

Improving Own Learning and Performance

Effective practice in teaching and learning

Improving Own Learning
and Performance

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This publication is one of a series of *Effective practice in teaching and learning* guides. There is one guide for each of the six key skills.

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About this guide

This guide will help teachers to support learners working towards the key skill qualification of Improving Own Learning and Performance (IOLP) at Levels 1–3. IOLP can be part of a wide range of learning programmes and is delivered in a number of contexts including:

- schools
- colleges
- work-based learning
- other contexts including the secure estate and adult and community learning.

The guide has been written so that it will be useful to both **new and experienced** teachers, working in **any context**, with the **full range of learners**.

Overview

This guide explains the IOLP key skill and provides some suggestions and ideas for teaching and supporting learners. It also gives an overview of the assessment system for the key skills in general and explains the specific requirements for IOLP.

The guide contains the following sections.

- **The value of Improving Own Learning and Performance** explains the importance of this key skill.
- **The Improving Own Learning and Performance key skill** introduces the IOLP process and the QCA standards.
- **Approaches to delivery** explains the main principles for teaching IOLP and suggests how these may be applied in a range of settings.
- **Teaching Improving Own Learning and Performance** is the main part of the guide and contains ideas and guidance about how to teach the key skill. It is organised under the headings 'Planning', 'Doing' and 'Reflecting'.
- **Assessing Improving Own Learning and Performance** provides an overview of the assessment system for this key skill.
- **Appendices:**
 - **Appendix 1: Developing your own practice** encourages you to get the most from the guide in terms of your continuing professional development (CPD).
 - **Appendix 2: Resources and support** gives information about free resources and support available from national agencies and programmes.
 - **Appendix 3: Understanding the Improving Own Learning and Performance standards** will help teachers who are new to Improving Own Learning and Performance to interpret the key skills standards.

Further advice and information

- If you need further advice on the specific assessment requirements for the qualification, you should refer to your awarding body. Assessment is the responsibility of the awarding bodies who provide detailed documentation and specialised training.
- For information or resources on the development of schemes of work or on how to write assignments that develop and/or provide evidence for Improving Own Learning and Performance, please see other publications from the Key Skills Support Programme (KSSP) at www.keyskillssupport.net
- Earlier good practice guides specifically for school and college staff and for work-based practitioners are still available on the KSSP website at www.keyskillssupport.net (see Appendix 2, p40).
- For detailed advice and guidance on interpreting the key skills standards, you should consult the QCA guidance document detailed below.

Throughout this guide, the term 'QCA guidance' refers to *The key skills qualifications standards and guidance: working with others, improving own learning and performance and problem solving – levels 1–4* (QCA, 2004; ref QCA/04/1294). This is available from QCA Publications (tel 08700 606015) or via the QCA Orderline <http://orderline.qca.org.uk>. It can be downloaded from the QCA website www.qca.org.uk

The value of Improving Own Learning and Performance

Improving Own Learning and Performance (IOLP) is the key skill that promotes effective performance in education, training and employment. It provides learners with a structured approach to learning, continuous improvement and self-management which is relevant to every context – from GCSE to advanced level study, to work-based learning, higher education and employment. It is designed to help people become increasingly independent learners who know what they want to achieve and can work towards this.

Improving Own Learning and Performance develops valuable skills for a wide range of learners who will be working towards the qualifications for a variety of reasons in a number of settings. For example, they may be:

- a Key Stage 4 learner who is doing IOLP alongside GCSEs or a vocational qualification
- a Year 11 learner who wants to improve their GCSE performance
- an apprentice for whom the qualification provides a valuable part of, or addition to, their Apprenticeship framework
- a Year 12/13 or FE learner preparing for higher education and/or employment
- an Entry to Employment learner doing IOLP as a way of getting back into the habit of learning
- an offender in prison doing IOLP to improve their employment or education prospects on release.

IOLP in the revised National Curriculum

In their introduction to the revised secondary National Curriculum QCA states that 'skills such as self-management, problem solving, teamwork and effective communication are important components in a curriculum that seeks to develop young people for the future'. One of the aims of the National Curriculum is to enable all young people to become successful learners who 'understand how they learn and learn from their mistakes' and 'enjoy learning and are motivated to achieve the best they can now and in the future'.

The personal development section of the secondary curriculum includes:

Enjoy and achieve – develop the capacity to enjoy learning and succeed in it

Through becoming self-aware and self-managing young people will:

- *develop a positive sense of their own identity and self-esteem*
- *be able to enjoy life and be positive about its challenges*
- *use their imagination and creativity to develop new ideas, insights and new ways of doing things*
- *learn to assess their skills, achievement and potential to set personal goals, negotiating and planning ways to meet them*
- *understand that achievement is life-long and that there are different ways to succeed*
- *aim to achieve personal excellence, enjoy learning and be motivated to achieve their best.*

Source: <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/personaldevelopment/index.aspx>

Personal, learning and thinking skills

The 11–19 framework of personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) is central to the revised secondary curriculum as well as post-16 education. PLTS are also an integral part of the Diplomas which will be piloted at Foundation, Higher and Advanced levels from 2008. At the time of writing this guide, no separate accreditation of these skills is planned, but organisations may decide that learners taking Diplomas – certainly those at Higher and Advanced level – might also gain formal accreditation of their skills as reflective learners through the Improving Own Learning and Performance key skill.

One of the groups of skills identified in the PLTS framework is ‘reflective learners’. The focus for this group of skills is:

Young people evaluate their strengths and limitations, setting themselves realistic goals with criteria for success. They monitor their own performance and progress, inviting feedback from others and making changes to further their learning.

Source: PLTS framework (www.qca.org.uk/qca_15033.aspx)

Enrichment programmes

As well as subjects leading to qualifications, non-accredited aspects of the curriculum such as work-related learning, careers education, citizenship and enterprise and entrepreneurial skills all provide a sound base for IOLP which can offer recognition of the skills and knowledge learners acquire in these areas. Work experience schemes also provide opportunities for learners to review and evaluate what they do and learn during their placement.

Enrichment programmes – from plays and concerts, through community service and charity work, to externally accredited programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme, ASDAN and Young Enterprise – all provide ideal contexts for developing this key skill.

Every Child Matters

Offering IOLP could also demonstrate a school's active commitment to Every Child Matters in developing learners' future employability.

Achievement and Attainment Tables

IOLP qualifications – like the other key skills – are assigned points that contribute to Achievement and Attainment Tables in secondary education. IOLP is worth 18.8 points at Level 1, 34.5 points at Level 2, and 63 points at Level 3. For comparison, a grade D GCSE is worth 34 points.

IOLP and GCSEs, Diplomas and A levels

Many GCSE and A level programmes require learners to manage their time and to juggle the sometimes conflicting demands and deadlines that they have not experienced to the same extent in earlier stages of their education. Learners on the new Diploma programmes will have similar demands made on them as an intrinsic part of their progression towards becoming independent learners. Many schools and colleges have found that IOLP, delivered in the context of a tutorial programme, helps to provide just the kind of structure that learners need for success in these learning programmes.

The partnership tutoring really helps the students to understand the relevance of the [IOLP] key skill. Attendance has really improved and embedding the wider key skills means that students understand why they are doing them.

Josette Bennett, Stockport College of Further Education

IOLP in work-based learning

IOLP is an important employability skill. The CBI has reported that over half of employers are concerned about school leavers' generic employability skills, which they regard as 'central to virtually every job and sector'. They present an employability skills framework that includes:

Self-management – readiness to accept responsibility, flexibility, resilience, self-starting, appropriate assertiveness, time management, readiness to improve own performance based on feedback/reflective learning.

Source: Fit for Business, Employment Trends Survey 2007 (CBI, 2007)

IOLP forms part of the framework for some Apprenticeships and is integrated into certain NVQs. Reports from providers suggest that learners who undertake IOLP are more successful in other aspects of their Apprenticeship such as the NVQ and technical certificate. Some providers offer IOLP in addition to framework and NVQ requirements because it helps prepare learners effectively for work.

IOLP and higher education

IOLP is included in the UCAS tariff. The qualification is assigned a value of 10 tariff points at Level 2 and 20 tariff points at Level 3.

Universities emphasise the importance of the skills that are central to IOLP – and the other wider key skills. Higher education institutions (HEIs) have identified the skills as critical to successful progression to higher-level learning, and to retention and completion on degree programmes. The Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) 'Subject benchmark statements' also identify the importance of key skills in the curriculum (see www.qaa.ac.uk), while the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has established a national Enhancing Student Employability Coordination Team to promote awareness among students and staff of the importance of student employability.

