

# *Skills Audit and Development Planning Practice*

## *Learner Guide*

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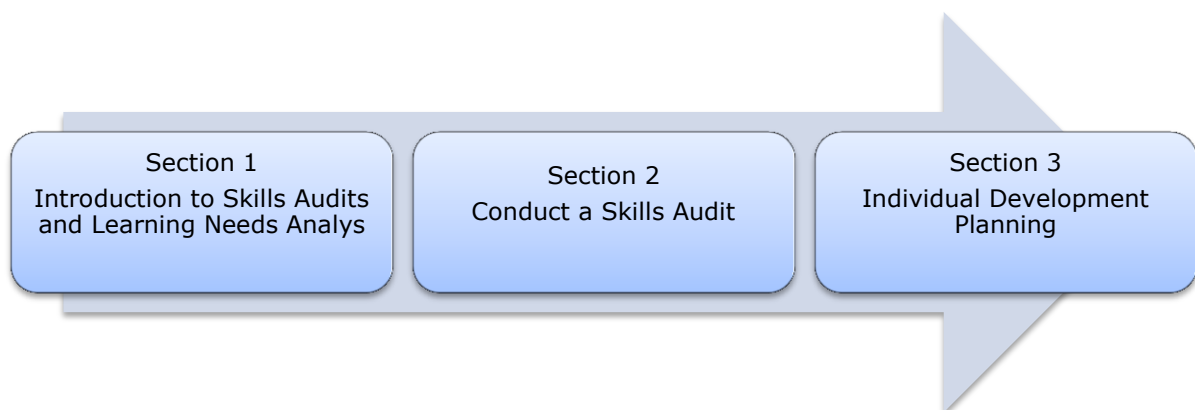
## Course Overview

Before a training plan can be designed, a careful needs assessment is required to develop a systematic understanding of where training is needed, what needs to be taught or trained, and who will undergo such training. This course teaches you how to undergo such an assessment as well as how to develop a development plan that will allow employees to ensure that organisational goals are met.

## Course Outcomes

After you have completed this course you will be able to:

- ✓ Understand what training needs analysis is
- ✓ Understand what a skills audit and plan is
- ✓ Prepare for a skills audit
- ✓ Gather information on learners
- ✓ Carry out a basic skills audit
- ✓ Compile a report on the target audience and skills gaps
- ✓ Define career planning
- ✓ Apply testing techniques for initial assessment of employees
- ✓ Compile a personal development plan
- ✓ Review the planning process
- ✓ Apply quality assurance



# Section 1 – Introduction to Skills Audit and Learning Needs Analyses

## SECTION OUTCOMES

After completing this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the concept of training needs
- Describe different types and levels of needs
- Explain the importance of identifying the necessary job skills through a task analysis
- Be able to construct a list of relevant job competencies (a competency chart) from task analysis data
- Decide on the use of particular methods to collect data on training needs
- Prepare a simple training needs assessment questionnaire
- Interpret the information using appropriate methods of analysis
- Report on the training needs assessment.

'Learning is a necessary process for achieving business objectives and essential to improving organisational performance. It bridges the gap between the organisation's current capability and that needed to deliver the business results. From an individual point of view, it enables people to add to their stock of personal competences and develop their full potential.'

This statement from the Inland Revenue policy for learning called 'Learning Directions' sums up why all organisations, whatever their size, should be investing time and money in developing their people. Effective learning is an essential component of business strategy.

## Skills Audit / Training Needs Analysis

A skills audit is essentially a process for measuring and recording the skills of an individual or group. The main purpose for conducting a skills audit in an organisation is to identify the skills and knowledge that the organisation requires to reach its goals, as well as the skills and knowledge that the organisation currently has.

Thus a training needs assessment can be defined as determining the gap between what an employee must be able to do and what he or she can do or is currently doing.

A training needs assessment (also called a "training needs analysis") therefore identifies the gap between what the job expects an employee to be able to do, and what the employee is actually able to do.

Thus a training needs analysis discovers whether there is a discrepancy or conflict between what an employee is ought to be doing and that which he or she can do.

A Training needs analysis also helps determines the categories, levels and numbers of personnel who need to be trained, the content of the training, the length of training required, the materials which need to be developed or acquired, and the infrastructure that needs to be put in place to ensure that learners have the means to do a better job and are maximally utilized.

In order for one to do a task one has to have knowledge, skill and a good attitude to be able to complete such a task effectively. If one does not possess the knowledge, skill and attitude one would not be able to complete ones tasks properly or confidently.

Any job requires a person to be able to meet certain standards. Standards are levels of expertise or skills one has to comply with to do a job properly. Whenever one does not meet the required standards, the need for training arises.

Training based on such a need (or needs) will then aim to address that need, and by eliminating it, will supply the employee with the skills to be able to do the job properly (i.e., according to the standards set for that job).

Before training design issues are considered, a careful needs assessment is required to develop a systematic understanding of where training is needed, what needs to be taught or trained, and who will undergo such training. Unless such a needs assessment has been adequately performed it may be difficult to rationally justify providing training.

Such a needs assessment should enable an explanation to be given on why the training activities should be done, and also show that training is, in fact, the best solution for the performance problem or development need. A needs assessment can be an important tool for any trainer or organisation planning a programme or course. Accurate needs assessment can help develop a programme or course based on the real needs of the people that it is serving. Focus should be placed on needs as opposed to desires.

As time is often limited in training programmes, courses which take learners' needs into account can ensure that what is most important and useful for learners is covered during such training.

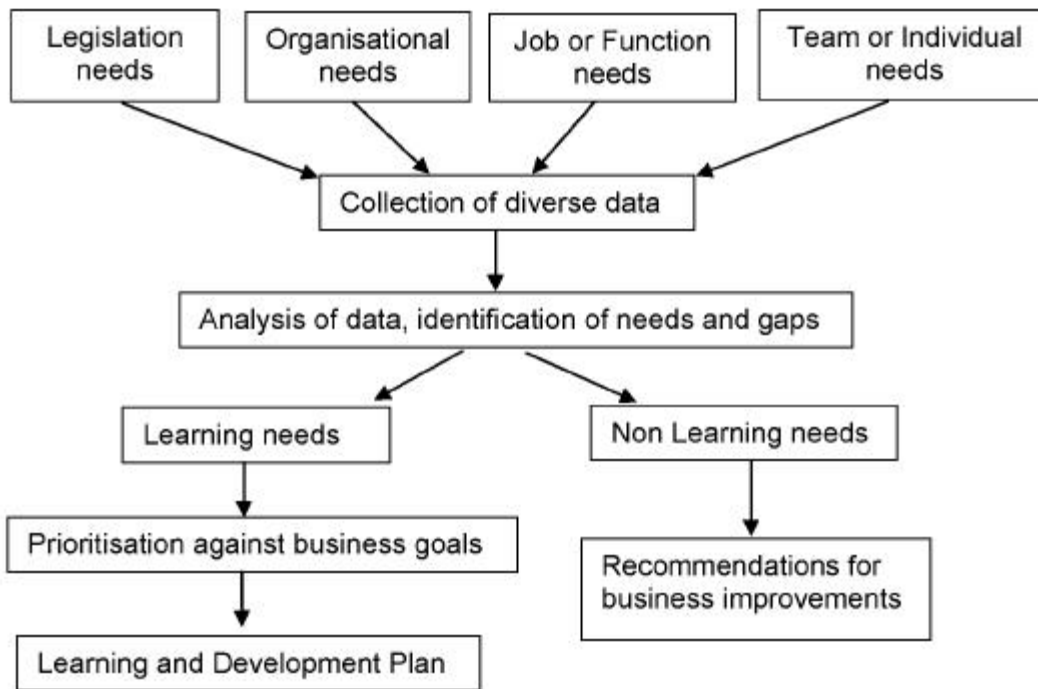
Why conduct a training needs assessment?

- To pinpoint if training will make a difference in productivity and the bottom line.
- To decide what specific training each employee needs and what will improve their job performance.
- To differentiate between the need for training and organizational issues.

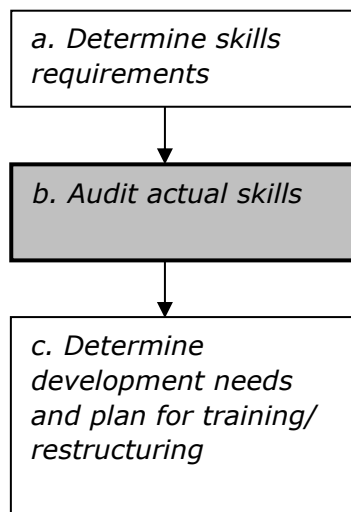
Therefore the key benefits of a skills audit are:

- Valid and valuable Workplace Skills Plans.
- Improved skills and knowledge.
- Lower training and development costs because development efforts are more focused.
- Acquisition and use of information that can be used for purposes such as internal employee selection and placement.
- Increased productivity as people are better matched to their positions.

## Learning needs analysis process



A shorter process to be followed essentially consists of the following:



There are three key stages to a skills audit. The first is to determine what skills each employee requires. The second stage is to determine which of the required skills each employee has. The third is to analyse the results and determine skills development needs. The outcome of the skills audit process is usually a training needs analysis, which will enable the organisation to target and also provide information for purposes such as recruitment and selection, performance management and succession planning.

### **a. Determine skills requirements**

In order to determine skills requirements, an organisation should identify current and future skills requirements per job. The end result is a skills matrix with related competency definitions. Definitions can be allocated against various proficiency levels per job, such as basic, intermediate and complex.

### ***b. Audit actual skills***

The actual skills audit process is outlined below and involves an individual self-audit and skills audit. Results are collated into reporting documents that may include statistical graphs, qualitative reports and recommendations.

### ***c. Determine development needs and plan for training/restructuring***

Once skills audit information has been collected, an analysis of the results may be used for planning purposes relating to training and development and other Human Resource interventions. Recommendations are then discussed and agreed actions are implemented.

## What is a Skills Plan?

A skills plan sets out a strategy to meet the developmental needs of the employees of an organization. A skills plan also ensures that the core skill requirements of the business are met.

The workplace skills plan should cover all skills development training and refer to:

- Strategic priorities for skills development
- Reference to sectoral/national skills plans
- Linkages to employment equity

A skills plan can help the organisation to:

- assess what the organisation requires of staff performing their specific functions, in measurable terms
- understand the existing level of skills in the organisation
- know the skill gaps that need to be addressed to improve the performance in the workplace
- make informed decisions regarding how skill gaps will be addressed in order to best meet business needs, or
- assess and implement effective solutions that address skill gaps.

A skills plan can also:

- raise awareness of the importance of functional areas within the organisation
- encourage support for the continual development of staff to meet their responsibilities

- assist individuals with career development and improve morale
- ensure that staff in all parts of the organisation are fully aware of, and meeting their responsibilities
- help the organisation to achieve best practice

A skills plan is also a requirement in terms of recovering levies from the SETA (Sector). The skills development facilitator would be charged with the process of developing the workplace skills plan, via a process.

### When to Perform a Skills Analysis?

A skills analysis/assessment should be conducted periodically in order to ensure that the organisation has at its disposal human resources with the knowledge, skills and attitude to achieve its goals. Suitable points for commencing a skills analysis include:

- when the organisation's corporate or strategic plan is revised, incorporating new objectives requiring different skills and knowledge to achieve them
- when the organisation is involved in governmental administrative change, bringing in new functions and responsibilities and associated recordkeeping requirements
- when the organisation is subject to internal restructuring, involving the transfer of skilled personnel into different administrative areas
- at the introduction of new or enhanced technologies and systems, bringing with them different requirements of records professionals, or
- on the introduction of new requirements from legislative or other sources that impact on recordkeeping.

#### **An indication that training is needed may occur through:**

- Complaints from staff
- Complaints from clients
- Poor quality of work
- Errors in work
- High staff turnover
- Conflicts amongst staff
- Introduction of new tasks
- Introduction of new systems, perceptions and interventions

**In conducting training needs analysis information should be collected in the following areas:**

- Job roles
- Job process
- Job problems
- Task(s) to be conducted
- Task frequency
- Task difficulties
- Task importance

**Information can be collected through:**

- Interviews with staff, management and client
- Questionnaires with staff, management and clients or training needs assessment
- Observation
- Performance appraisals
- Client satisfaction surveys
- Testing of staff

Once information has been collected from various sources, it must be examined to determine if training is the appropriate action for the problems identified. To establish a training need it must be identified that there is a gap in knowledge, skills and attitudes.

### What Kinds of Needs are there?

The individual needs may be personal, performance-related or career-related, and will include needs, amongst others for:

- updating knowledge, skills and job-related competences;
- increasing job satisfaction and the fulfilment of personal goals;
- making decisions about career choices and career progression;
- identifying personal strengths and weaknesses;
- identifying and achieving work values and work targets;
- developing communication, personal effectiveness and life skills;
- improving qualifications;
- individual learning and self-development;
- building self-awareness, self-confidence and motivation.

## What Perceptions do People have of these Needs?

Education and training needs, as opposed to a basic needs such as the need for food, are often difficult and complex things to understand – for example, looking at the list above, think how complex a set of needs are present in a person wanting to build self-awareness, self-confidence and motivation! A further complication is that people may not be aware that they are in need.

Hence trainers often talk of four different types of educational and developmental needs:

- felt
- expressed
- normative
- comparative

**Felt needs** are the needs that people perceive themselves. Felt needs are often defined as being what people really want and that they consciously feel. However, felt needs are often likely to be constrained by what people perceive as being possible and available. Employees are more likely to buy into training programmes if they are seen as meeting felt needs.

**Expressed needs** are felt needs that are outwardly and publicly expressed or demanded. Sometimes, however, needs are expressed in less obvious ways, for example, if an employee feels his or her needs are not being met he or she may resign or ask to be transferred without clearly expressing or demanding the meeting of the needs in the current job situation. People may also express needs without really feeling that they are essential.

**Normative needs** are those seen as desirable against an external standard proposed by the organization or institution and are sometimes expressed in formal standards. Such standards represent a minimum level of adequacy (as defined by the employer or authority). If employees are found below this standard they can be defined as being in need.

**Comparative needs** are when individuals and organisations are compared with others. Those found to be lacking are then defined as being in need. This is similar to normative needs in that the needs are defined by employers or experts 'from above'.

The existence of these different types of needs raises important questions about who determines or ascertains training needs.

Some of these questions include:

- What role does the trainer play in determining the needs?
- Do employees know what their needs are?
- Do employees know what their needs are but are unable to articulate them?
- Whose needs are most important?
- If needs are accurately identified, does this mean that the trainer must meet them?

One can immediately see what potential conflicts may arise in relation to needs.

There may be conflicts between:

- the needs of different individuals;
- different institutional needs;
- Individual and institutional needs.

## Personal Development Plans

The introduction of a personal development plan system will help to ensure that the principle of access and entitlement of all staff to meaningful training and education opportunities becomes a practical reality. In particular it helps allow needs to be expressed and made visible.

Every learner should have a learning plan which details the training and support they receive to help them fulfil their learning programme and how the objectives will be achieved.

Personal development plans will seek to identify in particular:

- the current competencies of staff (which will help to form the basis for an effective skills audit which will show which competencies need to be developed to enable staff to meet work and career targets);
- the work values of staff (e.g. career progression, helping others, creativity, being skilled and respected in one's work);
- the work and career targets of staff.

On this basis individually tailored programmes of staff development, training, education and support (including internships, apprenticeships and learnerships where appropriate) designed to enable staff to acquire the relevant competences and meet their work targets and personal and career objectives.

Learning plans should include information on the learner, their learning programme, their learning objectives, and the result of the initial assessment, induction training,

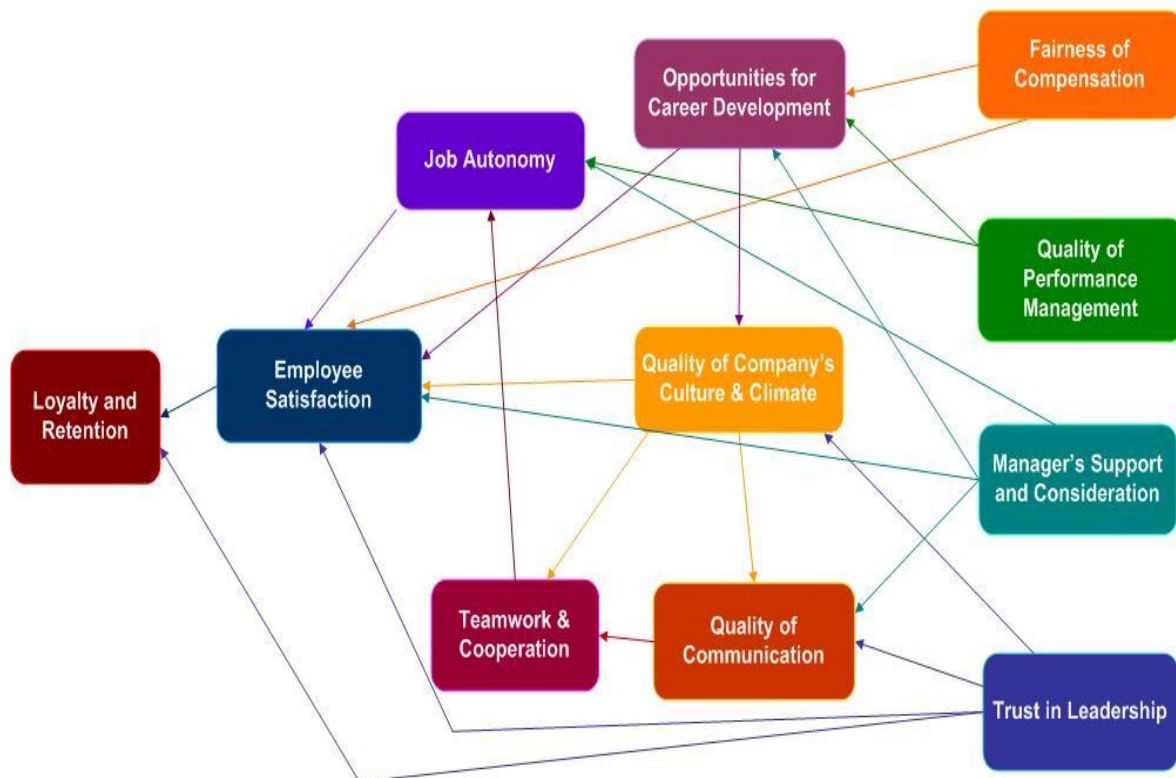
and off-the-job training, programme reviews, assessment and additional arrangements.

We will take a closer look at conducting initial individual assessments later in this module.

**When conducting Skills Analysis the following stakeholders should be involved:**

- Training Department / Skills Development Facilitator
- HR Department
- Higher Management
- Management / Supervisory
- Employees

**Here is an indication of what employees need in employment**



## Basics Concept of Data Gathering

There are many methods which can be used to collect information about needs. A distinction is often made between quantitative and qualitative methods.

**Quantitative** methods collect data that can be counted or measured – it may be specific statements, figures and numbers. Questionnaires and surveys are examples of methods often used to gather quantitative information.

**Qualitative** methods tend to be more context-bound and descriptive in nature. They collect data that is less easily counted or measured and often has a smaller area of focus. The perceptions and feelings of the people being interviewed often have an important place in qualitative methods and data. Informal interviews and observation are examples of qualitative methods.

