

# Personal Development Planning Guide

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## Contents

<b><u>Introduction</u></b>	4
<u>How to Use</u>	4
<u>Why Bother?</u>	4
<u>Mature Students</u>	5
<b><u>Key Skills</u></b>	6
<u>Skills Intro</u>	6
<u>Skills List</u>	6
<u>Employer Perspective</u>	7
<u>Job Adverts</u>	7
<u>Skills Audit</u>	8
<b><u>Background</u></b>	9
<u>Qualifications</u>	9
<u>Work Experience</u>	9
<u>Extra Curricular</u>	9
<u>Strengths</u>	10
<u>Areas for Improvement</u>	10
<b><u>Learning Style</u></b>	11
<u>Learning Styles Quiz</u>	11
<u>My Learning Style</u>	11
<b><u>Goals</u></b>	13
<u>SMART</u>	13
<u>Career</u>	14
<u>Academic</u>	14
<u>Personal</u>	14
<b><u>Planning</u></b>	15
<u>Career</u>	15
<u>Academic</u>	15
<u>Personal</u>	16
<u>Financial</u>	16

<u><b>Opportunities</b></u>	18
<u><b>Employment</b></u>	18
<u><b>Academic</b></u>	19
<u><b>Volunteering</b></u>	19
<u><b>Extra-curricular</b></u>	20
<u><b>Progress</b></u>	22
<u><b>Learning Logs</b></u>	22
<u><b>Year 1</b></u>	23
<u><b>Year 2</b></u>	23
<u><b>Placement Year</b></u>	23
<u><b>Final Year</b></u>	24
<u><b>CV</b></u>	26
<u><b>Preparation</b></u>	26
<u><b>CV</b></u>	26
<u><b>Covering Letter</b></u>	27
<u><b>Interviews</b></u>	28
<u><b>Links</b></u>	30
<u><b>Reference</b></u>	31
<u><b>And Finally...</b></u>	32

## Introduction

Personal Development Planning will help you to define and explore your goals and map out ways to turn them into reality. It will enable you to articulate the skills you are developing now in order to open up opportunities in the future. Using the templates in this guide you can build up your Personal Development Plan from goal-setting exercises, together with reflective notes and useful feedback. It will grow according to your input and should prove an excellent tool to manage your own development.

You can either print your documents, or store them to disk. However you decide to manage your files, make sure you keep them safe to use as a reference when you leave University.

Whilst studying you will have many opportunities to expand your academic, professional and personal horizons.

The level of engagement and what you get out of your period of higher education is your choice. You have responsibility for your own learning.

Taking stock of your position and setting goals in all areas of your life is a crucial step. But in order to maximise your potential you must be clear about how you can transfer the skills and knowledge you have acquired into other situations. You must learn to articulate your unique skills and abilities.

This guide to Personal Development Planning is designed to help you do just that and to look strategically at where you are and where you want to be.

What are students saying about the Personal Development Planner?

*"Your opportunity to plan for your future."*

*"Priceless."*

*"It is very important... it helps me to plan my university life in the most efficient manner."*

*"An invaluable part of the graduate process."*

*"The guide helps you to start thinking about your personal development. How far you take it is up to the user."*

Look out for more student quotations throughout.

## How to Use

*"At first I thought it was more work, but I feel it will be of great use as you physically stop and analyse strengths and current skills and assess what you need to improve."*

This guide includes 9 main sections. Work through the sections at your own pace. Take your time and return to update or add to each section as often as you like.

## Why Bother?

By choosing to work through this guide you are carrying out a number of key functions:

Firstly you are taking stock. Evaluating the skills and abilities you already possess. You'll hopefully recognise some of your strengths and spot a couple of your weaknesses.

You will have the space to reflect upon where you want to be. Recognising your personal goals, your objectives and dreams is the first step to achieving them.

You will have the chance to plan ahead. There is space to plan what you want to achieve from your academic, career and personal life; to think about both the knowledge you can develop and the skills you can improve.

Finally, most important of all, you are developing the skill of critical self-reflection. You have the chance to be honest with yourself, to understand a little more about who you are and what you can actually do. Developing these abilities is essential as it will help you both academically and in your search for employment. "It helps you to feel more prepared when facing the prospect of finding future employment."

### **Mature Students**

*"You need direction and someone else's point of view sometimes, and this helps."*

As a mature student you are likely to already have some experience of skills mapping, reflective practice, learning styles, career planning, CV and interview technique. The decision to return to education may have been step one of your career plan. It is still of benefit to continually reassess your goals and adapt your plans accordingly.

Using this guide will help you to pull together all the experience you have accumulated in one place and set new goals for the future. Taking a fresh look at your skills competencies can only increase your confidence.

Some of the examples provided may not seem relevant to your circumstances. You may have work and family responsibilities and no spare time for extracurricular activities. But in analysing your strengths, think laterally: juggling family life and your studies shows commitment, organisation, time-management and adaptability - all important skills. You can illustrate this with examples from your own activities such as helping at playgroup, listening to reading in school or committee work.