In working out my strategy for the key skill of Improving Own Learning and Performance I used Progress File to develop an action plan and note my current capabilities, so I could compare it as I was monitoring my progress. I definitely think the key skills process made me focus more.

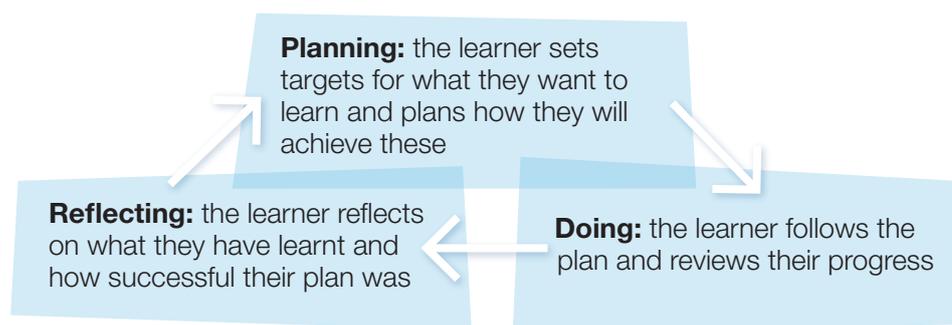
HE student

Some post-16 institutions use IOLP as part of preparation for the demands of higher education (HE), which include a greater need for learners to be self-motivated, organise and manage their own time and develop different methods of learning and study. Learners need these skills while at university and they should always be emphasised in the personal statement in the UCAS form.

The Improving Own Learning and Performance key skill

This section provides an overview of the Improving Own Learning and Performance key skill. If you are relatively new to the key skill, you may wish to go now to **Appendix 3: Understanding the Improving Own Learning and Performance standards** (p41), which gives more detail. When working with learners, you will also need to be familiar with the standards themselves and the QCA guidance.

The key skill of Improving Own Learning and Performance is available at Levels 1–4. The focus of this guide is on teaching learners aiming for Levels 1, 2 or 3. At every level the key skill follows a clear process:



The table below shows what learners must do at each level from 1 to 3.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Plan	Confirm your targets and plan how to meet these with the person setting them	Help set targets with an appropriate person and plan how these will be met	Set targets using information from appropriate people and plan how these will be met
Do	Follow your plan, to help meet targets and improve your performance	Take responsibility for some decisions about your learning, using your plan to help meet targets and improve your performance	Take responsibility for your learning, using your plan to help meet targets and improve your performance
Reflect/review	Review your progress and achievements in meeting targets, with an appropriate person	Review progress with an appropriate person and provide evidence of your achievements	Review progress and establish evidence of your achievements

As learners progress through the levels, they are expected to take more responsibility for managing their own learning, to use more sophisticated learning techniques, and to reflect on and evaluate their approach to learning in more depth.

The QCA guidance (p40) says: ‘At levels 1 and 2, the candidate works with an appropriate person who takes the lead in setting targets and reviewing progress. At level 3, the candidate takes the lead role.’

In order to achieve the IOLP qualifications, there is a range of things that learners need to know. These include:

- how to set targets and create a plan
- how to manage their time
- how to seek information and identify people who can provide support
- different ways of learning and how to choose the right one for their needs and their targets
- how to seek and act on feedback
- how to review progress and monitor their plan
- how to reflect on what they have learnt and how they could continue to improve in the future.

Process skills, interpersonal skills and personal qualities

The aim of the standards for IOLP is to develop independent learners who are clearly focused on what they want to achieve and able to work towards targets that will improve the quality of their learning and performance. This involves two types of skill:

- **process skills** – which are used throughout the plan–do–reflect/review cycle, such as target setting, managing time or reviewing progress
- **interpersonal skills** – which underpin the process skills and are crucial to success, such as listening, negotiating learning opportunities or communicating needs.

Learners’ **personal qualities**, such as confidence, flexibility and assertiveness, will also play a part in how effectively they improve their learning and performance.

Helping learners to develop and improve their interpersonal skills and personal qualities is just as important as developing their process skills.

This is made clear in the QCA guidance (p40): ‘The focus of the assessment of Part B is primarily on the process skills, although to be effective, candidates will also need to develop and apply their interpersonal skills and have personal qualities such as confidence, motivation and persistence. These skills and qualities should be highlighted as important...’

Links with other key skills

In a sense, the IOLP key skill underpins all the other key skills. But explicit links can also be made if learners choose to set goals or targets relating to the other key skills. Here are some examples.

- A learner may choose writing a letter of application as a target. This clearly links to the Communication key skill.
- Another learner may choose an ICT-based target, such as learning to create a database.
- Level 3 learners might set themselves the target of solving a technical issue. This could link to the Problem Solving key skill.
- A learner aiming for Application of Number at Level 2 or Level 3 might set the target of improving their data collection and analysis skills.

Approaches to delivery

How you design your teaching for Improving Own Learning and Performance will depend on the context you are working in and the needs of your learners. Whatever your context, the central principles for teaching all the key skills are:

- embedding and integrating learning with other topics or subjects
- personalising learning so that each learner is offered an individual learning programme, with opportunities for progression
- using active learning methods to maintain motivation and ensure that skills are applied in real and relevant contexts
- encouraging collaborative learning wherever possible.

Recent research carried out by KSSP (2007) into the wider key skills found great variety in how IOLP is taught and assessed. While some providers do some group teaching, in many cases – both in schools and colleges and in work-based learning – the approach used was one-to-one reviews or tutorials. Although an element of individual teaching allows greater personalisation, there is a risk that it may be less planned or structured.

However, the research also highlighted how important teaching these skills can be. For example, while we all to some extent learn how to improve our performance within our work and learning, learners will develop these skills much more effectively if they are made explicit.

Embedding and integrating

Integrating the key skill within a learner's overall programme will help to ensure that their work on IOLP will also contribute to their other achievements. It also helps to ensure that the goals and targets they set themselves are relevant and appropriate.

Some providers use an embedded approach where learners develop, practise and apply their key skills in the context of their main programme of learning. Key skills development opportunities are planned and signposted in the scheme of work and in lesson plans. The key skills are taught either by main subject teachers or by key skills specialists, sometimes through team teaching. There is no separate timetabling of key skills but learners may be offered additional support (eg through workshops or tutorials), including for building portfolios. However, it is important to achieve a balance. Providers in research conducted by KSSP often described themselves as using an embedded approach, but this can carry the risk that the skills are embedded to the extent that they are virtually invisible to learners.

Other providers 'contextualise' their key skills teaching. Here, key skills specialists deliver key skills in timetabled sessions. However, the key skills specialists liaise with main programme tutors to ensure that the examples and contexts used in these sessions are relevant to learners' main programmes of learning. The specialists also offer support for building portfolios.

Example

One school delivers IOLP for selected learners in additional sessions focused on improving their revision techniques.

What is crucial is to devote time to teaching the skills of Improving Own Learning and Performance. Learners must develop the understanding and skills involved in order to complete all the assessment successfully. So it is vital not to assume that learners will improve their skills 'by osmosis'. The section 'Teaching Improving Own Learning and Performance' (p13) looks at some ways of doing this.

Personalisation

Personalisation is important because, while it is not a new idea, there is a drive to make it widespread across all schools, further education and work-based learning.

Personalised learning is absolutely central to the IOLP qualifications since the starting point for personalisation is to help learners set individual learning targets. Teachers then work on a one-to-one basis to help learners review their progress, reflect on their learning and set further targets. For IOLP, the goals, targets and learning plan for each individual will be unique to them, as will their review and reflection.

The starting point for personalising learning is to establish each learner's existing skills and abilities. In a school you will already have much of this information, but in work-based learning, colleges, the secure estate and other settings learners will be new to you and you will need to carry out some form of initial assessment. There is a range of methods you can use, including self-assessment, discussion and structured activities.

For more information on initial assessment, see the *Initial assessment toolkit for key skills and Skills for Life* (KSSP, 2006), detailed in Appendix 2 (p40).

This information is used to help learners set individual learning targets. Teachers then work on a one-to-one basis to help learners review their progress, reflect on their learning and set further targets.

If learners have a personal tutor, this is an ideal way to personalise learning, and many organisations choose to deliver IOLP through their tutorial systems.

