

# KEY SKILLS UNIT

# Personal skills development



## What is this unit about?

This unit is about building on your current capabilities and applying your skills in an integrated way, in order to manage dynamically complex work, ie work in which action in one activity is likely to change other aspects of your work in ways that may be difficult to predict or control.

Problems will be complex, having sub-problems and a significant amount of missing or contradictory information, that require you to extend your specialist knowledge and adapt your strategy to meet new demands.

You will have opportunities to develop and demonstrate your skills in communication, problem solving and working with others through:

- exploring work demands;
- managing the work and monitoring progress;
- planning the work;
- evaluating performance and presenting the outcomes.

You will show you can make the most of these opportunities to improve your own learning and performance in skills that are key to meeting personal and organisational objectives.

## How do I use the information in this unit?

There are three parts to the unit: what you need to know, what you must do and guidance.

### Part A WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

This tells you what you need to learn and practise to improve awareness of the skills you use in your professional life.

### Part B WHAT YOU MUST DO

This describes what your evidence must show you can do.

### Part C GUIDANCE

This provides guidance on some activities you might like to use and examples of the sort of evidence you could produce to prove you have the skills required.

# LEVEL 5

# Part A

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### *In exploring work demands,*

#### YOU NEED TO KNOW HOW TO:

- establish the critical features of your work by:
  - breaking it down into manageable activities;
  - identifying the known, anticipated and novel aspects of these activities;
  - predicting how these activities are likely to affect each other and change the nature of the work;
- identify clearly the outcomes required (*eg relating to your own objectives and organisational objectives*);
- select and use a range of strategies (*eg quantitative and qualitative methods*) and resources to:
  - explore problems (*eg brainstorm ideas with others, use imaginative analogies, concept maps, scenario writing, computer modelling, statistical analysis*);
  - research different options for resolving problems (*eg apply critical thinking; consult reference material, specialists and colleagues; carry out a cost/benefits analysis; identify trade-offs, possible risks or side-effects on related products or the environment*);
- formulate viable proposals for managing the work and resolving problems, taking into account acceptable levels of risk, budget and resource limitations and other possible constraints (*eg limits to your authority, legal regulations affecting the workplace, ethical and other codes of practice, customer demands*);
- assess your skill-development needs by identifying the gap between your current capabilities and the demands of the work in terms of communication, problem solving and working with others (see Part C for criteria for each of these skills).

### *In planning the work,*

#### YOU NEED TO KNOW HOW TO:

- gain commitment to your proposals from relevant people (*eg relate proposals to business objectives when seeking approval, secure cooperation of colleagues and other interested parties by outlining benefits and involving them in your planning*);
- establish the expertise, resources, schedule and monitoring procedures needed to get results (*eg negotiate budgets, roles and responsibilities; schedule meetings, set up record-keeping systems, identify quality-control procedures for checking standards*);
- plan how to meet your own skill-development needs, using support from others to challenge your thinking, obtain advice and explore alternatives (*eg mentor, training and development officer*):
  - a) set targets that clearly say what you want to achieve and are realistic, in terms of available opportunities and resources for their development, and are also:
    - Measurable (*ie say how you will know when you have achieved them*);
    - Achievable (*ie challenging, but not too difficult in terms of what you can do now*);
    - Time-bound (*ie with clear deadlines and review dates*);
  - b) identify effective ways of meeting these targets, by identifying action points, resources and preferred methods of learning (*eg coaching, independent learning materials, training course; use of visual, verbal, auditory or practical learning styles; sequencing of theory and practice*), and negotiate resources and support needed from others;

## Improving own learning and performance

In working through this unit, you will be applying skills in improving your own learning and performance. You will:

- assess accurately your own skill-development needs for meeting the demands of the work (KS5.1);
- plan how to meet your skill-development needs, by setting realistic targets and negotiating effective ways of meeting these (KS5.2);
- monitor progress and critically reflect on, and review, your own performance (KS5.3); and
- evaluate the effectiveness of your application of skills, establishing ways of enhancing your skills in the future. (KS5.4).

**This chart highlights the criteria for establishing your individual skill development needs and capabilities**

### You will need to show that you can:

#### Communication

- interpret and evaluate information from a variety of sources
- synthesise information from relevant sources and select effective ways of structuring this information to suit your purpose, including use of images to clearly illustrate complex points
- show assured, accurate and fluent use of language in presenting information, sustaining the interest of others and responding perceptively to their contributions

#### Problem solving

- select and effectively use a range of strategies and resources to explore problems, research different options and formulate viable proposals for resolving problems
- establish the expertise, resources, schedule and monitoring procedures needed to get results
- monitor progress and adapt your strategy, as necessary, to resolve problems

#### Working with others

- gain commitment to your proposals from relevant people
- ensure that others are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and confirm working arrangements for achieving the quality of outcomes required
- take a lead role in making things happen, sustaining motivation and effective working relationships to enable you and others to meet your responsibilities

# Part B

## WHAT YOU MUST DO

### *You must:*

Provide at least **one** extended example of meeting the standard for KS5.1, KS5.2, KS5.3 and KS5.4 (your example must show that you can apply skills in communication, problem solving and working with others when strategically planning and managing work that is dynamically complex).