Other examples include being treasurer of a local football club, attending night classes, associations with industry, membership of a professional body and voluntary work. If you are a postgraduate don't underestimate the value of activities such as supervising undergraduates, giving demonstrations, invigilating exams or offering tours of the campus.

If you have come back to study to facilitate a change in career, your past work experience may seem irrelevant. Analysing your job roles in terms of key skills will help you to maximise your prior experience and relate it to your chosen field.

## Key Skills

This section covers the important area of Key Skills: What are they? Why are employers so keen on them? Do I have any? How do I develop mine?

Completing the audit will help you to plan how you will move your key skills forward.

*"Makes you think about things you can do rather than things you can't"*

### Skills Intro

Key skills are not specific to your course and can be developed and used in a wide range of situations. Many employers put great importance on them and if you can demonstrate a high level of competence in key skills on your CV you may give yourself an advantage over other graduates.

During your university career you will increasingly become more responsible for your own learning. You will learn and practice a wide range of key skills. Your extracurricular activities will also give you valuable experience of useful skills.

*"Realisation and identification of skills will be useful when writing my CV."*

On the next page is a list of the main groups of skills you are likely to acquire or improve during your degree and some suggestions on how to develop them. See the Opportunities section for more ideas. The list is not exhaustive and you may want to add other skills to it, but it makes a good starting point.

To find out more about key skills visit the **Key Skills Resource Pack web site**.

### Skills List

*"It will make me realise how many unrecognised skills I have actually learnt and help me articulate them."*

#### Communication

- Publicity for a student society
- Writing letter to raise sponsorship
- Member of the staff/student committee
- Oral presentations
- Project reports
- Canvassing for elections
- Public speaking/ debating
- Talking to visiting 6th form students

#### Numeracy

- Treasurer of a student society
- Work experience involving money
- Negotiating prices for a social function
- Statistical analysis in course work

#### IT Skills

- Using e-mail to communicate
- Word processing reports and essays
- Producing publicity for student societies
- Using the WWW as a source of information

### ***Learning to Learn***

- Setting and meeting academic deadlines
- Prioritising workloads
- Organising a trip or social event
- Using learning logs to aid reflective practice
- Demonstrating and tutoring

### ***Working with Others***

- Membership of student committees
- Team sports
- Membership of orchestra, choir or band
- Sharing a flat successfully
- Staging a play or musical

## **Employer Perspective**

Employers are interested in more than the subject specific skills you will learn on your programme of study. They want to employ graduates who can exercise a wide range of other skills. Personal development planning will help you to articulate the skills you are developing now.

"Employers want people who can rapidly 'fit in' to the workplace culture, work in teams, exhibit good interpersonal skills, communicate well, take on responsibility for an area of work, and perform efficiently and effectively to add value to the organisation - they want adaptive recruits".  
Harvey, Moon and Geall 1997

"Few students are able to articulate what they have gained from their experience in higher education."  
Association of Graduate Recruiters, 1995

Many employers put strong emphasis on skills in graduate recruitment. The following are quotes from major retailers:

"First of all, people skills are essential. Whoever you come into contact with, whether customers, suppliers or members of staff, an understanding of situations and the ability to interact in a calm, confident manner are vitally important."

"We're looking for dynamic hardworking graduating college seniors with vision, initiative, excellent communication skills and a sharp focus."

"With every graduate position comes responsibility and the need for well-rounded management skills. We look for motivated graduates with drive, commercial acumen and a passion for fashion. Individuals who will thrive in an open and creative environment where teamwork is valued."

## **Job Adverts**

Job adverts demonstrate the skills employers value. The following adverts appeared in Drapers Record on November 16th 2001:

### **TRAINEE ASSISTANT MERCHANDISER**

Our client, a leading ladies fashion retailer have an excellent opportunity for an Allocator with at least one year's experience to join their merchandising

function. With strong communication and numerical skills, your success will be recognised and rewarded with a competitive package.

#### RANGE MANAGER - MEN'S SHOES

You'll need to be a real team player and an effective negotiator and communicator...

This is an extract from an advert placed by RR Donnelley Financial in September 2000:

#### PRICING ANALYST

- Strong analytical skills and ingenuity to provide logical solutions to non-standard issues
- Strong mathematical aptitude as well as well developed communication skills (written and verbal)
- Computer literate (including working knowledge of Excel and Word)
- Requires resourcefulness, organisational skills and ability to coordinate activities across company functions
- Demonstrated ability to work well under pressure to meet critical deadlines
- Ability to adapt to changing priorities and handle multiple tasks
- Exceptional attention to detail and problem solving skills

### Skills Audit

Taking an audit of your skills at the beginning of your course will help you to define your current status and highlight where you need to develop certain skills. At the end of each year you can complete a new skills audit, based on your experiences. This process allows you to monitor your own development as you progress through University.

*"It will help me to evaluate the skills I have learnt in order to recognise what I'm good at."*

Over the three/four years of your degree course your skills level should improve. An area in which you are 'very confident' in the first year will still need to show an improvement if you want to maintain that level in the third/fourth year.

Use Editable Word Doc: **skills\_audit.doc** to complete the skills audit and save it for future reference.

Your audit will help you identify areas where you can build on your current strengths, as well as areas that need improving. In the following sections you can translate these into goals and then plan how to achieve them.