Below are some examples from the KSSP research.

All learners have regular monthly reviews where they look back over the month, identify gaps in learning and anything they need to improve on.

We approach IOLP through the generation of monthly action plans and the reporting scheme. At the beginning of the programme, we will help the apprentices to produce their action plans and reports, but once they've got the idea (usually after the first two or three reporting sessions), they produce their own action plans and have them signed off by their line manager.

Our approach to target setting across the school involves action planning so our learners should be doing this anyway.

Active learning

Active learning is dynamic, involves dialogue and gives learners experiences and activities that allow them to do things and engage in the learning process. Because key skills are about applying skills and knowledge, they already embody an active learning approach.

Within IOLP there are many opportunities for active learning – indeed, it is vital that learners have opportunities to practise the skills of planning, doing, reviewing and reflecting. The activities in the section ‘Teaching Improving Own Learning and Performance’ (p13) give examples of how you can promote an active learning approach.

Collaborative learning

Although a personalised approach is central to IOLP, there is also scope for group work and collaborative learning. For example, there is no reason why individuals should not set personal targets in the context of a group project or assignment. There are also some aspects of the standards that lend themselves to group teaching – such as setting SMART objectives and giving information about ways of learning.

However, when learners have worked as a group, it is important to ensure that the work of each learner is assessed individually. Teachers will need to be careful to ensure the authenticity of any evidence that is included in the portfolio – ie evidence must have been produced by the learner, with no more help than the standards at each level allow.

Teaching Improving Own Learning and Performance

The teacher's role is to create a climate in which learners contribute to and negotiate their own learning plans and are able to reflect on, review and discuss their progress. As they progress through the levels, learners should increasingly look on the teacher and others as a resource to support them in achieving the learning or improvements they have planned.

This section of the guide gives ideas for both teaching the knowledge required in the standards and taking learners through the plan–do–reflect/review process. It is presented to follow the three main stages of IOLP.

Planning

- Setting goals and targets
- Ways of learning
- Resources and support
- Action points
- Risk assessment

Doing

- Managing time
- Reviewing progress
- Using feedback and support

Reflecting

- Reflecting on performance
- A framework for reflection
- Identifying scope for future improvement

Planning

The planning stage is perhaps the most important part of the IOLP process. Getting the plan right makes it much easier for learners to follow the other two stages, which depend on having a well-constructed plan. It is an important part of the evidence for the IOLP portfolio. The plan needs to include the following information:

- a goal – linked to the learner’s overall personal, learning or career goals
- targets – the steps for helping to achieve the goal
- a timescale for reaching each target
- action points for achieving the targets
- the ways of learning selected
- support and help needed from other people
- any resources that will be used.

At all levels learners need to know that making plans is about:

- **why** they want to do something
- **what** they want to achieve at the end of it
- **when** they intend to complete it
- **how** they are going to approach it
- **what** resources they will need
- **what** problems may arise
- **who** will support them – in what way and when.

The plan should specify exactly what the learner will do and when. The document on the next page suggests a format for a draft plan that may help with this. Your awarding body may provide pro formas that can be used for the plan. Plans can be ICT-based.

Plans are essential as evidence for the IOLP qualification. The QCA guidance (p45) states: ‘Although plans may be amended at a later stage, it is not acceptable for them to be produced in retrospect.’

Setting goals and targets

Learners must have a good reason for wanting to learn or improve their performance. Although you may give learners help with setting their goals and targets, they must be ones that the learners themselves want to achieve and will motivate them.

For the IOLP qualification, learners may need to explain their reasons for learning so they should be clear about these before they start.

Goals

The QCA guidance (p41) explains that targets are ‘the steps for helping to achieve personal, learning and/or career goals’.

The first stage of the planning process is to identify an overall goal. Although the standards refer mainly to ‘targets’, these must be linked to a goal that is relevant and appropriate to the learner.

Here are some examples of learners’ goals.

- Gabriella is a Year 10 learner whose goal is to improve her revision skills and get higher grades in her GCSEs.
- Hayley is on an Entry to Employment course. Her goal is to: ‘Write a letter of application for a job’.
- Naresh is a Year 11 learner who hopes to start a Creative and Media Advanced Diploma next year. His goal is to: ‘Learn about careers in the media industries’.
- Chris is a motor vehicle apprentice. His goal is to: ‘Learn how to service a gearbox’.
- Dave is going on an outdoor pursuits weekend as part of his Duke of Edinburgh’s Award. His goal is to: ‘Improve my navigation skills’.
- Roxanne is studying business administration at college. Her goal is to: ‘Be able to set up a financial management system’.

Although goals are broader than targets, they should not be too big or take years to achieve, such as ‘To achieve my Level 2 NVQ’, ‘To pass my A levels and go to university’ or ‘To become a midwife’. While learners should be aiming for bigger, long-term goals in their career or life, they are more than is needed for an IOLP qualification.

Targets

Targets are stepping-stones to achieving the goal. The number of goals and targets required varies according to the level, as shown in the table below.

At Level 1	At Level 2	At Level 3
Learners must provide at least two examples or goals Each example should cover at least two targets	Learners must provide at least two examples or goals Each example should cover at least two targets	Learners must provide at least one example or goal Each example should cover at least three targets

Each example must meet the assessment criteria for all components. It is often easier if the learner makes a plan for one example/goal first because they will find it much easier to plan the second one later.

In practice, target setting is the part of IOLP that many teachers and learners find hardest to get right – the tendency is to make targets too broad or complex. Targets should stretch the learner so that they are learning something new, but at the same time should not be so challenging that they are not achievable.

SMART targets

The QCA guidance says that targets should be SMART – ie specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

- **At Level 1** it is the responsibility of the person setting the targets to ensure this – for example, the teacher or tutor. They should be familiar with the capabilities of the learner and ensure that the targets are ‘capable of being met within a few weeks or less’ (p41).
- **At Level 2** the learner must show that they are able to provide information to help set realistic targets for what they want to achieve.
- **At Level 3** the learners are expected to set realistic targets for themselves.

A SMART target is:

- **S**pecific – sets down exactly what the learner aims to do and achieve
- **M**easurable – is clear about how the learner will know they have met the target
- **A**chievable – is challenging for the learner, but not too difficult
- **R**ealistic – the opportunities and resources should be available
- **T**ime-bound – there should be a timescale for achieving it.

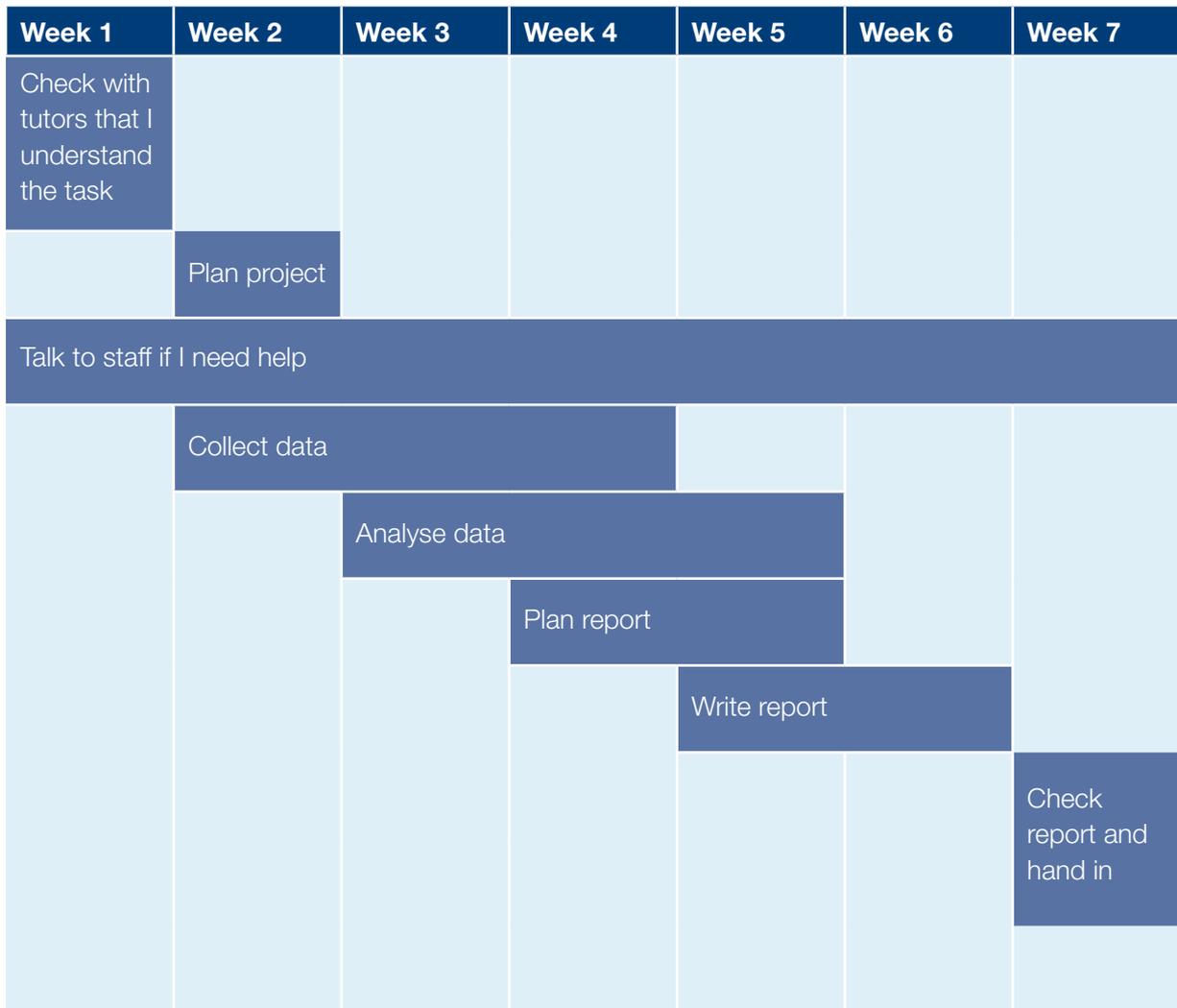
Here are some examples of goals and SMART targets.

