candidate has taken responsibility for his/her own personal development planning.

The reflective account should demonstrate the candidate's understanding of the requirement to plan ahead; to organise to use time and opportunities effectively; and to review progress.

The account should also describe the use of a formal learning situation — perhaps linked to an HN Unit — and an informal/experiential learning situation — perhaps linked to a non-study context, such as personal, social, leisure/cultural/sporting activities.

Evidence should be provided to show that the candidate was able to amend the plan to accommodate changing or unexpected circumstances and to show that he/she was able to seek feedback/advice from tutors and other people.

The reflective account should highlight the achievements, learning and development which the candidate believes to have arisen from completing the PDP process.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

The objective of promoting self-directed learning is fundamental to the requirement that the candidate monitors and evaluates his/her own experience of devising and implementing an action plan. Under all circumstances candidates must be encouraged to reflect on their own experience and challenged to use their personal reflection to generate insights and understanding of their own strengths and development needs. Specifically, candidates should be helped to identify achievements, learning and developments which have arisen from their experience and reflection; and, they should be helped to identify ways in which they might further improve their learning and performance.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

This Unit provides candidates with the opportunity to develop the Core Skill of Problem Solving at SCQF level 6. Problem Solving involves three component activities — critical thinking, planning and organising, and reviewing and evaluating. Critical thinking can be developed through candidates self assessment and drawing up priorities for their development plan. Planning and organising can be developed through the objectives and approaches suggested in their development plan and the adjustments they make to this plan as they implement it. Reviewing and evaluating can be developed through the on-going evaluation of the candidate's learning experience, the reflective account and the evidence he/she gathers to support this reflection.

The Unit also provides candidates with the opportunities to develop the Core Skills components of Written Communication at SCQF level 6 and Oral Communication SCQF level 6. Written Communication can be developed through the reflective account, which involves the candidate analysing a range of information/material from self-assessment, development planning and on-going reflection and presenting this in a coherent written account of his/her learning experience. In working towards this reflective account, the candidate will also be required to read complex material such as those related to self-assessment and personal development planning. They will then be required to make judgements about the information read and make use of this through the PDP process and the reflective account. If the candidate presents the reflective account orally or through a medium such as video, audio diary, etc. then he/she will have the opportunity to develop oral communication in terms of conveying reflections on his/her learning experience in a structured way. Candidates will also have opportunities throughout the PDP process to develop oral communication in seeking and responding to feedback from others over a range of topics e.g. personal qualities, plans, assessments, etc.

If candidates are using ICT to assist with review, research, planning and recording throughout the PDP process, there may be opportunities to develop the Core Skill of IT at SCQF level 5 by demonstrating that they can use IT systems to process a range of information. This would involve using different software packages, carrying out searches, word processing documents and adding graphics, sound, etc. where appropriate.

Open learning

This Unit requires candidates to take responsibility for their own personal developing planning and reflection on their experience and learning. As such, it could be delivered by Open Learning. However, it would be necessary to make arrangements to ensure candidates had access to relevant materials and self assessment tools. Candidates would also need some tutor support to undertake analysis, review and evaluation of their plan, experience and learning and, in particular, to build the skill of being able to think reflectively about their learning.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

Candidates with additional support needs

This Unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Alternative Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs*, which is available on SQA's website: **www.sqa.org.uk**.

General information for candidates

Unit title: Personal Development Planning

This Unit will help you to clarify and to achieve your personal and career aims. Personal Development Planning (PDP) is a process that is increasingly used by individuals, in a wide range of contexts — occupations, higher education and the professions — to keep their personal and job related knowledge, skills and expertise up to date. If you are looking for entry to a higher education programme or applying for a job, one of the particular qualities an admissions tutor or an employer will look for is your ability to manage your own learning and development. Completing this Unit will help you to demonstrate — to yourself, an admissions tutor and/or an employer — that you are capable of doing this.

By completing this Unit you will be able to:

- ◆ assess your own existing capabilities, learning styles, needs and opportunities
- ◆ create, implement and evaluate a personal action plan
- ◆ review your own experiences and learning on a continuing basis
- ◆ use the PDP process to learn by reflecting on your experiences

To complete the Unit you will:

- ◆ review and reflect on your education and training experiences to date
- ◆ identify your current strengths and development needs (knowledge, skills and personal attributes) by using a variety of self assessment tools
- ◆ identify, analyse and plan how to develop your:
 - learning styles and preferences
 - approaches to problem solving
 - enterprise, work and time management skills
- ◆ identify your personal, educational and career goals and aspirations
- ◆ identify priority areas for learning and development in order to meet your goals and aspirations
- ◆ create, implement and evaluate an action plan
- ◆ create and maintain a personal development portfolio
- ◆ review and reflect on your experience and learning associated with the Unit and, on the basis of your experience, reviewing and learning, produce a reflective account in which you demonstrate that you have met the Unit Outcomes

During the Unit you will have to record and store evidence of the activities you have undertaken, your reflections on your experiences and your on-going learning. You can do this in a range of different ways, including written records or audio or video recordings. The Unit is assessed through a reflective account, which you must produce based on your experiences, reflections and learning. Your reflective account must be supported by evidence.