## Background

This section allows you to record your current skills, knowledge and competence in relation to qualifications, work-experience, positions of responsibility and extracurricular activities. Here is the chance to look in detail at how you have developed as a result of all these experiences, using both your own self-reflection and feedback from objective sources. There is also an opportunity to pinpoint your key strengths and key areas for improvement.

*"It will help me keep a record as I go along, rather than trying to remember it all at the end."*

*"All the relevant information in one place instead of scattered about"*

## Qualifications

You may think you could never forget that exam... but as you gain more qualifications it will become harder to remember all the details of those in the past. Start now by recording the qualifications you already have, and keep this document updated regularly as you go along. You can also use this Editable Word Doc: **back\_qual.doc** to reflect on how you have developed as a result of gaining each qualification.

The more information you can gather from other sources the better. Look back at your school reports and examination comments; it will help you to gain a greater perspective on how you have developed.

As you gain more qualifications, add the details to this record - you'll be glad you did when it comes to writing your CV or filling in application forms.

If you have certificates relating to your qualifications, keep them safely in a dedicated file - many employers will ask for copies when you start work.

## Work Experience

Think about any work experience you have. Remember, voluntary work experience can be just as important as paid work.

Take time to make notes in the Editable Word Doc: **back\_work.doc** on how you have developed as a result.

Keep any papers relating to your work experience, in particular any feedback, references or appraisals. These will be useful to back up your own feelings on what you have gained from the experience.

Don't forget to keep this document up to date by adding any new work experience you gain in the future.

## Extra-Curricular

What you do outside school or college can be just as valuable in terms of developing your skills. Reflect on your extracurricular activities using the Editable Word Doc: **back\_extra.doc**.

Ask those you came into contact with during these activities what they think were the important learning points. It may help you to have this further perspective.

No doubt you'll be involved in extra curricular activities during your time at University - so keep this section up to date.

### **Strengths**

Looking at how you have developed already and the skills, knowledge and competencies you already have when you arrive at University, try to focus on three Key Strengths. Use the Editable Word Doc: **back\_stre.doc** to summarise these strengths and back them up with examples of feedback.

*"Helps you focus on positive aspects about you as a person."*

### **Areas for Improvement**

Completing the sections on your background qualifications, skills, knowledge and experience may have highlighted some key areas for improvement. As a first step towards filling in the gaps, read over the sections again and record the areas that would benefit from improvement on the Editable Word Doc: **back\_imp.doc**.

*"Evaluating your own skills and weaknesses is crucial to be successful in your job and to improve on your skills."*

## Learning Style

By discovering your individual approach to learning you will be able to:

- seek out experiences that draw on the strength of your approaches;
- adapt your speaking, writing, thinking and listening to the approach to learning of other people. This can enhance your effectiveness at all levels;
- make a conscious attempt to develop your skills at other approaches to learning.

The quiz in this section helps you recognise your learning style - a crucial step in increasing your effectiveness and reaching your potential.

### Learning Style Quiz

This exercise is designed to give you an insight into your own style of learning and studying.

- Answer the quiz in this Editable Word Doc: **I\_styles.doc**
- Add up your scores to discover your learning style
- Click Next to review what your pattern has revealed about the way you learn

### My Learning Style

#### ***Deep Approach***

You attempt to make sense of what is to be learnt, which consists of ideas and concepts. This involves thinking, seeking integration between components and between tasks, and 'playing' with ideas.

- Leads to understanding
- Is the ability to determine interrelationships and to apply underlying principles
- Implies a capacity to transfer thinking and performance to other situations
- Is long lasting

#### ***Strategic Approach***

This is where you elect to use a surface approach in a strategic way, in order to manage an aspect of the learning environment e.g. volume of work or lack of interest in a subject, despite being able to use the deep approach.

#### ***Surface Approach***

You reduce what is to be learnt to the status of unconnected facts to be memorised. The learning task is to reproduce the subject matter at a later date.

- Learning by rote
- Depends on memory rather than understanding
- Can only be applied in a situation identical to the one initially encountered
- Does not last

#### ***Lack of Direction***

You have no real focus and have a passive approach to your studies.

***Academic Self-confidence***

You believe in your own ability to cope with your studies and feel happy with your position on the course so far.

## Goals

Setting clear goals for the different areas of your life can be invaluable. This section allows you to bring into focus your aspirations in terms of your career, your academic ambitions and your personal goals.

Splitting your goals into separate areas may seem artificial. Many of your aims will of course be interrelated, so after concentrating on one area at a time, step back and consider the bigger picture.

Read the section on SMART goals first to give yourself the best chance of success.

*"The goals section is very analytical and forces you to think about what you want which can prove very hard, but at least it makes you start thinking of the future."*

### SMART Goals

The SMART model was developed by psychologists as a tool to help people set and reach their goals.

**Specific**  
**Measurable**  
**Attainable**  
**Relevant**  
**Time-bound**

In the next three sections you will have the opportunity to set yourself career, academic and personal goals. You may find it useful to check your goals against the SMART model. Here are some examples to get you started:

#### **Specific**

Is your goal well-defined? Avoid setting unclear or vague objectives; instead be as precise as possible.

