

BA (Hons.) Community and Criminal Justice/ DipPS

Foundation Skills and Methods Module Guide

**Professional Development Institute
De Montfort University**

BA (Hons.) Community and Criminal Justice

Diploma in Probation Studies

by Distance Learning

Foundation Skills and Methods

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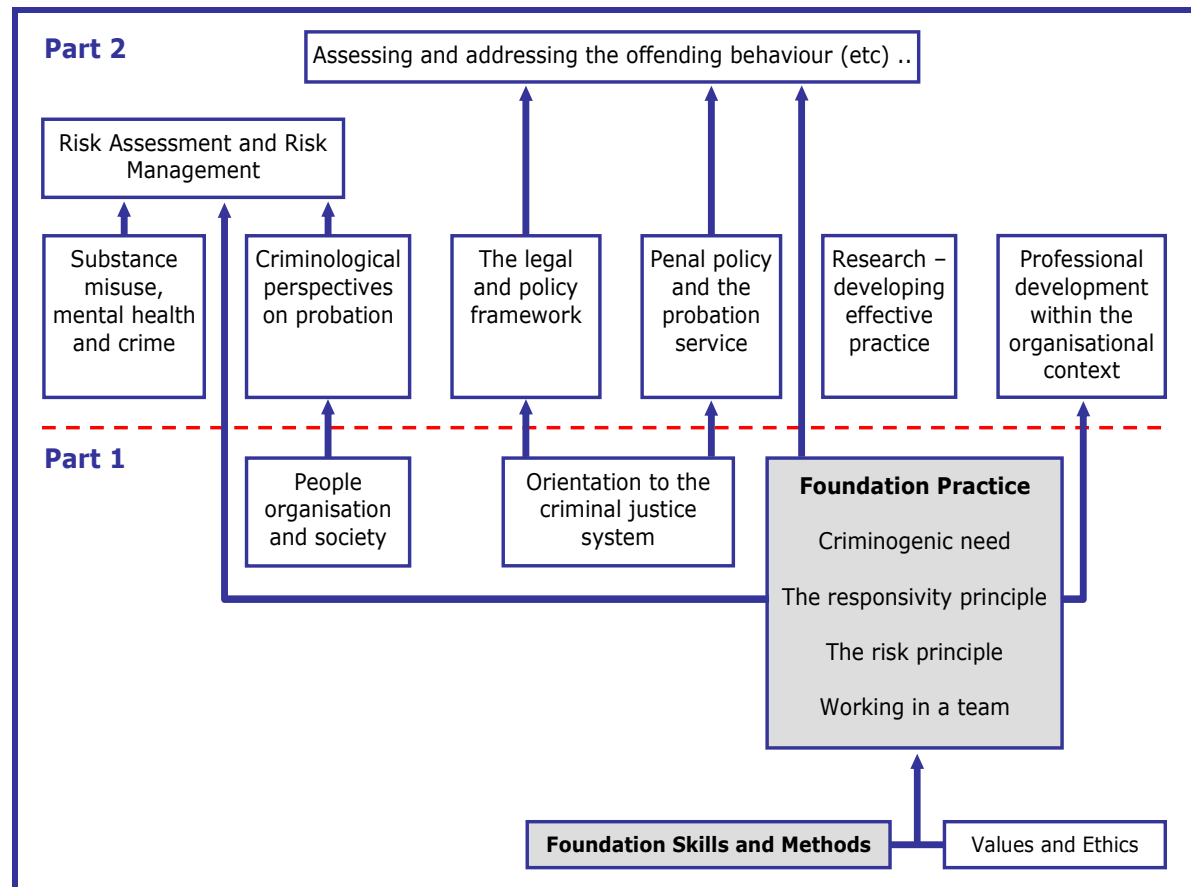
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This Module in Context



Foundation Skills and Methods, as its name implies, underpins this programme (along with **Values and Ethics** – a consideration of which should inform everything you do). In addition to explaining the study skills that you need to develop to complete the course effectively, this module helps you to examine your learning style and the ways in which you can integrate your academic learning and practical experience. In a separate guide, [Introduction to Foundation Practice](#) (issued with this Module Guide) you'll also be introduced to the underpinning knowledge for the four **Foundation Practice** modules (which are assessed on the basis of documented evidence of your practice, rather than academic assignment).

