



Work-based Learning Introduction

Work-based learning allows you to undertake a course of study and obtain a higher education degree based on your day-to-day work or part of your professional activities.

The curriculum is set by you and your organisation so that you achieve real professional development and impact in terms of organisational improvements and leadership.

PDF.Net structures work-based learning within the framework of a Masters Degree (or other awards) in Professional Development, accredited by Middlesex University and a number of professional bodies. This enables our candidates to study for a range of qualifications including Post-graduate Certificate and Diploma, within a very broad range of specialisms.

To identify how this would work for you or your organisation, please contact [Carole Ferro](#), who can arrange an appointment with a member of our senior faculty to discuss it further.

We'll try to explain how it works in practice and how it adds value to you as a professional.

Adding value to your work

The concept of the reflective practitioner draws upon the idea that our practice, as professionals, is at our most effective when we are able to understand both ourselves, (that is, the factors which drive our capacity), the context in which we work, the people we work with and the results we are trying to achieve. By critically examining and reflecting upon each of these areas and placing that analysis within the framework of sets of values, codes of conduct and changing scientific and social and political influences, we are able to develop more effective policies and practice.

This approach to self-development, which combines reflective practice, collaborative dialogue and action research, contributes to both personal and organisational capability.

Understanding how you improve in times of uncertainty

In the pressure of day-to-day work, practitioners often have to focus on a single issue and “fire-fight” the symptoms of change. Development of this type is reactive and aimed at trying to solve immediate problems. In such circumstances finding time to think, let alone plan for the future, is very difficult. A further consequence is that training is often undertaken on an opportunistic basis, rather than forming part of a strategic plan for the future. The impact of such training on everyday practice may, as a result, be impaired.

We fully endorse a philosophy of management as a social enterprise. This requires executives to create a safe space for others to have their voice. It enables organisations to harvest the wisdom of different and contrary perspectives and thus better

anticipate what is unforeseen. The past few years have made it easier for organisations to recognise that they have to provide a means to explore such volatility. There is a concern with appreciating how sudden and unpredictable changes occur after a period of stability.

The critical challenge for leadership is how we can become better prepared to anticipate the unpredictable and vulnerability of unforeseen risks. This means we have to overcome the dominant focus that is so absorbed by the immediacy of the moment.

There is increasing evidence that new challenges can no longer be readily solved within the conventional leadership paradigm. In the past many traditional narratives about leadership were based on the “heroic visionary leader”. The role was to drive the organisation forward towards a predefined vision or goal in the relentless quest to drive shareholder value. This paradigm fits well with a future that is predictable, where the past can be used to project the future but less helpful in managing on the edge of chaos.

In the future leadership will be much more about balancing the art of leading through uncertainty and certainty and adapting the style of approach to address both. We need to both understand the impact of the stories we tell in unpredictable contexts as well as tell better stories.

Thus, our approach to CPD will need to be much more about shared learning in the work place - about enabling better stories. An alternative to traditional CPD activity is needed.

An alternative approach to this situation is to ensure that professional development activity is part of the strategic development for the organisation.

Being strategic implies:

a) Continuously expanding the capacity to create your own future through:

- not trying to solve today's problems with yesterday's solutions;
- looking at whole situations, not just parts of problems; and

b) Surfacing and challenging mental models and exploring the underlying perceptions which drive practice but are rarely stated:

- your own views;
- those of your colleagues;
- the organisation's views and
- the wider context which gives it meaning.

Our programmes are designed to create and develop these capabilities. It ensures that in the development of your professional practice you are able to be:

Reactive	—	dealing with issues as they arise
Emergent	—	developing approaches from current practice
Proactive	—	identifying issues before they arise and planning the response
Strategic	—	expanding capacity to create the future

Our belief, based on forty years of experience in our professional network, is that the most effective energy for professional development comes from motivated development, based on insight gained through collaborative practice. Organisation-dominated schemes, in

which the individual is the passive recipient of their own development, stifle many of the qualities needed to cope with the changing world of professional practice.