*Instead of:* To do well in my exams

*Make it specific:* To increase study time to 30hrs per week and attend all scheduled revision sessions

#### **Measurable**

Be clear how will you recognise when you have achieved your goal. Using numbers, dates and times is one way to represent clear objectives.

*Instead of:* To get fit

*Make it measurable:* Swim 20 lengths, twice a week this term

#### **Attainable**

Setting yourself unfeasible goals will only end in disappointment. Make your goals challenging, but realistic.

*Instead of:* Give up smoking, drinking, sex and chocolate, all at once

*Make it attainable:* Only drink alcohol at weekends

#### **Relevant**

Try and step back and get an overview of all the different areas of your life: Academic, Personal and Career. Consider how relevant each objective is to the overall picture.

### Time-bound

Set a time scale for completion of each goal. Even if you have to review this as you progress, it will help to keep you motivated.

*Instead of:* Sort out CV and research job market

*Make it time-bound:* Compile CV by end of Easter holidays, and set up interview with careers centre before end May

### Career Goals

Complete the Career Goals Quiz: **goals\_c.doc** and give definition to your Career Goals.

This quiz is based on a tool created by a major employer, R.R.Donnelley, to help new recruits develop their skills and grow within the organisation.

*"The career goals quiz ... makes you think about the big picture."*

*"Clarifying my thoughts on my future career... is very important."*

### Academic Goals

Your most recent academic goal may just have been achieved by gaining this place at University. But what's next?

Use this Editable Word Doc: **goals\_a.doc** to clarify your goals and plan for the future.

### Personal Goals

Use this section to explore other areas of your life which you have not covered in your career or academic goals. For example, your sporting ambitions, cultural interests, travel plans, environmental action or involvement in drama.

Take the opportunity to formulate your personal goals in the Editable Word Doc: **goals\_p.doc**.

## Planning

Having set your goals, break each one down into manageable action points. Use this section to get a clear picture of what you need to do and when.

There is also a section on Financial Planning which includes tips on managing your budget.

*"Helps me in realising possibilities for the future... it will aid with motivation."*

## Career Planning

No one can predict the future, but planning now could help to enhance your chance of finding the perfect career.

Take the opportunity to manage your own career pathway and plan for your future employment. Look back at your career goals and the strengths and areas for improvement that you have identified.

Arrange to meet with a careers advisor, or someone who has experience of a relevant industry or works in a similar position to the one you aspire to. Tell them about your background skills, strengths and experience and describe how you see these enabling your chosen career path in the future. Share with them any relevant areas for improvement you have identified or any potential barriers to achieving your career goals.

Try to get as much from the meeting as possible by preparing some questions and listening to the feedback. Are my plans realistic? Do I need to develop any skills areas beyond what I have identified already? How closely does my vision of this job match the reality? What were some of the barriers you faced in getting to where you are now? What do you think are the most important areas that I should concentrate on?

Discuss timescales in the meeting and start to break down your career goals into manageable steps then record them using this Editable Word Doc: **plan\_c.doc**.

When you have completed your career plan ask your mentor to review it for you.

## Academic Planning

Having set your academic goals, now consider the practical steps to achieving them.

If possible arrange to meet with your personal tutor, year tutor or other academic mentor to discuss your academic goals. It might be something you can bring up at a tutorial meeting. Tell them about your strengths and areas for improvement, and go through your skills audit with them. Explain the academic goals you have set and ask them for input on any of these points. Discuss with them your ideas for how you can meet your academic goals and the timescales you will be working to. The notes from this meeting should help you to formulate a workable action plan using the Editable Word Doc: **plan\_a.doc**.

To make sure you have all the feedback you need, ask your personal tutor or year tutor to look at your academic plan and comment on its feasibility, the timescales and highlight any potential gaps.

*"The plan helps you to think about your education in general and then break it down into key areas of consideration. I can only see this as a benefit in the long and short term."*

## Personal Planning

So you've set your personal goals... Now work out exactly how you plan to reach them using this Editable Word Doc: **plan\_p.doc**.

Ask someone who knows you well, or someone who has experience in an area you aim to develop to help you clarify your personal goals and break them down into achievable targets. Ask them to review your personal plan once you have drafted it and incorporate any new points on which you agree into your final plan.

## Financial Planning

Starting your university career may be the first time that you have been in control of your finances. You will probably be on a tight budget. Although your finances are not directly related to your academic career, if you have financial problems the stress can affect your work.

Most banks have branches with student advisors. They can help with information on student accounts and products such as low cost overdraft facilities. They can also help with budget planning. When opening an account, shop around for the best account and services, not the best free gift.

If you are getting into difficulties, get help as soon as possible. Your bank would rather hear from you before you reach a critical situation.

It is difficult to calculate a monthly budget as your income and expenditure will vary from month to month, however putting figures down on paper can help. Take control with the Budget Planner Editable Excel Worksheet: **plan\_f.xls**.