#### **KS5.1**

Explore the demands of the work and formulate viable proposals for meeting these demands.

### *Evidence must show you can:*

- establish the critical features of the work and clearly identify the outcomes required;
- select and effectively use a range of strategies and resources to explore problems, research different options and formulate viable proposals for managing the work and resolving problems; and
- assess accurately your own skill-development needs for meeting the demands of the work.

#### **KS5.2**

Plan to manage the work, and meet your own skill-development needs, and gain the necessary commitment from others.

- gain commitment to your proposals from relevant people and establish the expertise, resources, schedule and monitoring procedures needed to get results;
- plan how to meet your own skill-development needs, by setting realistic targets and negotiating effective ways of meeting these; and
- ensure that others are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and confirm working arrangements for achieving the quality of outcomes required.

### **KS5.3**

Manage the work, adapting your strategy as necessary to resolve at least **two** complex problems and achieve the quality of outcomes required. Formally review, with an appropriate person, your use of skills in:

- communication;
- problem solving;
- working with others.

### *Evidence must show you can:*

- take a lead role in making things happen, sustaining motivation and effective working relationships, to enable you and others to meet your responsibilities;
- monitor progress, interpreting and evaluating information from a variety of sources, and critically reflect on and review your own performance; and
- adapt your strategy, as necessary, to resolve problems, meet new demands and produce the quality of outcomes required.

### **KS5.4**

Evaluate your overall performance and present the outcomes, including at least:

- **one** formal, oral presentation of the outcomes from the work;
- **one** written evaluation of your overall approach and application of skills.

- synthesise information from relevant sources and select effective ways of structuring this information to suit your purpose, including use of images to clearly illustrate complex points;
- show assured, accurate and fluent use of language in presenting information, sustaining the interest of others and responding perceptively to their contributions; and
- evaluate your overall approach to the work and the effectiveness of your application of skills, establishing ways of enhancing your skills in the future.

# Part

## GUIDANCE

This unit recognises your ability to apply a strategic approach to managing work that is dynamically complex ie work in which action in one activity is likely to change other aspects of your work in ways that may be difficult to predict or control. This might happen, for example, when external changes to timescales mean you need to balance technical and human demands in meeting tight deadlines.

You may be involved in:

- formulating and establishing policies;
- setting up or supporting organisational structures or advanced systems;
- advancing practice and theory (research);
- managing complex design work or customer-service operations.

Much of your work will be self-directed. You will be likely to delegate aspects of your work and take responsibility for supporting others and checking their work. However, over a period of at least three months you will also need to identify opportunities that will enable you to develop, personally and professionally, in meeting challenging new demands. Skills will be integral to this process.

You are likely to be using a range of skills, as well as specialist knowledge, in managing your work, but for the purpose of this unit, you will need to pay specific attention to skills in communication, problem solving and working with others. These skills may be developed in a variety of ways. For example, through coaching while carrying out practical tasks, by using independent learning materials, or through a specific training course. You will need to show that you can apply what you have learned, critically reflect on your performance and adapt your skills in meeting new demands.

In establishing the critical features of your work, you will need to identify opportunities for:

### **Communication,**

eg opportunities to:

- interpret and evaluate information (oral, written, numerical, visual), from a variety of sources, including electronic;
- engage in discussions and make presentations;
- write a variety of documents, using IT where appropriate to enhance communications.

### **Problem solving,**

eg opportunities to:

- use a variety of strategies and resources for exploring problems;
- generate realistic options for resolving problems;
- monitor progress and evaluate results.

### **Working with others,**

eg opportunities to:

- work on a one-to-one basis;
- take a lead role in a group or team;
- consult others to help resolve problems.

These skills are implicit in the standards described in Parts A and B of this unit, and they will be assessed in an integrated way. However, to help you establish your skill-development needs and capabilities, the individual criteria are listed under the individual skill headings on the next page.

- ensure that the people involved in carrying out the work are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and confirm working arrangements for achieving the quality of outcomes required (*eg the standard of performance, product or service*).

