



Who's in Charge?

Study Plan Portfolio in a UK Foundation Programme

Self-directed learning can be a powerful route to deeper student engagement and understanding on any subject matter and it brings greater ownership of the process and the outcomes.

The Hub, University of Nottingham, Spring 2010: p. 30.

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This session

- Foundation Certificate context
- Study Plan portfolio aims & components
- Case examples of typical student profiles
- The teacher's role as learning advisor
- Issues relating to portfolio assessment
- Future recommendations



Nottingham Context

The development of the autonomous learner is one of the key goals of higher education. Motivated passionate learners who seek out their own ways of solving problems in order to learn become the graduates who shine in any career that they choose.

Self-directed learning can offer the opportunity to develop strong capacities of independent thinking and action. This includes the ability to take charge of a situation and to have the confidence to try things out, even to make mistakes and see these as part of the process of learning.

The Hub, University of Nottingham, Spring 2010: p. 30-31.

Foundation Programme context



Foundation Certificate aims: Academic Literacy

- Thinking Skills
- Language Skills
- Independent Study Skills
- Transferrable skills:

e.g. BA (Hons) Management Studies

Effective self-management in terms of time, planning and behaviour, motivation, self-starting, individual initiative and enterprise.

Learning to learn and developing an appetite for reflective, adaptive and collaborative learning.



The module structure

SEMESTER 1	SEMESTER 2
EAP Modules (60 credits)	
Written Communication and Study (30 credits)	Written Communication and Study (continued from semester 1)
Oral Communication and Study (30 credits)	Oral Communication and Study (continued from semester 1)
Other Modules (60 credits)	
Introduction to Information Technology (15 credits)	Introduction to Analytical Thought (15 credits)
Introduction to Business Economics (15 credits)	Introduction to Business Methods (15 credits)
OR	OR
Media and Texts: Society (15 credits)	Media and Texts: Culture (15 credits)



Study Plan Purpose

The purpose of the Study Plan portfolio:

- ❑ to encourage the development of independent, self directed learning where the learner makes decisions, develops goals and manages the portfolio project over the two semesters.
- ❑ to develop a particular language skill area e.g. listening or vocabulary