### ***Top Tips for Financial Planning***

#### **DO**

- Withdraw enough cash for a week and don't spend any more.
- Only use your credit or debit card for planned purchases, not for impulse buys.
- Check your balance regularly so you are always aware of how much money you have spent.
- Shop with friends and take advantage of 2 for 1 offers and cheaper bulk purchases.
- Buy own brands or economy products.
- Put money aside for electricity, gas and 'phone bills. Check your supplier is the best value.
- Try to buy second hand books for your course.
- Use your NUS card for discounts at some cinemas, exhibitions, concerts and shops.
- Be energy efficient to save money on your fuel bills and help the environment. Turning your heating thermostat down by 1°C could



save up to £30/year. For other energy savings visit  
[www.saveenergy.co.uk](http://www.saveenergy.co.uk)

### **DON'T**

- Waste money on expensive lunches. If you spend £3/day on food at university, it works out at roughly £60/month or £420/academic year. A homemade sandwich could save a lot of money.
- Let a part-time job interfere with your studies. Remember why you're here!

## Opportunities

There are many opportunities to gain valuable experience and skills whilst having a great time and meeting new friends. This section contains links to organisations and information to get you started.

*"Makes you think about the bigger picture, not just the course."*

### Employment Opportunities

Information on graduate careers, job hunting and locating current vacancies.

#### Careers Service

The University Careers Service offers information, advice and career counseling.

#### Local Papers

Most local papers contain recruitment pages. Find out which day offers the most opportunities, or try browsing the jobs online at the paper's web site.

#### Gradunet: Virtual Careers Office

Hosts regular virtual careers fairs.

<http://www.gradunet.co.uk/>

#### Prospects Web

The UK's Official Graduate Careers Website.

<http://www.prospects.ac.uk/>

#### Milkround Online

Check out jobs from the UK's leading recruiters, general career and application advice, psychometric testing and up to date employment news.

<http://www.milkround.com/>

#### Get 2000

Online careers service.

<http://www.get.hobsons.com/>

#### Activate Careers

The official jobs website of the National Union of Students.

<http://www.activatecareers.com/>

#### The Monster Board

Search 1,000,000 job postings.

<http://www.monster.com/>

#### Brilliant Careers

Channel 4's online career guide.

<http://www.channel4.com/brilliantcareers>

#### Learndirect Job Profiles

Learndirect job profiles are written by Learndirect careers advisors drawing on a range of materials including that published by the Department for Education and Employment.

[http://www.learndirect-futures.co.uk/job\\_profiles/jf\\_frameset.htm](http://www.learndirect-futures.co.uk/job_profiles/jf_frameset.htm)

#### Inside Careers

Includes careers advice, live vacancies and company profiles in a range of graduate careers.

<http://www.insidecareers.co.uk/>

### **Employer Perspective**

Link back to the [Employer Perspective](#) section of this guide to view example job adverts and quotations from employers.

## **Academic Opportunities**

These web sites provide information on study skills, research and postgraduate opportunities.

### **Study Skills Online**

Electronic study guide including sections on undergraduate study and postgraduate research.

<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/~mastmmg/ssguide/sshome.htm>

### **Key Skills Online Resource Pack**

With links to a variety of skills related sites and projects.

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/textiles/keynote/resourcepack/mainpages/index.htm>

### **BBC Learning Web Site**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/colleges/>

### **Postgrad 2000**

Includes a search engine for all UK postgraduate courses.

<http://www.postgrad.hobsons.com/>

### **National Postgraduate Committee**

<http://www.npc.org.uk/>

### **Prospects Web**

Focuses on research and study opportunities for graduates, includes features on funding postgraduate study.

[http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home\\_page/Search\\_courses\\_and\\_research/pleacge](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Search_courses_and_research/pleacge)

## **Volunteering Opportunities**

As well as being personally satisfying, volunteering can provide excellent experience and give you an added interest on your CV.

### **Executive Committee**

The Student Union Executive Committee usually elects both sabbatical and non-sabbatical posts annually. There are a range of different responsibilities depending on your interests. Contact your Student's Union.

### **Student Reps**

The Student Rep speaks up for students on their programme. They provide useful feedback to the lecturers and can change problem areas when they arise. Contact your Program Leader or Faculty Office.

### **Local Community Volunteering**

Find out if your city has a Council for Voluntary Service to help put you in contact with local volunteer groups and charities needing volunteers.

### **Association of Voluntary Service Organisations**

<http://www.avso.org/>

### **National Centre For Volunteering**

Find out how to get involved in volunteering placements in your area.

<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/>

### **International Voluntary Service**

IVS organises Workcamps in Britain and sends volunteers to over 40 countries throughout the world. The programme of short term Summer Workcamps is available along with details of how to apply.

<http://www.ivsqbn.demon.co.uk/>

### **National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service**

Network promoting voluntary and community action.

<http://www.nacvs.org.uk/>

### **Tearfund**

Life changing programmes in the UK and around the world from a weekend to four months.

<http://www.tearfund.org/transform/>

### **Academic Associates International**

Aim to provide innovative, rewarding yet challenging, cultural exchange volunteer and study abroad opportunities.

<http://www.aaiuk.org>

### **Gap Activity Projects**

Volunteering experiences for your year out.