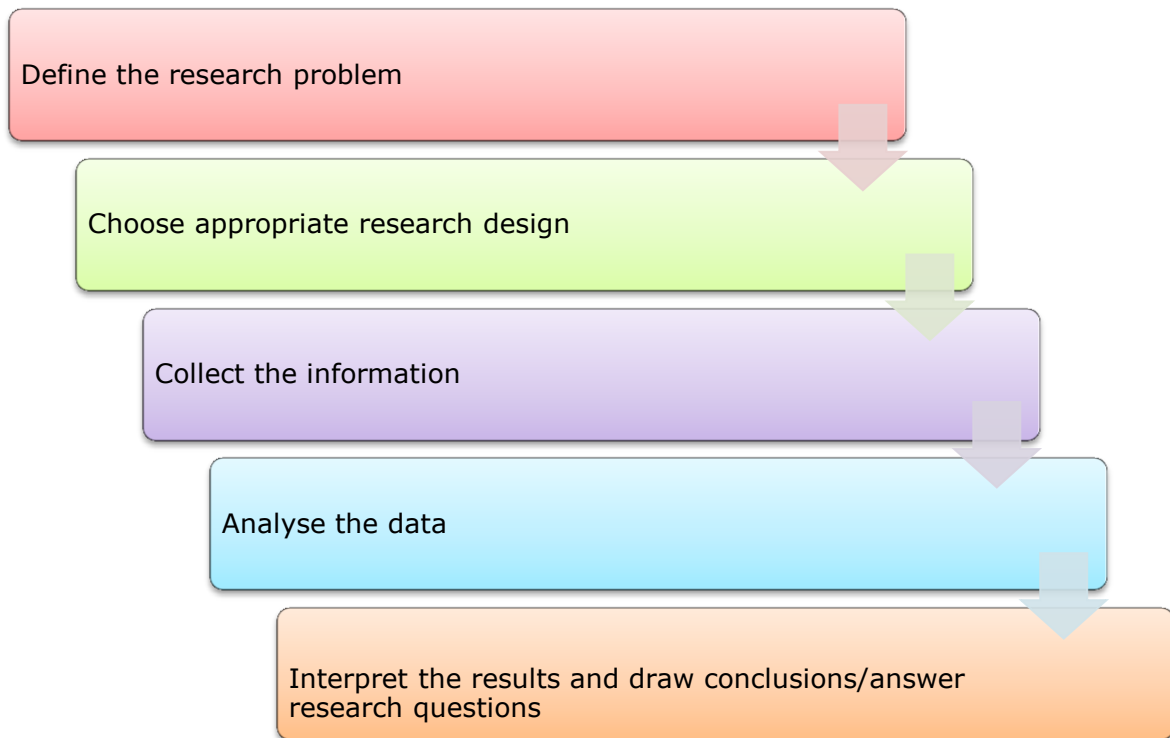
Simplistic distinctions are sometimes made between the two groups of methods. Quantitative methods are sometimes called objective, value-free, number-centred, and 'hard' versus the subjective, people-centred and 'soft' qualitative methods! The two methods, however, are not exclusive; you could use a combination of the methods according to your purpose.

However, whatever methods you choose should be chosen because they are the most appropriate. A method should never be chosen because it seems 'easier'. Many people make the serious mistake of assuming that qualitative methods are 'easier' because they do not (seem to) require numerical or statistical skills. In practice good qualitative research requires an extremely high level of skill and sensitivity.

It is important that we do research to ensure that training and development does make a difference. The term "research" is used here to refer to the process in which the scientific method is used to expand knowledge in the field of education, training and development practice.

Doing needs analysis means researching or finding out what prospective learners needs to learn. Training needs are to help us as skills developers or trainers in developing and delivering an effective training course for the targeted learners so as to meet those needs; in other words, ensuring that there will be a good match between learners' training needs and the training course's materials, learning activities and so on.

Thus we will follow the same process as used in research. The process is outlined as follows.



### **Definitions of Analysis and Data/Information Gathering**

- Analysis and Information Gathering is the skill that is part of the Ability to analyse a group of basic skills.
- Analytics is important for various range of positions, from logistic planner, to general manager.
- Analyses and interprets verbal and numerical business information, in order to form conclusions and make recommendations.

### **Key Behavioural Indicators**

1. Balances the need to obtain more, better or new information, but knows when to stop; does not over-analyse.
2. Seeks information from different sources and perspectives through multiple collection methods.
3. Recognizes trends or associations of data and acts on them.
4. Relates information from different sources to draw logical conclusions
5. Identifies possible cause and affect information.
6. Uses judgment and common sense in getting down to the root cause when appropriate.

7. Reviews information/data to stay informed of new developments and strategies.

### **Tips for Development**

- Gather information from a wide variety of sources when making important decisions. Thoroughly examine, weigh and use all relevant information. Do not over-analyse or burden the decision with irrelevant information.
- Double check data and assumptions related to important decisions.
- Talk with others in the organization to find out how they approached difficult decisions.
- Be open to changing your decision if new information becomes available or if the situation changes.

### **When you need to take quick action:**

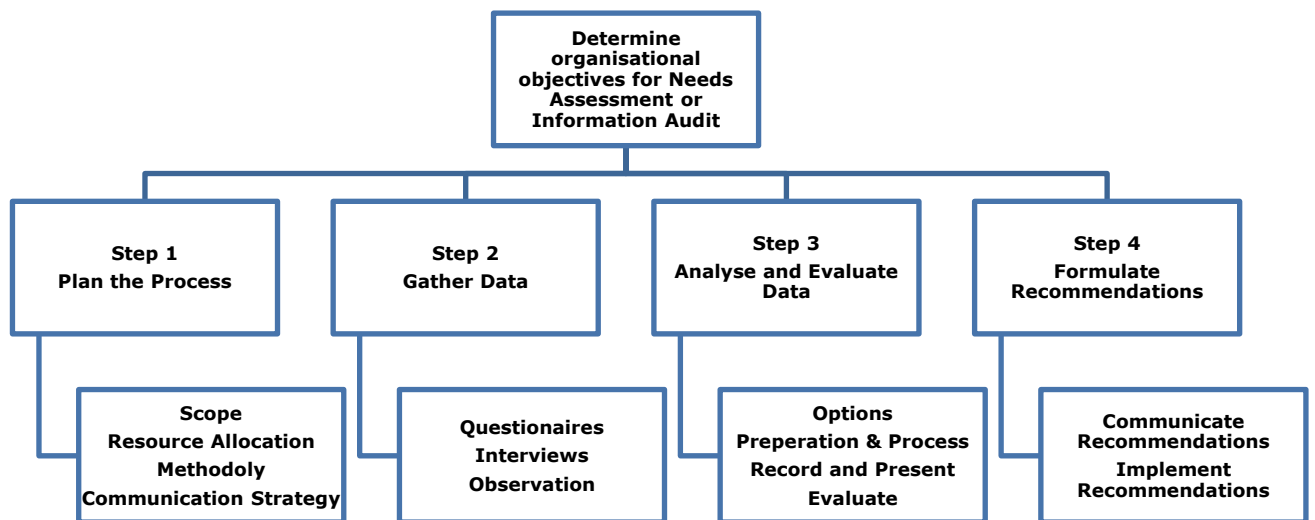
1. Quickly gather the information from a few reliable sources
2. Break the issue into parts. Act immediately on the urgent part and where appropriate buy time to act on the remaining parts
3. Test the water before acting with a few key stakeholders
4. Minimize risk by choosing alternatives that can be revisited when more information is available.
5. If you must act now, do it even if information is incomplete or if risks are involved, but don't always assume that others' "crises" are urgent.
6. Identify potential problems – what could go wrong to interfere with the intended results of your decision/action, by analysing the overall action plan and critical steps within the action plan.
7. Analyse problems and opportunities from a broad organizational perspective rather than focusing solely on your area of responsibility. Help others think "big picture" and realize that actions they take in one part of the organization impact other parts of the organization and the organization as a whole.
8. Include people with different ways of thinking in your meetings and on teams.
9. Analyse all information and use it to make the final decision. Ensure you balance every constituent's needs and support with doing what is inevitably correct for the business (i.e., don't just take the easy way out).
10. Identify the risks of each alternative before choosing an alternative. What are the potential downsides of each alternative? What could go wrong – short-term and long-term? What are your contingencies if downsides occur?
11. Choose the alternative that offers the most benefits with acceptable risks.

## Methods of Information Gathering

When searching for the right tools to search for data one must consider the following:

<b>1. Focus</b>	For example does the tool focus on strategic planning, business planning, training and development planning, employees, marketing, finances or evaluations?
<b>2. Purpose of the tool</b>	For example, to detect strengths and weaknesses, or to compare to certain "best practices?"
<b>3. Values and assumptions</b>	For example, does the tool assume a specific structure or top-down leadership?
<b>4. Languages</b>	In what language the tool will be used, for example: English? Other(s)?
<b>5. Audiences for the tool</b>	To whom will the tool be applied? Identification of stakeholders
<b>6. Administrator of the tool</b>	Who will guide the application of the tool? An outside person? Self-assessment? Will the data collection be participatory?
<b>7. User guide</b>	Are there adequate descriptions of procedures for how to use the tool and analyze the results?
<b>8. Duration and frequency</b>	How long will it take to use the tool? Is the tool to be applied at certain times? More than once?
<b>9. Cost</b>	What are any costs to obtain the tool? Use the tool?
<b>10. Availability</b>	How soon can the tool be made available?
<b>11. Technical support for the tool</b>	If you have questions or need guidance, can anyone help you?
<b>12. Modification</b>	You might need permission if you seek to modify the tool.

## Steps in gathering information in an educational setting



### Analysing Planning Process

Before starting the analysis, you should take into account the views and requirements of as many of these stakeholder groups as possible.

The sort of questions to be asking these stakeholder groups might include:

- What results or outcomes do you expect and need from this analysis?
- How involved with the analysis would you like, or need to be?
- What feedback will you need or expect?
- Do you have any concerns or requirements I need to know before I start that may affect the approach?

The answers to these questions will be diverse, considering the different needs of these stakeholder groups.

### Scoping the Analysis

Having confirmed the required skills are available and identified all the requirements of the various stakeholder groups, the next step in the preparation is to define the scope of the analysis. This will clarify what is to be included and what is to be left out of the process.

Typical questions to be asked at this stage include:

- What is the main purpose of the analysis?
- What are the main areas to be covered?
- What information will be needed?
- Who are the main people to be directly involved?
- Which divisions, departments, locations will need to be visited?
- How much time can be devoted to this and when has it got to be finished?
- What tools and techniques are likely to be needed and do we have the expertise to use them effectively?

Here is a Quick overview of the planning process:

- Develop clear objectives
  - Know what you want to achieve
  - Know your organisation
  - Identify your stakeholders
- Determine scope and resource allocation
  - Scoped by type of information or coverage of the organisation
  - Estimate level of human, financial, physical and technical resources
- Choose methodology
  - Data Gathering (Survey)
  - Data Analysis and Evaluation
- Develop communication strategy
  - Communication before, during and after
  - Communication of findings and recommendations
  - Communication of implementation of recommendations

To decide on the most appropriate method of data collection, you must know:

- What data do you need to achieve objectives?
- From whom do you need to collect it?
- What is the most appropriate way of collecting data in your organisation?

## Steps in Learning Needs Analysis

### **Design**

When designing the learning needs analysis, the aim is to:

- Assess the current situation
- Define the problem – what gaps exist?
- Determine if there is a need for training/learning
- Determine what is driving this need for training/learning
- Evaluate existing training
- Assess the possible learning solutions
- Ascertain information about logistical considerations/constraints

### **Conduct**

The following methods, or a combination of these methods, can be used:

- Interviews
- Focus group – a small group is selected to represent the interests of the larger group and a group interview is then conducted
- Questionnaires
- Follow-up surveys from previous students
- Observation
- Action Research

Ensure the culture and context of the respondents is taken into consideration, e.g. questionnaires may not be appropriate for learners with limited literacy levels. It is important to use open ended and descriptive questions that will elicit information. Pilot the questionnaires/ interview forms that have been devised so as to ensure sufficient information is received, as this will allow for revision if necessary.

## Analyse

Gather the information and sort it into categories that help you identify themes/topics that need to be addressed.

- What topics/issues can be prioritized?
- Which, if any, elements are common to all responses?
- Are there any inconsistencies in the responses?
- Are there any numerical values of relevance?
- Is there a fit between the trends emerging and the capabilities of the learning provider?

### Here are some methods to consider

Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Talking and listening to various people	Various forms including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Individual Interviews</li> <li>○ Group Interviews</li> </ul>	Can lead to openness; achieving a sense of individual needs; more detailed information can be obtained; all voices and be heard	Emphasis on individual rather than general needs; Can lead to high expectations that individual needs will be met; time consuming
Formal Interviews	Preplanned interview, usually done with an interview schedule	A lot of information may be gained	Person being interview may be inhibited; takes time
Questionnaire	Formal survey questionnaire filled in by the respondent. May be distributed by mail or email	May save time for the assessor, standardisation useful in large-scale surveys	Off putting to many people; time-consuming to fill in; coding responses for open-ended questions may be time consuming and difficult; unusable for illiterates or poorly educated; mailed questionnaires often have a low return rate.
Workshop	Designed (educational) event at which needs are assessed	Can allow for a detailed and thoughtful response	Time consuming; attendance may be unrepresentative; needs good planning skills
Meeting	Usually a meeting is called to discuss some problem facing the workgroup	May be possible to gain endorsement for a survey or programme	Attendance may be poor and unrepresentative; some may be reluctant to participate and

			others may dominate
Observation	Observation of the workgroup; target group; the provider in action	Information gained may be checked through other methods	Time consuming; what is observed may be difficult to interpret
Literature Study	Read previously scholarly research and literature on this particular need or situation. Look at indicators relating to that area or issue; for example relevant research or statistics to help understand the needs of the target group more	Can provide useful background information and make the assessor aware of other needs that he or she was not previously aware of	The needs of the educator's own learners may be different of those described in the literature, may reflect the ideological bias of academic researchers
Document Study	Read more documents (eg; reports, minutes etc) to understand the type of work that is being done and the community that is being served	May provide valuable information and a good source of questions	The most important information may not have been documented; documents are created by literate people and they may not contain the views of the poorly educated

### A Quick Method – Needs Analyses?

Want to quickly learn the training needs of a group of employees who have similar jobs? Yet, you don't want to develop and implement a survey, put the questions in a computer program, or run analyses on demographic information you collect.

This training needs assessment works best in small to mid-sized organisations. It will give you a quick assessment of the training needs of an employee group. These training needs assessment helps find common training programs for a group of employees.

There are several techniques that can be utilized individually or in combination with each other. More than one tool should be considered to get a better view of the big picture.

Here are some techniques to consider.

### **1. Meet with management.**

Since most supervisors are involved with the planning of projects and the future of the company, they know what will be needed. They should be able to communicate where their employee's current abilities lie and what is needed to get them to the next level for new projects on the horizon.

### **2. Meet with employees.**

Discuss what struggles they may be facing from day-to-day and what would make their job easier and more efficient. Remember to keep them focused on what they need rather than what they want.

### **3. Conduct surveys.**

Surveys are beneficial because many people can be polled in a short period of time. Additionally, surveys provide employees with the opportunity to confess a need on paper that they may be too embarrassed to admit needing in a face-to-face meeting. Surveys should take the form of a questionnaire and can include close-ended or open-ended questions, or a series of both. Close-ended questions require the respondent stay within certain perimeters set by the person who created the survey. Being that the answers are limited, tabulating the data is simple. Open-ended questions allow an employee to provide more feedback and introduce new ideas that may not have been considered initially, although tallying the results may be more difficult.

A good option during the creation of a survey would be to include a combination of both close-ended and open-ended questions.

### **4. Conduct focus groups.**

Focus groups allow for small group interaction, allowing the assessor to uncover details about their target audience. Brainstorming is encouraged allowing for an exchange of new ideas and a revelation of what training may be needed. They should be at least ninety minutes long to initially break the ice and for participants to become comfortable enough to express their thoughts. Depending on time limits, focus groups can be held once or repeatedly.

### **5. Review company goals and mission statement.**

A brief review of the company's past and where they are headed for the future may reveal valuable information for training. A comparison should be made of what employees are currently doing and what will be expected of them as the company continues to grow and change.

### **Three things to consider:**

- Consider meeting with employees that are already successfully completing tasks. You may uncover useful techniques that can be taught during training to other employees.
- Keep surveys brief. More employees will be willing to complete them and tallying the results will be more manageable.
- Good hand-written notes should be taken during a focus group

### **Facilitating the Process:**

The skills development facilitator or assessor gathers all employees who have the same job in a conference room with a white board or flip charts and markers.

Ask each employee to write down their ten most important training needs. Emphasize that the employees should write specific needs. Communication or team building sessions are such broad training needs, as an example that you would need to do a second training needs assessment on each of these topics. How to give feedback to colleagues or how to resolve a conflict with a co-worker are more specific training needs.

Then, ask each person to list their ten training needs. As they list the training needs, the facilitator captures the training needs on the white board or flip chart. Don't write down duplicates but do confirm by questioning that the training need that on the surface appears to be a duplicate, really is an exact duplicate.

When all training needs have been listed, use a weighted voting process to prioritize the training needs across the group. In a weighted voting process, you use sticky dots or numbers written in magic marker (not as much fun) to vote on and prioritize the list of training needs. Assign large dot 25 points and smaller dots five points each. Distribute as many dots as you like. Tell needs assessment participants to place their dots on the chart to vote on their priorities.

List the training needs in order of importance, with the number of points assigned as votes determining priority, as determined by the sticky dot voting process. Make sure you have notes (best taken by someone on their laptop while the process is underway) or the flip chart pages to maintain a record of the training needs assessment session.

Take time, or schedule another session, to brainstorm the needed outcomes or goals from the first 3-5 training sessions identified in the needs assessment process. This will help as you seek and schedule training to meet the employees' needs. You can schedule more brainstorming later, but I generally find that you need to redo the needs assessment process after the first few training sessions.

Note the number one or two needs of each employee, which may not have become the priorities for the group. Try to build that training opportunity into the employee's performance development plan.

**Tips:**

Training Needs Assessment can be, and often needs to be, much more complicated than this. But, this is a terrific process for a simple training needs assessment.

Make sure you keep the commitments generated by the training needs assessment process. Employees will expect to receive their key identified training sessions with the brainstormed objectives met.

# Section 2 – Conducting a Skills Audit

## SECTION OUTCOMES

After completing this section, you will be able to:

- Assess levels for training needs
- Conducting a task analysis
- Understand a needs assessment model
- Developing competency charts
- Collecting data for a needs assessment using a questionnaire
- Developing a training needs assessment cycle
- Conducting evaluation and giving feedback on the audit
- Compiling a Skills Audit Report

## Assessing Levels for Training Needs

Needs assessment can be done at different levels as shown in the table below, though trainers typically are involved in needs analysis at the micro-level.