About this Module

Learning Outcomes

When you have completed your study of this module, you will be able to identify and discuss:

- Your preferred learning style (using the Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Inventory) and the ways in which you think you will learn best on this programme.
- The ways in which your past experiences of learning might help/hinder/ transfer to your present situation.
- The ways in which your race, gender, sexuality, physical/ mental ability, age (and any other factor which seems significant to you) might impact – either positively or negatively – upon learning, (giving illustrations from your own experience, within the limits of what you wish to disclose).
- The strategies you will employ to maximise your learning opportunities and effectiveness – including, for example:
 - Developing different learning styles and approaches.
 - Using appropriate learning and support resources (such as the library, the module guides, the 'electronic campus', your Action Learning Set, Practice Development Assessor (PDA) and programme staff).
 - Managing your time and overcoming potential obstacles.
 - Using effective presentation styles for your work – both written and verbal.

You will then be expected to draw up:

- A Personal Development Plan, which sets out your primary learning objectives and the resources you'll need for meeting them, in completing Part One of this programme.
- A 'learning log' to capture your learning/ build a portfolio of evidence of work required for the practice modules (the risk principle, the responsivity principle, criminogenic need and working as a member of a team/ group).
- A Learning Agreement between the four partners to the learning process – you, your PDA, your line manager and your tutor – setting out the responsibilities of each party to the contract.

Assignment and Electronic Seminar Topic

Please refer to the [assignment document](#) for details of the assignment and the first electronic seminar.

You will be introduced to the use of [Blackboard](#) at the introductory workshop and on [page 54](#) of this module.

Module Texts

The recommended books for this module are:

- Marshall, Lorraine and Rowland, Frances (1998) *A guide to learning independently*. (3rd ed.) Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Drew, S. & Bingham, R. (2000) *The Student Skills Guide*. Gower.

- Knowles, Malcolm S. (1990). *The adult learner : a neglected species* (4th ed.). Houston; London: Gulf Pub. Co, (Building blocks of human potential).
- Whitfield, Dick (1998). *Introduction to the probation service* (2nd ed.) Winchester: Waterside Press.
- DMU self study packs – available from the DMU web site: www.library.dmu.ac.uk/Skills/Study/. (Some of these are also available on your [coursework CD](#)).

For this module, the most directly relevant packs will be [Time management](#), [Managing your learning](#), [Reading and note-taking from written sources](#), [Presentation skills](#), [Essay writing](#) and [Managing your group project](#). You can read them on screen, as they are included on CD ROM, or you can print them off, because they form part of the resource base that you will use throughout the course and will help you in drawing up your Learning Agreement and Personal Development Plan.

The DMU Library website has a number of links to guides on using the internet. To explore these resources, click on the internet tutorials link on the Study Skills page, www.library.dmu.ac.uk/Skills.

For the introduction to the practice modules, you should also have access to:

- Chapman, Tim and Hough, Michael, on behalf of HMIP (1998). *Evidence based practice. A guide to effective practice*. London: Home Office.
- Underdown, Andrew (1998). *Strategies for effective offender supervision*.

Both of these texts are available in DMU libraries and all probation areas should have copies. You can also download 'Evidence based practice' from the Home Office web site:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Once you are on this website go to 'probation' and you will find the recently launched website for the National Probation Directorate. This contains useful information and documents such as 'The New Choreography' which is essential reading for your understanding of the current probation service. You will also find links to: probation circulars, good practice guides, James Mcguire's very helpful 'Cognitive-Behavioural Approaches - Introduction to Theory and Research', and of course the vitally important 'National Standards'. If you go to the 'HM Inspectorate' page via the Probation link you will find 'Evidence Based Practice' as well as a range of other, and very important reports that you will need for various academic modules on this programme as well as for your practice. Use this first module as an opportunity to get used to accessing the Home Office website and discovering what information is available to you here.

The most important outcomes of this module are the ones about learning how to learn, and you must endeavour to get hold of a copy of the Malcolm Knowles book on Adult Learning. You could also access a psychology web site which offers a helpful and succinct summary of a range of adult learning theories:

<http://tip.psychology.org/theories.html>

Introductory Workshop

To introduce you to this module, you will be attending an introductory workshop at which you will meet with the module leader(s) and other teaching staff, other trainee probation officers working in your region, and be introduced to some of the key themes and concepts of the module. This workshop will be an introduction to the programme as well as to this particular module, in that it will provide you with an opportunity to think about:

- Adult Learning: for yourself and for offenders.
- Learning in groups and from your colleague trainees.
- An introduction to social identity theory and how this helps us to understand how and why we discriminate in a range of different ways, some positive and some negative.
- Learning about the values of the programme and the frameworks we use to introduce you to concepts of diversity and anti-discriminatory practice.
- Your study skills and where you might need additional help.
- An Introduction to 'What Works' and effective probation practice, in preparation for your four Foundation Practice modules. (You will find more detailed information about this in the [Foundation Practice module guide](#) included on this CD ROM).