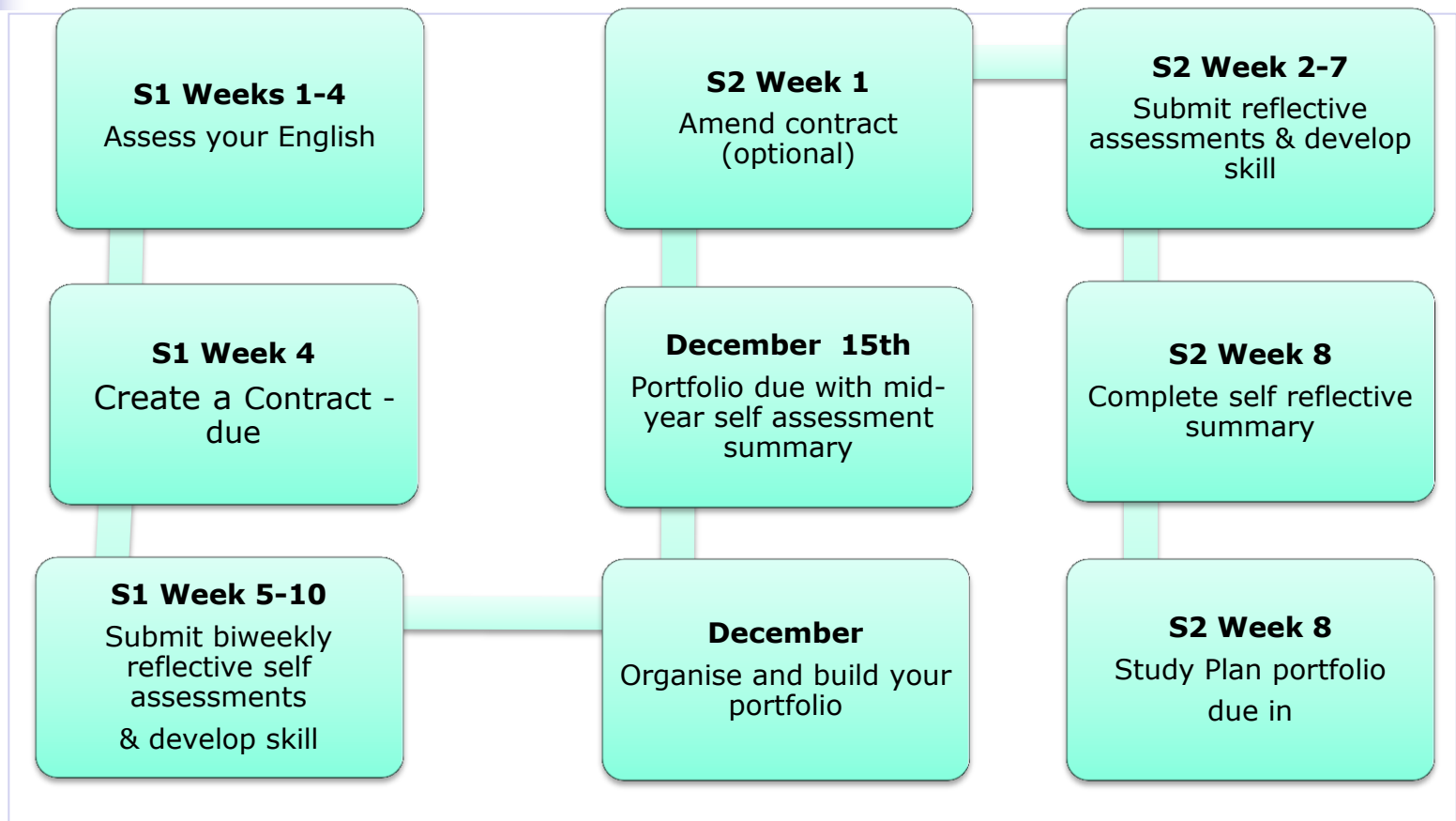


Study Plan Aims

- ❑ To develop your ability to study independently in British Higher Education
- ❑ To develop an academic English language skill through self directed study
- ❑ To negotiate & complete a Study Plan Contract with the tutor
- ❑ To create an action plan with practical tasks
- ❑ To keep a record and evidence of your studies in a well organised portfolio
- ❑ To reflect on and self assess your progress regularly
- ❑ To reflect on your learning and complete a Study Plan Summary



Study Plan Timeline:





Semester 1 - scaffolding

In class activities in Week 1-4 include:

- Assessing your English strengths

e.g. Prepare for Success, Southampton University

<http://www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk/>

e.g. Pathway, University of Nottingham

www.nottingham.ac.uk/pathways

- Completing a strengths and struggles form



Semester 1 - scaffolding

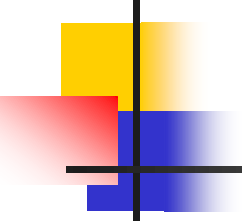
In class activities in Week 1-4 include:

- Exploring possible portfolio skills in class
e.g. vocabulary with Academic Word List, word families, notebook, electronic dictionaries
e.g. record and transcribe spoken introduction
- Advice on preparing a contract with an action plan
- Revising your contract (to be more specific)





Semester 1 - scaffolding


- Reflection via Critical Reflective Cycle -Gibbs (1988)
 - Study your language area
 - >reflect on how you feel and how valuable the study has been
 - >analyse your study to discover which activities/ strategies were most effective and what else you could have done
 - >revise your action plan for the next two weeks
- Biweekly self evaluation forms
- Mid year summary
- End of year summary



Semester 1 - portfolio

- 
- Prepare a title page for your portfolio folder
 - Create a table of contents

- 
- Divide into two week periods with a divider
 - Insert a reflection page every two weeks
 - Evidence of study

- 
- Insert Study Plan self assessment Summary - mid
 - Insert Study Plan self assessment Summary - end



Case examples of typical student profiles- A

Turkish male- aims to study law

Contract Skill: vocabulary in news articles
& The Economist

Sub-skill:

- highlight words and phrases in context;
- find a definition in an English dictionary;
- provide an example sentence.



