***Skills for Success* 4th Edition**

**Companion site for tutors and professional support staff**

**Introduction**

Since the first edition of *Skills for Success* was published in 2003, the landscape for personal development planning (PDP) within HEIs has changed almost beyond recognition. There is now greater appreciation of the importance of graduate employability – to students themselves and also to institutional reputations, recruitment and funding. There has been a host of initiatives to encourage and support students to engage in a broader higher education curriculum in order to boost their career opportunities and work readiness. PDP has been integrated into the core curriculum for some courses or offered alongside study through work placements, enterprise and entrepreneurship schemes, student volunteering and community engagement, Enterprise and Knowledge Transfer schemes with businesses, as well as training and support from careers services.

The added value of PDP has been emphasised by packages offered to students such as ‘University Plus’ or equivalent schemes. HEIs have been variously involved in mapping how skills taught through the curriculum could be applied in life and work, and redesigning programmes to broaden the range of skills that students could develop through the curriculum. Credit is offered for extra-curricular activities, opportunities created for work placements at home and abroad, research projects undertaken for business and the community, and a whole host of developmental activities provided. Elaborate on-line resources enable students to identify where on their programme or through other activities they can address personal skills gaps. The energy and support for PDP is already very different to that at the turn of the century.

The broad applicability of personal development planning (PDP) to diverse agendas is reflected in the range of approaches to it adopted by HEIs. Feedback to Macmillan publishers from academic staff indicated that, although graduate ‘employability’ was a key motivator for advocating PDP, it is also viewed as important to developing students as rounded people, creative individuals and ‘radical thinkers’. Although associated primarily with career planning and employability, PDP can be applied usefully to improving academic performance, personal life and general well-being – as it is within *Skills for Success.*

I hope this edition will continue to assist busy teaching and professional support staff in higher education to integrate more easily into their provision the planning and preparation their students need for successful study and for life beyond their course.

Dr. Stella Cottrell

**What is Personal Development Planning (PDP)?**

Whilst some students have always been wise to the importance of building their CV and preparing for life after higher education, it was the Dearing Enquiry (1997) that advocated a systematic approach: ‘a means by which students can monitor, build, and reflect upon their personal development’. This has influenced the higher education currculum in Briatian ever since. The Dearing report recommended that students undertake personal planning throughout their time as undergraduates, using three key approaches:

(1) personal development processes

(2) student records that guide personal reflection and planning

(3) the formal university transcript.

Dearing emphasised a need for institutions to provide structured opportunities for reflection throughout students’ time on course, so that students became more self-aware and were bettere placed to make key decisions about their future.

PDP refers to much more than career planning. It is about creating the right environments and opportunities for students to develop a range of skills and attributes that will benefit them in life, work and study. These include generic skills such as self-management, inter-personal skills, team work, problem-solving, communications and creativity, all of which can be applied to enhance academic performance and well-being as well as to boost employability.

**PDP in Higher Education**

Personal development planning, as a process, is used in higher education to:

* promote greater self-awareness in students, to help them plan and prepare for their futures and to improve current performance at work or in their studies
* help students to identify personal priorities for action – and then to plan action and monitor their progress
* develop specific skills and attitudes useful to study, student life and employability
* understand the world of work and how to prepare and apply for jobs
* manage personal records and their online profile in ways that aid reflection and planning and support them when applying for jobs.

At its best, PDP develops rounded, reflective individuals who are responsible, emotionally mature, forward thinking, and capable of working well with others. Such skills and attributes take time, practice, support and encouragement to develop. Many students find it quite hard to think about their future, to reflect at depth and to plan their own development over a three- or four-year period. It helps when PDP and support for employability are made relevant and accessible through their course, ideally linked to the curriculum and assessment, rather than left to occasional or last-minute sessions with the Careers Service when their course is coming to a close.

**Using *Skills for Success* with students**

**Why use *Skills for Success?***

* **Designed to support academic teaching staff as well as students** Material in *Skills for Success* can be used in lectures, workshops, tutorials or support sessions. The bookwas written originally to address concerns about gaps in resources and expertise expressed by academics who found themselves charged with enhancing their students’ employability yet felt this was beyond their training. The book is used as a core text for a diverse range of courses. It can also be used as a stand-alone text. It is expected that students would dip into it as needed rather than read it from cover to cover, to suit their aspirations, course or level of study. It takes varied approaches so that lecturers and support staff can select those that they feel are most relevant to their cohorts.
* **Makes ‘employability’ tangible to students** Although the hope of enhanced work opportunities is a prime consideration for people entering higher education, it is often challenging for students to engage with work-relevant activities, epecially if not on a vocational course. It can seem that there is endless time to get around to making choices, gaining experience, and building their CV, and that there isn’t an obvious starting place. Planning for work and for the future can seem a vague, amorphous consideration. *Skills for Success* provides definitions, processes, structured self-reflections, self-evaluations, personal audits, activities, information and practical guidance to help students focus their thinking, decide on their next steps and take action.
* **Enhances academic as well as work-related performance** *Skills for Success* takes students through practical steps in organising their thinking and actions in ways that can be applied to study and personal life as well as to work contexts. That includes developing strategies for managing their time, undertaking tasks in teams, problem solving, thinking creatively, dealing with set-backs, and taking personal responsibiity. This complements the more specifically ‘study skills’ aspects of academic study that are covered in *The Study Skills Handbook* (Cottrell, 2019, 5th edn.).
* **Provides guidance on top skills sought by employers** *Skills for Success* identifies for students the kinds of skills and attributes that employers say they look for in applicants for graduate jobs. It provides information, reflections and activities to help students to develop their understanding and abilities in areas that feature persistently on employers’ lists, such as communication, creative problem-solving, team-work, leadership and using initiative.
* **Builds abilities in self-reflection** *Skills for Success* provides multiple short reflections to encourage students to apply information to their own circumstances, to develop the habit of pausing to think about what is relevant to them, and to help them shape a questioning approach. It also provides models for longer, more in-depth reflection for use in academic assignments and professional life.