<b>Level</b>	<b>Type of analyses</b>	<b>Details</b>
Macro level	Sectoral analysis	Identification of key skill shortages and assessment of relative importance of identified shortages in the sector
Meso level	Organisational analysis	Examines company-wide goals and problems to determine where training is needed
Micro level	Job analysis Task analysis	Examines tasks performed and the knowledge, skills, attitudes and other behavioural aspects required to determine what employees must do to perform successfully
	Personal analysis	Examines tasks performed and the knowledge, skills, attitudes and other behavioural aspects required to determine what employees must do to perform successfully

### Sectoral Level Needs Assessment

This involves the identification of key skills shortages and the assessment of the relative importance of the identified shortages to the sector. Skills shortages may seriously endanger the successful operation of an important economic/social activity, and are then regarded as training priorities for that sector.

## Organisational Needs Assessment

This examines organisational goals, available resources, and the organisational environment to determine where training should be directed. This analysis identifies the training needs of different departments or subunits. Organisational training needs analysis also involves systematically assessing manager, peer, and technological support for transfer of training or workplace application of training.

Supervisor and peer support for training helps to motivate employees entering training and increase the likelihood that they will transfer newly acquired knowledge, skills, attitudes and other behaviours to the job. It is critical to conduct an organisational analysis before developing a training programme so that appropriate support for training exists.

## Job and Task analysis

Task analysis examines what employees must do to perform the job properly. A job analysis identifies and describes all the tasks performed by employees in a particular job and the knowledge, skills, attitudes and other behaviours needed for successful job performance. If available, the results of a job analysis are very helpful in determining training needs.

## Person analysis

This identifies which individuals within an organisation should receive training and what kind of instruction they need. Employee needs can be assessed using a variety of methods that identify weaknesses that training and development can address. For example, assessments of employee knowledge, skills and attitudes can be obtained from the performance evaluation system or from a 360-degree feedback system that provides input for training and development activities. Objective data on accidents and job performance are often examined as part of the needs analysis, and written tests are used to assess employees' current job knowledge. Assessments of learner personality, ability, and prior learning experience are increasingly being used as part of the needs assessment process.

## Conducting a Job Analysis

The next level of analysis is job or task analysis. A job will contain a number of tasks, some tasks can be common across several jobs.

Analysing the job is often a significant part of a learning needs analysis. It looks at the requirements of a job, not at the capability of the individual to do the job. Jobs are a collection of tasks and responsibilities generally associated with the employee's title, such as secretary, supervisor, or accountant. HR specialists normally do a job analysis when a new job is created or there are substantial changes to an existing job. It is often used as an employment tool for classifying work and for selecting employees.

When undertaking this type of analysis it is essential to check that all affected departments, including line managers, are involved in the process. This should maximise effectiveness and minimise duplication.

A job list is a compilation of all job titles associated with a particular part of an organisation or the whole organisation. The purpose of a job list is to ensure that all the jobs belonging to a specific operation or process have been identified. The compilation of such a list is normally the responsibility of the HR department. If it already exists, the learning and development manager should ensure it is up to date and complete if it is to be used as the basis for a learning needs analysis.

A job analysis approach to learning needs analysis is fundamentally breaking down the complexity of a person's job into logical parts. It seeks to gather and analyse detailed and objective information about all aspects of the job in question. This includes the component tasks, the responsibilities, the required standards of performance and the conditions in which it takes place. This information is then used to identify the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to perform the job to the required standard.

### Job Analysis Methods

An effective way of doing this is to ask a number of people who are considered to be good at that specific job. Usually these would be the highest-level performers or the most experienced. Methods of job analysis include:

- **Diaries** – A method of self-reporting tasks carried out over a period of time. They are simple to do but can be disruptive and rely on the honesty of the reporter for accuracy.
- **Interviews** – Employees, in groups or individually, are asked to describe what they do and how they do it. Face-to-face situations are preferred as they give the opportunity for supplementary questions to be asked and explored in more depth.

They can be prone to inaccuracies due to bad memory or reluctance to say what actually happens.

- **Observation** – An observer follows or shadows an individual or group as they carry out their job over a specified period of time. Observations can be used for this kind of analysis but they are time consuming. Observations also may have the problem of being viewed as ‘checking up on people’, causing resentment. This would need careful introduction and reassurances. Another potential problem with observations is that of ‘playing to the audience’ where those being observed do not act normally but exaggerate what they are doing and do not perform the job normally.
- **Critical incident** – Where an individual describes exactly what happened during a specific incident. This is intended to isolate particular behaviours relevant to the incident but as it depends on self-reporting it may not be detailed or accurate enough.
- **Repertory grid** – Where a range of skills and behaviours are identified on a grid and individuals are invited to rate their colleagues against each heading. The resulting rating is comprehensive and robust but requires considerable expertise to administer and analyse.
- **Checklist and inventories** – There are a great number of questionnaires and checklists produced covering a wide range of different jobs. These have the advantage of being readily available and extensively researched. However, because of their general appeal they may not fit a specific organisation’s needs.

The output of a job analysis is usually a job description and person specification. Many organisations will already have a set of job descriptions and person specifications for all their jobs. Using these as collective set of generic skills and knowledge requirements can be identified. The following figure shows a simple way to capture these requirements.

<b>Separate activities contained in the job description</b>	<b>List of relevant capabilities, skill and knowledge</b>
Type a letter Make a telephone call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of business English</li> <li>• Able to use word processing packages</li> <li>• Clear speaking voice</li> <li>• Able to use a telephone directory</li> </ul>

Comparing people against the job descriptions and person specifications can be used to identify individual needs and gaps. This analysis usually takes one of two forms:

- Learning needs questionnaire, where the statements in the job descriptions are converted into questions for self-analysis.
- Learning needs interview, where the same questions are given verbally and explored more thoroughly.

## Task Inventory

Another method of job analysis is known as a task inventory. This is where the job is broken down into a set of separate tasks, activities or behaviours. A task is a function the jobholder performs such as typing a letter, adding up a column of figures, or operating a lathe. It is an action designed to contribute a specified end result to the accomplishment of an objective. It has an identifiable beginning and end that is a measurable component of a specific job.

The analysis then takes each task and describes it in terms of skills, knowledge and attitude required to do the task. A Task Inventory can be compiled for each job in a department or the whole organisation. Some jobs may have few tasks associated with them, while others may have a lot. Each task should have the following characteristics:

- a separate and necessary activity or action, independent of other actions in the performance of the job
- an identifiable start and end point which produces a measurable output
- the ability to be performed in relatively short periods of time
- the ability to be observed to confirm that the task has been performed.

The task inventory includes all the tasks that a jobholder requires to perform the job and to what standards.

## Conducting a Task Analysis

Task analysis is a process that produces a structured and reliable method of describing the task so that it can be consistently repeated. The task analysis identifies the measurable behaviours involved in the performance of each task. A task statement is then written for each task containing an action and an output. The analysis then breaks the task down into the Skills, Knowledge and Attitudes necessary to perform the task. It uses a systematic process of identifying those specific tasks to be trained, and a detailed analysis of each of those tasks in terms of frequency, difficulty, criticality and importance.

There are four logical stages in carrying out an effective task analysis:

1. Identifying each tasks and generating a list
2. Selecting and prioritising tasks that may be appropriate for training
3. Dissecting tasks – identifying and describing the components of the tasks, goals, or objectives in terms of Skills, Knowledge and Attitudes
4. Sequencing tasks and sub-tasks – defining the sequence in which instruction should occur that will best facilitate learning.

As with a job analysis, a task analysis can be carried by a variety of methods including interviews, direct observations and questionnaires.

### Task Analysis Methods

There are four common methods of carrying out a task analysis:

- **Hierarchical task analysis** – arranging actions in order
- **'If and Then' analysis** – decisions relationship
- **Scenario-based analysis** – lists of possible actions
- **Cognitive task analysis** – based on critical decisions

### Hierarchical Task Analysis

This is the most common task analysis method, which involves analysing steps in the natural order in which they are normally performed. It may not always be easy to distinguish the logical sequence of steps in a task and the observer will need to decide how important it is to get the sequence accurately recorded.

There is often no definitive sequence as circumstances will differ widely. This dilemma means it is critical that the manager determines what type of information is needed at the start.

### 'If and Then' Analysis

This analysis method is used where the action the performer takes depends upon a particular condition being satisfied. The method gets its name from the choice presented to the performer which requires the decision 'if this happens then this is what I will do'.

A simple example for a trainer would be: 'If the student is new then I will send him on the basic course. If he is an experienced user then I will send him on the advanced course'.

This method of analysis is done by interview questions asking for the rationale for the decision making process.

### Scenario Based Analysis

This method is often used for management and leadership tasks, as the steps can be difficult to define or observe. Also these kinds of tasks do not have clear procedures for their correct performance. This method of analysis relies on the performer to explain what tasks are needed and in what sequence.

The process is done through interview questions asking what would be appropriate in a variety of situations. The output of this method of analysis is then a range of options as suitable responses to a specific event.

### Cognitive Task Analysis

In many organisations, jobs are no longer defined by a collection of tasks, but by decision-making and problem-solving activities. A cognitive task analysis may be a more appropriate method for identifying the details of effective performance in these contexts.

A cognitive task analysis looks at the psychological processes underlying the performance and the subtle cues that may depend on context and experience.

The main goal of a cognitive task analysis is to define the actual decision requirements and strategies of the task. This is done by diagnosing and characterising the decisions being made, the thought processes taking place and how those thoughts are turned into actions.

A cognitive task analysis focuses on the psychological processes underlying the behaviour, not the behaviour itself. It extends the learning needs analysis by providing information on the critical mental decisions and cognitive processes that make up an essential ingredient of many complex tasks.

### Weighting Tasks

Whichever method is used, there are four basic requirements to be identified from a task analysis in order to use the information as part of a learning needs analysis. For each task these requirements are:

- Importance
- Frequency
- Criticality
- Difficulty.

In many task analysis templates each of these important factors are given a rating scale, usually 1 to 5 where 5 means very frequent, very critical, very difficult. The higher the score the more likely it is that formal training is required. Those tasks with very low scores will probably not need to be considered for training.

Here are a wider range of typical questions that might be appropriate as a checklist when doing a task analysis:

- How difficult or complex is the task, ie easy, hard, very hard?
- What behaviours are used in the performance of the job?
- How frequently is the task performed, ie daily, weekly, monthly, yearly?
- How would you recognise good performance of the task?
- How critical is the task to the performance of the job?
- Is this an independent or interdependent task, if so what is the relationship between the various tasks and other people?
- What is the consequence of the task being performed incorrectly or not at all?
- What information is needed to perform the task? What is the source of information?
- How much time is needed to perform this task?
- What prerequisite skills, knowledge, and abilities are required to perform the task?

Regardless of which method of data gathering is chosen and what questions are asked, the data gathered must accurately reflect the specific tasks as they are actually performed for the analysis to be of value.

**Herewith an example of the results of a task analysis of a train driver:**

1.Pre-operation responsibilities	Preparing for operating the train for a given shift. This includes reporting for duty in a state of preparedness with proper equipment, and getting information from the bulletin board and/or dispatcher.
2. Pre-operation equipment inspection	Checking the train for defects and safety, including checking brake system, gauges, and track under the train.
3.Train operations	The actual operation of a train in a safe and timely manner. This includes

	controlling the train in the yard or on the road, consideration of conditions such as weather, curves and grades, speed restrictions, and interpretation of warnings/signals.
4. Maintaining schedule	Activities associated with timely operations, including adhering to the timetable and communication with personnel to prevent disruption of service.
5. Emergency situation activities	Identifying and reacting to emergency situations, keeping customers safe, communicating with the control centre, and troubleshooting mechanical difficulties.



### Activity 1: Performance Ability

Let's look at a method of assessing one's ability to perform ones tasks.

Write down four of the most important tasks your job description expects you to do.

Write down not only these four tasks, but also the standard or level at which you ought to be doing them (to your own or someone else's satisfaction).

Job Title:

Job Tasks	Subtasks	Required Standard / Level

**Let us look at an example:**

My job description requires me to build brick walls. But at what level of proficiency?  
How well am I expected to do this job?

The standard or level at which I have to do this indicates that I have to

- lay bricks in a straight line
- in laying these bricks, use a proper mixture of sand, cement and water to keep the bricks in place
- lay 250 bricks per hour
- submit an invoice to my client for the work completed.

After you have indicated your four tasks and their standard, answer the following personal question:

- Which of these tasks you listed on the previous page do you feel, or know from experience, that you are not able to do according to the set standard? In other words, which of these tasks are you currently doing, but not to the satisfaction of yourself or your employer?
- Provide one reason why you think you are not coping with a specific task.
- What do you think you need to do the task(s) properly and to everybody's satisfaction?

You have just completed an elementary training needs assessment of yourself by identifying the gap between what you ought to be doing and what you are doing (or not doing) at this moment.



### Activity 2: Task analysis of a Trainer

First, think of all the tasks of a trainer. In the same way that task clusters were developed in the example of train operators, identify a set of five key task clusters for trainers. Give a brief description of the various tasks identified in each of the five task clusters.

Job Title: Trainer		
Key Task Clusters	Description of Tasks	Evidence Record

Now give some examples of the typical training that could be designed for these trainers (based on this task analysis).

### The use of the term 'competency' in task analysis

When engaging in a task analysis one often comes up against a range of terms about being able to do something: ability, skill, aptitude, competence, capacity, capability, proficiency, etc. These are often used loosely and interchangeably though they do have their specialised meanings. Over the last few decades the term 'competency', meaning having the power or ability to do something, has become popular for describing job related skills. Competency is a broader term than knowledge, skills or attitudes, as being able to do something usually includes a mix of these working together.

Competencies are sets of behaviours that are instrumental in the delivery of desired results or outcomes.

#### Competencies may be roughly divided into three types:

**Foundational competence:** The knowledge, underpinning theory and principles that learners must acquire and apply to be able to do something (in simpler language it is the demonstrated knowledge and understanding of what one is doing and why);

**Practical competence:** The mix of knowledge and skills that learners must be able to demonstrate in their work (that is, it is the demonstrated ability to apply one's skills in practice);

**Reflexive competence:** The demonstrated ability of the learner to reflect on (assess and evaluate) his or her own learning and growth as well as the ability to reflect on how the acquired knowledge and skills can be transferred and applied in different contexts.

All of these together – the combination of foundational competence, practical competence and reflexive competence – form **applied competence** (the ability to put the acquired learning outcomes into practice in the relevant context) which is the core focus of outcomes-based training programmes.

The training needs analysis is an important part of the process of identifying and developing applied competencies.

Organisations are increasingly trying to identify generic competences that are required for all jobs. For example, in South Africa the *Batho Pele* principles describe a core set of values and competencies that Public Sector employees need to demonstrate.

Training programmes in the Public Sector need therefore to be designed to help employees adopt and demonstrate the *Batho Pele* principles in their behaviour.

**Examples of competencies (Grobler et al, 2006)**

Management competencies	Individual competencies
Delegating responsibility Solving problems Project management skills Presentation skills Developing people skills	Job knowledge Technical knowledge Computer skills Time management Management interpersonal conflict Customer Care
<b>Competencies required for developing people</b>	
Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Understand verbal and non-verbal communications</li> <li>→ Listen without evaluation/judgment</li> <li>→ Give feedback to others that can be used</li> <li>→ Encourage others to contribute</li> <li>→ Facilitate communication across teams</li> <li>→ Value diversity</li> </ul>	

### Problem-solving

- Identify problems with others
- Gather data to diagnose
- Propose and analyse alternative solutions
- Implement solutions
- Evaluate results

### Developing self and others

- Contracting and managing performance
- Conducting performance appraisals
- Providing challenging and stretching tasks and assignments
- Holds frequent development discussions
- Is aware of each person's career goals
- Constructs compelling development plans
- Cooperates with the development system in the organisation
- Is a people builder
- Develops self/engages in further development initiatives

## Training and Development Fields

Organisations are established with different purposes and functions. These functions are related to various bodies of knowledge and disciplines. For example, an organisation that deals in automobile production is mainly concerned with the body of knowledge related to the science of electrical and mechanical engineering. Financial organisations, on the other hand, are primarily concerned with the financial field of enquiry. The Public Service is primarily concerned with delivering good service to the public.

The first step in the plan to plan phase is to establish the training and development fields according to an approximation of jobs found each department.

That is, various jobs are categorised as being in particular fields. Training and development programmes and activities are then designed and offered in each field. Each training and development field comprises a set of related job and career paths normally found in the organisation operating within the same industry.

For example, the training and development field of a loans company operating in the banking industry would include jobs such as "credit manager", "loan officer trainee", "junior credit officer", "credit officer", "senior credit officer", and "manager of credit department". That is to say, such a field represents an approximation of jobs found within similar divisions and/or departments across all member organisations within the industry.

The number of fields will differ from one industry to another depending on various factors, chief among them are the nature of the operations as well as the size and number of organisations in the industry. However, one has to note that too many fields (over seven or eight) are not advisable, since they could generate uncontrollable volumes of paper work, require greater effort of coordination, be time-consuming and costly.

It is also advisable to consider the following when establishing these fields:

- Avoid overlap between fields to the extent possible.
- Distinguish between an organisation's operation and support functions in each field and avoid mixing them.
- Focus more on the organisation's core operations than on support related training fields.



**Activity 3: Establish training and development fields.**

Give examples of typical training and development programmes for the identified training and development fields. For example, the field of Human Resource Development requires programmes of skills development facilitation, etc.

<b>Training and Development Needs</b>	
<b>Training and development field</b>	<b>Examples of training and development programmes</b>
Human resource development	Skills development facilitation, human resource development, training of trainers

## Conducting a Needs Analysis

A needs analysis is a more comprehensive process than either a job or task analysis. It provides the SDF with a complete understanding of the operational system being analysed. It looks not only at the tasks being performed but also at other parts of the system and processes that might influence performance.

A needs analysis is a proactive approach where the SDF goes into the system or process and searches for problems or potential problems. The goal is to make the system more efficient and to prevent future problems from occurring. When looking for learning needs, or when problems arise, there are several instruments that may be appropriate.

### Needs Assessment Methods

Some of the needs assessment instruments are the same as for the job or task analysis but are used differently to provide more comprehensive information.

**Document research** – Analysis of budget documents, business plans, appraisals, quality control documents, goal statements, evaluation reports, personal development plans, work reviews, critical incident reports, scheduling and staffing reports, customer complaints or other business documents.

**Interviews** – Talk to supervisors, managers, subject matter experts and other employees.

**Observations** – Watch the job or task being performed, but remember the potential problems with this approach described earlier.

**Surveys** – Send out written questionnaires

**Group discussions** – Lead a group discussion composed of employees and their supervisors.

The sort of questions the learning and development manager should be asking in interviews and group discussions include:

- What are your employees doing that they shouldn't be doing?
- What specific things would you like to see your people doing that they are not doing?
- When people perform this job correctly, what do they actually do?
- What do you think your employees' learning needs are and why?
- What do you think your learning needs are and why?

- Do you have all the resources needed to do your job effectively?
- Are job aids available, are they accurate and are they being used?
- Are the standards reasonable? If not, why not?
- If you could change one thing about the way you perform your work, what would it be?

The answers to these types of question will provide information on a wide range of needs, some of which will be learning needs.

## Team and Individual Needs

Skills Development Facilitators need to take into account the specific learning and development needs of individuals and teams within the organisation.

This section looks at:

- Skills analysis
- Knowledge analysis
- Using competencies
- High potential
- Teams.