You decide what you need to learn

In applying this approach to development a unique partnership between you, your organisation and our university partners is created to ensure that a programme of development in which:

- you decide what you need to learn;
- negotiate with your organisation the benefits to you and them;
- write a learning plan that makes sense for you and them; and
- contract with us and the University to complete that plan and agree the final award.

In developing your plan, we support you to develop core competences in the following areas to ensure both your learning and its application to real world situations:

- demonstrates analysis and critical reflection which informs and influences practice within your field, policy and service provision;
- demonstrates self-reflective practice in the management of yourself, others and results of your work;
- provides evidence of a commitment to sustaining the values of professional work in the light of continuing scientific, social and political change and be able to define and develop policies and practices accordingly.

Our candidates learn and demonstrate through practical projects in the work place:

- critical appraisal of relevant theoretical models;
- critical appraisal of relevant policies and statute, in your chosen area, including knowledge of local, national and UK perspectives;
- skilled use of a wide repertoire of methods and to be able to select and use the most effective approach to meeting client/consumer need for the different aspects of your work;
- provide evidence of significant contribution to the development, delivery and evaluation of the service provided in a chosen area by demonstrating the ability to research, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate strategies for improvement or change; and provide evidence of leadership in chosen field.

The process to get you there

Once you apply you will be assigned a learning advisor who will stay with you throughout your programme. Appropriate advisors will also be appointed depending on the plan of learning you agree. You are supported throughout to ensure you attain the competences described in your learning plan which will form a series of modules. The submissions for each module have been designed to allow you to evidence attainment of the Learning Outcomes required on that module. Assessment will allow you to identify your progression in learning and identify where further development is necessary. You will obtain feedback from your Assessor against each of these criteria prior to formal submission of all modules thereby allowing you to progress through your programme with confidence.

What support you may need

We provide a number of different forms of learning support for our candidates including:

- Comprehensive manuals for each module;
- eLearning and a virtual learning environment , The Learning Net (VLE);
- Facilitated learning group (set) pursuing Enquiry Based Learning methodology;
- A Learning Advisor / and Assessor.

Once you are accepted onto the Programme our Client Manager, will contact you directly to provide you with the web address, username and password for our virtual learning environment. You will also have a manual providing step-by-step instructions on how to use this resource. Access to on-line resources such as journals is provided.

On the Learning Net you will be able to download the manuals for each of your modules and you will also find other resources such as literature and critical reviews. There is the facility to interact with other candidates on your programme and also you will be able to contact your Advisor (see below) there directly, and in confidence.

If numbers allow for each programme of study candidates are formed into Learning Groups (Sets) of 5-8 candidates, facilitated by a PDF associate. The aim of the Set is to support the learning of its members by providing a safe but challenging environment to explore their practice and development. You will be informed if a learning set is active on your programme and you will be provided with an induction to the Set.

As candidates you will also be provided with an assessor who will be able to give you feedback on your drafts as they develop. A distinctive feature of the system is the individualised support and feedback throughout the programme in the form of face-to-face and telephone tutorials or feedback on work through the Learning Net.

Submission of draft work for feedback from your advisor and/or assessor is the basis for the dialogue, which will develop your understanding and ability to meet programme and module learning outcomes. This approach places a high premium on the facilitation of adult learning rather than subject based teaching.

Module feedback and peer observation of teaching in tutorials confirms that facilitative teaching by an advisor is effective because it relates to the individual and his/her needs and experiences.

Producing evidence for assessment

In conjunction with your advisor, you will plan the submission of your completed modules in relation to the agreed learning plan. You will obtain feedback on draft submissions as you develop them so you will be able to identify when a submission is ready for assessment. All submissions are via the Learning Net and every submission is receipted on-line. The assessment recommendations by the assessors are then passed to the Professional Development Assessment Board (a joint Board of PDF and IWBL). The PDF have appointed External Examiners to the Board in agreement with the University and QAA regulations. Where the award forms part of a professional development plan in accordance with CPD or upgrading requirements of a professional body, additional external examiners will be nominated by that body.

This is a personal supported journey built in collaborative dialogue between you, your team and your organization. PDF are part of your team -

Sharing our passion for learning.