Case examples of typical student profiles- A

Evaluation: Mid-year summary comments

- initially found reading news magazines especially the economist very difficult
- became easier as he learnt the vocabulary and followed the same stories
- used the new politics and economics vocabulary in conversation with flatmates
- decided to write a news story after reading ten articles



Case examples of typical student profiles- A

Evaluation: Year end summary comments

- began to investigate articles in more depth to deconstruct the arguments
- found this difficult initially but easier with practice
- began to practice writing argument style essays



Case examples of typical student profiles - B

Kazakhstan female – aims to study international relations

Contract Skill: grammar and vocabulary

Sub-skill:

- highlight words in news context;
- write out grammatically correct sentences
- review verb tenses in exercises and on posters



Case examples of typical student profiles - B

Evaluation: Year end summary comments

- made good progress in grammar and vocabulary skills
- engaged with other international students to develop grammar and vocabulary
- started reading various books/novels alongside her studies



Case examples of typical student profiles - C

Chinese male – aims to study
Finance & accounting

Skill: Listening and notemaking

Sub-skill:

- Listening to a news article every morning;
- Making notes.



Case examples of typical student profiles- C

Evaluation: No mid year or end summary

One biweekly reflection form - February

- helped develop listening skills
- helped distinguish numbers between 'ty' and 'teen'
- found some 'collections' very useful



Teacher vs learning advisor

- Learning advisor :

“Advising in language learning is the process of assisting students in directing their own paths in order to become better, more autonomous language learners.”

(Mynard & Carson, 2012)



Teacher vs learning advisor

- Raising awareness of the language learning process
 - Guiding learners
 - Helping learners to identify goals
 - Suggesting suitable materials by offering choices
 - Suggesting suitable strategies by offering choices
 - Motivating, supporting and encouraging self-directed learners
 - Helping learners to self-evaluate and reflect
 - Assisting students in discovering how they best learn
 - Actively listening to learners
 - Helping learners to talk through their own problems
- Mynard, 2010



Assessment

Issues:

- “Assessing learners is problematic in a self-access setting in general” Reinders n.d.
- self assessment vs teacher assessment
- assessing from the contract
- assessment criteria – grid now used
- student’s self assessment
- collaboration between module tutors to standardise assessment



Assessment grid

Contract(s) 20%	The Study Plan Contract successfully completed and all deadlines met
Portfolio with 40% evidence of study	A well organised portfolio with a cover page, etc. and plentiful evidence of the exercises and work you have completed during the semesters
Reflection 40%	Self assessment via biweekly summaries + mid-year and final summaries reflecting on your overall learning and evaluating your progress



Study Plan portfolio

Many advantages

- greater ownership
- motivation
- organisation and time management
- problem solving and decision making
- research skills
- critical reflection
- confidence



Study Plan portfolio

Many advantages, but difficulties include...

- reading of brief document
- following specific instructions
- developing a explicit, suitable contract
- irregular engagement & time management
- decision making skills (some prefer teacher to decide)
- critical reflection
- self assessment & teacher assessment
- worries about marks



Recommendations

- include orientation and scaffolding early
- focus on reading of brief, especially instructions
- ensure detailed, manageable contracts
- balance teaching and independence
- monitor for time management
- encourage critical reflection
- discuss self assessment
- possibly electronic portfolio
- explain and separate roles of teacher and language advisor



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