The first thing to consider is the organisation's policy on individual needs:

- Does the organisation empower local managers or even the individuals to source their own training, and to what level?
- Does the organisation empower managers to identify the learning needs of their people?
- Does the organisation provide a central suite of learning interventions from which individuals can select the most appropriate?
- Does the organisation have the policy, resources and expertise to design individual learning interventions for small numbers?

It is the job of the SDF to separate learning needs from the other needs of the individuals. However, it is line managers' responsibility to support the development of their people. If the line managers are empowered to identify the learning needs of their people, the learning and development department needs to be able to suggest the most effective learning solution.

The job, task or needs analysis will have defined both the skills and knowledge and the level of performance. Comparing the skills and knowledge of the individual against these standards is the usual approach to identifying the needs of individuals.

### Skills Analysis

Most learning needs analysis processes concentrate on the identification of skills. This is because skills can be defined as discrete observable behaviours that contribute to the successful achievement of tasks. Because they can be measured they can also be assessed and rated from poor to excellent or similar scales of ability.

Here are examples of skills assessment processes.

#### Example: Skills and personal characteristics review

<p>Outlined below are 10 skills and personal characteristics to be used as a benchmark in reviewing how the jobholder sought to fulfil and achieve his/her objectives. Comment against each of the job relevant characteristics denoting <b>Strengths (+)</b> or <b>Areas for Development (-)</b> supplemented by examples.</p> <p>Highlight any particular strengths (+) or areas for development (-) by marking 'X' in the column headed (+) or (-) against the appropriate characteristic.</p>			
Characteristics	Comments	+	-
<p>Leadership and influencing            Motivates others to work towards an 'agenda for change'            Directs and co-ordinates activities of others            Accepts responsibility/delegates authority to others</p>			
<p>Strategic thinking            Capable of innovative thinking to find solutions            Identifies future risks and opportunities            Considers longer-term effects of actions</p>			
<p>Teamwork            Supports own and cross-functional work groups            Contributes to and enhances group decisions</p>			
<p>Communications            Converses clearly and persuasively to different</p>			

levels Proficient in presentations and meetings Adaptable and effective writing skills			
--	--	--	--

**Example: Skills Profile**

<p>This questionnaire is designed to assist the process of identifying the current attributes and future potential of individuals. The headings for each section cover the management capabilities expected of all managers in this organisation.</p> <p>In response to each statement, you will need to put a cross on the appropriate line using the following assessments:</p> <p>5 = The person always does this (is a role model)</p> <p>4 = The person frequently does this</p> <p>3 = The person sometimes does this</p> <p>2 = The person rarely does this</p> <p>1 = Either not applicable or the person has not yet had the opportunity to do this</p> <p>Your numerical rating will act as an important indicator for those skills which require development and practice and those which simply require on-going use.</p>					
<b>Skills</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>Leadership</b> Is seen by colleagues as a role model in current job Displays an ability to inspire and motivate self and others Is assertive, not aggressive Is able to get others to do things when they don't directly manage them</p>					
<p><b>Innovation and creativity</b> Creative when confronted with business challenges and problems Uses innovative state of the art approaches to solving problems Works from a compromise between creativity and the rule book</p>					
<p><b>Decision making</b> Displays the ability to make, and commit to, tough decisions Gathers and analyses information from others to draw conclusions and produce outputs Is open to an appropriate level of influence and change and makes rational decisions Has a practical and common sense approach</p>					
<p><b>Resourcefulness</b> Learns from both failures and success Demonstrates initiative, drive, persistence and involvement Spots opportunities and makes things happen</p>					

## Identifying an Individual's Current Skills Set

Identifying the current skills and knowledge set for individuals is often at the core of a learning needs analysis. It is normally the responsibility of the line manager to identify the skills and knowledge their people already have. To make effective use of a skill review, the manager first needs to explain what the skills are in words that are easy to understand and apply. Creating a 'skills checklist', which is a list of all probable skills that might be relevant, described in simple language, often does this.

The skills checklist is best completed in consultation with the individual by encouraging them to describe everything they feel they can do particularly well. It often helps to explore home or leisure activities as they might involve examples of work-related skills. This checklist should always include space for the individual or their manager to add additional skills. Sometimes the identification of individual needs by their manager is part of an appraisal process. The appraisal is normally done half-yearly or annually and part of the review of their performance is a review of their skills.

## Identifying Potential Areas for Development

Having identified an individual's current skills and knowledge, the manager should be in a good position to identify areas for future development. The first part of this stage in the analysis is to revisit the skills checklist to identify any missing or sub-standard skills that form a requirement of the job. These areas will determine short-term learning needs.

The second part is to discuss with the individual future development needs, which may be more long term or associated with promotion or job change.

Having quantified and agreed the skills to be developed with the individual, the final part is to prioritise the needs and agree an action plan. The documentation of this prioritised action plan is often referred to as the Personal Learning Plan (PLP) or Personal Development Plan (PDP).

Many organisations require the appraisal documents and associated PDPs to be sent to the HR department on completion. As well as an audit that the process is being carried out correctly, the returned documents provide a rich source of information for identifying learning needs.

- **Skill levels** – There is an ever-increasing drive for organisations to be faster, cheaper but still produce even higher quality. This puts tremendous pressure on them to get more from their workforce and puts a corresponding pressure on the employees to strive to be more productive themselves.

One possible consequence of this constant increase is that the skill levels that were acceptable last year are not high enough this year and certainly will not be high enough next year.

- **Currency of skills** – As well as maintaining and improving the level of a specific skill the individual and the organisation need to constantly check that their skills are still current. Many skills require regular updating and refreshing. The employer will need to ensure the skills are up-to-date to account for changes in working practices, improved technology and continuous improvements in the industry.

Therefore, when carrying out a skills audit the learning and development manager needs to ensure the required level of the skill will meet the future needs by asking:

- Is the level of skill still appropriate for the business needs?
- Are some of the identified skills no longer relevant to today's business?
- Do we need other skills we currently don't have?

In most organisations the skills of an individual cannot be seen in isolation. The unit of production is often the team where individual members of a team contribute different skills dependent on the needs of the team and the task. The manager should always make their assessment of individuals in the context of the team and, if relevant, factors beyond their immediate section or department should also be included.

### Knowledge Analysis

Individual learning needs analysis will include the identification of knowledge as well as skills. All jobs and tasks consist of a combination of both knowledge and skills and the analysis would not be complete without the identification of knowledge gaps.

If it assists the analysis, knowledge can be divided into the following three categories:

**Factual knowledge** – giving names to things, ie objects or processes or locations. This type of knowledge includes facts, principles, natural laws, sequences of events and concepts. Methods for identifying factual knowledge needs include:

- Written or verbal memory tests
- Flow charting or diagrams
- Interview or group questioning

**Procedural knowledge** – this is needed to perform a given task. Procedural knowledge shows the person knows the discrete steps or actions to be taken and the available alternatives to perform a given task or tasks. With practice, procedural knowledge can become an automatic process, the ability to perform a task without conscious awareness. Methods for identifying procedural knowledge gaps include:

- Interviewing but with the specific purpose of uncovering the process steps
- Observation to demonstrate the steps in a process followed by recording the process.

**Strategic knowledge** – this is needed for decision-making and problem solving. It covers action planning and contingency planning and how to act appropriately with minimum information. Methods for identifying strategic knowledge gaps include:

- Interviews to identify non-routine or critical events that challenged their thinking and events where their expertise made a significant difference.
- Critical Decision Method is a semi-structured interview using specific probing questions designed to explore the perceptions and judgements used to make decisions.

We will look at the initial assessment process and testing for individual career planning later on in this module.

## Developing Competency Charts

Competencies are the appropriate combination of knowledge, skills and attributes required for a job that should be possessed by an individual. Competencies tend to be associated with National Vocational Qualifications. A competency is linked to action and has to be identified and measured in the working environment. The individual competencies across an organisation normally fit into an overall competency framework. Often the line manager is the best person to identify the competencies required for the job in particular situation.

The main advantages of competencies for learning needs analysis is that they are practical, observable and rooted in the job to be done. They are also impersonal – someone is either competent or not yet competent.

The information that needs to be collected involves identifying what are the competencies required for the particular jobs and then finding out how current employee performance matches these competencies and what can be done to build these competencies through training.

Defining the competencies for a role or job and then assessing individuals against these is seen as an effective way of identifying gaps in skills and knowledge. Once the gap has been identified, then interventions can be developed to address them.

Competencies can also be used at an organisational level to quantify the level of capability across departments and divisions and identify common capability gaps. The use of standard competencies across an organisation also helps the development and use of standard personal development plans. The use of common language to describe core capability makes it easier to move people across the organisation from department to department and makes promotion requirements more transparent.

A competency chart is simply a list of competencies required for an approximate of jobs in a particular field found in the member organisations or departments. The aim is not to develop a precise chart of each job in the organisation, but an approximation of the major competencies required to better perform jobs that normally fall under each field. Each department has, after all, different job designations and descriptions unique to its culture and management style.

### **Sample of a competency chart for a marketing and business field (Castley,1996)**

#### **Product development and management**

- Managing product development process
- Evaluating new product ideas and plans
- Corrective skills
- Time and product entry strategies

#### **B. Pricing related competencies**

- Costing products and services
- Planning and controlling cost of performance
- Pricing strategies

#### **C. Marketing strategy related competencies**

- Negotiation skills
- Networking
- Methods for competitive marketing strategies
- Methods and techniques for analysing the industry
- Calculating market share
- Market segmentation and product and service positioning

#### **D. Service quality related competencies**

- Assessment of service gaps
- Measuring service quality standards
- Managing service quality team



#### **Activity 4:** Develop a Competency Chart

Think now about the competencies of a trainer. Develop a competency chart for a trainer.

#### **Competency chart for a trainer:**

### Using Questionnaires to Compile a Competency Chart

The prime purpose of this component or step in needs assessment is to develop the data gathering methods that will be used in collecting information about the actual training and development needs. A variety of methods can be used though questionnaires are particularly common. Whatever methods are used they should be manageable, time- and cost-effective.

Usually a comprehensive questionnaire should be designed for each training and development field. In order to ensure full and proper responses from employees, the line manager might consider an interview with the staff to facilitate adequate answering of the questionnaires.

A standard format for such needs assessment questionnaires uses the particular competency chart already developed for that field. Typically the questionnaire is divided into four sections.

#### **For Example;**

Employee profile data

- Professional knowledge and skills
- Cross functional knowledge and skills
- Other competencies

The **employee profile data** section of the questionnaires should include questions related to the personal and professional information of the respondent. Usually this may be quite simple (e.g. name, department, title, years of experience, etc.) but for some purposes may need to be comprehensive (including age, language, socio-economic status, education levels, qualifications, previous experience with different learning media, preferred learning styles, levels of experience, levels of motivation, special needs, etc.). The section is usually the same in all questionnaires.

The **professional knowledge and skills** section of the questionnaire is designed to measure an employee's level of knowledge and skills in relation to the technical aspects of his or her job. For example a credit officer in a bank is usually expected to perform activities related to financial, credit, cash flow analysis, etc. This second section of the questionnaire differs from one training committee to another.

The **cross-functional knowledge and skills** section of the questionnaire is to measure an employee's level of understanding of competencies related to the non-technical aspects of his or her job. The assumption here is that there are various skills that are common and required in any job regardless of its area of specialisation or departmental unit (that is why this section is identical in most questionnaires).

For example, though a credit manager needs skills in credit operations, he or she also needs such things as good leadership and planning skills, marketing skills, computer skills, knowledge of the laws and legal aspects related to the job. Each committee needs to identify the non-technical knowledge and/or skills required for the job under their training field.

The final section on **other competencies** ensures the comprehensives of the questionnaire. The respondent is given the chance to indicate any other training needs that might not have been included in the rest of the questionnaire. Here one has to be warned about a very important issue in any training assessment activity, that is, the difference between employees' training needs and wants. The training needs are skills required to effectively perform the job, but are lacking in the employee, whereas training wants are skills that an employee believes they need and are not necessarily related to the job. For most employers training needs rather than wants are the priority and the latter are usually deferred.

## Designing the Questionnaire

Questionnaires are usually criticised as being time-consuming, lengthy, and complicated. To avoid such drawbacks, a unified approach to forming the questions and a measuring scale is a must. As indicated in the example of a questionnaire we provided below, each section of the questionnaire starts by asking the respondent to rate his or her level of familiarity with the listed competencies.

A unified scale of six points is given to the respondent to rate him or herself. A "not applicable" box is designated for each question to be used if the knowledge and/or skill does not relate to the employee's job.

Such uniformity of the questions and scale should minimise the time to respond, possible errors, and should increase possible accuracy.

The questionnaire must be reviewed and updated every training year. This task should be accomplished in a participative manner with the involvement of the Human Resources Department and other departments, and the Human Resources Training and Development committee members.

**Sample questionnaire on marketing and business development (based on Castley, 1996)**

<b>Section 1. Profile data</b> Name: _____ Current job: _____							
_____ Since: _____				Supervisor: _____			
_____ Brief of job description: _____							
_____ Previous training courses attended: _____							
_____							
<b>Rate all the following categories from Unfamiliar (=1) to Familiar (=6) or as Not Applicable (NA)</b>	<b>Unfamiliar ←----- &gt; Familiar</b>						
	<b>NA</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Section II. Professional competencies</b>							
<b>A. Product development and management</b>							
Managing product development process							
Evaluating new product ideas and plans							
Corrective skills							
Time and product entry strategies							
<b>B. Pricing related competencies</b>							
Costing products and services							
Planning & controlling of cost performance							
Pricing strategies							
<b>C. Marketing-strategy related competencies</b>							
Negotiation skills							
Networking							
Methods of competitive marketing strategies							
Methods & techniques for analysing the industry							
Calculating market share							
Market segmentation and product positioning							
<b>D. Service quality related competencies</b>							
Assessment of service gaps							
Measuring service quality standards							
Managing service quality tea							
<b>Section 111: Cross functional competencies</b>							
Rate your knowledge and skills in the areas listed below							
<b>A. general management skills</b>							
Goal setting							

Steps of the planning process							
Setting priorities and scheduling							
Leadership skills							
Creative thinking							
<b>B. Computer skills</b>							
Spreadsheet applications							
Word processor applications							
Database applications							
Windows							
Others (please specify)							
<b>Section IV: Other competencies</b> In the space below please indicate other training needs (competencies/knowledge and skills not mentioned above):							

The Skills Development Facilitator should provide assistance in the development and updating of the questionnaire, administering the questionnaire in his or her department. This should include explaining the training assessment system to other managers/supervisors and helping them administer the questionnaire, collecting questionnaires.



**Activity 5: Develop a needs questionnaire**

Review the sample questionnaire provided above and look again at the competency chart you developed for a trainer earlier.

Now design a sample questionnaire for assessing the training needs of a trainer.

<b>Sample Skills Audit Questionnaire for Trainer</b>	
<b>Section I: Profile data</b>	
<b>Section II: Professional competencies</b>	
<b>Section III: Cross-functional competencies</b>	
<b>Other</b>	

## Data Analysis and Plan Development

In this stage, the questionnaires and/or other sources of data are analysed in order to determine the training needs of departments. Analysis starts with identifying the skills and topic that were most frequently chosen by respondents as requiring attention – that is, the respondents indicate that they have a low level of familiarity (either of knowledge or skill) with them. These skills and topics are then logically and coherently integrated into a formal training and development programme, course or event.

When a familiarity rating scale is used, it is important to tabulate the actual point on the scale that respondent's choose (the so-called training need point). Those with a very low score on an item (1 or 2) lack sufficient knowledge or skill in this area and therefore need training. Those items with middle range scores (3 or 4) are of medium priority and those with high scores (5 or 6) are of low priority.

These range scores need to be looked at both on an individual and group level. At an individual level the scores will indicate what needs to be built in, by way of training, into an individual's personal development plan. The average (mean) score achieved by a group of employees will indicate whether there is need for a substantial training course or programme run for a whole group of people.

The training need point serves as a mechanism to identify the priority of the training activity. It should be annually reviewed and readjusted according to changing circumstances and events.

The data analysis, accurately compiled into a report, feeds into the development of the final training and development plan of the company.

Typical questions that have to be asked once the data has been analysed include:

- Will performance in the job situation improve if these needs are satisfied?
- Will the performance problem be solved if the needs are satisfied?
- How important are the needs (in terms of frequency of use, and critically or importance)?
- Is there a need for the job to be redesigned?
- Should any of the tasks be re-allocated?
- Should some of the employees be transferred instead of undergoing training?
- Is On-The-Job Training challenges an option instead of formal training?
- Who will be the beneficiaries of the identified training and development interventions?

- What assistance could the Human Resources Department provide in terms of sourcing the training and development interventions?
- What is the availability of the learners?
- What is the biographical and demographical profile of the learners?
- Are there any possible barriers to their participation in training?
- What other constraints need to be considered which may influence decisions with respect to training?

In addition, periodical investigations need to be made during implementation by verbally asking people who are involved about inadequacies related to the execution period, the size of paper work generated, the clarity of the questions, etc. In some cases further questionnaires or interviews will need to be administered.

On the next pages are some examples of checklist and questionnaires designed to assist in the analysis of data and in prioritising the needs that have emerged from the process of data collection.

**Can training correct a performance deficiency? A quick reference checklist (Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk and Schenk, 2003, p. 457)**

**What is the performance discrepancy?**

What is the difference between what is being done and what should be done?  
What is the evidence and is it reliable?

**Is the discrepancy important?**

- What is it costing?  
Will the problem grow?  
Is it worth fixing?

**Is it a skill or knowledge lack?**

Could they do it if their lives depended on it?

**Did they know how to do it in the past?**

Have they forgotten?  
Is the skill often used?  
Do they get regular feedback on how they are doing?

**Is there a simpler way?**

Can the job be simplified?  
Could job aids be used?  
Can they learn by being shown instead of training (On-the-job training methods?)

**Do they have the potential to do the job well?**

Are they physically fit?  
Do they have the mental potential?  
Are they over/under qualified?

**Is the correct performance being punished?**

Do they perceive performing correctly as being penalized?  
Is not doing the job rewarding?

Is there some reward for non-performance (less work, worry or tiredness, or do they get more attention?)

**Does correct performance really matter?**

Is there a favourable outcome for performance?

Is there any status/job satisfaction connected with the job?

Are there any obstacles to performing?

Are the resources available (time, equipment, tools, space?)

Are there any other barriers (policy, culture, ego, systems, authority, and conflicting time demands?)

**What is the best solution?**

Are there any solutions which are unacceptable to the organisation?

Are the solutions beyond the resources of the organisation?

**Example of a needs assessment questionnaire with selected questions (Grobler *et al*, 2006)**

**Instructions:** Please read the list of training areas carefully before answering. Circle **Yes** if you believe you need training in that skill, either for use in your current job or for getting ready for promotion to a better position. Circle the question mark (?) if uncertain. Circle **No** if you feel no need for training in that area.

