

Personal, Learning & Thinking Skills

Guidance for Young Apprenticeship in Business & Administration

Value of Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS)

The Council for Administration (CfA) has identified the importance of this framework through extensive research with employers and higher education. Feedback from the recent employer evaluation of the Young Apprenticeship in Business & Administration highlighted that attitudes and behaviours needed to be further developed in Young Apprentices. Wider research¹ has also confirmed that employers and Higher Education view generic skills and personal attributes as essential in new entrants emerging from education.

Given the centrality of these skills, the CfA consulted with partnerships in the sector and agreed that it would be of value to consider how PLTs could be developed through the different components of the Young Apprenticeship in Business & Administration. These components are:

- Delivery of VR qualifications
- Work placement (CfA work-based project resource.)
- Enrichment activities
- Enterprise activities
- KS4 core curriculum

This guidance focuses on the development of PLTs through the VRQ, however, the CfA would like to encourage partnerships to take all appropriate opportunities to develop PLTs in all components.

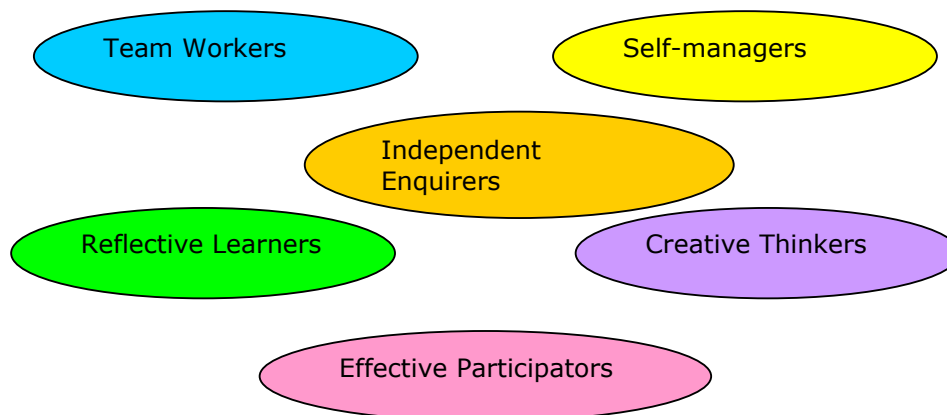
This guidance provides examples of how partnerships are currently approaching the delivery of PLTs. The examples are taken from the Level 2 Technical certificate in Business & Administration but would be equally applicable to the Level 2 BTEC First Diploma in Business. The examples are provided to help you to think about how to develop PLTs through your programme delivery and are not intended to be prescriptive in any way.

¹ For example the CfA LMI Data for Administrators across sectors, based on data from 24 SSCs, representing 2,956,000 of the workforce; CfA Business and Administration Skills Survey 2006 and the National Employer Skills Survey 2005, published by LSC, based on the views of 74,500 employers across industries in England

What are Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTs)?

The framework for PLTS is comprised of six skill groups that are essential to success in learning, life and work.

They are:



For each group there is a focus statement that identifies the main personal, learning and thinking skills in that group. That is followed by a set of outcomes that are indicative of behaviours and personal qualities associated with each group of skills. The full framework is given in Annex 1.

Each group of skills is distinctive and coherent. The groups are also interconnected. Learners are likely to encounter skills from several groups from any one learning experience. For example, an *Independent enquirer* would set goals for their research with clear success criteria (*Reflective learner*) and manage their time and resources effectively to achieve these (*Self manager*). In order to acquire and develop fundamental concepts such as organising oneself, managing change, taking responsibility and perseverance, learners will need to apply skills from all six groups in a wide range of learning contexts.

QCA have published plans to integrate the development of PLTS across 11-19 provision by 2009. The implementation of this work may have an impact on Young Apprenticeship programmes and we would urge partnerships to bear this in mind. In the meantime, the CfA feels that it is important for Young Apprentices to have the opportunity to develop these skills within their existing programmes of learning. This will also allow partnerships to further develop their expertise in delivering and recording the attainment of these skills.

Developing Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTs) through action-orientated learning

The CfA would suggest that partnerships scrutinise their existing programmes of learning to identify opportunities to develop PLTs. The following examples are drawn from current practise in partnerships. They are intended to stimulate discussion and thinking around PLTs delivery and are not in any way prescriptive.

Example 1: Plan and undertake a research project

Working individually, students were required to plan and carry out a piece of research. They decided on a methodology, carried out initial desk research using the internet and developed a short questionnaire. They circulated the questionnaire to appropriate people, and analysed the responses. They produced a written report of the work, including their findings and recommendations and presented their results to a peer group. The group discussed the work and gave feedback on the report and presentation. Students were encouraged to reflect on the experience and discuss with their tutor what went well, and what they might do differently in future.

This activity presents the opportunity for the development of the following PLTs:

Independent enquirers, Creative thinkers, Reflective Learners, Self-managers. Aspects of Team workers and Effective participators might also be developed depending on the precise nature of the research project.

Example 2: Plan how to run a small business to promote a pop group

Working in small groups, students were required to generate ideas for and plan how to run a small business. In the particular example given here, the business was to promote a pop group.

