

## Trainee's guide to developing a personal learning plan

*(Based on the work of Drs M Hughes and S Hands, West Midlands Deanery, Birmingham.UK)*

### What is a personal learning plan?

A personal learning plan forms part of a learning agreement. It identifies the learning outcomes / objectives you wish to achieve, a strategy to meet these objectives, and the means by which you will provide evidence of this achievement. It should be initiated by you (trainee) in discussion with your trainer / supervisor. It will benefit you by:

- Making the most of the learning you already do on a regular basis.
- Improving patient care by focusing your learning where it is most needed.
- Clarifying opportunities for the acquisition and assessment of competencies
- Helping you to prepare for appraisal and assessment through preparation of a portfolio of your learning.

### What do I need to do?

Draft a personal learning plan using the guide below

- ⇒ Arrange a meeting with your trainer / educational supervisor to discuss your ideas and make any necessary changes to your plan
  - ⇒ Undertake the educational activities as planned and collect the evidence in your portfolio (the CoBaFolio provides a portfolio template)
    - ⇒ Review your progress at regular intervals with your trainer; this will include review & updating of your plan & discussion of the contents of your portfolio

### Three steps to drafting a personal learning plan:

**1. Learning needs** – what do you most need to learn about in the weeks/months ahead?

**2. Learning activities** – what are the best ways you learn, what learning activities will meet your learning needs, what help will you need and how long (time) will it take?

**3. Evidence of learning** - What will you put into your portfolio to demonstrate your learning progress and achievements?

## Step-by-step guide:

**1. Learning needs** – what do you most need to learn about in the weeks/months ahead?

REMEMBER: Build on any previous learning agreements & personal development plans  
Focus on areas of weakness and not only about the things you are good at  
Think about all aspects of your work  
Include things which will raise your confidence and self-esteem

ASK YOURSELF:

**Is there any need outstanding from your last learning agreement or recent events?**

**What needs do I have arising from instances when my work has seemed difficult or less satisfactory?** (*'Awkward moments', significant events/critical incidents, feedback from colleagues and patients/relatives*)

**What do I need to learn about to feel confident and fulfilled?** (*Clinical and professional skills, career development, academic challenges, interest & enjoyment*)

Make a note of your most important learning needs, then proceed to step two.

**2. Learning activities** – what are the best ways you can learn, what learning activities will meet your learning needs, what help will you need and how long (time) will it take?

REMEMBER: Build on past experiences and consider a wide range of activities  
Pick the most appropriate activity for each need  
Include activities you are already doing regularly  
Be realistic about the time each activity will take and the help you will need.

ASK YOURSELF:

**How have I learnt best in the past, can I use methods which have worked well before?**

**What learning methods and activities are readily available to me?** (eg. learning on your own - reading, online resources; learning within the ICU - formal and informal opportunities; learning outside the ICU - local, regional and national meetings and courses, peer group)

**Is the activity I have chosen appropriate?** (If you need to know about treatment options for ARDS - it may be appropriate to read a journal; if you need to learn the skill of intubation - it may be best to participate in simulated or supervised practice in the work-place).

**How can activities I am already involved in, and wish to continue with, be incorporated into my personal learning plan?**

**What help will I need and who will provide it?** (E.g. yourself - use your past experiences and achievements; members of the health care team - draw on the knowledge and skills of others; your trainer/supervisor)

Make a note of your chosen learning activities and number of hours you think each will take.

### **3. Evidence of learning** - What will you put into your portfolio to demonstrate your learning progress and achievements?

**REMEMBER:** Think about your learning and how you will do things differently in future  
Share some of the things you have learnt with your colleagues  
Look for ways that your learning has actually benefited your patients  
Organize the evidence you collect in a folder so that it can be presented at appraisal

**ASK YOURSELF:**

**How will I show that I have benefited from my learning?** (Records of attendance; written reflections identifying how you will do things differently; Certificates of achievement)

**How will I show that my ICM colleagues have benefited?** (Examples of knowledge and skills shared with your colleagues, protocols or guidelines introduced because of things you have learnt, feedback from colleagues on a job well done)

**How will I show that patients have benefited from my learning?** (Description of a patient's care, results of an audit, positive feedback – cards or letters, or individual comments)

Make a note of your ideas about what evidence to collect. Now arrange a meeting with your trainer to discuss your plan in order to put it into action.