<http://www.gap.org.uk>

## **Extra-curricular Opportunities**

### **Clubs and Societies**

Most universities and colleges offer a wide variety of clubs and societies, from surfing to Sikhism. So there are plenty of opportunities to expand your horizons. To get an idea of what's available visit the Fresher's Fairs at the start of the academic year. Or contact clubs individually through the Student Union website, notice boards or the Student Activities Department.

### **Student Paper**

The student newspaper will give opportunities for writers, reviewers and editors. Contact your Student's Union for details.

### **Student or Hospital Radio**

Most Student Union's broadcast live a couple of times year, giving opportunities for presenters, DJs, reporters and a marketing team. Or get involved in your local hospital station.

### **Raleigh International**

A youth development charity which inspires people from all backgrounds and nationalities to discover their full potential by working together on challenging environmental and community projects around the world. They run 3-month expeditions that are part of a longer programme of training weekends and workshops prior to expedition. The training concentrates on personal development, cultural awareness, global issues and preparing people for expedition life.

<http://www.raleigh.org.uk/>

### **Duke of Edinburgh's Award**

A program designed to develop you through volunteering, expeditions and learning new skills.

Contact: Gulliver House, Madeira Walk, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 1EU  
(01753) 810666.

email: [info@theaward.org](mailto:info@theaward.org)

<http://www.theaward.org/>

### **STEP**

Program in which students spend 6-8 weeks of their summer holiday working in a small business on a specific project.

Contact: Harling House, 62 Copperfield St, London SE1 ODJ  
(0207) 921 5450

<http://www.step.org.uk/>

### **Teaching English as a Foreign Language**

Find teaching advice, make contact with experienced EFL instructors and browse accounts of teaching English in countries around the world.

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/tefl/>

### **Coach Education Opportunities (CEO)**

CEO is a training program designed to help people get the most out of their sport by offering opportunities to take part in coaching qualifications. Find out if your institution supports the program.

### **Teaching and Projects Abroad**

A range of programmes are offered from Teaching English, to Volcanology and Conservation, in 13 different countries. They also arrange placements to assist your final year dissertation.

<http://www.teaching-abroad.co.uk/>

### **Rough Guide**

Information on thousands of destinations online. Browse destination coverage and check out information on everything from flights to food to accommodations and more.

<http://travel.roughguides.com/>

### **Lonely Planet Online**

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/>

### **Trailfinders**

Tailor-made itineraries and selection of discounted flights.

<http://www.trailfinder.com/index.htm>

### **STA Travel**

Specialists in flexible, low-cost student and youth travel.

<http://www.sta-travel.com/>

## Progress

During your time at University make time to assess how you are progressing towards your goals. Even if you only take a few hours each semester, it will help to keep you on target towards achieving your goals and getting the most out of your time here. Use the Learning Logs to record individual experiences, then at the end of each academic year pull together all your thoughts and reassess your progress.

Don't worry if your course doesn't include a placement year - just miss that section out. And if your course is shorter (for example if you are on a two year postgraduate course) just use the first and then the final year to chart your progress.

*"Its really useful to plot progress as I go along"*

## Learning Logs

You can use learning logs at any time during your course to record significant experiences. It is a good way to improve your performance in future by reflecting on the way you learn.

Use the Editable Word Doc: **prog\_log.doc**, which you can print out or save to disk to provide as many different versions as you, need.

For more information on Learning Logs:

Moon, Jenny, *Learning Journals*, Kogan Page, 1999 (ISBN 0 7494 3045 1)

Moon, Jenny, *Reflection In Learning and Professional Development*, Kogan Page, 2000 (ISBN 0 7494 3452 X)

## Year 1

Towards the end of your first year is a good time to reflect on how you are progressing towards your goals, and to adjust your plans if necessary.

During the academic year you will have gained a basic understanding of your core subjects and be able to communicate your understanding in a clear and concise way.

You will be familiar with collecting and analysing relevant information and start to recognise the relationships between different areas of study.

You will have started to organise your workload in an effective way and starting to recognise areas of strength and weakness.

## Revise Progress

Look again at your Goal Setting and Planning exercises in the three areas: Career, Academic and Personal.

- What progress have you made towards your targets?
- Have you met all your time scales?
- Have your goals changed at all?
- Do you have any other progress to record that was not part of your plan?
- Do you need to concentrate on any areas in particular in order to stay on track?
- What have you learnt about yourself, your strengths and weaknesses, during the last year?

### **Audit Skills**

You may also find it worthwhile to complete the Skills Audit again. If you ranked a particular skill highly the first time you filled it in, you should demonstrate an improvement in that skill if you wish to rank it highly again.

### **Adjust Plans**

You may want to draft a new plan with additional goals, especially if you have made good progress, or if your aspirations have changed. Just go back to the relevant Planning section and save a new version of the word document.

## **Year 2**

At the end of your second year, it is time to reflect on your current position.

During your second year you will have gained a much deeper understanding of your core subjects and be able to communicate them in a clear and concise way using appropriate language.

You will have developed independent research skills and will be able to analyse information that is more complex and make critical judgements about it.

You will be able to work confidently on your own and in groups, producing work to a high professional standard.

