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Guidance for assessment and learning
www.sflip.org.uk

Individual learning plans

What is an individual learning plan?

An effective individual learning plan (ILP) is at the heart of assessment, learning, support and achievement. It helps the learner to become an active, motivated partner in learning. The ILP is:

- a personalised, flexible route map to guide each learner's journey
- a dynamic working document, owned and used by the learner, supported by teachers, employers and others
- a record of learning goals and progression routes, initial and diagnostic assessment information, learning targets, progress and achievements within different contexts for learning
- a communication aid between the learner and others who support the learning process in various contexts
- a way of making and reinforcing links and connections between topics, subject and personal, learning and thinking skills.

In practice, this means learners using their ILP to:

- record what they want to achieve on their learning journey – their goals and progression options
- negotiate and plan **exactly** what they are going to do, how and when. The ILP will include:
 - learning targets with outcomes and timescales, and details of how success will be determined (success criteria)
 - details of the resources, support and guidance the learner will use
 - details of where and how the learning will take place.
- view every assessment as a learning opportunity and to plan for the next steps in learning
- reflect on:
 - what, and how, they learned
 - what went well and why
 - what went less well and why
 - where they could use the skills and approaches again.

The benefits of ILPs

Learners can use ILPs to:

- take ownership of their own learning
- recognise the value of prior experiences
- make sense of new experiences and understand how they learn
- plan to practise skills and gain confidence by applying them in a range of different contexts such as the workplace, at home or in the community
- identify and understand barriers to learning, and where they can find support to remove them
- measure their own success.

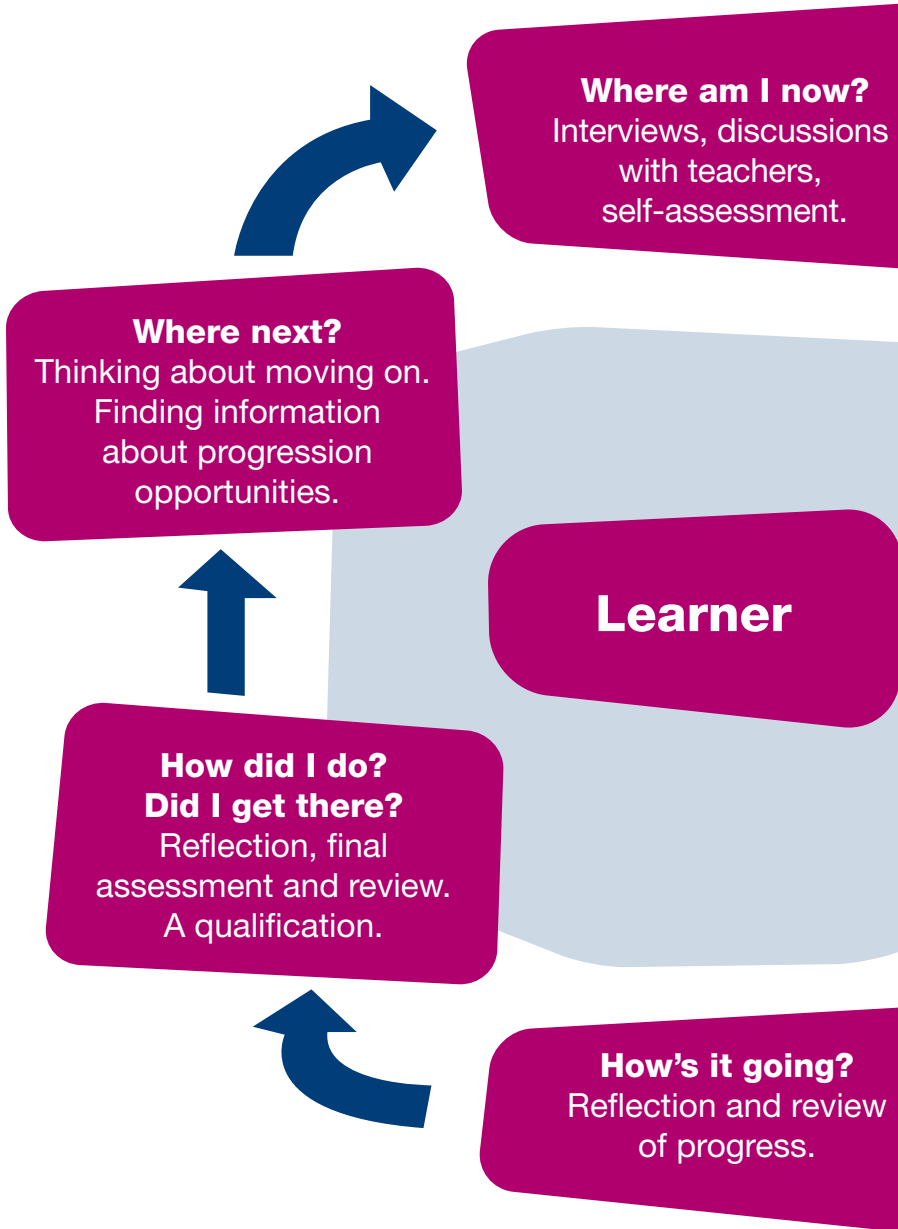
Staff can use ILPs to:

- listen to learners' voices, review performance and respond to learners' needs
- integrate processes around the learner: initial and diagnostic assessment, action planning, learner contracts, additional support needs, tutorial records, learner performance, progression options and exit information
- match teaching and learning to learners' strengths and needs, and ensure that learners are on the right programmes and achieving according to expectations
- plan opportunities for learners to extend their learning into contexts such as the workplace, community or leisure activities
- plan opportunities for progression to further learning.

Managers can use ILPs to:

- make efficient use of core processes
- evaluate learners' responses to new teaching and learning approaches
- support consistent standards and sustainable improvement
- record the RARPA (Recognition and Recording of Progress and Achievement) process
- monitor the quality of provision and provide data for impact measures.

Managing the learner journey



Where do I want to get to?

Setting goals and progression routes.
Why work for a qualification?
What skills do I need to work on?

How do I get there?

Individual and group learning activities.

The learner's journey is dynamic, not confined to a simple loop. Learners will pass through several cycles of learning and review. Involve learners by encouraging them to ask questions about their learning. As you negotiate meaningful ILPs with learners, your role is to:

- create a climate in which learners can negotiate and contribute to their own learning plans
- use teaching approaches that make learning skills explicit
- provide constructive feedback and support for learners as they develop reflection skills.

Your role will vary from the 'sage on the stage' to the 'guide on the side' as learners gain skills and become independent.

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Developing ILPs

- Ask learners to construct a 'route map' and develop ways of discussing learning experiences. For example: start, services, accelerate, destination, motorways, breakdowns.

Preparing to learn

- Share learning objectives and success criteria with learners in a language that they will be able to understand. Learners need to know and understand their targets if the ILP is to be an effective tool.
- With learners, create bite-sized, personal learning targets and success criteria. Learners record them in their ILP. They manage the tasks, measure their progress and reflect on what they learned and how they learned it.

Building assessment into teaching and learning

- Create frequent assessment and feedback opportunities.
- Use tasks where learners must ask questions to promote thinking.
- Plan your questioning strategy and engage all learners. For example, use diagnostic questions (why?, how? with 'wait' time. Ask pairs/groups to confer and agree an answer. Put questions to named individuals so that they are invited to contribute or respond.

Monitoring learning and giving feedback

- Develop error-marking checklists with learners, agreeing how errors will be recorded. Ask learners to mark their own or each other's work.
- Use self- and peer assessment with learners so they learn how to judge their own progress against the success criteria.
- Be specific in your feedback. Identify what has been done well and make specific suggestions for improvement.

Reflection and review

- Reflect on the skills used to learn and not just the content.

How ILPs contribute to high-quality provision

Effective ILP processes lie at the heart of high-quality provision in the FE sector and the aspiration to provide personalised learning for all learners. For example:

- by addressing the challenge of the skills agenda:

‘Learners should be supported ... in order to get the most from their programme and to take responsibility for managing their own learning. In short, we want all students in FE to become “expert learners”. We know that knowing how to learn has a positive impact on retention, achievement and a learner’s attitude to learning.’