Students generated ideas for the business, and planned how they would implement it successfully (e.g. its aims and objectives, how it would be structured, how it would be financed, its marketing plan, what operations would be necessary, what legislation/regulation needed to be thought about). They researched the market for the business using internet resources, and produced a written business case. They presented their business idea and implementation plan to a peer group, which gave feedback on the business idea. Students were encouraged to reflect on what went well, and the problems they encountered.

This activity presents the opportunity to develop all six PLTs areas.

Example 3: Run an event

Working as a team, students were required to organise and run an end-of-year exhibition and social event.

They were required to come up with ideas for the format of the event, agree the ideas with tutors, agree a budget for the event and monitor expenditure, agree allocation of responsibilities, book the venue, make catering arrangements, issue invitations, organise the exhibition stands and deal with issues and problems that arose.

Feedback was sought on the event from those that attended, and an 'organisers meeting' was held after the event to review the feedback and reflect on the experience.

This activity presents the opportunity to develop all six PLTs areas.

The CfA is keen to extend this catalogue of examples in order to share good practice and developing thinking amongst partnerships. We would therefore be very keen to hear of other practice in this area.

Involving the learner

To ensure that Young Apprentices are equipped to manage their own development of PLTS it is very important that they understand that these skills are an integral part of their programme of learning. The CfA would therefore suggest that PLTs are discussed and incorporated within the Individual Learning Plans (ILP).

The development of the skills needs to be monitored throughout the learning programme, for example, through:

- Discussions in tutorials
- Reflective questionnaires/Diaries
- Placement review meetings
- Self and Peer assessment

Finally, the CfA would suggest that the attainment of PLTs should be recorded within the learner's progress log for the following reasons:

- An opportunity to reinforce the development of these skills with the learner
- A formal record of attainment of the skill areas
- To provide confirmation to employers that these skills have been developed

The CfA is intending to amend the standard progress log document developed by the LSC and DfES to allow for recording of PLTs attainment. Partnerships that use school progress logs may wish to make the necessary amendments to these documents. The CfA would wish to be clear that the recording of PLTs attainment is not a requirement for certification at this stage. Certificates will continue to be issued on the basis of achievement of the Level 2 qualification and completion of a 50-day work placement in the sector.

Annex 1: The PLTs Framework

Independent enquirers

Focus:

Young people process and evaluate information in their investigations, planning what to do and how to go about it. They take informed and well-reasoned decisions, recognising that others have different beliefs and attitudes.

Young people:

- identify questions to answer and problems to resolve
- plan and carry out research, appreciating the consequences of decisions
- explore issues, events or problems from different perspectives
- analyse and evaluate information, judging its relevance and value
- consider the influence of circumstances, beliefs and feelings on decisions and events
- support conclusions, using reasoned arguments and evidence

Creative thinkers

Focus:

Young people think creatively by generating and exploring ideas, making original connections. They try different ways to tackle a problem, working with others to find imaginative solutions and outcomes that are of value.

Young people:

- generate ideas and explore possibilities
- ask questions to extend their thinking
- connect own and others' ideas and experiences in inventive ways
- question own and others' assumptions
- try out alternatives or new solutions and follow ideas through
- adapt ideas as circumstances change

Reflective learners

Focus:

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.

Young people:

- assess themselves and others, identifying opportunities and achievements
- set goals with success criteria for their development and work
- review progress, acting on the outcomes
- invite feedback and deal positively with praise, setbacks and criticism
- evaluate experiences and learning to inform future progress
- communicate their learning in relevant ways for different audiences

Team workers

Focus:

Young people work confidently with others, adapting to different contexts and taking responsibility for their own part. They listen to and take account of different views. They form trusting relationships, resolving issues to reach agreed outcomes.

Young people:

- co-operate with others to work towards common goals
- reach agreements, managing discussions to achieve results
- adapt behaviour to suit different roles and situations
- show fairness and consideration to others
- take responsibility, showing confidence in themselves and their contribution
- provide constructive support and feedback to others

Self-managers

Focus:

Young people organise themselves, showing personal responsibility, initiative, creativity and enterprise with a commitment to learning and self-improvement. They actively embrace change, responding positively to new priorities, coping with challenges and looking for opportunities.

Young people:

- seek out challenges or new responsibilities and show flexibility when priorities change
- work towards goals, showing initiative, commitment and perseverance
- organise time and resources, prioritising actions
- anticipate, take and manage risks
- deal with competing pressures, including personal and work-related demands
- respond positively to change, seeking advice and support when needed

Effective participators

Focus:

Young people actively engage with issues that affect them and those around them. They play a full part in the life of their school, college, workplace or wider community by taking responsible action to bring improvements for others as well as themselves.

Young people:

- discuss issues of concern, seeking resolution where needed
- present a persuasive case for action
- propose practical ways forward, breaking these down into manageable steps
- identify improvements that would benefit others as well as themselves
- try to influence others, negotiating and balancing diverse views to reach workable solutions
- act as an advocate for views and beliefs that may differ from their own