Goal	Target
To write a letter of application for a job	Spell all the words in the letter correctly by 23 April Set out the letter in the correct way by 30 April
To give a talk about a European city, using a foreign language	Pronounce new words correctly by 10 October Speak clearly when I give the talk on 28 October
To learn basic skiing techniques	Learn how to use equipment safely by 19 February Be able to descend and traverse by 23 February
To learn how to service a gearbox	Learn how to inspect the gearbox by 10 May Be able to drain the gearbox safely by 17 May Be able to refill with correct oil and check level by 17 May

Setting the timescale

Because targets must be time-bound, each one will need a deadline – learners will need to estimate how long a task will take. There may also be intermediate deadlines or milestones within the overall timescale that will appear as action points (see p22).

Level 3 learners may want to make use of tools such as Gantt charts to help them plan milestones. While it is possible to create these using a computer, a simple Gantt chart can be drawn up by hand. An example of a Gantt chart for a research project is given below.



Ways of learning

In drawing up their plan, learners need to choose the ways in which they will learn in order to achieve their targets.

In this context the standards are the same at each level and specify that learners must ‘Overall, show you can use at least **two** different ways of learning to improve your performance.’

More specifically:

- **at Level 1** learners must ‘use ways of learning suggested by your supervisor, making changes, when needed, to improve your performance’
- **at Level 2** they must ‘choose ways of learning to improve your performance, working for short periods without close supervision’
- **at Level 3** they must ‘choose ways of learning to improve your performance, working at times independently and adapting approaches to meet new demands’.

This provides an excellent opportunity for you to help learners to expand the range of learning methods they use. As a teacher of IOLP, your aim is to help people become effective learners who can use a variety of approaches to suit their own preferences, the task and the context for learning. Learners need to be made aware that:

- there are different ways of learning
- they may prefer to learn in a different way from the one they are used to
- there are no right or wrong ways to learn but some may be more successful than others for particular people in particular situations
- successful learners can adapt and use a range of ways of learning.

At Level 2, for example, the QCA guidance (p48) is: ‘Encouraging candidates to try different ways of learning is an important part of improving own learning and performance, and they should be helped to decide which methods seem to suit them best or are most appropriate to a particular context.’

Learning styles

There are many models of learning styles – and many learners will have completed some form of learning styles questionnaire at an early stage of their programme or course. It is important to treat these with caution as the research examples below show.

An LSDA report, *Should we be using learning styles?* (Coffield *et al.*, 2004) is very sceptical about the value of much of the research and literature about learning styles. It concluded that many learning style ‘instruments’ are at best worthless and at worst can lead to negative and inflexible stereotyping of learners.

Another important concept comes from the work of Pask (1986) who looked at the importance of becoming a ‘versatile’ learner. He found that the most successful learners adapt the way they learn to what they are learning and use different modes, within the same task, at different stages. They deploy learning styles as part of a strategy; they do not simply ‘have’ them as part of a personality trait that is impossible to change.

This all points to the importance of the teacher in helping learners to choose the ways of learning that are most appropriate for their personal targets.

Helping learners choose ways of learning

Learners may not be aware of the range of ways of learning that are available. The activity that follows will help them to think about different ways of learning and to identify those that may be most suitable. Remind them that they must select two different ways of learning for each target.

Choosing ways of learning

You can use this activity with individuals or groups of learners.

Introduce it by explaining to learners that thinking about when they have enjoyed learning will help them to know what their strengths are but that it is also important to choose the right methods for their targets. For example, it may be best to learn a practical skill by demonstration or trying it for yourself, but something theoretical may be learnt best by reading and making notes. They should ask themselves:

- Is this method suitable for what I’m going to be learning – is it likely to be successful?
- Is this method available – can I get the resources and help I need?

Way of learning	I enjoy learning this way	Why I like learning this way	Is this method suitable for my target?
Going on a course			
Learning in a group			
Learning on my own			
Being shown what to do			
Using e-learning or the internet			
Trying things out for myself			
Using self-study packages			
Reading books, magazines or instructions			
Understanding the theory behind something			
Discussing			
Watching someone else			
Watching a video/DVD			

The following checklist of dos and don'ts may help remind learners of the importance of using a variety of ways of learning.

Do	Don't
✓ Make a conscious effort to use different ways of learning	Stick with the same way of learning all the time x
✓ Use different ways of learning to help you develop your thinking and learning skills. You need a range of these throughout life	Treat the ways of learning you like best as a label or part of your personality ('I'm visual' or 'I'm a thinker') x
✓ Think of ways of learning as something you can change – you're in control!	Think of learning styles as fixed or permanent – they change! x
✓ Choose the best method to suit what you want to learn	Pick a method that doesn't suit your target x

Resources and support

Learners need to consider the support and resources they will need to help them achieve their targets and include these in their plan.

- **At Level 1** learners must 'use support given by others to help you meet targets'.
- **At Level 2** learners must 'identify when you need support and use this effectively to help you meet targets'.
- **At Level 3** learners must 'reflect on your progress, seeking feedback and relevant support to help you meet your targets'.

What support and resources will you need?

Support can take the form of a practical demonstration, feedback, teaching, or talking to a specialist in the subject or activity. Resources may include equipment, books, magazines, internet and computer facilities.

Learners need to identify the support they will need and who will provide it. They may also need to ask people if they are able and willing to help them.

Support

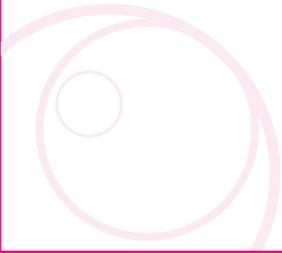


Ask learners to look at their targets and think about what support they might need from other people such as:

- a demonstration of a procedure
- arranging access to resources (eg computers, equipment)
- observing them and giving feedback
- doing a short teaching or tutorial session
- providing information or materials.

They should then make a note of the person or persons who could provide this support and, if necessary, plan how they will approach them.

Resources



Learners should then think about any resources they will need in order to achieve their targets such as:

- books, magazines or other literature
- equipment, tools or workspace
- computer and/or internet access.

Again, they should make a note of how or where they can access this resource and, if necessary, plan how they will do this.

Action points

Once learners have set their targets, identified their ways of learning and identified the support and resources they will need, they are ready to draw up a list of action points. They will need action points for each target that they have set.

This is what the QCA guidance says about action points.

- **At Level 1** 'Evidence is likely to include two plans, each including action points for achieving the targets, deadlines and a date for reviewing progress' (p45).
- **At Level 2** '[Candidates] should know how to write clear action points for each target that are manageable (involve small steps or tasks) and capable of being achieved in the time available (a few weeks or less)' (p48).
- **At Level 3** 'Candidates should know how to write clear action points for each target, with timescales underpinned by time management proposals' (p54).