### **Revise Progress**

As you did at the end of your first year, assess your progress towards your targets. Look again at your Goal Setting and Planning exercises in the three areas: Career, Academic and Personal.

- Have your goals changed? Do you need to adapt or make new plans? Are there any areas which need particular attention?
- Have your goals changed?
- Has your progress been within the timescales you anticipated?
- Do you need to adapt or make new plans?
- Are there any areas which need particular attention?
- What achievements have you been particularly proud of during the last year?

### **Audit Skills**

Have you updated your skills since year 1? Revisit the Skills Audit and see just how far you have progressed in the last year. If you keep up to date with this section it will be invaluable when you come to writing your CV.

### **Adjust Plans**

As your experience and awareness grows, redraft your plans and set additional goals. Just go back to the relevant Planning section and save a new version of the word document. As you do this, start to plan for your third year.

## **Placement Year**

This page is not applicable to all students, but can be used if you have undertaken a placement year or a shorter work placement. Think back over the time and consider the skills and knowledge you have developed in your role. It will have been a rich experience, providing many new examples to add to the Background sections of your Personal Development Plan. Your skills levels will have changed in many areas. Your communication skills will have improved - visual, verbal and written. You will be able to work using your own

initiative, keeping to deadlines. You will be able to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations.

For a comprehensive resource on all aspects of work placement see the **Keynote Work Placement Guide**.

### ***Revise Progress***

Look again at your Goal Setting and Planning exercises in the three areas: Career, Academic and Personal.

- How far have you progressed towards your targets?
- Are the goals you set yourself in your first and second year still relevant now?
- Have you progressed in areas which you did not anticipate in your plan?
- What are the main learning outcomes of your experiences this year?

### ***Audit Skills***

Review your Skills Audit. You will find that you have gained confidence and ability in many skills.

### ***Adjust Plans***

A work placement may have changed your expectations for the future. From the work experience you have gained you may have a clearer idea of your goals - even if it is discovering that your aims have altered. Revisit the Planning section and save a new version of the word documents to make plans for your final year.

## **Final Year**

As you near the end of your final year at University, reflect on the experience as a whole.

You will have specialist knowledge in some subject areas but be aware of how to source information in others.

You will be able to solve complex problems using information from a variety of sources and critically assess conclusions.

You will be able to set objectives, focus on priorities, plan and execute a project to deadlines. Work will be well structured with fluent arguments.

Presentation will be of a professional standard.

### ***Revise Progress***

Look again at your Goal Setting and Planning exercises in the three areas: Career, Academic and Personal.

- What progress have you made towards your targets?
- Have you met all your time scales?
- Do you need to set new goals going forward?
- Recognise and record how much you have achieved and developed as a person.
- How will you continue to learn and develop after you leave?

### ***Audit Skills***

Complete a Skills Audit and compare it with your first year audit. You should be able to see clearly where you have developed during your time here. You may have already started applying for jobs, and will be starting to see the benefit of this exercise in compiling your CV.



***Adjust Plans***

Refine your plan to include goals beyond your graduation. Taking the time now to put some thought into your future will help you articulate your goals and strengths. Return to the relevant Planning section and save a new version of the word document.

## Curriculum Vitae

This section contains useful tips on producing a professional CV and covering letter and preparing for interview, including links to useful websites.

*"Valuable when applying for jobs during and after the course."*

### Preparation

*"Prepares you well for employer's questions."*

Graduate employers are looking for evidence that you have the abilities they need.

Going through this short exercise now will save you time when it comes to answering tricky interview questions, filling in application forms or customising your CV to match a job advertisement.

Be unique: include some unusual examples

Be specific: identify an event, rather than an extended period of time

Be confident: make sure you would be able to talk about your experiences at length

Open the exercise in **cv\_prep.doc**.

### CV

Your CV will create a first impression for an employer. Design a basic CV and keep it regularly updated. Be prepared to tailor it to the specific requirements of a position, placing emphasis in different areas. As well as including factual content about your qualifications and experience, use the skills audit, and the strengths you have highlighted to build a personal profile.

#### ***Top Tips for your CV***

##### **DO**

- Keep it brief - 1-2 pages is best
- Put name and contact details on each sheet in case they become separated
- Use plain English - short sentences and bullet points
- Start with a brief personal profile - 1-2 sentences
- Tell the truth
- Use positive language
- Make sure there are no major gaps in your history
- Sell yourself!
- Consider what impression your CV gives to a busy employer in 30 seconds?

- Tailor your CV to each application
- Back up your claims with examples
- Include details for referees
- Word process your CV
- Ensure the document has a consistent appearance
- Use a clearly legible font type and size - e.g. Times NewRoman, Arial, 12pt
- Use good quality white paper, one-sided only
- Use an A4 envelope so you don't have to fold it
- Always send a covering letter
- Check, check and check again - spelling, dates, spacing, grammar, punctuation

#### **DON'T**

- Use Jargon
- Assume the reader will know what acronyms stand for
- Mislead or lie about your experience or qualifications
- Make vague, unsubstantiated statements
- Go over 3 pages
- Use the same CV for all your applications

#### **Covering Letter**

A covering letter sent with your CV allows you to be specific to the role. Use the letter to complement the information in your CV, not repeat it. By studying the job description you can highlight relevant skills and give brief examples of attributes asked for. Try to include something to make you stand out. A good covering letter will entice the reader to look further at the CV, where your statements will be backed up with full details

If you reach the interview stage, be prepared to talk about things you have included in your covering letter - be truthful and don't exaggerate.

