Unit 3:   Professional Practice

Unit code	**Y/615/1620**
Unit type	**Core**
Unit level	**4**
Credit value	**15**

Introduction

The need to be effective as a communicator, critical thinker, analyser, team worker and interpreter is essential. Within the workplace these skills are needed on a daily basis to show proficiency in designated tasks as part of a job role. The development of academic competence, and also the continuation of life-long learning and Continuing Professional Development (CPD), is required to ensure that individuals have a valued set of interpersonal skills that can be applied to any situation or environment.

This unit provides a foundation for good practice in a variety of contexts. The ability to communicate effectively using different tools and mediums will ensure that practical, research, design, reporting and presentation tasks are undertaken professionally and in accordance with various communication conventions. In everyday life the ability to apply critical reasoning and solve problems are necessary skills to enable task resolution and facilitate effective decision-making.

Working with others in a group environment academically or within the workplace is an integral part of everyday life. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of teams in terms of culture, roles and responsibilities will ensure that there is a better understanding and awareness of the importance and value of teamwork. Continuing professional development, self-improvement and working towards various goals is an area that is encouraged in the workplace through the appraisals framework. In addition, professional development extends into higher levels of learning and the need to demonstrate effective research skills and academic reporting skills is also required.

Among the topics included in this unit are: the development of communication skills and communication literacy; the use of qualitative and quantitative data to demonstrate analysis, reasoning and critical thinking; and tasks that require the integration of others within a team-based scenario and planning and problem-solving.

On successful completion of this unit students will be able to demonstrate leadership skills through the dynamics of team working, and through reflective practice be able to evaluate the contributions made as an individual and also of others. As a result they will develop skills such as communication literacy, critical thinking, analysis, reasoning and interpretation, which are crucial for gaining employment and developing academic competence.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

LO1   Demonstrate a range of interpersonal and transferable communication skills to a target audience.

LO2   Apply critical reasoning and thinking to a range of problem-solving scenarios.

LO3   Discuss the importance and dynamics of working within a team and the impact of team working in different environments.

LO4   Examine the need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and its role within the workplace and for higher level learning.

Essential Content

LO1 Demonstrate a range of interpersonal and transferable communication skills to a target audience

Effective communication:

Verbal and non-verbal e.g. awareness and use of body language, openness and responsiveness, formal and informal dialogue and feedback to a range of different stakeholders; academic report writing; use of IT to enhance communication; use of source information to undertake research.

Interpersonal skills:

Soft skills e.g. personal effectiveness, working with others, use of initiative, negotiating skills, assertiveness skills and social skills.

Time management skills:

Prioritising workloads; setting objectives; using time effectively; making and keeping appointments; planning and scheduling tasks and activities.

LO2 Apply critical reasoning and thinking to a range of problem-solving scenarios

Specification of the problem:

Definition of the problem; analysis and clarification.

Identification of possible outcomes:

Identification and assessment of various alternative outcomes.

Tools and methods:

Use of problem-solving methods and tools.

Plan and implement:

Sources of information; solution methodologies; selection and implementation of the best corrective action e.g. timescale, stages, resources, critical path analysis.

Evaluation:

Evaluation of whether the problem was solved or not; measurement of solution against specification and desired outcomes; sustainability.

LO3 Discuss the importance and dynamics of working within a team and the impact of team working in different environments

Working with others:

Nature and dynamics of team and group work; informal and formal settings; purpose of teams and groups e.g. long-term corporate objectives/strategy; problem-solving and short-term development projects; flexibility/adaptability; team player.

Teams and team building:

Selecting team members e.g. specialist roles, skill and style/approach mixes; identification of team/work group roles; stages in team development e.g. team building, identity, loyalty, commitment to shared beliefs, team health evaluation; action planning; monitoring and feedback; coaching skills; ethics; effective leadership skills e.g. setting direction, setting standards, motivating, innovative, responsive, effective communicator, reliability, consistency.

LO4 **Examine the need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and its role within the workplace and for higher level learning**

Responsibilities:

Own responsibilities e.g. personal responsibility, direct and indirect relationships and adaptability, decision-making processes and skills, ability to learn and develop within the work role; other e.g. employment legislation, ethics, employment rights and responsibilities.

Performance objectives:

Setting and monitoring performance objectives, measurement tools for success and achievement.

Continuing Professional Development: lifelong learning, training and development, personal development, professional development.

Evidence criteria:

Production data, personnel data, judgemental data; rating methods e.g. ranking, paired comparison, checklist, management by objectives; skills audit (personal profile using appropriate self-assessment tools); evaluating self-management; personal and interpersonal skills.

Motivation and performance:

Application and appraisal of motivational theories and techniques, rewards and incentives; manager's role; self-motivational factors.

Development plan:

Current performance; future needs; opportunities and threats to career progression; aims and objectives; achievement dates; review dates; learning programme/activities; action plans; personal development plans.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria

Pass	Merit	Distinction
LO1 Demonstrate a range of interpersonal and transferable communication skills to a target audience		
P1 Demonstrate, using different communication styles and formats, that you can effectively design and deliver a training event for a given target audience. **P2** Demonstrate that you have used effective time management skills in planning an event.	**M1** Design a professional schedule to support the planning of an event, to include contingencies and justifications of time allocated.	**D1** Evaluate the effectiveness and application of interpersonal skills during the design and delivery of a training event.
LO2 Apply critical reasoning and thinking to a range of problem-solving scenarios		
P3 Demonstrate the use of different problem-solving techniques in the design and delivery of an event. **P4** Demonstrate that critical reasoning has been applied to a given solution.	**M2** Research the use of different problem-solving techniques used in the design and delivery of an event. **M3** Justify the use and application of a range of solution methodologies.	**D2** Critique the process of applying critical reasoning to a given task/activity or event.
LO3 Discuss the importance and dynamics of working within a team and the impact of team working in different environments		
P5 Discuss the importance of team dynamics in the success and/or failure of group work. **P6** Work within a team to achieve a defined goal.	**M4** Analyse team dynamics, in terms of the roles group members play in a team and the effectiveness in terms of achieving shared goals.	**D3** Provide a critical evaluation of your own role and contribution to a group scenario.
LO4 Examine the need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and its role within the workplace and for higher level learning		

Pass	Merit	Distinction
P7 Discuss the importance of CPD and its contribution to own learning. **P8** Produce a development plan that outlines responsibilities, performance objectives and required skills, knowledge and learning for own future goals.	**M5** Compare and contrast different motivational theories and the impact they can have on performance within the workplace.	**D4** Evaluate a range of evidence criteria that is used as a measure for effective CPD.

Recommended Resources

Textbooks

Cottrell, S. (2001) *Critical Thinking Skills: Developing Effective Analysis and Argument*. 2nd Ed. Palgrave Macmillan.

Forde, C. (2006) *Professional Development, Reflection and Enquiry*. Sage Publications.

Megginson, D. and Whitaker, V. (2007) *Continuing Professional Development*. 2nd Ed. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Winstanley, D. (2005) *Personal Effectiveness: A guide to action.* Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Journals

Journal of

Group

Dynamics

Professional

Developmen

t in

Education

Websites

www.thinkwatson.com	Critical Thinking Resources "Critical Thinking Correlation Studies" (Research)
ipda.org.uk Association	International Professional Development (General Reference)

Links

This unit links to the following related units:

Unit 6: Managing a

Successful Computing

Project Unit 13:

Computing Research

Project