There is more about time management on p24 of this guide.

Risk assessment

At Levels 2 and 3 learners need to think about factors that could affect the success of their plan.

This is what the QCA guidance says.

- **At Level 1** 'If plans were not revised, assessors should also question the candidate about what they would have done (eg to deal with an unexpected problem)' (p51).
- **At Level 2** 'Assessors should probe candidate's thinking about factors that might affect their plan and their proposals for overcoming possible difficulties' (p56).

However, all learners will benefit from thinking ahead about possible risks. These could be things to do with them personally or factors outside their control. For example:

- *My workload over Christmas will be very heavy.*
- *I'm scared to ask my tutor for help and don't always understand what she says.*
- *I'll need a computer to practise using spreadsheets.*
- *There's someone in our group who takes all the tutor's attention.*

SWOT analysis

Another way to approach risk assessment is to use a SWOT analysis. Level 3 learners may find this a useful tool for future projects. An example is given below. Ask learners to work as individuals or in pairs and list:

- things within themselves that will help their learning (strengths) and hinder their learning (weaknesses)
- things in the wider world that will help their learning (opportunities) and hinder their learning (threats).

They can then discuss ways of building on their strengths and opportunities (usually the easier task) and reducing the impact of the weaknesses and threats.

Strengths

I'm organised
I've got a good attendance record and I'm punctual
My IT skills are good

Weaknesses

I can get distracted easily
I find it hard to manage my time

Opportunities

The chance to do more qualifications
I can attend key skills workshops

Threats

Sometimes the classroom is noisy and distracting
I can't always get on to a computer in the library

Doing

Once the plan is complete, the learner can start to put it into action. As they follow the plan they will need to monitor it, record progress and note any changes. At every level the activities for this stage of IOLP are:

- following the plan and meeting deadlines
- managing time
- knowing when to ask for help or advice
- being able to accept and ask for feedback – and make good use of it
- knowing when to change a plan.

As learners follow the plan, they should keep a record – in a learning log or similar – of what they do and how it's going. Not only will this be useful evidence for the portfolio but it will also help them to answer any questions they may be asked by the assessor.

You should reassure learners that they do not need to worry if they change their plan – that's all part of IOLP. If they change the plan, it proves that they are thinking carefully about and reviewing their progress and learning.

Managing time

Completing action points and working to deadlines all involve managing time. In IOLP, managing time is linked to the ability to set and meet realistic, time-limited targets.

As the levels of the IOLP standards progress, learners need to take more responsibility for managing their time. This is what the QCA guidance says.

- **At Level 1** 'In following each plan, the candidate is required to work through their action points to complete these on time...' (p45).
- **At Level 2** 'Candidates should know that they are responsible for checking that they are working through their action points to complete these on time...' (p48).
- **At Level 3** 'In taking responsibility for their learning, candidates are required to manage their time effectively to meet deadlines...' (p56).

In order to know how to manage their time effectively, learners need to:

- plan ahead
- make a realistic estimate of how long an activity might take
- prioritise tasks
- work to deadlines
- minimise distractions.

The amount of support learners will need and how much you should give will vary between the levels. At Level 1 you should check at frequent intervals that they are on schedule. At Levels 2 and 3 learners are expected to take more personal responsibility for meeting deadlines.

You need to strike a balance between not leaving learners to 'sink' and making sure that they retain ownership of their targets and their plan.

Techniques for managing time

There are a number of techniques that can help with managing time.

- Keep a 'to do' list of everything that needs to be done. This not only helps to break the task down into manageable chunks; ticking or crossing out items can be very satisfying. New items should be added as they arise.
- Estimating how long a task will take can be difficult – especially if the task or activity is new. Help learners to reflect on previous experiences and to monitor how long tasks took in the past to use as a point of reference.
- Build time into the plan for reflecting on progress to date and for making changes.
- Set priorities. Prioritising involves ranking tasks in terms of how urgent and/or important they are. Learners can assign each action point a priority ranking of 1, 2, 3 or 4 on the basis of:
 - Priority 1: Urgent and important = Do it now
 - Priority 2: Urgent but not important = Do it as soon as you can
 - Priority 3: Important but not urgent = Start it before it is urgent
 - Priority 4: Not important and not urgent = Leave it for later.
- Use a project planner, such as a Gantt chart (see p18).
- Minimise distractions. This is a very individual thing – for example, some learners work best when listening to music while others need silence. Sometimes we distract ourselves as a form of task avoidance. We should be aware of this and take action – for example, by switching off a mobile phone. Learners need to reflect on what distracts them and think about what they can do to avoid this. If a learner is being distracted by other people or their demands, they will need to be assertive.

Pitfalls

Here are some of the common pitfalls and suggestions for how the teacher can help learners through them.

The learner	Suggestion
Hasn't even started	Agree an easy starting point – a small task that the learner is likely to achieve easily and successfully
Can't make up their mind what to do next or for the best	Discuss pros and cons and help them to reach a decision
Is aiming for perfection	Point out that it is better to have a task that is completed reasonably well and on time than a perfect one that is a week late
Encounters difficulties beyond their control	Look back at the risk assessment and be prepared to help them if necessary (eg by organising extra time or resources)

Reviewing progress

Learners need to monitor and keep track of their progress towards targets and the achievement of their overall plan. The amount of help they will need from you depends on the individual and the level at which they are working. However, it is helpful for all learners to have a regular progress review with their teacher or tutor.

The QCA guidance for IOLP Levels 1 and 2 (pp42 and 48) states that learners 'should also know the person who will be reviewing their progress, where this will take place and when. It is important they understand the reasons for a review and what to expect...'

The questions below can provide a framework for a progress review.

1 How's the plan going generally?

Start by talking about whether or not the learner is on track with their plan overall and how they feel about it.

2 How are the ways of learning working?

Discuss the ways of learning that the learner has chosen and how well they think they are working. If any of them aren't working, should they select a different way and change the plan?

3 Are you meeting your deadlines?

Here, you need to talk about how the learner is managing their time – whether or not they are likely to meet the deadlines they have set (and the reasons why or why not). If it looks as if they aren't going to meet a deadline, the dates will need to be revised.

4 Are you getting the help you need?

Learners should not be afraid to say if they aren't getting enough help and support to achieve their targets.

5 What resources are you using?

As part of the IOLP key skill, learners need to have a record of any resources they use, so it is helpful to keep a note of them and discuss them as part of the review.

6 Does the plan need adjusting?

The review should enable both you and the learner to identify any changes they need to make to their plan.

7 What would you do differently?

IOLP is not just about achieving the targets set to achieve the qualification; it should prepare learners to improve and manage their learning in the future. Ask learners what they would do differently next time or in a different situation.

Again, you may need to stress to learners that changing the plan is not a sign of failure – in fact, it is an integral part of the IOLP key skill and shows that they are able to review and adjust their plans as necessary.

Remind them that they should keep a record of the outcomes of any review or changes to the plan. A sample format for a progress chart that you could use or adapt for use with learners is shown opposite.

Progress chart

Name:

Date:

Target:

Ask yourself these questions and make a note of your answers. Don't worry if you don't have something to say about every question.

Question	Answer
What's happened since last time?	
Has anything different happened from what I'd planned? If so, what?	
Are the methods working? If not, why?	
Am I keeping to the timescale I've set? If not, why?	
Do I need to change the plan? If so, what are the changes and how will they happen?	
What are the new action points?	
What resources have I used since the last review?	
Where else could I use or apply what I have learnt and how I have learnt it?	

Using feedback and support

Using feedback and support is an important part of the IOLP process. You will probably take the lead in identifying and providing help and support for Level 1 learners but at Levels 2 and 3 learners are expected to be more proactive in seeking feedback and sources of help and support.

This is what the QCA guidance says about feedback.

- **At Level 1** 'Candidates should know how to accept constructive feedback, and be able to ask questions to clarify what they need to do' (p43).
- **At Level 2** '[Candidates] should also know how to accept constructive feedback, and be able to ask questions for clarification, in order to know how to improve performance' (p49).
- **At Level 3** the requirement is the same as at Level 2.

Giving feedback is also an integral part of assessment for learning – sometimes called formative assessment. This should be part of all aspects of a learner's programme, not just their IOLP qualification. Below are some principles both for how the teacher should give feedback and for how learners can receive feedback constructively.