## *In managing the work,* YOU NEED TO KNOW HOW TO:

- take a lead role in making things happen, so that you and others can meet your responsibilities (*eg obtain resources, optimise budgets, keep each other informed*), managing time effectively and sustaining:
  - the motivation of those involved (*eg recognise your own needs and feelings and those of others, show appreciation for individual and team efforts, use humour to raise morale*);
  - effective working relationships, by behaving ethically, showing fairness in making decisions, providing, and inviting, constructive feedback on performance, anticipating and dealing with conflict or resistance (*eg address problems resulting from poor communication or personality clashes by restructuring meetings or role boundaries, facilitating the airing of grievances and issues and following correct procedures*);
- monitor progress, interpreting information from a variety of sources (*eg written, visual, oral and numerical data obtained from electronic sources, face-to-face meetings, direct observation or measurement*) and identifying possible error, bias and distortion when making judgements on the quality and reliability of information;
- critically reflect on your own performance in applying skills in communication, problem solving and working with others (see Part C for criteria);
- formally review progress towards meeting your targets with an appropriate person (*eg your line manager, mentor, colleague*), including how you have used different approaches and styles of learning in developing your skills;
- adapt your strategy, as necessary, to:
  - resolve problems (*eg draw on relevant research findings, expertise and support from others, results from testing, observing, sampling or inspecting*);

- meet new demands (*eg adapt your skills to deal with other developments as the work progresses*);
- produce the quality of outcomes required.

## *In evaluating performance and presenting outcomes,* YOU NEED TO KNOW HOW TO:

- synthesise information obtained from relevant sources, by identifying different perspectives and developing your own interpretation in a way that brings together information in a coherent way;
- select effective ways of structuring this information to suit your purpose, including the use of images (*eg diagrams, charts, graphs, pictures*) to illustrate complex points;
- present the outcomes of your work through the use of written, oral and visual forms of communication, showing assured, accurate and fluent use of language, including:
  - confident and precise use of standard English, or Welsh or Irish;
  - accurate use of grammar, punctuation and spelling;
- sustain the interest of the people with whom you are communicating (*eg colleagues, clients, line manager, external assessor*), through choice of style and presentational devices (*eg use of electronic multimedia*), and respond perceptively to their contributions by analysing, developing and sustaining arguments to persuade, influence and inform;
- evaluate your overall approach to the work, identifying factors that had an impact on outcomes (*eg level of expertise, resources, response time to changing demands, environmental factors*), including the effectiveness of your application of skills (*eg how your use of particular skills improved, or limited, your performance*);
- establish ways of enhancing your skills in the future (*eg set new targets, identify opportunities and sources of support*).



## Examples of evidence

Evidence should be drawn from work carried out over an extended period of time (at least three months). This work should require you to adapt your skills to meet the demands of change processes that constantly interact to produce new problems, issues and opportunities.

**It is expected that information relating to your performance, and the outcomes from managing the work, will be collated and synthesised, in written and oral forms, to meet the purpose of:**

- a performance review with a person who knows you and your work;
- an assessment by someone who is independent of your work, eg through a professional dialogue.

*The examples of evidence below give an indication of the sort of material that you may wish to collect for review and assessment purposes.*

### **KS5.1 EXPLORE WORK DEMANDS**

Descriptions of:

- the critical features of your work and the outcomes required;
- how you formulated viable proposals, including strategies and resources used to explore problems and research different options.

A brief statement of the skills you need to develop in communication, problem solving and working with others.

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**This unit is for use in programmes starting from September 2000.**

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### **KS5.2 PLAN**

#### **THE WORK**

An outline of your proposals, with:

- records of how you gained commitment from others and established the expertise, resources, schedule and monitoring procedures needed to get results;
- a development plan setting out targets, action points, deadlines and review dates, with notes of how you negotiated support and resources.

### **KS5.3 MANAGE THE WORK**

#### **AND MONITOR PROGRESS**

A variety of records (eg video or audio recordings, annotated photographs, statements from those who observed your work, minutes from meetings, products) to show how you enabled yourself and others to be effective in meeting responsibilities and produce the quality of outcomes required.

A critical, reflective commentary on your application of skills in communication, problem solving and working with others.

Records of your formal review, including answers to questions about how you adapted your strategy to resolve problems and meet new demands.

### **KS5.4 EVALUATE PERFORMANCE**

#### **AND PRESENT OUTCOMES**

Hand-outs, overhead projector transparencies or a record of electronic screen displays used in your presentation. Statements from someone who observed your presentation.

A written evaluation of your overall approach to the work, including an assessment of your skills and ways of enhancing them in the future.

If producing certain types of evidence creates difficulties, through disability or for another reason, you may be able to use other ways to show your achievement. Ask your tutor or supervisor for further information.