#### ***Top Tips for your Covering Letter***

#### **DO**

- Make the letter particular to the company
- Analyse the job advert for minimum and desirable requirements
- Highlight how you can meet these requirements

- Translate your skills and experience into benefits for the employer
- If responding to an advertised vacancy, refer to job title and reference number if applicable and say where you saw the advert
- Keep it brief - 2-3 paragraphs
- Use standard letter layout
- Keep to a formal style
- Use good quality white paper, to match your CV
- Word process the letter if your handwriting is less than perfect
- Include a phone number and e-mail in your contact details
- Find out who to address the letter to, by phoning up if necessary
- Post in an A4 envelope, to avoid folding
- Check your draft for facts and spelling
- Make sure you spell the company and addressee's name right
- Keep a copy
- End on a positive note

#### **DON'T**

- Say what the employer can do for you
- Address the letter to Sir or Madam

Open Editable Word Doc: **cv\_cover.doc**.

#### **Interviews**

This is your chance to shine and a little preparation can make all the difference.

Find out as much as you can about the company and the job you have applied for. Use the web, graduate recruitment brochures, library, and business sections of newspapers, your tutor and careers advisor.

Think about what you can offer the company and why they should employ you rather than another candidate. If you get the job you will cost thousands of pounds to employ - why are you worth it? Look back through your covering letter and CV for this application and be prepared to talk about them in detail.

The interview gives you the opportunity to decide whether the job is right for you. Don't be afraid to ask questions about the role and your specific duties, but try not to concentrate your questions on staff benefits.

Although mock interviews with friends, careers advisors and tutors can't replicate a real situation exactly, they can be useful to try out verbalising your experiences and gain feedback on personal presentation.

Even if you are unsuccessful at interview try to get the most out of it as a learning experience. Phone politely for feedback and take the points on board; perhaps there will be something you can do differently next time.

Avoid getting lost for words at your interview by making notes on some frequently asked questions in this Editable Word Doc: **cv\_inter.doc..**

### ***Top Tips for your Interview***

#### **DO**

- Prepare for the interview by thoroughly researching the company and the role
- Give yourself plenty of time to find the interview - if possible go and check your route the day before
- Take the company phone number and call if you are running late
- Try and find out how long the interview is likely to be and allow enough time
- Take a copy of your CV along
- Dress smartly and professionally
- Smile
- Look at the interviewer
- Use his/her name, but not excessively
- Sit up straight and keep your hands in your lap
- Take time to think before answering
- Ask for clarification if you need it
- Tell the truth
- Offer to leave the room if the interviewer receives a call
- Make sure you get all your important points across
- Go prepared with some questions to show your interest.
- Shake hands firmly at the end, and ask when you can expect to hear from them

#### **DON'T**

- Arrive more than 15 minutes early
- Sit down before the interviewer does

- Smoke
- Chew gum
- Swear, even mildly
- Interrupt
- Argue - if your views differ from the interviewers, move on to an easier subject
- Be over-familiar
- Criticise past employers/ university
- Constantly repeat questions
- Ask about salary, let them open the bidding
- Draw attention to your weaknesses, try and turn them into positives
- Fiddle or jiggle or tap or flap
- Leave your mobile switched on

## CV Links

*"A head start over other prospective employees."*

The links below contain more in-depth information and templates for producing a professional CV. If you have worked your way through the Personal Development Planner you will already have all the information you need at your fingertips.

**The Big Trip** web site offers a guide to producing your CV and includes sections on Different Styles, Content, Top Tips and making the most of yourself as well as two example CVs in word format.

[http://www.thebigtrip.co.uk/plan\\_your\\_route/applying\\_for\\_a\\_job/cv/](http://www.thebigtrip.co.uk/plan_your_route/applying_for_a_job/cv/)

**CV Writing Workshop** from New Monday. An extensive guide to writing your CV and covering letters, with several examples. Other sections of the site give guidance on interview techniques and psychometric testing.

<http://www.newmonday.co.uk/Careers/yourcv.jsp>

For more resources on job hunting see the [Employment Opportunities](#) section.

## Reference Summary

When it comes to writing references, your tutor will need to know more about you than just your marks. This Reference Summary: **ref.doc** will give your tutor the information they need to support your applications at a glance. You can base it on the word documents you have filled out so far.

Give a summary to your tutor when you need a reference at any time during your course, for example if you are undertaking a summer course or holiday job, and make sure you leave it with them when you graduate.

## And Finally...

*"A useful record to look back on and refer to."*

We hope you'll find this Personal Development Planner useful - both now and in the future.

### ***Remember...***

Save all your word documents onto a disc;

Leave a copy of your Reference Summary with your tutor.

### ***It doesn't end here...***

You can come back to your Personal Development Plan throughout your life. Use it to keep track of your goals and demonstrate your progress in the years to come.