Giving constructive feedback

Tutor

- Invites the learner to speak first
- Praises good work – doesn't just point out and correct errors
- Confirms where the learner is on the right track
- Encourages a dialogue
- Focuses on the task rather than the individual
- Gives specific advice on mistakes and suggests ways of correcting them
- Gives the learner the opportunity to ask for more help
- Provides encouragement and builds confidence
- Keeps a record of main points and agrees this with the learner

Learner

- Listens to feedback carefully before trying to explain or justify
- Asks for clarification if necessary
- Says what they want to change
- Asks for help and support
- Keeps a record and agrees this with the teacher

Reflecting

Reflection is the final part of the IOLP cycle and underpins the whole of the plan–do–reflect/review process. IOLP is all about learners becoming aware of the quality of their own learning and how to plan and improve their performance. The standards place a strong emphasis on this self-awareness and self-knowledge which help learners to:

- identify how they learn best
- identify their achievements
- reflect on and learn from experience
- identify ways in which they could further improve their learning or performance.

The QCA guidance for the wider key skills (p12) states: 'If candidates are to process and assimilate their learning, they will need time for reflection. Those who support candidates can encourage them to reflect in a number of ways, eg by questioning candidates on what they have done, by asking them to record their experiences, or through use of self-evaluation forms.'

The guidance for the IOLP key skill states the following.

- **At Level 1** 'Candidates will need practice in identifying knowledge and skills learned from their various activities. Tutors or trainers can help by providing a supportive environment to encourage candidates to express their own opinion as to what has gone well and not so well' (p43).
- **At Level 2** they have also to identify 'how they have used learning from one task to help them tackle another task' (p49).

Reflecting on performance

Reflecting on what has been learnt involves both:

- **describing** the experience – what you did, what you learnt, how you learnt it and how it felt, and
- **reflecting** on the experience – what went well, what went less well, and what you might do differently another time.

This helps learners to continue to improve learning and performance in the future, for other tasks and in other situations.

In reflection, the focus is not so much on whether or not a target has been achieved (although this is important), it is more about the process – what the learner did on the way to achieving it – particularly if they came up against any difficulties.

A framework for reflection

Reflection

You can use the following questions as a self-evaluation form to help learners reflect or as the basis of a one-to-one, peer or group discussion.

Improving your learning

- What have I learnt?
- What were the most effective ways of learning that I used?
 - Why did they work?
- Were there any ways of learning that didn't work?
 - If so, why not?

Improving your performance

- Which of my targets have I achieved?
- What changes did I make to my plan and why?
- Where did I perform well?
- What were the difficulties?
- What would I do differently in the future?

Identifying scope for future improvement

Reflection is not just about looking back – it is also about looking forward. Here are three examples of how learners have reflected on their learning.

Different revision techniques were explained to us. I tried a few for GCSE history and RE and worked out which ones worked best for me – and I got A in both. But I didn't stick to my timetable and sometimes worked too late at night. I'll have to manage my time better when I start my A levels.*

Key Stage 4 learner

My target was to learn how to carry out accurate calculations for cutting a roof. I suppose my ideal method of learning is by making mistakes. But you can't afford to do this when there's money or materials involved. I learnt that theory without practice wasn't a good method of learning for me or the target I set myself.

Construction apprentice

I've learnt how to use an online database. My targets and deadlines were realistic and went well but I think they covered too much. Next time, I'll break my targets down into smaller tasks.

Business studies learner

Learners should reflect on:

- how they can use what they have learnt – their new knowledge and skills – in another task or another situation or context
- other areas for improvement or learning that have emerged during the IOLP process
- how they could further improve their learning or performance in the future.

- **Assessors of Level 1** should look for evidence of ‘what the candidate has said ... about their progress and achievements ... The candidate’s understanding of what they need to do to improve could be checked through questioning’ (QCA guidance, pp45–6).
- **Assessors of Level 2** should look for evidence that the learner can ‘identify what they learned, and how they have used their learning in another task; ... identify ways they learn best and how to further improve their performance’ (QCA guidance, p52).
- **Assessors of Level 3** should look for evidence of ‘how the candidate has used learning to meet new demands, and probe the candidate’s understanding of the factors that impacted on the quality of their learning and performance. There should also be evidence drawn from consultation with appropriate people to show how the candidate agreed ways to further improve their performance...’ (QCA guidance, p57).

Learners will need help with reflection. It is not enough simply to ask them to do it. Reflective practice is now a central part of professional development for many occupations – especially teaching and work in health and social care. A great deal of training in how to reflect is provided for these professionals.

Learners will benefit from guided discussion and probing questions to help them with reflection. There is also scope for peer review.

Assessing Improving Own Learning and Performance

While this guide can give general advice about assessing IOLP, it is essential that you consult your awarding body for details of their particular procedures and requirements.

As with all the key skills qualifications, to gain an IOLP key skill qualification candidates must provide evidence that they have met all the assessment criteria in Part B of the standards and that they have the knowledge specified in Part A.

For IOLP this is assessed in two ways, through:

- **a portfolio of evidence** – which shows that candidates have met all the criteria in Part B of the QCA standards
- **questioning** – where the assessor asks additional questions to confirm candidates' knowledge of areas of Part A when this cannot be inferred from the portfolio.

This section looks at both aspects of assessment. However, it is essential to check your awarding body requirements and talk to your key skills coordinator or manager and internal verifier to clarify your own organisation's systems. You should also look at your awarding body's documentation and the QCA guidance.

The portfolio

All six key skills require candidates to complete a portfolio as part of their assessment.

A portfolio is usually a folder of evidence which shows that the learner has met all the assessment criteria in Part B of the standards. The essential points are that portfolio evidence must be:

- **purposeful** – the evidence should be generated in the context of a task or activity that satisfies some purpose in the learner's work, study or leisure; the activity must have a purpose and relevance of its own; evidence that has been generated simply to satisfy the requirements of the portfolio is not purposeful
- **authentic** – evidence must have been produced by the learner, with no more help than the standards allow
- **valid** – evidence must show what it claims to show
- **sufficient** – evidence must include all that is required by Part B of the standards.

Whatever approach you choose, portfolio building should start as soon as possible as it is very difficult to catch up later.

It can be helpful for learners to keep two separate folders. The first one is for 'work in progress', which could include all drafts and learning activities. The other one forms the basis for the final portfolio and includes evidence that has been selected from the work in progress file and assessed as meeting the standard. The value of this approach is that it avoids the production of portfolios that are too bulky and contain evidence that is irrelevant or duplicated.

The QCA guidance (p13) states: 'Volume is not a measure of quality. Evidence should be carefully selected to show that the criteria have been met for each component of a key skill' and 'Set exercises can help candidates learn the skills involved in presenting evidence, but including a large amount of work of this type in a portfolio is unacceptable.'

*A **witness statement** is a statement, signed by a competent person, which confirms that the learner completed the activity in question. For example, a supervisor might confirm that the learner discussed and agreed targets with them, or a teacher or tutor might confirm that they took part in a review session. A witness statement should not be the sole form of evidence. Assessors are responsible for judging the validity of witness statements.

Forms of evidence

There are two main forms of evidence that are particularly relevant to IOLP.

- **Evidence of the process**, showing how the candidate has carried out the learning or improvement activities. This could include the candidate's plans, notes, learning logs or diaries, audio or video recordings, assessor observations, peer statements or witness statements* that confirm understanding of the process, and records of discussions, reviews or questioning by the tutor.
- **Outcomes of the process** the candidate has been involved in. This might include handwritten or word-processed documents, something the candidate has made or built, or evidence of a newly acquired skill. The evidence might also take the form of a video or set of photographs.

It is important to note that evidence of outcomes alone is not enough. There must be evidence of process, as this is central to the key skill. IOLP evidence must show how the candidate's skills developed and grew as a result of being involved in a learning activity and responding to problems. At every level the evidence must be holistic and show the whole process. Each example of meeting the standard should follow through all three components in Part B.

How much evidence – what is sufficient?

- **At Levels 1 and 2** the portfolio must cover two distinct and separate activities, each with evidence that the candidate has planned, carried out and reviewed the activity. Each activity must include evidence that the candidate has used at least two different ways of learning to improve their performance.
- **At Level 3** the portfolio must provide at least one example of meeting the standard for all three components in Part B, involving at least three targets and two different ways of learning.