Further education: raising skills, improving life chances (DfES, 2006)

- by delivering the 14–19 education and skills programme:

‘[The use of ILPs] must become more widespread and eventually more uniform across schools and colleges. An ILP may be used to set out a programme of study, to set learning targets, and if relevant to set social behaviour targets. They may be used as a basis for inter-agency working, and be linked to partnership-wide data bases for planning, delivery and evaluation. E-based ILPs are most useful, and more attractive to learners.’

Excellence in supporting applied learning (LLUK and TDA, 2007)

- by developing learners with expertise and confidence:

‘However, personalisation is much more than flexibility and tailoring teaching and support – at its heart is the learner taking responsibility for their learning.’

Personalising further education: developing a vision (DfES, 2006)

Want to know more?

See *Planning learning and recording progress and achievement: a guide for practitioners* (DfES, 2003) to learn more about how you and your learners can make the most of each learning opportunity. It will help you to:

- evaluate and review your ILP processes
- develop learner-centred ILPs for your organisation
- improve your practice.

Available at **www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/teachingandlearning**

To learn more about effective practice in the development and use of learner-centred ILPs:
www.sflqi.org.uk/materials/staff_materials/index.htm

To discover the good practice in ILPs reported by Ofsted inspectors:
<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/page.aspx?o=108289>

Person-centred approaches and adults with learning difficulties includes information on interactive resources for personalised ILPs.

Available from QIA Publications
Ref PAALD
Tel 0845 222 60
E-mail qia@prolog.uk.com

To find out about effective tutorial support and use of ILPs, see *Tutorials and target-setting in the effective delivery of vocational A-levels*: (Jones/Duckett, 2004)
www.LSNeducation.org.uk/pubs

How the ILP records and informs assessment and learning

Assessment for learning

- Recognises what has been learnt, including progress in literacy, language and numeracy
- Recognises what still needs to be learnt and how
 - Provides feedback to learners in ways that help them to improve

The individual learning plan records:

- achievements and reflections
- further learning targets
- reviewed progression options



The learner

- Informed
- Making decisions
- Negotiating and using their individual learning plan (ILP)
 - Developing reflective skills

Diagnostic assessment

- Is a detailed assessment of specific skills
- Informs teaching and learning strategies
- Can include a diagnostic assessment tool as part of the detailed assessment of literacy, language and numeracy skills

The individual learning plan:

- records precise learning targets
- details appropriate learning
- steers learning towards achievement of long-term goals

The individual learning plan records:

- the need (or not) for future assessment
- long-term goals and aspirations
- progression routes

Skills check

- Takes place during the information, advice and guidance (IAG) process
- Informs signposting and referral to learning, training or employment opportunities
- Is a quick assessment to establish abilities and needs in literacy, language and numeracy
- Can include a literacy, language or numeracy skills check tool

The individual learning plan records:

- current achievement levels
 - the need for further assessment in specific areas
- long-term goals and aspirations
- progression routes

Initial assessment

- Begins the process of identifying abilities, interests, aspirations and needs
- Informs selection of the right learning programme
- Can include an initial assessment tool as part of the identification of a learner's literacy, language or numeracy level

About this series

This is one of five leaflets on assessment and learning produced by QIA. Other titles in the series are:

- High-quality assessment processes: guidance for managers
- Using skills checks
- Initial and diagnostic assessment: a learner-centred process
- Assessment for learning.

The focus for the guidance leaflets is informed by recent QIA work that highlights the need for:

- greater clarity about the purposes and forms of assessment
- the development and/or honing of understanding and skills to manage and implement assessment at different stages
- effective learner-centred processes
- specific learner feedback that identifies what the learner knows and can do, what the learner needs to learn and how they can learn it
- appropriate use of assessment tools
- effective use of assessment data by learners, teachers, managers and organisations
- effective use of individual learning plans so that they are at the heart of assessment, learning and support processes
- self-assessment and quality assurance processes that take account of the important role played by assessment.

Go to the assessment area of the Skills for Life Improvement Programme website (www.sflip.org.uk) to download copies of all five leaflets, for ideas on how to use the leaflets to support staff and organisational development, and to access a resource bank of supporting material.

Contact us

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