You will also have the opportunity to learn about some of the resources available to you as a student of De Montfort University including:

- The library.

- [Blackboard](#) – the virtual learning environment for the programme.
- Student services.

Introduction

Welcome to the very first module of the Community and Criminal Justice degree programme. Before you begin, here's a brief introduction to:

- The backdrop for probation training and practice.
- The structure/ content of this module.
- Distance learning.

The Backdrop for Probation Training and Practice

You are joining the service at a time of unprecedented change. Both locally and nationally, the probation service is facing fundamental changes and, inevitably, you will witness the effects of some of these changes. From a service which set out to, '*advise assist and befriend*' offenders, we are (in the words of Paul Boateng introducing the *National Standards for the supervision of offenders in the community 2000*):

"... a Law Enforcement Agency. It's what we are. It's what we do."

The government has moved the locus of the service from the 'caring profession' of social work into the criminal justice sector, with new occupational standards and new training arrangements. It has taken on the private sector values of efficiency, effectiveness, economy and value for money, expecting:

- The **probation service** to tackle only the central problem of offending behaviour, using government accredited programmes – this is their job.

- Activities considered not to be central to the purpose of the service (the 'advising, assisting and befriending' activities, such as help with accommodation, money management, employment and education) to be devolved to **specialist agencies** with whom the service is to set up partnerships.

Coming to the situation afresh, you will be able to assess the changes with a fresh eye – unlike, perhaps, some of your colleagues in the service who may find that the new ways are challenging to their previous *modus operandi*. As you work alongside these colleagues, you will find yourself learning from their experience, current practice, values and beliefs, too.

This is at the heart of what it means to be a professional. You are not passive recipients of wisdom and knowledge developed elsewhere, but future shapers of the policy and practice of the service. You need to develop – and use – a critical and **reflective** approach in all aspects of your work; to evaluate your own practice as well as the overall practice and policy of the service you are joining. This is one of the main purposes of acquiring a degree level education in pursuit of your probation officer qualification.

You will need to keep abreast of research and to work within the guidelines established by the government and your service, but also to analyse, reflect and, where appropriate, challenge current thinking as you develop your own views about what constitutes **effective practice** in work with offenders.

Reflective and **effective practice** are at the heart of this module.

Module Structure/ Content

Section 1 - Study Skills begins with a consideration of the ways in which people learn, as a lead into the notion of **reflective practice**. There are four main learning styles ('activist', 'reflector', 'theorist' and 'pragmatist')

but, to be an effective learner – and practitioner – you need to use all four approaches and to build them into a continuous improvement cycle. Such a cycle allows you to build, constantly, on what you learn both from experience and from theory – by reflecting on your experiences, and using theory to inform your practice.

The rest of [Section 1 - Study Skills](#) introduces the basic study skills that you need to have on board to acquaint yourself well during this programme including, for example, effective reading, revision and presentation techniques – and managing your time. Some of you may already feel competent in these areas. One of the advantages of distance learning is that you can take from this section (and others) simply what you need.

Section 2 - Producing your Assessment Documents provides you with some guidance on completing the two documents for beginning your programme: the Learning Agreement and the Personal Development Plan.

Distance Learning

In this programme, you'll find that all the traditional elements of a university education are there – but provided in a slightly different way. For example:

- Apart from the introductory workshops, the main 'lecture content' is provided through a series of module guides, like this one, each providing you with:
 - A fair amount of information-giving, but with references out to recommended texts, that should be available within your probation area and/ or you may be encouraged to purchase. In some instances, a module reader (a set of photocopied, copyright-cleared articles) may be provided along with a

number of hyperlinks to library databases and to relevant web-sites.

- A series of '**Activities**' – provided to encourage you to engage in the traditional academic activity of 'comparing and contrasting' what other people say and to apply what you have learnt to your own situation. Taking this 'active' approach to study, rather than simply reading, passively, will help you to retain information and to clarify your own thinking/ values.

Note: An earlier cohort of students commented on the large number of activities. It's important to remind yourself that the activities are there to help you get to grips with the material – not as a rod to beat you with! If you are quite clear about the area in question, there is no need to complete the associated activity.