The role of the plan

At every level the candidate must provide a plan. These plans provide essential evidence that is relevant to each component at every level of the IOLP qualifications. Any adjustments or modifications made to the plan, with the reasons for any changes, are also valuable evidence.

The QCA guidance (pp45, 51 and 56) says at every level: ‘The plans could be ICT-based or recorded in another way.’

Examples of Level 1 evidence

A Level 1 portfolio could include the following.

LP1.1	LP1.2	LP1.3
<p>Two plans, each with at least two targets, with action points, deadlines and a date for reviewing progress. If the learner did not write the plan, there must be evidence that they contributed to it</p> <p>Notes or other records that show that the learner checked their understanding of targets, knew how to get support and understood the review arrangements</p>	<p>A learning log or similar with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ brief descriptions of learning activities ■ evidence of at least two different ways of learning ■ notes of support given and how it was used ■ dates of when tasks were completed ■ notes of changes made to the plan, with reasons, and a copy of the revised plan <p>with entries confirmed as accurate by relevant others</p> <p>Annotated photographs, or records from people who have seen the learner’s work</p>	<p>Records (possibly including audio) produced by the learner and/or by the person reviewing their progress that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ show what the learner has learnt and how they learnt ■ identify targets that have been met ■ include what the learner has said about their progress and achievements and what they need to do to improve

Examples of Level 2 evidence

A Level 2 portfolio could include the following.

LP2.1	LP2.2	LP2.3
<p>Two plans, each with at least two short-term targets, with action points, deadlines, notes of support needed and a date for reviewing progress. If the learner did not write the plan, there must be evidence that they contributed to it</p> <p>Notes or other records that show that the learner provided accurate information when helping to set targets, knew how to get support and understood the review arrangements</p>	<p>A learning log or similar with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ brief descriptions of learning activities ■ evidence of at least two different ways of learning ■ dates that tasks were completed ■ when the learner asked for support and how they used it ■ when and how they worked without close supervision ■ notes of changes made to the plan, with reasons, and a copy of the revised plan <p>with entries confirmed as accurate by relevant others</p> <p>Records from people who have seen the learner's work and observed how they managed their time</p>	<p>Records (possibly including audio) produced by the learner and/or by the person reviewing their progress that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ identify what the learner has learnt and how they have used their learning in another task ■ identify targets they have met and evidence of their achievement ■ identify ways they learn best and how to improve their performance further

Examples of Level 3 evidence

A Level 3 portfolio could include the following.

LP3.1	LP3.2	LP3.3
<p>An action plan that includes at least three targets, with action points, deadlines, notes of support needed and dates for reviewing progress. The learner should have recorded the plan, unless they have a specific individual need</p> <p>Records that show how the learner sought and used information from appropriate people and used it to set realistic targets</p>	<p>A learning log or similar with the learner's own notes of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how they learnt in at least two different ways ■ how they adapted their approach to meet new demands ■ when they sought feedback and support and how they used this ■ notes of changes made to the plan, with reasons, and a copy of the revised plan <p>Records from people who have seen the learner's work and observed how they managed their time</p>	<p>Records that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ provide information on ways the learner has used their learning to meet new demands ■ provide information on factors that affected the quality of their learning and performance ■ identify targets the learner has met and evidence of their achievements drawn from at least two different ways of learning ■ show they have consulted appropriate people to agree ways to further improve their performance

For more detail on what assessors will be looking for in IOLP portfolios, see pp44–6, 50–2 and 55–7 of the QCA guidance.

Presenting the portfolio

Portfolio presentation and layout varies according to organisation and awarding body requirements, but usually includes:

- an index of evidence, showing where the evidence can be found in the portfolio or another location. IOLP evidence can be contained in a portfolio for another qualification – for example, an A level or NVQ – but it must be clear that the work has been separately assessed against the key skills criteria
- sufficient evidence that the candidate has achieved the required standard in Part B of IOLP for the level they are aiming for
- descriptions of the activities the candidate undertook, or an explanation of the context in which the evidence was produced
- the candidate's work, including evidence of planning, support, feedback, questioning, development and review
- assessment sheets and records – assessors should annotate evidence to show that it has been assessed
- records of internal verification/moderation.

You should check portfolio requirements with your awarding body. They may also provide suitable pro formas.

Questioning

When you have assessed a candidate's portfolio, it is likely that the portfolio evidence will demonstrate that the candidate understands many aspects of Part A of the standards. However, where this is not the case, you will need to check their knowledge and understanding by asking the candidate additional questions about Part A. You should check your awarding body arrangements for this as requirements may vary.

If questions are needed, you should arrange a one-to-one session with the candidate. Your awarding body will provide a list of questions from which you should select those you need to ask the candidate – the learning log or similar evidence can also act as a prompt. This will mean that some candidates are asked more questions than others. Guidance on the effective use of Part A questions will be provided by your awarding body.

Answers to questions must be recorded. Possible formats include:

- the candidate writes the answers, either on paper or electronically
- the answers are recorded on audio or video tape
- the assessor makes notes of the answers given.

The candidate's answers should be internally assessed and verified/moderated and may be externally verified/moderated by the awarding body.

The key skills assessment system

The key skills assessment system is designed to ensure that assessment of key skills qualifications across all centres is valid, reliable and consistent with national standards.

There are three roles that contribute to achieving this: the assessor, the internal moderator/verifier and the external moderator/verifier.

- **The assessor** is responsible for assessing the evidence in a candidate's portfolio and for making the initial judgement of a candidate's performance, asking Part A questions where necessary. In many cases, the assessor will help learners to compile their portfolio.
- **The internal moderator/verifier** is responsible for ensuring that the standards of assessment in a centre are consistent both across the centre and with national standards.
- **The external moderator/verifier** is appointed by the awarding body and is responsible for ensuring that internal assessment is valid, reliable, fair and consistent with national standards.

Assessor and moderator competence

Awarding bodies offer training and support for assessors and internal moderators/verifiers. There are 16 awarding bodies that offer key skills. They are listed on the QCA website www.qca.org.uk/qca_6564.aspx

Key skills assessors and internal moderators/verifiers are not currently required to have specific qualifications. However:

Assessment of work against the key skills criteria should be carried out by someone with appropriate specialist expertise to understand the full implication of the standards.

Source: *The key skills qualifications standards and guidance: communication, application of number and information and communication technology – levels 1–4* (QCA, 2004, p18)

Assessors and internal moderators/verifiers should schedule regular standardisation meetings to review the quality of their learners' work and to share ideas and experience about best practice and evidence and assessment opportunities.

Appendix 1

Developing your own practice

Your work on this guide can contribute to your continuing professional development (CPD). Reflecting on your current practice and identifying changes you might make can be included in your CPD record. Similarly, if you use activities in the guide for the first time with your learners, you should reflect on how these went and record your observations.

First, spend some time reflecting on your own skills of Improving Own Learning and Performance.

- What are your strengths in planning improvements, monitoring and reviewing plans?
- How do you currently model these to your learners? Could you make more use of them in your teaching?
- To what extent do you use reflection to identify ways of improving your teaching?
- Which skills would you like to develop further?
- How might you do this?

Next, think about any changes that might improve your teaching.

- Where is your current practice already strong? How can you build on this?
- Where do you wish to make improvements to your practice? You may wish to set SMART targets for these.
- What specific ideas from this guide would you like to try out in your teaching?
- What else do you need to find out?

Your work with learners around Improving Own Learning and Performance is an important part of your own professional development. As you develop your skills in supporting learners, you may wish to seek recognition of your expertise. See the websites for the Institute for Learning (IfL) and Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) as well as for the National Teaching and Learning Change Programme (NTLCP) and Key Skills Support Programme in Appendix 2 (p40).

Appendix 2

Resources and support

The Key Skills Support Programme provides a range of other resources and support. The website address is www.keyskillssupport.net. In particular, you may find the following useful.