1. How to more effectively manage my time	Yes	?	No
2. How to handle stress on the job	Yes	?	No
3. How to improve my written communication skills	Yes	?	No
4. How to improve my oral communication skills	Yes	?	No
5. How to improve my listening skills	Yes	?	No
6. How to improve my customer relations	Yes	?	No
7. How to improve my service to customers	Yes	?	No
8. How to deal with customer complaints	Yes	?	No
9. How to improve my personal productivity	Yes	?	No

**Example of questionnaire for prioritising training needs (Grobler *et al*, 2006)**

Position: <b>Clerical</b>		
Employee:	Department:	
Supervisor:	Date:	
<p><b>Instructions:</b></p> <p>In column A, rate the skills necessary for the employee to perform the job. Use the following ratings: 1 = not important; 2 = moderately important; 3 = very important</p> <p>In column B, rate the need for training for each skill area which received a rating of 3 or 2 in column A. Use the following ratings: 1 = no need for training; 2 = moderate need for training; 3 = immediate, critical need for training</p>		
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
	<b>How important is the skill?</b>	<b>Employee's need for training?</b>
Ability to read and comprehend rough draft material		
Typing speed		
Typing accuracy		
Proofreading skills		
Ability to use office machinery		
Filing skills		
Ability to compose letters and memos		
Oral communications		
Ability to organise daily routine		
Human relations skills		
Customer service skills		

The final training plan will include a list of training programmes required, the contents and the selection of appropriate curricula, the standards set, groups targeted and programme duration.

The annual training and development plan should be a detailed statement of the training that will be implemented over a specific period. The plan results from a reconciliation of priority training needs, the training and development policy, the workplace skills plan, and the resources (including budgets available).

## Conducting Evaluation and Giving feedback

No training assessment system is complete without an evaluation element. The main objective in this phase is to find out whether the actual training and development needs, not wants, were detected. It is also an attempt to pinpoint inadequacies in the needs assessment system, provide feedback to the concerned parties and to suggest corrections.

The HRD department must develop an evaluation system that appropriately detects deficiencies.

For example, a set of related questions can be included in the final questionnaire given to the trainee at the end of the programme. These might include questions such as:

- To what extent is the content of the programme related to your job?
- Is the content of the programme based on an appropriate standard(s)?
- To what extent did the programme meet your actual training needs?
- What topics of the programme were irrelevant to your job?
- Were learners assessed in terms of learning outcomes?
- Did learners have the opportunity to apply the skills in the workplace?
- Were learner support structures established?

## Training Needs Assessment Information System

Undoubtedly the efficiency of this proposed training assessment system cannot be maximised without a rigorous information system. The latter should serve, among other things, the following:

- integration of the processes into a productive system;
- facilitation of a reliable flow of information among involved parties;
- minimisation of excessive paper work; and
- facilitation of follow-up activities

The information system might easily be integrated with the training and development system.

Employees' records will become more comprehensive since they will include not only the training programmes attended, but also employees' training needs and thus enable both the department, as well as the Hum Resources Development department, to trace the employees' career development.

## Producing and Presenting a Research Report

### Reporting Results

1. The level and scope of content depends on to whom the report is intended, e.g., to funders / bankers, employees, clients, customers, the public, etc.
2. Be sure employees have a chance to carefully review and discuss the report. Translate recommendations to action plans, including who is going to do what about the research results and by when.
3. Funders / bankers will likely require a report that includes an executive summary (this is a summary of conclusions and recommendations, not a listing of what sections of information are in the report – that's a table of contents); description of the organization and the program, product, service, etc., under evaluation; explanation of the research goals, methods, and analysis procedures; listing of conclusions and recommendations; and any relevant attachments, e.g., inclusion of research questionnaires, interview guides, etc. The funder may want the report to be delivered as a presentation, accompanied by an overview of the report. Or, the funder may want to review the report alone.
4. Be sure to record the research plans and activities in a research plan which can be referenced when a similar research effort is needed in the future.

### Contents of a Research Report – An Example

Ensure your research plan is documented so that you can regularly and efficiently carry out your research activities. In your plan, record enough information so that someone outside of the organization can understand what you're researching and how. For example, consider the following format:

1. Title Page (name of the organization that is being, or has a product/service/program that is being researched; date)
2. Table of Contents
3. Executive Summary (one-page, concise overview of findings and recommendations)
4. Purpose of the Report (what type of research was conducted, what decisions are being aided by the findings of the research, who is making the decision, etc.)

5. Background About Organization and Product/Service/Program that is being researched:
  - a. Organization Description/History
  - b. Product/Service/Program Description (that is being researched)
    - i. Problem Statement (in the case of non-profits, description of the community need that is being met by the product/service/program)
    - ii. Overall Goal(s) of Product/Service/Program
    - iii. Outcomes (or client/customer impacts) and Performance Measures (that can be measured as indicators toward the outcomes)
    - iv. Activities/Technologies of the Product/Service/Program (general description of how the product/service/program is developed and delivered)
    - v. Staffing (description of the number of personnel and roles in the organization that are relevant to developing and delivering the product/service/program)
6. Overall Evaluation Goals (e.g., what questions are being answered by the research)
7. Methodology
  - a. Types of data/information that were collected
  - b. How data/information were collected (what instruments were used, etc.)
  - c. How data/information were analysed
  - d. Limitations of the evaluation (e.g., cautions about findings/conclusions and how to use the findings/conclusions, etc.)
8. Interpretations and Conclusions (from analysis of the data/information)
9. Recommendations (regarding the decisions that must be made about the product/service/program)
10. Appendices: content of the appendices depends on the goals of the research report, e.g.:
  - a. Instruments used to collect data/information
  - b. Data, e.g., in tabular format, etc.
  - c. Testimonials, comments made by users of the product/service/program
  - d. Case studies of users of the product/service/program
  - e. Any related literature

### Some Pitfalls to Avoid when Reporting

1. Don't balk at research because it seems far too "scientific." It's not. Usually the first 20% of effort will generate the first 80% of the plan, and this is far better than nothing.

2. There is no “perfect” research design. Don’t worry about the research design being perfect. It’s far more important to do something than to wait until every last detail has been tested.
3. Work hard to include some interviews in your research methods. Questionnaires don’t capture “the story,” and the story is usually the most powerful depiction of the benefits of your products, services, programs, etc.
4. Don’t interview just the successes. You’ll learn a great deal by understanding its failures, dropouts, etc.
5. Don’t throw away research results once a report has been generated. Results don’t take up much room, and they can provide precious information later when trying to understand changes in the product, service or program.

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>STEPS</b>
Agreement on the objectives of the skills audit and the expected outcomes	Discussion and agreement on project outcomes
Investigation to identify key competencies and analyse the organisational context and strategy in relation to the objectives of the skills audit.	Review business goals Review job descriptions Review organisational structure Review future business plans
Communication	Workshop with key people to confirm key competencies and to agree broad process  Communicate purpose and process to all staff members
Competence profiling	Prepare a profile for each job
Individual audits (by self, consultant and/or panel)	Plan a meeting with each employee to gather evidence of competencies in relation to the key organisational competencies and the job competence profile
Application	Prepare a skills gap analysis
Feedback	Present the skills gap analysis to management and training committee/shop stewards and discuss next steps  Give feedback to individual staff members  Train managers to use the skills audit process
Reporting	Prepare a formal report and compile the Workplace Skills Plan

### **Example of Providers Learning Plans**

## On-the-job Learning Plans

### Example 1 - On-the-job Training for a Single Learner

Name of learner: Kathleen Vigour						
Task	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
House-keeping						
Salon procedures						
Shampooing						
Conditioning						
Reception						
Neutralising						
Temporary colouring						
Semi-permanent colouring						
Permanent colouring						

### Example 2 - On-the-job Training for a Group of Learners

Learner	Sept – Oct	Nov - Dec	Jan - Feb	Mar - Apr	May - Jun
Simon Buck	Fitting shop /IFR	Inspection	Maintenance	Machine shop	Electrical
Stephen Clark	Inspection	Maintenance	Machine shop	Electrical	Fitting shop /IFR
Miriam Davey	Maintenance	Machine shop	Electrical	Fitting shop /IFR	Inspection
Sam Langdown	Machine shop	Electrical	Fitting shop /IFR	Inspection	Maintenance
Victoria Lucas	Electrical	Fitting shop /IFR	Inspection	Maintenance	Machine shop

## Off-the-job Learning Plans

Example 3 - Planning Off-the-job Training for a Group of Learners

	Off-the-job training session			
	Professional practice	Working as a team	Underlying principles	Physical well-being and development
Learner	24 Sept	4 Oct	12 Oct	19 Nov
Pat Naylor	✓	✓	✓	✓
David Esiri	✓	✓	✓	
Allan Hague	✓		✓	✓
Linda Place	✓	✓	✓	
Diane Ward	✓	✓	✓	✓
Robin Toole	✓	✓	✓	✓

# Section 3 – Individual Development Planning

## SECTION OUTCOMES

After completing this section, you will be able to:

- Apply career planning for individuals in the organisations
- Understand the importance of planning the development of employees
- Understand what career guidance entails
- Understand the concept of initial assessments
- Applying assessment and testing techniques for the purpose of designing a development plan for an employee
- Design a Training Plan for each employee
- Monitor and review development plans for individuals
- Implement quality assurance measure to ensure effective development of employees.

## Career Planning

### **Career**

Dictionary meaning of career is an individual's "course or progress through entire life (or a distinct portion of life)". It is understood mainly to be concerned with the remunerative or professional work and also, sometimes with formal education.

**Career planning** is the process of establishing career objectives and determining appropriate educational and developmental programs to further develop the skills required to achieve short- or long-term career objectives of individuals.

- Career planning process spans the entire or a significant portion of one's life.
- To start with it includes aiming for an occupation, getting necessary and related formal professional education, choosing a specific profession stream and getting an appropriate job.
- Next step includes growing in one's job, possibly changing careers before finally, retiring.
- For some, it may be just once for every phase in career and for others, it may be a more dynamic process. For the latter, it is more likely to happen several times in their life span as they first define and then redefine their life time goals.

Effective career planning and assessment, allows individuals to consider multiple options, act with self-advocacy, bridge academic and career plans, and equip themselves with critical information (Borgen & Amundsen, 1995).

Career planning and assessment focuses on four distinct domains:

- Academic
- Psychological
- Medical
- Vocational

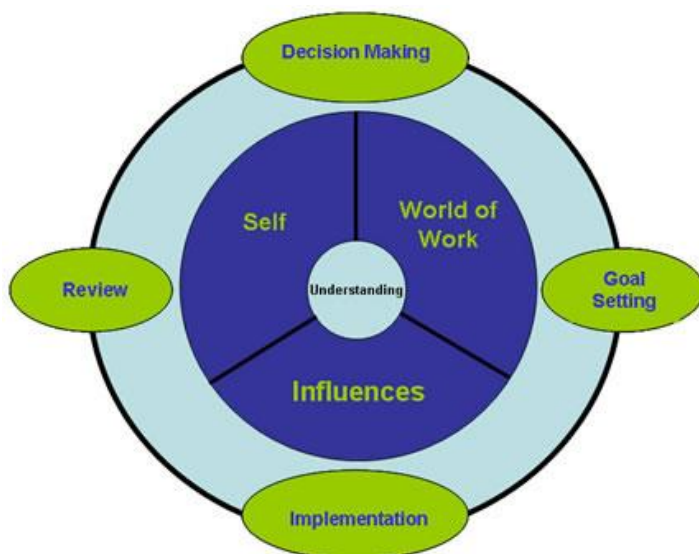
## Career Guidance

'Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers.

Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector.

In our case we will be using to facilitate employees to create personal development plans in order to perform better at their current tasks in order for them to help achieve organisational goals. Career guidance is also needed to facilitate individuals to grow horizontally and vertically with the organisation and should produce lifelong learning opportunities.

The activities may take place on an individual or group basis and may be face-face or at a distance.



## Career Planning within Organisations

- While each individual on his/her job in an organization will start planning out their career growth path and crossing the mile stones along the path to finally reach their goals, the organization where they works is also responsible to support or to proactively carve his/her career progression.
- Therefore, the organization should keep a track on the performance and progress of all the employees working in the organization.
- Organisations should enable their employees with the knowledge of the existing and future opportunities and growth avenues that can be pursued and achieved within.
- Organisations should also let their employees know about what kind of systems and interventions the organisations have to support the attainment of these growth possibilities.
- While organisations at corporate level will be concerned about the career planning of their employees, even as a corporate strategy, it may finally be human resources departments' responsibility to execute this function.
- It is considered an important function of HRM but it is also true that it is one of the most neglected and least developed functions in a large number of organisations.
- HR departments should chalk out well-structured systems of career planning within their organisations.

## Advantages of Career Planning

- A well-structured career plan within an organization helps it to retain those employees whom the company values and to motivate them fully to use their potential, talents and capabilities in the best possible ways.
- A good career planning system sends out a message that the organization believes in providing fairness and equal opportunities to all its employees with transparency.
- Since training and development of employees is an integral aspect of career planning, it prepares more competent employees within the organization on an ongoing basis. This is advantageous to the organization as well as the employees.

## Elements of Well Structured Integrated Career Planning System

It is necessary for the organisations to design a well-structured integrated career planning system for its employees which contain the following elements:

1. **Competency model:** Organisations should design and implement a competency matrix or a competency mapping system for defining the required technical and behavioural competencies for each job or position within the organisation. Then,

evaluating the existing competencies of the job holders against these expected competencies. The competency gaps can be addressed and rectified by various interventions like on or off the job training and development, coaching, mentoring, task force assignments, job rotation, job enrichment, transfers etc.

2. **Performance appraisal system:** Well designed and well implemented performance appraisal system facilitates evaluation of an employee objectively on their existing jobs as well as for potential jobs at higher hierarchical levels. The strengths and weaknesses of the employee allow the organization to plan to carve out an appropriate career plan and associated interventions. The decisions to promote an employee to a higher hierarchical level or motivating him/her at the current level by giving accelerated increments or other suitable rewards.
3. **Mentoring and career coaching:** Counselling through formal or informal mentoring system in the organization and/or positioning of career coaches help the employees in getting insight into the career path they can steer through and for this what development tools should they use.
4. **Establishing corporate campus:** In partnership with the local colleges and consultants, the organisations can make available for its employees career development programs and courses. Based on the career plan, the employees can choose to join these programs/courses or be deputed by the organization.
5. **Job rotations, job enrichment and job transfers:** These are well tried out systems to prepare the employees to take on the responsibilities of different jobs/assignments so as to groom them as per their career plans.
6. **Training and development:** In-company training and development systems can provide necessary inputs to the employees on the subject of career planning and also on various competencies and skills that will be necessary to be imparted to make the employees ready to take up the responsibilities that will come their way as they progress on their career paths in the organization.



### **Activity \_: Self-Assessment**

Based on the theory of John Holland, Ph.D., people with the same or similar interests are often found in the same work environments. To discover the work environments suited to your interests, abilities, and personality, consider the following categories/themes.

**Step 1:** For each theme in the table below, check those items that describe you best.

**Step 2:** Total the items checked for each theme/category. Identify the top 3 categories/themes that create the most accurate picture of you.

My top 3 categories/themes are: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

**Step 3:** How accurately do you believe your (3) top themes describe your personality and interests?



<b>REALISTIC</b>				<b>R Total =</b>	
<b>Are You:</b>		<b>Can You:</b>		<b>Like To:</b>	
	Practical		Fix electrical things		Tinker with mechanics
	Athletic		Solve mechanical problems		Work outdoors
	Straight forward		Pitch a tent		Be physically active
	Mechanically inclined		Play a sport		Use your hands
	A nature lover		Read a blueprint		Build things
	Good with tools and machinery		Work on cars		

<b>INVESTIGATIVE</b>				<b>I Total =</b>	
<b>Are You:</b>		<b>Can You:</b>		<b>Like To:</b>	
	Inquisitive		Think abstractly		Explore ideas
	Analytical		Solve math problems		Use computers
	Scientific		Understand physical theories		Work independently
	Observant		Do complex calculations		Perform lab experiments
	Precise		Use a microscope		Read scientific or technical magazines
	Good with tools and machinery		Work on cars		
			Analyze data		

<b>ARTISTIC</b>				<b>A Total =</b>	
<b>Are You:</b>		<b>Can You:</b>		<b>Like To:</b>	
	Creative		Sketch, draw, paint		Attend concerts, theatres, art exhibits
	Intuitive		Play a musical instrument		Read fiction, plays, poetry
	Imaginative		Write stories, poetry, music, sing, act, dance		Work on crafts
	Innovative		Design fashions or interiors		Take photographs
	An individualist				Express yourself creatively

<b>SOCIAL</b>				<b>S Total =</b>	
<b>Are You:</b>		<b>Can You:</b>		<b>Like To:</b>	
	Friendly		Teach/train others		Work in groups
	Helpful		Express yourself clearly		Help people with problems
	Idealistic		Lead a group discussion		Participate in meetings
	Insightful		Mediate disputes		Do volunteer service
	Outgoing		Plan and supervise an activity		Work with young people
	Understanding		Cooperate well with others		Play team sports

<b>ENTERPRISING</b>				<b>E Total =</b>	
<b>Are You:</b>		<b>Can You:</b>		<b>Like To:</b>	
	Self-confident		Initiate projects		Make decisions affecting others
	Assertive		Convince people to do things your way		Be elected to office
	Sociable		Sell things or promote ideas		Win a leadership or sales award
	Persuasive		Give talks or speeches		Start your own political campaign
	Enthusiastic		Organize activities and events		Meet important people
	Energetic		Lead a group		

<b>CONVENTIONAL</b>				<b>C Total =</b>	
<b>Are You:</b>		<b>Can You:</b>		<b>Like To:</b>	
	Well groomed		Work well within a system		Follow clearly defined procedures
	Accurate		Do a lot of paper work in a short time		Use data processing equipment
	Numerically inclined		Keep accurate records		Work with numbers
	Methodical		Use a computer terminal		Type or take shorthand
	Conscientious		Write effective business letters		Be responsible for details
	Efficient				

## **Description of Results**

**REALISTIC** people are characterized by competitive/assertive behaviour and by interest in activities that require motor coordination, skill, and physical strength. People oriented toward this role prefer situations involving "action solutions" rather than tasks involving verbal or interpersonal skills. They like to take a concrete approach to problem-solving rather than relying on abstract theory. They tend to be interested in scientific or mechanical rather than cultural and aesthetic areas.

**INVESTIGATIVE** people prefer to think rather than to act, to organize and understand rather than to persuade. They are not apt to be very "people oriented."

**ARTISTIC** people value self-expression and relationships with others through artistic expression. They dislike structure, prefer tasks involving personal or physical skills, and are more prone to expression of emotion than others. They are similar to investigative people, but are more interested in the cultural-aesthetic than the scientific.

**SOCIAL** people seem to satisfy their needs in teaching or helping situations. In contrast to investigative and realistic people, social types are drawn more to seek close interpersonal relationships and are less apt to engage in intellectual or extensive physical activity. They have high interest in other people and are sensitive to the needs of others. They perceive themselves as liking to help others, understanding others, and having teaching abilities. Social people value social activities, social problems, and interpersonal relationships. They use their verbal and social skills to change other people's behaviour. They are generally cheerful, scholarly, and verbally oriented.

**ENTERPRISING** people are verbally skilled and use this skill in persuasion rather than support of others. They also value prestige and status and are more apt to pursue it than conventional people.

**CONVENTIONAL** people don't mind rules and regulations and emphasize self-control. They prefer structure and order to ambiguity in work and interpersonal situations. They place value on prestige or status.