- Face-to-face **seminars** are replaced by 'computer-mediated conferencing', using the university's [Blackboard](#) virtual learning environment. You'll be introduced to this during the introductory workshop.
- Day-to-day **tutor discussions** will take place through email and telephone rather than face to face (apart from the workplace visits by your tutor).
- You'll have some face-to-face **discussions with fellow-students** – in 'action learning sets' but with the other students, you'll again be using computer mediated or telephone communication for day-to-day communication.
- Further **personal support** is available from your PDA and from experienced colleagues back on-the-job who will help you to put

into practice what you have learnt and to help you learn from what you practice.

Distance learning provides you with many benefits, such as being able to study when you choose, where you choose and at your own pace. It also allows you flexibility in the way you approach materials. Remember all those lectures/ lessons you've been to where you've had to sit through material with which you are already familiar?

- With distance learning you can identify which sections you really need to read – skip-reading sections where you feel you can already meet the objectives and spending longer on the sections which are new to you.
- You can start by polishing off the things you are familiar with – or interested in – as a good motivator, leaving the less familiar work until you've got the bit between your teeth. (And the converse is also true – some people prefer to deal with the difficult items first so that progress speeds up rapidly as they near the end.).

A couple of provisos on the flexibility front:

- A 'building block' approach to development of the modules means that later sections usually depend on knowledge and skills presented in earlier ones.
- The seminar topics to which you are expected to contribute will require you to have studied the relevant sections in time to share your thoughts and experiences with fellow students in the period of time allocated to the seminar. You'll find out more about the process of starting off, contributing to and summing up seminar topics at the introductory workshop, along with the dates for each seminar. Participation in the seminars is a vital

element of the course - and, as an 'attendance' requirement, you will be expected to make at least three contributions to each seminar.

One last point (actually, seven to be precise!) Theory has it that adult learners work best under the conditions listed in the left-hand column of the following table.¹ In the right-hand column, you'll find the ways in which we have tried to make this programme adult-learner friendly. Any further suggestions on how we can improve the programme will be very welcome. In the meantime, good studying and good luck!

Adult Learners...	This Programme...
...want to know how they are progressing.	...provides regular activities to help you check that you understand what you have been reading.
...want to assess themselves against a relevant standard to determine their educational needs.	...provides such standards in the form of learning objectives, which are related to the Community Justice Standards (NVQ3 in Part 1 and NVQ4 in Part 2).
...want to be self-directed, selecting their own learning experiences.	...provides you with more flexibility than a traditional course to direct your own study, with the provisos already outlined on previous pages.
...prefer a problem-oriented, case-based approach.	...provides case study exercises in many modules, in addition to role-play work on training sessions with PDAs (who will also help you to get the most out of your learning on-the-job).
...want to apply their new knowledge and skills immediately.	...is built around the relationship between theory and practice – many of the activities ask you to develop such links.

<p>...want to contribute from their own knowledge and skills to help others learn.</p>	<p>...provides you with formal opportunities to debate key issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ In introductory workshops.■ Face-to-face within 'Action Learning Sets'.■ With all students using the electronic conferencing facility, 'Blackboard'.
<p>...respond best to a non-threatening environment with a good teacher-learner relationship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ We are also learners. We are not ivory tower academics but practice-focused (We all have practice backgrounds).■ We try to practice what we preach and build on what you tell us, to improve our practice and provide effective learning.■ We give you the opportunity – during the introductory week - to negotiate some 'ground-rules', establishing what will help you to work well together throughout the duration of the programme.

Section 1 - Study Skills

Objectives

When you have completed your study of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe briefly the ways in which people learn most effectively - and the significance of this for arranging appropriate learning opportunities (you should be able to illustrate this with reference to your own experience and to your experience of working with offenders as adult learners).
- Describe briefly the importance of reflective practice – and set up a learning log format and learning diary for your own reflective practice.
- Describe briefly the principles of anti-oppressive practice.
- Explain the principles of effective time management – and develop the most appropriate strategy for managing your own time.
- Develop effective methods of pursuing further study around the module guide – in particular, reading and note taking from written sources and managing group projects (learning activities undertaken with a group of fellow students).
- Develop effective methods for presenting your work including essay writing, report writing, verbal presentations and exam techniques.

The main headings for this section, as you might imagine from the objectives are:

- **Learning styles.**
- **Reflective practice and the learning log.**
- **Anti-oppressive practice.**
- **Planning and time management.**
- **Use of resources.**
- **Presentation of finished work.**

If you have concerns about your ability to write and structure academic assignments you are encouraged to work through the DMU study packs, included on this CD rom. In addition, '*The Student Skills Guide*' (2001) by Sue Drew and Rosie Bingham,² is available in the DMU libraries and is a very helpful and practical way to develop your skills. The section on Essay writing is particularly relevant.