- The teaching and learning packs from KSSP help learners develop key skills in ways that are directly relevant to the following occupations: Administration, Care, Child care, Hairdressing, Hospitality and catering, Motor vehicle, Retail, Travel and Wood occupations.
- Good practice guides: *Supporting improving own learning and performance* (KSSP, 2004) is written specifically for work-based learning; *Teaching and learning: Improving Own Learning and Performance* (KSSP, 2005) is for schools and colleges.
- The self-study professional development module *An introduction to the wider key skills* can be downloaded from www.key-line.org.uk
- The *Initial assessment toolkit for key skills and Skills for Life* (KSSP, 2006) contains resources to help assess learners' skills in IOLP.
- There is CPD material on the wider key skills at www.keyskillssupport.net/cpda/materials/session14/index.aspx

Other resources

- For more about the key skills standards, visit the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) website at www.qca.org.uk/qca_6455.aspx
- For information about Diplomas, see www.qca.org.uk/qca_5396.aspx
- For PLTS, see <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/skills/plts/index.aspx>
- For more about CPD, visit the Institute for Learning website at www.ifl.ac.uk, Lifelong Learning UK at www.lluk.org or the Institute of Educational Assessors (IEA) at www.ioea.org.uk. For the National Teaching and Learning Change Programme, visit www.qia.org.uk
- If you put 'learning styles' into Google, you will find a host of websites offering information, questionnaires, etc, but remember the caution given earlier (p19) about the limitations of these.

References

CBI (2007) *Fit for business: Employment trends survey 2007*.

Coffield, F, Moseley, D, Hall, E & Ecclestone, K (2004) *Should we be using learning styles? What research has to say to practice*. London: Learning and Skills Research Centre.

KSSP (2007) 'Research on delivery of wider key skills.' Unpublished research.

Pask, G (1986) Learning strategies, teaching strategies and conceptual or learning style. In Schmeck, R (ed) *Learning Strategies and Learning Styles*. New York: Plenum Press.

Appendix 3

Understanding the Improving Own Learning and Performance standards

This section explains the overall structure of the standards and what learners have to do at each level. As a teacher or assessor, however, you must become familiar with all the detail of the standards. You can download these from the QCA website (see Appendix 2, p40).

If anything about the standards is unclear, you should refer to the QCA document *The key skills qualifications standards and guidance – working with others, improving own learning and performance and problem solving – levels 1–4* (QCA, 2004; ref QCA/04/1294) (see p2 of this guide). This provides amplification of the standards together with guidance on assessment.

Structure of the standards

The Improving Own Learning and Performance standards are available for Levels 1–4. At each level there are three components, covering:

- planning Improving Own Learning and Performance
- following the plan and monitoring progress
- reviewing and reflecting on how the plan went.

QCA presents the standards at each level in a four-page leaflet.

- The front page introduces the key skill.
- Page 2 sets out Part A – what learners need to know. This is often referred to as ‘underpinning knowledge’.
- Page 3 sets out Part B in three parts that are referred to as ‘components’. They specify what learners must show that they can do. This is the evidence that they must include in their portfolios. Part B also states how many examples they must provide.
- Each component in Part B also has a series of sub-components that provide the criteria for judging the learners’ performance. These appear under the heading ‘Evidence must show you can’.
- Page 4 gives some examples and guidance.

Your awarding body may present the standards in a different format in their documentation but the content will be the same.



The levels

The QCA guidance (p4) says this about the levels.

‘As candidates move up through levels 1–5, they are expected to:

- draw on more complex and a wider range of techniques in tackling activities
- take increasing responsibility for deciding how they will apply their skills to suit different tasks, problems and situations
- be more aware of factors that affect their performance when working within progressively more challenging contexts.’

Part A: What learners need to know

Part A of the standards sets out what learners need to know in order to meet these requirements. The table below highlights some of the key knowledge required by the IOLP standards. Note that we have highlighted this in a way that relates to the content of this guide; you should, of course, refer to the exact wording in the standards themselves when assessing learners' work.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Targets and planning	Understand targets set Develop individual learning plan with targets, action points and deadlines	Help set targets; provide information Develop individual learning plan with targets, action points and deadlines	Develop individual learning plan with clear and realistic targets, action points and deadlines
Methods of learning	Use different ways of learning to find methods which suit you best	Choose different ways of learning and decide which methods suit you best	Choose different ways of learning and decide on methods which suit you best
Resources and support	Identify how to get support Use support given by others	Take some responsibility Work for short periods without close supervision Use support effectively	Seek relevant information and support Work independently at times; take responsibility for adapting approach
Time management	Complete action points on time	Complete action points on time, revising plan when necessary	Manage time effectively, meet deadlines, overcome difficulties Revise plan when necessary
Keeping track of progress	Identify targets met and achievements	Identify targets met and identify evidence of achievement	Identify targets met and establish evidence of achievement
Using feedback	Make changes suggested by supervisor/tutor	Identify how to get support when needed	Seek and use constructive feedback
Reflection and review	Give an opinion on learning and on what has gone well and less well Check what is needed to improve performance	Review progress and identify what you learnt, how you learn best, and ways to improve performance	Reflect on what is going well and less well; review progress, provide information on relevant factors Consult appropriate people and agree ways to improve performance

Part B: What learners must do

The following table presents the Part B components – what learners must do at each level – as they appear in the QCA standards. It also shows how the components relate to the plan–do–reflect/review cycle.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Plan	LP1.1 Confirm your targets and plan how to meet these with the person setting them	LP2.1 Help set targets with an appropriate person and plan how these will be met	LP3.1 Set targets using information from appropriate people and plan how these will be met
Do	LP1.2 Follow your plan, to help meet targets and improve your performance	LP2.2 Take responsibility for some decisions about your learning, using your plan to help meet targets and improve your performance	LP3.2 Take responsibility for your learning, using your plan to help meet targets and improve your performance
Reflect/review	LP1.3 Review your progress and achievements in meeting targets, with an appropriate person	LP2.3 Review progress with an appropriate person and provide evidence of your achievements	LP3.3 Review progress and establish evidence of your achievements

Useful addresses

AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance)
Devas Street
Manchester M15 6EX
Tel 0161 953 1180
Publications 0870 410 1036
www.aqa.org.uk

ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network)
Wainbrook House
Hudds Vale Road
St George
Bristol BS5 7HY
Tel 0117 941 1126
www.asdan.co.uk

CfBT (Centre for British Teachers)
60 Queens Road
Reading
Berkshire RG1 4BS
Tel 0118 902 1000
www.cfbt.com

City & Guilds
1 Giltspur Street
London EC1A 9DD
Tel 0207 294 2468
www.city-and-guilds.co.uk
www.key-skills.org

DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families)
Functional Skills Policy Team
Room E3c
Moorfoot
Sheffield S1 4PQ
Tel 0114 259 3781
Publications 0845 602 2260
www.dcsf.gov.uk

DIUS (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills)
Key Skills Policy Team
Room W3d
Moorfoot
Sheffield S1 4PQ
Tel 0114 259 4731
Publications 0845 602 2260
www.dfes.gov.uk/keyskills/what.shtml

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme
Gulliver House
Madeira Walk
Windsor
Berkshire SL4 1EU
Tel 01753 727400
www.theaward.org

Edexcel
One90 High Holborn
London WC1V 7BH
Tel 0870 240 9800
Publications 01623 467467
www.edexcel.org.uk

Key Skills Support Programme
5th Floor
120 Holborn
London EC1N 2AD
Helpline 0870 872 8081
www.keyskillsupport.net

LSC (Learning and Skills Council)
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Tel 0845 019 4170
www.lsc.gov.uk

LSN (Learning and Skills Network)
5th Floor
120 Holborn
London EC1N 2AD
Tel 0845 071 0800
www.LSNeducation.org.uk

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Coventry Office
Progress House
Westwood Way
Coventry CV4 8JQ
Tel 02476 851509
www.ocr.org.uk

Ofsted
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA
Tel 08456 404045
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Outward Bound Trust
Hackthorpe Hall
Hackthorpe
Penrith
Cumbria CA10 2HX
Tel 01931 740000
www.outwardbound-uk.org

The Prince's Trust
18 Park Square East
London NW1 4LH
Tel 020 7543 1234
www.princes-trust.org.uk

QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority)
83 Piccadilly
London W1J 8QA
Tel 020 7509 5555
Publications 01787 884444
www.qca.org.uk/keyskills

QIA (Quality Improvement Agency)
Friars House
Manor House Drive
Coventry CV1 2TE
Tel 0870 1620 632
www.qia.org.uk

UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service)
Rosehill
New Barn Lane
Cheltenham GL52 3LZ
Tel 01242 222 444
Publications 01242 544 610
www.ucas.ac.uk

Young Enterprise
Peterley House
Peterley Road
Oxford OX4 2TZ
Tel 01865 776845
www.young-enterprise.org.uk

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