## Initial Assessments of an Employee

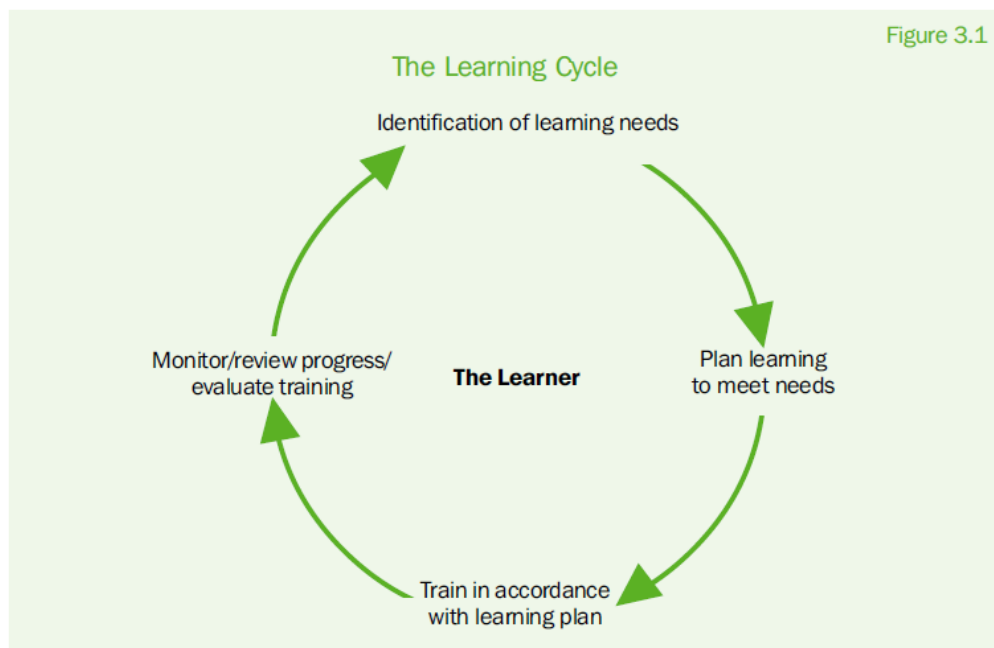
All employees should undergo a period of initial assessment. Initial assessment is the process of identifying an employee's learning and support needs to enable the design of an individual development plan which will provide the structure of their learning. In other words create a starting point for the employee's learning path.

Like we have mentioned before, learning needs are the knowledge, skills and competence which an employee needs to acquire during the course of the learning programme. Support needs are the additional needs that the employee requires to enable them to address barriers which may otherwise prevent them from fulfilling their learning programme.

Failure to accurately identify an employee's learning needs, may result in a learning plan or learning programme, which does not address those learning needs.

Employees must be actively engaged in every cycle of the learning cycle as they are in the centre of the system that drives their learning.

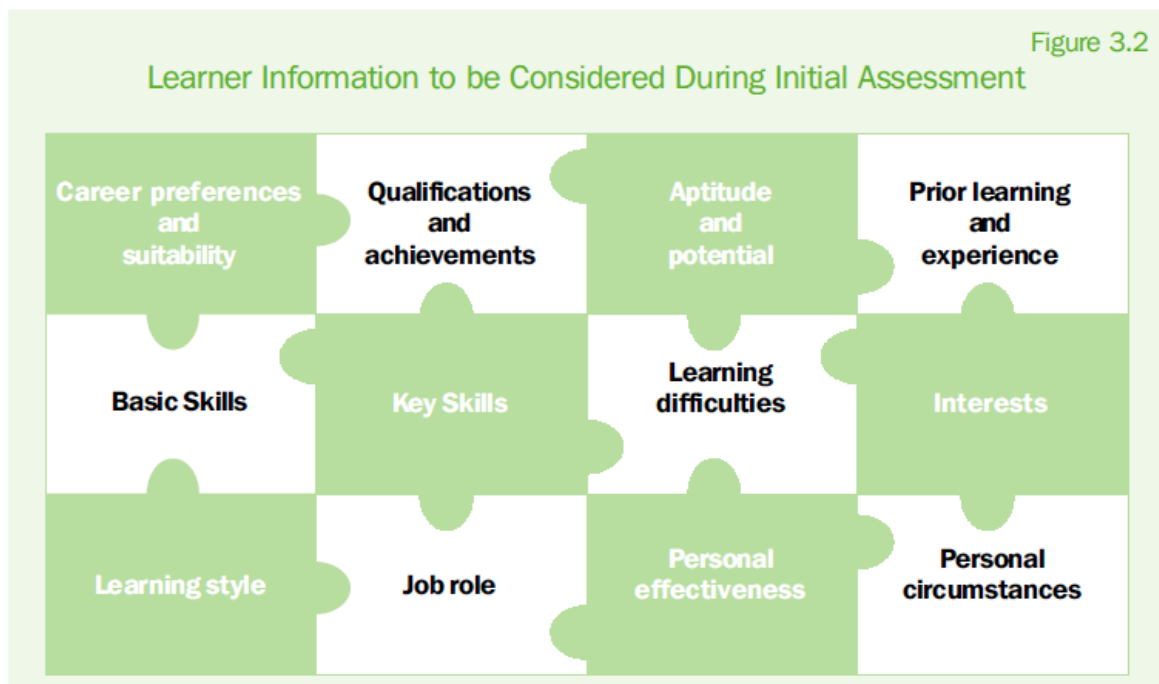
This figure below shows how a learning cycle works and shows the placement of the employee/learning in the centre of the learning cycle.



Initial assessment commences at the point entry, from the first contact with the employee and continues until the point that the individual plan is completed. Further learning support needs will inevitably be identified through the review process and should be reflected in updates to individual learning plans.

Initial assessment should take place over a number of days or even weeks. It should not be confined at one session.

An employee's learning and support needs are identified from the collection and analysis of a wide range of information. The next figure depicts the different types of information which needs to be considered during the initial assessment process. It is shown as a jig-saw to demonstrate that the process is one of building up a series of interlocking pieces of information to form a coherent picture of the individual.



### Career Preference and Suitability

The career aims of individuals who are unemployed when they join a learning programme need to be identified. This points them towards an appropriate occupational area for their learning programme, or a suitable option within their learnership.

Career choice is dependent upon many factors including: qualifications and achievements, abilities, interests, subjects studied at school, skills, knowledge and understanding of the chosen occupation, jobs available in the labour market, as well as an individual's aptitude to undertake certain types of work.

## Qualifications and Achievements

Information about an individual's qualifications and achievements can provide an indication of their general level of ability. The qualifications and achievements can indicate strengths and weaknesses in certain subject areas which may then inform their choice of career.

It can help in deciding which programme is most appropriate for the learner and whether the level of the planned programme and qualifications are appropriate.

## Ability and Potential

Some individual's educational qualifications and achievements may not reflect their true ability or potential. Failure to achieve educational qualifications could be caused by a variety of reasons. The individual may have dropped out of school early. They may have missed large parts of their schooling due to illness, or disability, or transport, or finances, or even taking care of somebody. There may be other reasons such. Academic qualifications are not necessarily an indicator of success in vocational learning programmes. An individual's ability or potential needs to be initially assessed so that accurate decisions can be made about the type of programme and level from which they would most benefit.

## Prior Learning and Experience

The purpose of establishing an individual's prior experience and learning is to ensure that he or she does not waste time in repeating learning in areas in which they are already competent. If they do, they may make slower progress in achieving their educational goals. Individuals may, for example, have previously attended other programmes and started to work towards qualifications. They may have achieved units towards a qualification. They may have achieved other qualifications which awarding bodies accept evidence towards the qualification which they are now seeking.

Young people choosing to follow apprenticeship or learnership programmes may have achieved some key skill units previously. Individuals already employed would have already gained occupational skills and may be able to demonstrate competence in certain areas.

## Basic Skills

During initial assessment it is important to identify those learners who require support with basic skills during their learning programmes. Their current level of basic skills should be assessed and the specific areas in which they require help and support should be identified.

## Key Skills

Some individuals follow learning programmes where the achievement of specific key skills are a mandatory requirement. Their current level of basic skills should be assessed and the specific areas in which they require help and support should be identified.

## Learning Difficulties

Some individuals have specific learning difficulties or disabilities which may not be obvious or have been previously recognised, which require specialist learning provision and support. It is vital that these are identified during initial assessment in order that they can be addressed in the individual's learning plan.

## Interests

Collecting information on an individual's hobbies and interests may assist the process of guiding them to make suitable career and learning choices. Knowing such interest is important in enabling the design of innovative learning programmes which engage the learner.

## Learning Style

Each person has a preferred way of learning. Some people may learn best by undertaking practical activities, others prefer to read books, whilst others learn by listening or sharing ideas. Many people who fail to learn academically do so as a result of teaching styles which are not conducive to their own learning styles.

If learning is to be effective it is important that one is aware of the ways in which their learners are best able to learn, so that they can use appropriate teaching styles to suit the learner's needs. An excellent way to test such learning styles would be to research Natural Intelligence, as this concentrates on how the individual processes information rather than concentrating on the learner's ability to process information.

## Job Role

For individuals working towards one or more vocational qualifications, it is important to consider whether their job allows them to develop the necessary competence to achieve the full qualification. If there are any gaps, one should consider how the individual will be given the opportunity to develop competence in these areas when developing their individual learning plan.

## Personal Effectiveness

Skills in personal effectiveness are important in enhancing the employability of individuals. The skills include self-confidence, motivation, presentation, taking responsibility, attendance, time-keeping, reliability, respect for others and decision-making. Many learners need to develop these as part of their learning programme. Others need to develop them in preparation for entering mainstream learning.

## Personal Circumstances

Some individuals have personal problems which may need to be addressed during their learning cycle. Some individuals may face social problems such as homelessness, behavioural difficulties or they suffer from alcohol or drug addiction. Others may have certain medical conditions which could prevent them from learning and working in certain areas. They may have child care commitments which effect the times they can attend classes on the weekend or after work. Transport and financial constraints may also have an impact on class attendance. These types of problems have to be identified at the initial assessment so that ways can jointly be found to overcome these issues.

## Equality of Opportunity

Access to learning is an important part of promoting equality of opportunity which is of paramount importance for work-based learning. Organisations should not discriminate against or discourage any potential learning. The identification of individual needs is important in ensuring that flexible provision can be developed to meet needs where possible.

Within work-based learning there is still a marked stereotyping in choice of occupational areas with women dominating in business administration, retailing, hairdressing, health and social care, waitressing and men in engineering, construction, motor-vehicle and increasingly information and communication technology. Minority ethnic groups are seriously under-represented in traditional craft sectors.

Providers must avoid stereotyping not only in terms of gender and ethnicity but also in terms of disability, age and geographical factors.

### **Using the information Collected**

Information collected during the initial assessment process should allow the employee to:

- Be placed on an appropriate course or learning programme which matches their current level of skills, knowledge and abilities.
- Work towards a level of qualification which is appropriate to their level of skills, knowledge and ability.
- Be placed in work in an appropriate occupational area, where this is relevant to the learning programme.
- Have all learning and support needs identified, to enable a comprehensive individual learning plan to be designed.

### Benefits of conducting an Initial Assessment

#### **Employee / Learner**

Effective initial assessment helps employees / learners to:

- Have a better understanding of their career options
- Make realistic choices about their career aims
- Identify what they have already learnt and what they need to learn
- Feel valued and motivated by the support given to them in identifying their individual needs
- Play a part in the development of their learning plan through understanding their own learning and support needs
- Take responsibility for their own learning
- Measure their progress by providing a clear baseline of where they are at the start of their learning programme
- Complete their learning programme and achieve their qualification, where appropriate, through accurate identification of their required needs and support.

#### **Training Providers**

Effective initial assessment helps those who provide learning programmes to:

- Understand what the employee/learner needs to learn and the support they require.
- Plan and provide learning which meets the needs of learners, avoiding unnecessary training, and thereby saving costs and making better use of resources.
- Measure progress and success from an accurate starting point.
- Improve learner retention and achievement levels.

- Improve relationships with employers by providing appropriate training and support, and creating more motivated learners.
- Improve relationships with funding organisations through higher retention and achievement levels.

## **Employers**

Effective initial assessment helps employers by providing them with:

- Motivated learners who feel positive about achieving their training plan.
- A better understanding of the learning and support needs of each learner.
- More effective recruitment by the placement of learners in the vocational areas which best match their interests and abilities.
- Reductions in staff turnover and associated costs through improved learner retention rates.

## Conducting Individual Assessment Activities

Purpose for applying assessment activities would be to help employees to make informed choices and achieve desired outcomes requires a structured, well-defined assessment process. This process should provide a full array of effective practices and coordinate the gathering of helpful planning information. To collect all needed data, assessment activities should include observations, interviews, record reviews, and testing/performance activities.

### Observation

Observation is the process of watching or listening to an individual's behaviour and performance and recording relevant information. This process can be structured or unstructured, formal or informal, obtrusive or unobtrusive. Observation has elements of the objective and the subjective, but objectivity should be emphasized. Also, because different observers may come to different conclusions, it may be important to have more than one observer.

### Interviews

Interviews are structured or unstructured conversations intended to gather information from an individual through a verbal question-and-answer format. Like observations, interviews can also be formal or informal.

An interviewer can quickly gather key information about an individual, while at the same time building trust and a shared vision for the career planning process.

Interviews provide opportunity to discuss and gather information on:

- The accuracy of the information contained in the learners application form.
- Employee's knowledge and understanding and suitability to undertake particular types of careers and jobs.
- Expected examination grades if these are unknown. This may help in the identification of the level of programme to be undertaken.
- The results of any formal tests which have been undertaken prior to the interview such as psychometric tests or basic skills or key skills assessments.
- Employee's personal effectiveness. Where gaps are identified they need to be addressed within individual learning plans. Learners experiences at school/college, home, work and through hobbies and interests, provide the focus for much of this discussion. For example, how well does the learner communicate – are they confident? How well motivated are they and what kind of situations do they best respond in? Have they attended school/college or work regularly? Are they neat and tidy in appearance? How well do they respond to authority? Do they enjoy working with others or do they prefer to be on their own? What is their attitude to members of the opposite sex, or members of different minority ethnic groups, or persons with disabilities?
- Any health problems which might affect the type of job which they do.
- Travel-to-work areas.

### Record Reviews

Record Reviews incorporate prior assessment results and should include records from education, performance reviews etc, as available. A review of records can provide background information about academic achievement and performance, previous career planning and goals, and family involvement and support systems.

Care should be taken that the information is up-to-date and from sources that have properly gathered the data. Legally obtained releases of information are usually required, and confidentiality is essential when reviewing any assessment data or other protected records.

## Testing and Performance Reviews

Testing and Performance Reviews account for a large share of the most common assessment activities of employees in transition. Testing “consists of administering a particular set of questions to an individual...to obtain a score” (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004, p. 6). Typically, scores are intended to be used for quite specific purposes. This type of data collection is generally more formal and structured and frequently requires specially trained persons to administer and/or score the test.

## Performance reviews

Performance reviews are activities that look at a whole spectrum of what has been learned and are more subjective, holistic, and qualitative in nature (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2004, p.252). Work experiences and related activities often are best evaluated using performance reviews. It is very helpful to have some written, objective standards for individuals to use in measuring behaviours. Observation rating forms are particularly valuable for recording behaviours and outcomes on various tasks and work experiences.

Figure 4.1

**Suggested Methods for Collecting Relevant Information from the Learner**

	Application forms	NRA/Progress file	References	Interviews	Formal tests	Self assessment questionnaires	Observed group activities	Practical vocational activities
Career preferences and suitability	●			●	●			●
Qualifications and achievements	●	●	●	●				
Aptitude and potential		●	●	●	●		●	
Prior learning and experience	●	●	●	●		●		
Basic skills	●		●	●	●			
Key skills	●			●	●		●	
Learning difficulties	●	●	●	●			●	
Interests	●		●	●				
Learning style				●		●	●	
Job role				●		●		
Personal effectiveness			●	●			●	
Personal circumstances	●		●	●				

## Methods used for Testing

Compiling sufficient data for career planning may require the use of commercially prepared and published tests. These assessments should be chosen with the ultimate goal of helping the individual—this includes considering the effects of the individual's disability on the results of the testing process.

There are a number of factors to consider when choosing tests and assessments.

The ideal assessment instrument should be :

- (a) reliable,
- (b) fair,
- (c) valid,
- (d) cost-effective,
- (e) of appropriate length,
- (f) well-matched to the qualifications of the test administrator,
- (g) easy to administer,
- (h) able to provide easy-to-understand results, and
- (i) appropriate for the individual's needs.

In addition to considering the factors above, you should choose tests that fulfil the specific needs of the individual.

After reviewing available records and conducting informal interviews, planning should determine some short-term, and possibly longer-term, goals. Eligibility assessments can be conducted at this point along with diagnostic or achievement testing to determine where an individual may belong in classes or in training programs. More formal assessments may be used to answer specific or task related questions, at this point.

For our purposes, formal assessments are defined as published instruments with specified administration procedures.

Formal testing is used to assess seven areas related to career planning:

- Academic Performance or Achievement
- Cognitive Abilities
- Behaviour, Social, and Emotional Issues
- Vocational Interests
- Vocational Aptitudes
- Certification of Occupational Competencies

- Physical and Functional Capacities

Neubert (1985) and Leconte (1986) have identified seven major uses of informal and formal work and career assessment data:

- **Determination of career development:** To find out where the employee stands in terms of career awareness, orientation, exploration, preparation, placement, or growth/maintenance.
- **Measurement:** To identify abilities, interests, capabilities, strengths, needs, potentials, and behaviours within the areas of personal/social, functional/academic, community/independent, employment, and employability.
- **Prediction:** To match an individual's interests and abilities with appropriate training, community employment, or postsecondary training.
- **Prescription:** To identify strength and needs, to recommend types of adaptive techniques and/or remedial strategies that will lead to improved career preparation and development.
- **Exploration:** To try out different work-related tasks or activities and to determine how interests match abilities for work-based experiences, community jobs, postsecondary, or other adult activities.
- **Intervention:** To implement the techniques or remedial strategies that will help a student explore career or work options.
- **Advocacy:** To develop a career profile to help students, their families, and others identify concrete ways to assist students in achieving their goals.

### Basic Skill Testing

Basic skills are the ability to speak, read and write in English and to use mathematics at a level sufficient to function and progress at work and in society. Adults with poor basic skills are five times more likely to be unemployed or out of the labour market.

The initial assessment of basic skills is therefore crucial. Learners with a lack of basic skills are liable to make poor progress in their training and to have difficulty sustaining employment. Early and accurate assessment of their basic skills learning needs, followed by a learning plan to address those needs, can make a substantial difference to the learners.

Tests are available for use in the initial assessment of basic skills. Some of the more commonly used ones are listed in the Figure below.