1.1 Learning Styles

There are various theories about the ways in which people learn, but at this stage, you are going to take a look at one – Kolb's Learning Cycle.³

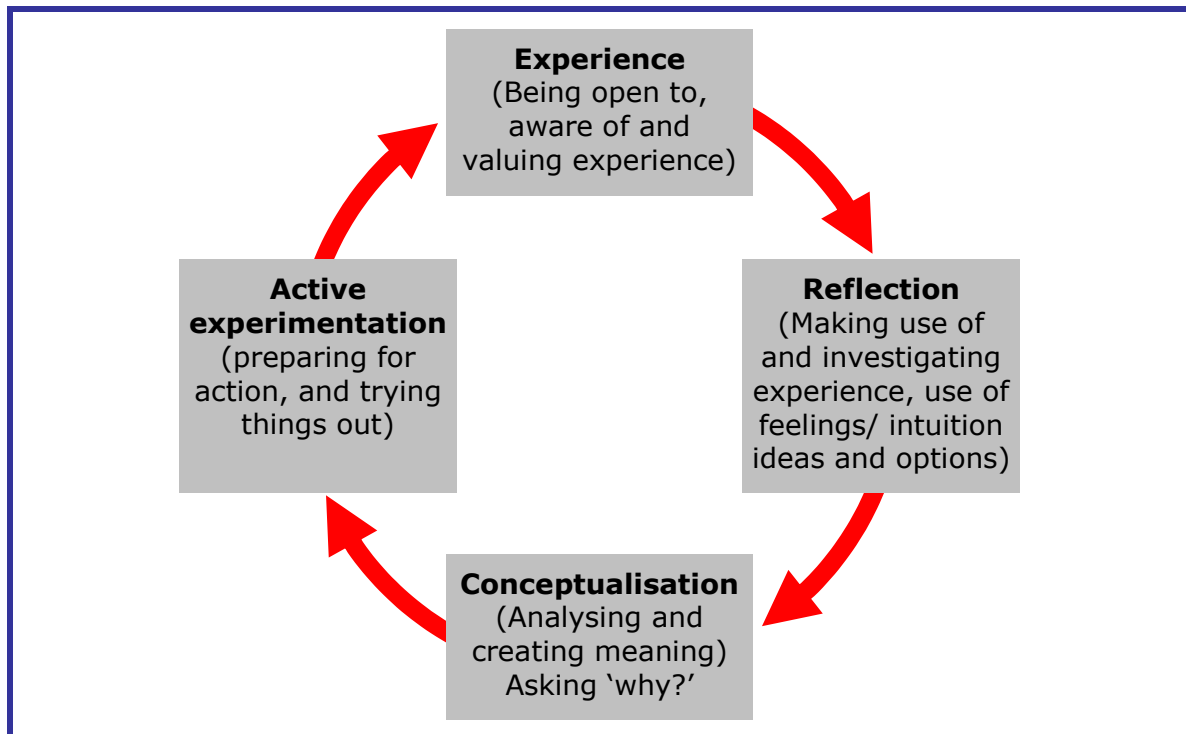
The theories are important for you in two ways:

1. On a personal level – when you are aware of the ways in which you best learn, you can organise your study time and methods more effectively.
2. On the job – when you are able to identify different offenders' learning styles, you will be able to provide them with the most appropriate learning opportunities, increasing the chances that

you will be able to motivate them to engage in the interventions you have planned.

Kolb³ has suggested that there are four contributory elements to learning, which he represented in cyclical form, as illustrated in [Figure 1.1](#).

Figure 1.1, Kolb's Learning Cycle.



You might enter this cycle at a number of points but, for real learning to take place, you need to engage in all four activities. For example, assume you start with the experience stage:

- An **experience** *might* trigger a desire to learn but we don't always 'learn from experience' (How many times have you repeated mistakes?) To do so, you need to use the other parts of the cycle.
- **Reflection** allows you to review the experience and your response to it – asking, for example (since any learning involves a combination of doing, thinking and feeling), '*What exactly did I do? What happened then? What was I **thinking** about, at the*

*time? And afterwards? How did I **feel** while I was doing it/ thinking that? How did I feel afterwards?’* Reflecting on the experience will help you to remember its salient features and work out their significance for you. The primary questions here are '**What?**' and '**How?**'

- **Analysis** involves taking a step back from the experience and reviewing it in a more abstract way, within a broader conceptual framework or theory. Sometimes you'll come up with your own theory; sometimes you'll use those developed by others. The primary question you'll be asking here is '**Why?**'
- In the **Action planning** phase, you work out how things might be different in the future. You plan steps to alter the sequence of events identified in the reflective phase, based on the theory used in the analysis phase. The key words now are '**If**' and '**Then**', as in: '*If I do this... then perhaps that...*' It might involve attempting to alter the outcomes of a similar situation in the future, or to transfer learning to new situations. (And an important part of action planning is taking steps to make sure you implement the action plan!)

