

Learning to be a professional: A current example

Post-graduate, mainly part-time students.

Seeking an award not made by the University.

Self-directed, self-managed, self-assessed.

No time allowance within University programme for this.

Goals to be professional, *and* course-related *and* personal.

Assessment depends upon showing self able to exercise stewardship of CPD.

Self-assessment ultimately “audited”, not second marked.

Self-assessment simply cleared for awarding body.

2-3 iterations of the programme cycle, which each require student to

.... set SMART goals, plan for them, set criteria, monitor, collect data, evaluate.

Formative peer-assessment (or co-operative feedforward) plays a key role.

Facilitative personal development tutor (PDT) plays no role in assessment.

PDT often suggests a range of options, but does not advise on choice from them.

Deliberate disregard of portfolio option; “shoe-box collection preferred.

Collection also reminds students of unintended learning outcomes of value.

Derived from:

- First year civil engineering students keeping reflective journals centred on development of Interdisciplinary Studies;
- A Design programme for civil engineers in which learning outcomes were self-determined (free choice), learning self-planned, and achievements self-assessed (within a consultative arrangement with peers)
- Learning partly from “reflection on incidents in part-time employment” in an employment skills module, for students in UK and Hong Kong.

Principles I try to follow

- Aim to send out graduates prepared, able and proven to handle their CPD.
- Promote activity which expects students to relate to the world of employment.
- Feature activity, development and learning which is not an assessed component of certificated programmes.
- Cater for affective needs; value affective outcomes.
- Tutors should show unconditional positive regard, empathy and congruence.
- Incorporate and distinguish between reflection-for, reflection-in, and reflection-on-action, early on. Encourage taking stock regularly – and systematically.
- Nurture and encourage the ability to see questions which need to be asked, and then to seek answers to them.
- Encourage not only metacognition, but meta-review.
- Train students to make objective judgements and evaluations of sources, solutions and especially of self – including noting indication of unperceived needs
- Encourage use (not exploitation) of others – peers, colleagues and specialists.
- Concentrate more on formative feedforward, than on feedback.
- Recognise the value and validity of persuasive data, which is not evidence.
- Encourage risk-taking, and do not criticise productive failure.
- Eschew compartmentalisation; stress transferability of many core abilities.
- Encourage students to identify successes as well as weaknesses.
- Show that worthwhile self-managed development will be acknowledged.
- Include some things which are fun, or are there for the hell of it.

**Using our own life experiences to develop principles
for designing good educational experiences**

Professor John Cowan, Edinburgh Napier University

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