The tests fall in to two categories:

- Initial screening
- Diagnostic assessment

Figure 4.2

Examples of Tools Used by Providers for the Initial Assessment of Basic Skills

Name of product	Supplier	What it assesses
Initial Assessment: An assessment test for Reading, Writing and Maths	Basic Skills Agency	Initial Assessment is an assessment test for basic skills in reading, writing and maths. Its purpose is to indicate that there may be a need for learning support in number, writing and reading and that further assessment is required.
BeST the Screening Toolkit for Basic Skills	BE Consultancy	BeST is a multimedia screening for the basic skills of reading, writing, oral communication and number. It includes 15 literacy and 15 numeracy tasks and is based upon the basic skills standards devised in the early 1990s which form the basis for the Wordpower and Numberpower accreditation schemes.
SKILLCHECK & CHECKERS	Associated Examining Board	SKILLCHECK is a one-hour assessment designed to assess basic skills in numeracy, graphical skills and literacy. CHECKERS assesses both basic literacy and numeracy skills at a lower level than SKILLCHECK. The numeracy section has 30 questions, which are divided into three repeated blocks of 10 skills. The literacy section has 20 questions with more important skills repeated at two or three levels.
Basic Skills Tests (BST)	NFER-NELSON	The basic skills tests provide a measure of basic literacy and numeracy skills. They are designed for use with young people and adults who have few or no academic qualifications. The numeracy test assesses the ability to carry out simple calculations, estimations and application of numerical concepts to everyday problems. The literacy test is based around a newspaper from an imaginary town.

Screening tests aim to identify those who may need support and to indicate an approximate level of their skills. Diagnostic tests aim to identify the specific nature of an individual's strengths and weaknesses and to clearly identify the learning needs. It is normal practice to screen learners first and then use the diagnostic tests where necessary.

It may be obvious from an employee's work or from other initial assessment sources that an employee does not lack basic skills. The figure below shows the equivalence between basic skills levels and those of key skills and the national curriculum.

Figure 4.3

**Comparison of Basic Skills Standards to Other National Qualifications and Standards**

<b>Basic Skills Standards</b>	<b>Key Skills</b>	<b>National Curriculum</b>
Communication and Numeracy	Communication and Application of Number	English and Mathematics
Entry		Key Stage 1 Level 2 (Age 7)
Level 1	Level 1	Key Stage 2 Level 4 (Age 11)
Level 2	Level 2	Key Stage 3 - 4 GCSE A* - C (Age 16)

### Key Skills Initial Assessment

Key skills are generic skills which can help individuals to improve their own learning and performance in education and training, work and life in general. Key skills are linked to basic skills in that they require their application in a wide range of contexts and the ability to transfer skills learnt in one environment to other completely different environments.

There are six key skills, performance in each of which is graded from level 1 to 4:

- Communication
- Application of Number
- Information Technology
- Improving own Learning and Performance
- Working with Others
- Problem Solving

Key skills are integral to all foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. The required level of individual key skills is determined within each occupational framework

The learning programme determines the final minimum target for each employee. Initial assessment of employee key skills on entry measures the distance each employee has to travel to reach that minimum target. Employees enter training with widely varying key skills. Accurate initial assessment of key skills can lead to substantially different individual learning plans. Some employees just meet the threshold of basic skills. Others may already exceed the minimum level they need to achieve by the end. In the latter case, employees probably still need to learn to apply their existing key skills in the workplace. The amount of planned off-the-job training in key skills would be expected to be quite different in these two extreme cases.

Initial assessment of key skills should also determine the level of key skills an individual employee is capable of achieving during the learning programme. If an employee is capable of achieving one or more key skills at a higher level than the minimum laid down in the framework then he or she should be helped to achieve that potential. Too often employees regard key skills as a waste of time because they are not learning anything new.

An assessment of employee's existing level of key skills may be possible from other initial assessment methods such as by looking at the application form. The following figure lists some of the tools available for the initial assessment of key skills.

Figure 4.4

## Examples of Tools Used by Providers for the Initial Assessment of Key Skills

Name of product	Supplier	What does it do?
keySKILLBUILDER	West Nottinghamshire College	"keySKILLBUILDER" is available as either a paper-based product or on CD-ROM. It provides a series of initial assessments for learners at levels 1, 2 and 3 for communication and application of number. The results from completed assessments are plotted on a results sheet which provides a detailed analysis of strengths and weaknesses. A series of 22 workbooks are available to support learners with their individual needs.
Diagnostic Assessment for Key Skills	Colchester Institute	"Diagnostic Assessment for Key Skills" is a computer based diagnostic tool which has been developed to provide a guideline to a candidate's current level of key skills in application of number and communication. The communication section contains 50 questions covering comprehension, spelling, punctuation and grammar. There is also a 'free writing' section to highlight problems such as dyslexia. The application of number section has 35 questions divided into three sections, which assess topics such as averages, formulae, probability and percentages. The assessment lasts approximately one hour. On completion of the assessment a printed profile is generated which indicates areas of weakness.
Searchlight	SHL Ltd	"Searchlight" is a computer-based package designed to profile ability and predict how an individual will cope with the key skill requirements of a course. It assesses the abilities or thinking skills seen as essential to the acquisition of the application of key skills in application of number, communication and IT. These abilities are mapped onto the revised (2000) key skills specifications. Any combination of key skills and level can be assessed in one session.

## Psychometric Testing

Psychometric tests are widely used in giving guidance on careers and in the selection of staff by employers. They are not used in isolation, but as one source of information alongside others, such as interviews. They can form a useful basis for discussion about a person's career or about his or her suitability for a job.

## Examples of Psychometric Assessment Tests Used by Providers

Product	Supplier	What it assesses/measures
XTEND GeneSys	Psytech International	GeneSys is designed to support providers in placing learners in an area that is most suitable for them. It consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Occupational Interest Profile</li> <li>• Verbal reasoning test</li> <li>• Numerical reasoning test</li> <li>• Abstract reasoning test</li> </ul>

FEATS Future Education and Training Series	NFER-Nelson	<p>FEATS is designed to help young people make the right educational and training decisions based on their personal ability, interests, preferred learning style and motivation. It comprises 12 sub-tests divided into four modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module 1- assesses reading skills, verbal ability, number skills,</li> <li>• numerical ability and writing skills</li> <li>• Module 2 assesses non-verbal and spatial ability with</li> <li>• checking and accuracy</li> <li>• Module 3 identifies personal skills, learning preferences and</li> <li>• motivation</li> <li>• Module 4 a vocational guidance questionnaire which looks at the sort of jobs and activities in which a candidate might be Interested</li> </ul>
AIMS portfolio	SHL	<p>The AIMS portfolio is designed to facilitate career decision making. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A general abilities profile (GAP) which consists of an integrated set of 12 ability tests, arranged at three educational levels.</li> <li>• Candidates take a core skills module (verbal, numerical and diagrammatic reasoning) and a specific skills module (checking, spatial and mechanical)</li> <li>• A general occupational interest inventory (GOII)</li> <li>• A motivation questionnaire (MQ)</li> <li>• An occupational personality questionnaire (OPQ)</li> </ul>
Technical Test Battery (TTB)	SHL	<p>A battery of tests suitable for the selection of craft and technical apprentices. The battery includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal comprehension</li> <li>• Technical understanding</li> <li>• Numerical computation</li> <li>• Numerical reasoning</li> <li>• Visual estimation</li> <li>• Fault diagnosis</li> <li>• Mechanical comprehension</li> <li>• Spatial recognition</li> </ul>
Differential Aptitude Test	The Psychological Corporation	<p>The Differential Aptitude Test battery assesses the seven primary abilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal reasoning</li> </ul>

Battery (DAT)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanical reasoning</li> <li>• Numerical ability</li> <li>• Spatial reasoning</li> <li>• Abstract reasoning</li> <li>• Language usage and</li> <li>• Clerical speed and accuracy</li> <li>• spelling</li> </ul> <p>The results from the assessments can be combined with interest data to form a basis for vocational guidance.</p>
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Psychometric testing is a specialised process. The tests have been designed to provide objective measurements of people’s psychological characteristics, such as their aptitude, their reasoning ability, their behaviour and their motivation.

As they are objective they can avoid problems of bias associated with more subjective techniques such as interviews. They can also provide evidence of potential where someone has no formal educational qualifications.

Research has shown that evidence of academic ability, such as GCSE passes, is not always a good indicator of assessing potential success in vocational learning programmes. Some providers therefore use them to determine whether an individual has the potential to successfully complete an advanced modern apprenticeship programme, for example. Tests are carried out by trained specialists who know how to conduct the tests under controlled conditions and who know how to interpret the results of the tests.

Providers can usefully use psychometric testing of learners to help them decide on an occupational area or a career, and therefore help them to decide on the most appropriate learning programme.

Those providers who select individuals may use psychometric testing as one part of the selection process, in order to choose the learners who are best able to benefit from the training. Employers may make use of psychometric test results in selecting a learner, in the same way as they would for any other employee.

The impact of psychometric testing on an individual’s learning plan is more likely to be in the choice of occupational area, and the level of programme, than in the structure of the learning plan itself.

## Aptitude Testing

The ability to identify a person's knowledge, skill and ability (KSA) is fundamental to planning and using academic and vocational assessment information. Identifying aptitudes, or the potential to learn, provides meaningful information to employees and the organisation to inform future career exploration. By design, an aptitude test measures the vocational potential or capacities of an individual to succeed in future career endeavours.

Specific aptitude tests, such as the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and Occupational Aptitude Survey and Interest Schedule (OASIS) measure an individual's aptitudes to succeed in specific areas.

These may include employee's capacities for numerical or abstract reasoning, mechanical proficiencies, form perception, verbal or language abilities, or other innate or learned talents under study.

When used with other assessment tools, aptitude testing can contribute to a more complete vocational profile and offer guidance concerning suitable secondary and postsecondary options. This is especially true in identifying career development pathways where specific academic or job strengths are known to be crucial and relevant. The use of aptitude assessment isolated from other vocational assessment information tends to screen out students with significant disabilities.

However, aptitude tests may be helpful when used as tools to identify customized job training, supports, or accommodations that may be needed by an individual to succeed in an occupation of high interest.

Keep in mind that aptitude means potential to learn. Aptitudes and skills should always be correlated with interests (and to a lesser degree, temperaments). For example, a student may be interested in engineering but have poor academic skills and aptitudes—or another may perform poorly academically but have high interest and motivation for welding.

Employees with high motivation may eventually succeed despite low reading or math achievement or aptitude scores. Learning style preferences should also be determined in order to assist students in understanding and articulating how they best receive or process information. A student who is an auditory learner may not perform as well when given written instructions or assessments, and as a result his or her scores may not accurately represent his or her performance.

## Learning Styles Assessment

Assessing learners' learning styles is important in ensuring that they learn quickly and efficiently during their learning programme. Individuals learn best in a variety of different ways and have preferences for certain ways of learning. Some, for example, learn best by doing things as opposed to thinking about them.

Others prefer to learn by listening and sharing ideas with others. Some prefer very structured activities whilst others enjoy reading and examining information carefully. Trainers need to be aware of the ways in which learners learn most effectively in order that they can plan training and learning opportunities which best meet their needs. Training styles are often influenced by the trainer's own preferred learning style. Learners are at risk of their training being ineffective; where the trainer's dominant teaching style is in conflict with their own preferred learning style.

Some providers use individual interviews or group discussions with learners to identify their preferred learning styles.

## Learner Questionnaires

Learner questionnaires are often used to help learners identify their own strengths and weaknesses and assess their own learning and support needs. The results contribute, along with other sources of information, to the individual learning plan.

The questionnaires usually adopt a fairly simple approach. They typically ask the learner to assess themselves against a number of criteria. For example, they might be asked to tick which of the following activities they have done before. Or, on a scale of 1 to 4, indicate how good they are at working in a team with other people.

<b>Name of product</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>What does it do?</b>
Learning Styles Questionnaire	Honey and Mumford	The questionnaire allows investigation of learning styles based on the learning process. Four types of learning styles are identified: Activists, Reflectors, Theorists and Pragmatists. The questionnaire has been designed for use with 16-19 year olds and takes approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Respondents answer 40 questions in terms of whether they agree more than disagree with them.

<p>The Learning Styles Interactive Diagnostic Screening Test</p>	<p>Ross Cooper</p>	<p>This is a computer based tool which investigates learning styles based on cognitive skills and instructional preference. Consideration is given as to whether people prefer to think visually or verbally and whether they prefer to process information Holistically or sequentially.</p>
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Questionnaires can be designed to collect information on almost any aspect of a learner’s experience. This may include, for example, a self-assessment of their perceived skills and performance in their current job if they are already employed. The outcomes are based on the learners’ perception of themselves which may not always be accurate. They are however an effective way of involving the learner in the identification of their own strengths, weaknesses and learning needs. Information gathered in this way can be built upon using other initial assessment methods, such as an interview or formal assessment tests.

### Group Activity Testing

Some providers observe a learner engaging in group activities with other learners to measure specific attributes and to identify personal strengths and weaknesses, for example, during their induction programmes. Some employers also observe learners in group activities as part of their selection process.

Attributes measured in this way include the ability to work with others, communication, confidence, motivation, decision-making and problem solving.

To be successful, group activities rely on having a number of observers who are properly trained and have clearly defined criteria on which to base their judgements. The outcomes of group activities can be a useful source in supporting or confirming information collected through other methods. The information may result in additions to an individual’s learning plan to increase, for example, his or her self-confidence.

### Interest Testing

A variety of assessment inventories and tools are available to assist employees in recognizing their predominant interests and preferences. When used properly, these surveys can help one to understand how their interests have direct application to making good academic and career choices.

Most career interest inventories are designed to assist employees to identify and better understand their interests and connect them to specific job fields or occupational clusters. Interest testing can provide one with a starting point to further study a range of job possibilities.

Some of the more common interest tests could commercially include:

- the Campbell Interest and Skill Survey (CISS)
- Career Exploration Inventory (CEI), COP System Interest Inventory (COPS)
- Harrington-O'Shea Career Decision-Making System (CDM-R)
- The Pictorial Inventory of Careers DV-2000 (PIC)

A majority of interest inventories are surveys of self-reported interests and skills. When selecting interest inventories, it is important to examine the test manuals to ensure the chosen test is appropriate for the age, job and educational level of the person being assessed. It is also helpful to review the survey to determine the skills needed to take it, such as reading ability etc.

Computer software programs are available to help match an individual's career interests and KSAs (knowledge, skills, and abilities) with specific careers or employment fields.

These computer software programs can be helpful in a number of ways. First, electronic software programs can help to identify KSA clusters that are relevant to a spectrum of jobs and occupational fields. Secondly, these products enable skills development facilitators to quickly match a person's career interests and KSAs with a range of possibilities under consideration.

An excellent tool is available at the following website:

<http://www.teamtechnology.co.uk>

It gives you a full report on your personality test, your leadership skills and gives you a range of possible career choices you could take. It is based on the Meyers Briggs Personality Test – MBTI.

Assessing Aptitudes, Work Behaviours, and Skills although aptitudes, work behaviours, and skills should be looked at distinctly, it is difficult to separate them when it comes to assessment.

Formal and informal assessments can identify an individual's ability to perform specific jobs and to exhibit behaviours and habits that match the work culture. By measuring these areas with paper and pencil, audio-visual, or computer-based assessment, and by analysing physical activity, insight can be gained regarding an individual's potential.

## Situational Work Assessments

Occupational skills and work behaviours can be assessed in situational work assessments and include capacities and competencies to perform essential job duties of specific competitive employment positions. For example, the measurement of an employee's keyboarding proficiency may be predictive of his/her abilities to succeed in a job where the duties require minimum standards of speed for data entry or word processing. Allowing an employee to try essential job functions of different jobs will help them decide if they really enjoy the work and if they are able to meet work requirements.

In a similar way, situational skills assessment can be used to assess the KSAs of employee's for a wide range of competitive jobs. This is accomplished by determining the core job competencies and duties required of a skilled worker and then comparing the actual performance of a student who is being assessed.

For example, a competitively employed housekeeper may be required to clean ten hotel rooms over an eight-hour work period. In this instance, the skills and productivity of a student can be measured by comparing his/her capacity to clean a similar number of rooms while meeting the hotel's standards for cleanliness and job performance quality. Similarly, an assessment can be designed to assess other skills such as those needed to write a computer program used in business or manufacturing.

The outcomes of occupational skills assessment are not entirely predictive of future success in a competitive job situation but they often can lead to job skills training, apprenticeships, or internships that help employee's to increase their competency and productivity.

They can also lead to the development of creative, individualized job placement plans such as customized employment or "job carving"—a restructuring of job duties or tasks so that a student with documented KSAs can successfully perform job functions of high interest. Typically, job carving is provided for people who cannot, for a variety of reasons, perform the entire job or the whole range of skills required.

In special education programmes and community rehabilitation organisations, situational work assessments are also often used to study the "soft skills" needed in employment. They include an assessment of basic work behaviours and skills through practical, hands-on work experiences.

- Situational work assessments are often supervised by trained evaluators or educators.
- Situational work assessments are ideally provided in partnership with training providers.

Business settings work well because they offer a more accurate view of an employee's performance within the context of normal business rules and practices.

Situational work assessments can lead to the development of baseline data and assist facilitators in engaging customized job training or other work supports an employee may need to obtain a satisfactory job placement outcome. Employees with identified behavioural disorders can benefit greatly from situational work assessments.

In a work setting with appropriate support and careful supervision, employees with behaviour problems can often experience success. If work assessments are provided in local businesses, it is very important to educate employers about working with employee with disabilities.

### Work Sampling

Work samples are standardized testing instruments that are sometimes used to help assess the job potential of employees. Standardized work samples offer the qualities of testing validity and reliability because they are statistically normed to specific populations.

Work Samples, are sometimes used to assess an employee's vocational potential or abilities to perform in jobs within specific career fields. Following each testing procedure, the outcome performance of an employee is compared to the performance scores of target populations. The goal is to gain a better understanding of the vocational potential of an employee in comparison to his/her peers or other groups. Frequently commercially available work samples are used for career exploration.

In addition to commercially developed products on the market, some secondary education, student development, organisations have chosen to design and use their own work samples. Custom-designed work samples enable vocational evaluators to measure the skills and performance of an employee with regard to specific tasks or occupations.

The advantage of using custom-designed work samples is the ability to use locally developed norms to compare the job performance of the employee to peers or industry standards (i.e., other students, student, co-workers, master craftsmen, etc). The disadvantage is the limited amount of validity and reliability data available.

Most locally developed work samples have high face validity: they look like work, sound like work, and feel like work. They provide hands-on work exploration while also identifying interests, skills, aptitudes, work behaviours, and temperaments.

Most employees enjoy performing work samples and get a real taste of the tools, materials, and equipment a job or training program might entail.

In recent years, there has been much criticism concerning the use of standardized work samples because of their potential for misuse in screening people with disabilities away from post-secondary and employment options.

A growing number of employee development programmes are adopting assessment methods that are more inclusive in exploring career opportunities for employees.

Although work samples may offer useful information in controlled situations, test scores should be used with great care. It is not enough to use only standardized testing procedures of any kind to make sweeping, predictive assumptions about an employee's ability to work within the organisation.

### Work Environment Testing

Ecological or environmental assessments examine a variety of factors that may contribute significantly to the success of an individual at work. These may include, but are not limited to, availability of close supervision; style of supervision (i.e., casual vs. autocratic); physical building structures and layout of the learning or working environment; flow of product or service processes; effects of formal and informal rules; social interaction demands of others (i.e., co-workers, classmates); sensory stimuli such as noise, motion, temperature, air quality, etc.; work schedules and time requirements; opportunities for independence and decision-making; performance expectations of authorities; and opportunities for self-correction. Temperaments (preference of working with data, people, or things; preference for indoor vs. outdoor work; working with people or alone) play a large role in ecological assessments.