**Resources for tutors**

On this site, you can find:

1. Information about the student’s companion site
2. Powerpoint slides to support selected themes from the book
3. Suggestions for using *Skills for Success*, grouped in three ways:
4. Ten things teaching staff can do to support student PDP and employability
5. Core themes for using *Skills for Success* with students
6. PDP by undergraduate level of study.

**Student companion site**

This is available to students for their personal use. It provides:

* electronic versions of templates for many of the resources used in the book, such as for action planning, for setting priorities, goals and targets, and for evaluating personal performance.
* Resources for supplementary activities, such as the balloon game.
* Links to additional resources suggested in the ‘Want to know more?’ boxes in the book.

Chapter 1 Taking charge of your future

1. Do I need personal development planning? Self-evaluation
2. What are my PDP priorities?
3. 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?**

1. The long-term vision
2. Evaluate whether your PDP goals are SMART-F
3. Personal Action plan for PDP
4. Benefits and costs of achieving your goal
5. Attributes needed to achieve your goal
6. Does it all add up?

**Chapter 3 Know yourself**

1. Top 40 strong points
2. 7 significant changes
3. Using your personal expertise
4. The impact of choices: the road walked
5. The impact of choices: the road unwalked

**Chapter 4 Improving your personal performance**

1. Find your SHAPES for academic study: Snap profile
2. Find your SHAPES for academic study: Rate yourself for skills, habits, attitudes, preferences, experience and strategies
3. Map your SHAPES profile
4. Your Personal Performance Profile
5. Identify significant features of your Personal Performance Formula (PPF)
6. Your Personal Performance Formula (PPF)
7. Your Personal Performance Formula (PPF) for Task 1
8. Your Personal Performance Formula (PPF) for Task 2

**Chapter 5 Successful Self-management**

1. Learning from mistakes
2. Attitude to challenge
3. Identifying your sources of support
4. Student day planner

**Chapter 6 People skills**

1. Balloon game
2. Changing a recurring situation
3. Monitoring my effectiveness in improving my people skills

**Chapter 7 Teamwork**

1. What I can contribute

**Chapter 8 Develop your leadership capacity**

1. Step up to responsibility
2. In the role of leader

**Chapter 9 Managing tasks and projects**

1. Priority organiser
2. SWOT Analysis
3. Advanced SWOT Analysis
4. Evaluate your targets as SMART-F
5. Action Plan
6. Project schedule

**Chapter 10 Thinking creatively and productively**

1. Creative thinking skills
2. Mindfulness meditation
3. Boost your creativity

**Chapter 11 Practical problem-solving**

1. Problem-solving: the ‘back of an envelope’ approach
2. Evaluating Multiple Solutions

**Chapter 12 The art of reflection**

1. Critical Incident
2. Core model for reflection
3. Personal Model for Reflection

**Chapter 13 What do employers really want?**

See Competence Sheets on:

* Written communication
* Oral communication
* Leadership
* Persuading others
* Negotiating a compromise
* Commercial awareness
* Managing a difficult situation
* Working independently
* Exercising responsibility
* Problem-solving
* Project or task management
* Working under pressure or to tight deadlines

**Chapter 14 Getting the job you want**

1. Recognise personal change
2. Gaining insights from the workplace
3. Preparing your job application
4. Preparing for the job interview
5. After the job interview

*See also Competence Sheets.*

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

***See:***

* Record of education and training
* Evaluating progress on learning goals
* Improving personal performance template
* Record of work history
* Current skills and personal qualities
* Evidence of learning
* Learning through work
* Evidence of skills and personal qualities for employment
* Competitiveness audit
* Competencies
* Critical incident sheet

1. Contents list for portfolios/personal records

**Tools for evaluating performance**

1. Improving personal performance
2. Evaluating progress on learning
3. Competitiveness audit

**Personal Records**

1. Record of education and training
2. Evidence of learning
3. Record of Work History
4. Learning through work
5. Current skills and personal qualities
6. Evidence of skills and personal qualities for employment

**Competence Sheets**

1. Evidence of competence in team work
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
18. Pro-forma for mapping other competences
19. Health and safety

**Links to**

* ‘Want to know more’ recommended further reading and resources
* Useful apps
* Useful websites