Some environmental conditions are more likely than others to promote unwanted social behaviours. For example, classroom or business settings that produce high levels of sensory stimulation may tend to increase discomfort and anxiety in some students.

These types of environments may supply the trigger for socially unacceptable behaviours or work habits. Certain types of business environments may be more tolerant of nonstandard behaviours exhibited by an employee.

For example, the loading dock of a trucking company may be more tolerant of an employee's use of profanity than the local community library. Or an employee with a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) may function more effectively in a warehouse that requires rapid movement, changes in job tasks, and physical stamina than in a sedentary job that requires continuous concentration.

Some companies or organisations are better than others in welcoming and mentoring new employees. However, all employees who are placed in jobs or work experiences should be prepared for the particular workplace culture they will encounter.

Appropriate job matches and effective career preparation or training can help a new employee feel more comfortable and adapt to the work environment.

Vocational development goals may dictate the need for training leading to standardized assessments certifying skill levels or ensuring that minimum standards of proficiency have been achieved.

Skills standards established by industries help secondary and postsecondary education and job training programs produce better qualified candidates to meet the skilled labour needs of businesses and industries. Credentialing exams help job candidates communicate their skills to prospective employers; they also help learners identify training they will need to advance in their chosen career fields. Ultimately, the certification process helps employers build a workforce capable of meeting the highest performance standards in an increasingly competitive global economy.

### Physical and Functional Capacity Testing

In some instances, it may be helpful to assess the muscular strength, endurance, motor coordination skills, and other physical capacities of student with disabilities. This is particularly true for students who are physically or medically fragile due to chronic diseases, progressive illnesses, and other health conditions that limit physical strength or motor capacities.

For example, an employee's ability to manage a full-time work schedule or perform tasks that demand physical exertion, strength, or motor skills coordination is very important information for matching an employee to suitable employment or career fields.

This information is also critical to identifying needs for accommodations so an employee who is physically or medically fragile can handle the essential functions of a job or participate successfully in a postsecondary education program. It is important to remember that employees may eventually develop physical capacities as they grow and mature physically.

Work capacities testing can also give some indication if a particular type of work is appropriate for an individual based on age or maturity level. For example, an immature employee may not be ready to function in a job with high social demands and responsibilities such as a nursing assistant or child care aid. Or an employee who is lacking in emotional maturity may not be ready to manage the hectic pace of a typical lunch hour at a local fast-food restaurant chain.

### Work Tolerance and Functional Capacity Assessment

Work tolerance testing is a structured process for examining and measuring the physical endurance, strength, motor coordination skills, and emotional capacities of an employee when performing essential job tasks. These types of assessments are commonly used for people who have serious medical problems or who have had significant injuries, often job-related.

The goal of work tolerance testing is to measure whether an employee can manage a regular job routine or full-time work schedule and perform essential job tasks without excessive fatigue or pain. Work tolerance testing also measures range of motion, lifting and carrying, manual dexterity, and motor coordination skills that are necessary to do a job successfully.

Work tolerance and functional capacity assessments can be conducted in formal as well as informal testing formats.

A number of commercially developed testing strategies are available to assess physical capacities, and work tolerance assessments also can be conducted in real job settings in ways similar to situational work assessments.

In these instances, the assessment of physical and emotional work capacities is achieved by observing and recording the job performance of an employee in competitive business environments.

Standardized work samples are sometimes used to measure the employee's ability to perform specific physical movements (e.g. stooping, reaching) or coordination of motor skills (e.g., hand-eye coordination).

Work tolerance testing is normally conducted by trained vocational evaluators who are skilled in these assessment methods and procedures. Job coaches, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and rehabilitation engineers are often knowledgeable about assistive technologies or accommodations that can enhance the functionality of people with physical or emotional limitations. Care must be taken to follow a physician's guidelines in order to prevent harm or additional physical or medical injury to the student.

## Motor Skills and Manual Dexterity Testing

Some standardized assessment tests, such as the Crawford Small Parts Dexterity Test or the Purdue Pegboard Test can measure an employee's finger dexterity, manual dexterity, or hand-eye coordination.

These dexterity tests can help to measure an employee's capacities to move hands, fingers, arms (gross movement), or to control the movement and manipulation of small objects. This information may be helpful to the employee with complex physical disabilities who are considering careers or job opportunities in fields that require good manual dexterity. Also, these tests can help to determine needs for assistive technology or accommodations that may enable an employee to perform the essential functions or tasks of a desired job.

## Implementing Learner Contracts

Learning contracts enable one to cope with the wide range of abilities, needs, interests, experience, incentives, motivation, background and education that are characteristics of most adult learning groups. These characteristics can be accommodated through contract learning.

A learning contract could be identified as a written agreement between the organization or institution and the learner. It is a commitment and an undertaking in which:

- The learner agrees to and gives assurances that learning objectives, outcomes and standards set out in the learning contract will be met. In other words an attempt will be made to achieve the predetermined, needs-orientated goals.
- The training provider will offer a learning opportunity.

A learning contract can also be used as a guideline by the stakeholders and must, therefore include:

- Learning objectives
- Learning resources and strategies
- Evidence of accomplishment of objectives
- Criteria and means for validating the evidence of accomplishment of objectives

### **Specify your learning objectives**

Objectives states that objectives should be formulated in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The objectives should indicate what knowledge, skills and attitudes are to be included in the contract.

Objectives should indicate clearly what learners should be able to do after the training session and indicate what the level of competence should be.

### **Specify learning resources and strategies**

Identify resources and strategies you will use to achieve the objectives – Materials and media plus methods and techniques.

### **Specify evidence of accomplishment**

Describe the evidence you will have to collect to indicate what level or degree of competence you have accomplished in working at the objective.

The type of objection, according to this classification, will decide the evidence that you will be looking for.

<b>TYPE OF OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE</b>
1. Knowledge of facts and figures	Ability to recall, state, write down, list, compile, compare information.
2. Understanding facts, concepts, figures, diagrams, graphs etc.	Ability to show understanding of the information learned
3. Application of information	Evidence of application of information in discussions, papers, arguments, presentations, performing tasks.
4. Analysis of information	Evidence of the ability to analyse information in discussions, reports, presentations
5. Attitudes and values	Evidence of changing attitudes in discussions, in personal relationships, in working with equipment and employees, et cetra. Evidence in feedback from observers of the learner's performance.

### **Specify how the evidence will be validated**

When all the evidence is collected, the following step is to decide how valid the evidence is – does the evidence actually show that learning has taken place?

The following criteria will be dictated by the type of objectives.

An important aspect in this step is how wisely the evaluators or valedictory are chosen. In a course situation the instructor are normally the assessors of performance.

### **Cognitive or knowledge**

- Comprehensiveness
- Depth
- Precision
- Clarity and fluency
- Authenticity
- Usefulness
- Accuracy in language use

### **Psychomotor or skills**

- Dexterity
- Speed
- Accuracy
- Flexibility
- Precision
- Imaginative application of skills

### **Affective or attitude and values**

- Responsibility and accountability
- Motivation and enthusiasm
- Interest and pride
- Improved performance
- Dedication
- Perseverance
- Accuracy and precision concerning quality of performance

### **Evaluating the evidence gathered:**

Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is the learner's knowledge on the subject complete and comprehensive?</li><li>• Does the learner have in-depth knowledge of how the product functions?</li><li>• Is there precision in their actions and answers to the problems faced?</li></ul>
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the learner handle the product with accuracy and dexterity?</li><li>• Can the learner control the situation and react quickly to an emergency?</li><li>• What is the level of flexibility and precision the learner achieved?</li></ul>
Attitudes and Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the reactions of the learner show responsibility and accountability?</li><li>• Is the learner motivated and enthusiastic to pass the test and become competent?</li><li>• Does the learner show interest, dedication and perseverance to</li></ul>

	<p>improve his/her performance when he/she has made a mistake?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the quality of the learner's performance show accuracy and precision and pride?</li> </ul>
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### **Review the contract with consultants**

- Discuss the contract with a supervisor or one or two experts in the field of the subject.
- Consult a friend to get reactions and suggestions for improvement.
- Ask the following questions:
- Are the learning objectives clear, understandable and realistic? Does the module describe the outcomes.
- Is there any other objective you may consider for inclusion?
- Does the learning resources and strategies seem reasonable, appropriate and efficient?
- Can other resources or strategies be considered?
- Does the evidence seem relevant to the various objectives, and is the evidence convincing?
- Can other evidence be considered?
- Are the criteria and means for validating the evidence clear, relevant and convincing?
- Can other ways to validate the evidence be considered?

### **Carry out the contract**

By using the objectives to guide the learning process and activities and using the criteria to determine acceptable levels of performance to be achieved before the learner can go on to the next objective.

The contract should be revised while learning is taking place.

Learners must gather evidence of performance as they work through the objectives in groups or individually.

### **Checklist for Planning Adaptations / Accommodations**

Decisions about adaptations and accommodations must be made on an individual basis, considering the learner's strengths and specific needs, and most importantly his/her goals. Is the goal primarily to improve skills or is it to do something in life—at work, for instance? Is the need immediate, or does the learner have time to build the required skills and knowledge?

When considering one or more adaptations or accommodations, you may rate and compare them using a checklist like the one below, which is adapted from a form found in *Accommodating Adults with Disabilities in Adult Education*, developed in 1998 by the University of Kansas Institute for Adult Studies.

Learner \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Accommodation  
Characteristic**

**Accommodation**

**Accommodation**

**Accommodation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Easily available			
Inexpensive			
Likely to be effective with the learner			
Proven effective with the learner			
Easy to use			
Portable			
Compensates for/bypasses difficulty			
Remediates difficulty/increases abilities			
Allows more independent study/work			
Useful for a variety of tasks			
Approved by GED Testing Service			

# Annexures

## Sample - Skills Audit Tool

**Organization's Name:**

.....**Name of employee:** .....

**Section:** .....

**General**

1. Are you a new employee or a long-standing employee of the company? .....

2. How long have you been in your **present** job? .....

### Confirmation of Current Duties

3. Do you have a duty statement for your job? Yes No .....

4. Is your job accurately described in the duty statement? Yes No .....

5.A If no, what extra duties do you do that need to be added to your duty statement?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

5.B What duties are no longer part of your job and can be deleted from your duty statement?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

### Job Analysis

6. Describe the tasks you regularly perform that are critical to carrying out your job effectively.

.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
.....

7. Describe the type of equipment you are required to use (for example, keyboard, machinery, tools of trade, etc).

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8. Do you require a high degree of technical knowledge for your job?

Yes

No

9. How do you work? Please circle

Alone

Part of a team

Other (specify below)

10. If you work as part of a team, do you perform the same of different work to members of your team?

.....

11. To what extent does your job require you to work closely with other people, such as customers, clients or people in your own organization? Please circle.

Very little

Moderately

A lot

12. How much autonomy is there in your job, ie, to what extent do you decide how to proceed with your work? Please circle.

Very little

Moderately

A lot

13. How much variety is there in your job, ie, to what extent do you do different things at work, using several skills and talents? Please circle.

Very little

Moderately

A lot

**Training Needs**

14. **To perform your current job:** What training do you still need (either on-the-job or a formal course) to perform your current job competently (eg, Excel, bookkeeping, English as a second language, etc)?

.....

.....

.....

15. **To perform other jobs in the organization:** What other roles in the organization would you be interested in doing if a vacancy became available (eg, transfer to another section, supervisor position, etc)?

.....

.....

.....

**To perform other jobs in the organization:** What training or experience would be required

16. (eg, machine operation, negotiation skills, Occupational Health and Safety Awareness, etc)?

.....

.....

.....

**Future Development Needs**

17. What are your career aspirations?

.....

.....

.....

18. What training or development do you need to help make this happen (eg, external degree study, formal meeting procedures, leadership training, etc)?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Recognition of Prior Learning**

19. What training have you attended within the last three years? (This will help identify if any training sessions have been missed or if any refresher training is required.)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

20. What training or skills have you acquired outside your current job that may be relevant to the wider organization?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Action Plan**

**Agreed training and development to be provided over the next 12 months:**

(Record the details of training courses, on-the-job experiences, buddy systems or mentor arrangements, and include the recommended dates the staff member can expect these to occur.)

<b>Training</b>	<b>Date</b>
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....

**Signature of Employee** : ..... **Date** : .....

**Signature of Supervisor** : ..... **Date** : .....

## Sample - Initial Assessment Summary Form

Learner details	
Name:	<input type="text"/>
Date of birth:	<input type="text"/>
NI Number:	<input type="text"/>
Age:	<input type="text"/>
Learning programme	
Learning programme to be followed:	
Qualifications to be sought and level:	
Career preferences and suitability	
Qualifications and achievements	
Aptitude and potential	
Prior learning and experience	
Basic Skills	

<b>Key Skills</b>
<b>Learning difficulties</b>
<b>Interests</b>
<b>Learning style</b>
<b>Job role</b>
<b>Personal effectiveness</b>
<b>Personal circumstances</b>
<b>Summary of learning needs</b>
<b>Summary of support needs</b>

## Advancement Career Planning Tool Sample

These important personal questions will help you put together career advancement strategy:

- What is my career goal?
- Which career direction is best?
- What opportunities do I have for advancement?
- Am I promotable?
- What do I need to do to reach the next career step?
- What opportunity is there for advancement at my current company?

### Summary of my Advancement Career Planning Assessment

<b>My career goal</b>
<b>Best career direction</b>
<b>Current opportunities for advancement</b>
<b>Promotion opportunities</b>
<b>My next career step</b>
<b>Current advancement opportunity</b>

**Step 1: Determine Your Career Plan**

1. What is your long-term career goal? Where do you eventually want to be on the career ladder?

*My career goal is:* \_\_\_\_\_

2. What job title steps at your present company will lead to your career goal? List the job title steps in order. If there is more than one way to reach your goal, use Options 2 and 3 to separately list the steps for each possible way.

These job title steps will lead to my goal:

Option 1:

Option 2:

Option 3:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

3. What is your present job title?

*My present job title is:* \_\_\_\_\_

4. Looking at your present job, what job title step could you advance to *next* that would lead you toward your career goal?

The next job title step that could lead me toward my career goal is:

\_\_\_\_\_

*If the answer is "none,"* what lateral job at your present company would provide the advancement step you need? \_\_\_\_\_

What other companies would offer the advancement step and opportunities you need? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Of the step sequences and opportunities available, which next job title step will *best* lead you toward your career goal?

The next job title step that would be best is: \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2: Assess the Next Advancement Step**

1. Which next job title step did you choose?

The next job title step I wish to pursue is: \_\_\_\_\_

2. What additional training or education will the next job step require?

The next job step will require: \_\_\_\_\_

3. If applicable, where can you receive the training or education needed?

I can receive training or education I need at: \_\_\_\_\_

4. What specific skills will the next job step require? (Examples: leadership, decision-making, computer skills, multi-tasking, coordinating, supervising, team-building, scheduling, budget planning, working with the public)

The next position step will require these following skills:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

5. Of those skills listed, which skills do you currently possess from actual experience?

I possess these skills from experience:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

6. Which skills would you need to develop?

I would need to develop these skills:

_____	_____
_____	_____

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7. How would you develop and acquire these skills? Mentorship (on-the-job training)? Courses? A degree program? Self-study? A training program? A volunteer position? Through community work? Other avenues?

I would develop these skills by:

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8. What are the essential job functions (job duties) of the advanced position? Lifting? Using a computer? Using technical equipment? Greeting the public? Writing reports? List all job duties of the position.

The essential job functions (duties) of the position would include:

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9. What accommodation, if any, would you need to perform the essential job functions (duties) of the advanced position?

I would need the following accommodation(s):

---

---

10. Of those accommodations listed, what accommodation training, if any, would you need?

I would need the following training:

---

---

11. Of the accommodations you would need, which accommodations, if any, might pose an undue hardship for your employer?

The accommodation(s) that might pose an undue hardship:

---

---

12. If an accommodation might pose an undue hardship, what alternative arrangement would be feasible to meet the essential job duty requirements of the position?

The following alternative arrangement would be feasible:

---

**Step 3: Assess Your Interests**

1. What aspects of the new advanced position would you enjoy?

I would enjoy these aspects:

---

2. What aspects of the new advanced position would you least enjoy?

I would least enjoy these aspects:

---

3. What aspects of the new position would you find challenging?

I would find these aspects challenging

---

4. How would you overcome the challenges listed?

I would overcome the challenges by:

---

**Step 4: Assess Your Promotability**

1. How visible are you within the company? In what ways, and by what means, do others have an opportunity to observe your work and performance?

Others are able to observe my work by my involvement in these activities:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. What do you do to further expand your responsibilities beyond your job description? Beyond your department?

I expand my job responsibilities by:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3. What accomplishments have you made toward reaching the company's mission?

My accomplishments include:

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Considering work evaluations you have received, what favorable perceptions do supervisors and co-workers have of you as an employee? Do they view you as hard-working? Capable? Likable? Responsible? Professional? Cooperative? A person who applies good judgment? A leader? A good problem-solver? A team-builder? List all favourable perceptions that come to mind.

Favourable perceptions include:

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Of these favourable perceptions listed, which ones would help your promotability to the advanced position desired?

Favourable perceptions that would help my promotability are:

---

6. What less favourable perceptions, if any, do supervisors and co-workers have of you as an employee? Do they possibly have stereotypical views about your disability?

My supervisors and co-workers might view me less favorably as:

---

7. Of these less favourable perceptions listed, which ones might work against your chances for promotion?

The less favourable perceptions that could work against my promotability would be:

---

8. Of the less favourable perceptions listed, how could those perceptions be improved?

What could you do to favourably change those perceptions?

I could change less favorable perceptions by:

---

9. To help you gauge your promo ability and receive possible guidance, how do you plan to communicate your interest in being promoted? Check the plan that you feel would work best.

I plan to use the subtle approach by asking questions, such as:

- What is the next career step at the company?
- What are the career step options for employees in my job position?
- What are the qualification requirements for advancing to the next career position?
- What are the chances for someone with my experience and background of being able to advance to the next career step?
- Over the years, how many people from this department have gotten promoted?

---

I plan to use the more forward approach by:

- Discussing my interests with my supervisor;
- Discussing my interests with my co-workers.

I plan to use the quiet approach by:

- Submitting my resume and application without mentioning my interest and plan to others;
- Waiting to see if the supervisor brings up my name or approaches me about being a possible candidate for the promotion. (This wait-and-see approach is very risky! The supervisor might have a false impression you aren't interested).

### **Step 5: Assess the Company**

1. What is the size of your company? Small? Mid-size? Large?

My company is: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Approximately how long would it take you to reach your career goal at your present company? How long would it take at a smaller or larger company?

At my present company, it might take this long: \_\_\_\_\_

At a smaller company, it might take this long: \_\_\_\_\_

At a larger company, it might take this long: \_\_\_\_\_

3. On average, how often does the job title step you desire have openings at your company?

Openings are available approximately every: \_\_\_\_\_

4. When is a job opening expected?

An opening is expected: \_\_\_\_\_

5. If no job opening is expected for a long period of time, what other companies might have openings in the near future?

Other companies with possible openings would include:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Of these companies listed, which would provide the advancement steps you need to reach your goal?

Advancement steps I need would be possible at these companies:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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