The next time you are in a similar situation, you can then call on this action plan to direct your thoughts, actions and feelings in a different way. You then reflect on what you did differently, how you thought and felt about it, and how this affected the outcomes ... and so on.

Many people have a marked preference for one or another element of Kolb's learning cycle – leading to four key learning styles, as used in the Honey and Mumford inventory used at your Introductory Workshop:

1. Those who prefer the **experience** element are termed **activists**. They 'just want to get on with things' and tend to be dominated by the here and now. Activists are usually open, gregarious and

enthusiastic (*'I'll try anything once'*); they thrive on the challenge of new experiences. However, it is often a case of 'act first, consider the consequences later' and, once the excitement of the challenge has worn off they tend to lose enthusiasm – they are not the world's best implementers/ consolidators.

- 2. Reflectors** like to collect all the data, read the books, and consider events from a number of angles before coming to a conclusion. They are usually cautious, considering all the implications before making a move. They tend to be quiet in meetings, preferring to observe others in action and get the full drift of the conversation before making their own contribution. When they act, it is on the basis of reflection on information and on past and present experience.
- 3.** Those who prefer the **analysis** phase are termed **theorists**. They think through problems in a systematic, logical sequence and try to assimilate data into a coherent theory. They are usually uncomfortable with subjective judgements and lateral thinking – preferring to work with underlying principles, logic, systems thinking and rational argument. They will probably appear cool and detached.
- 4.** Those who prefer the **action planning** phase are termed **pragmatists**. **Pragmatists** tend to be great list makers, preparing carefully for what needs to be done. They are the ones who are keen to try out new theories and experiment with new applications. Like activists, they like to get on with things and act quickly and may be impatient with long open-ended discussions. They are essentially practical people who like solving problems and making practical decisions.

Let's try to relate this to your current situation:

- Some of you are probably feeling that you want to get on with the 'real work' – the 'hands-on' experience of working with offenders and may be frustrated with the amount of time to be spent in reading and thinking, rather than doing.
- Others may feel they already have experience of this work and are looking forward to the chance to reflect on and analyse their practice.
- Yet others may be feeling anxious about undertaking practice so quickly and want to spend more time in academic study – understanding the theory before they commence practice.

Hopefully, you will all achieve a balance between the various activities – it is very important that none of these perspectives assumes greater ascendancy overall, either on the course or, later, on the job. Action-centred people may be great at responding to crises but it's important that they don't put their effort into the wrong things, through not researching the alternatives. Conversely, it's not a lot of use being the world's best expert on how to manage time effectively if you never get around to putting the principles into practice in our own life. Whatever type you are naturally, then, it's important that you plan strategies to develop other approaches.

To be an effective practitioner, it is important that you embrace opportunities to try out new theoretical insights in practice and bring your practice insights into academic debates. This is reflected, within this course, by assessing half your work through academic assignments and half through practice.

Activity 1.1

1. Do you have a preferred learning style? Do you recognise yourself in any of the traits described on [page 22](#)?
2. Do you recognise any of the traits in people that you know?
3. What effect does a preferred learning style have on the most appropriate learning methods and situations? In the following table, put one or more of the initials A, R, T, P (Activist, Reflector, Theorist, Pragmatist) next to the methods/ situations with which you feel a learner of that type would feel comfortable. (The first two are given for you as an example.)

Learning Activity		Learning Situation	
Internet searches.	R, T	Working against a strict deadline.	A
Role play/ simulation.		Being intellectually stretched.	
Library research.		Putting together a detailed report.	
Brainstorming.		Generating ideas without feasibility constraints.	
Group problem solving.		Observing others (e.g. role play or film.)	
Project work.		Plenty of time to chew over the topic.	

Games.		Identifying reasons for success/ failure of initiative.	
Following a role model		Immediate opportunity to try out learning on-the-job.	
Informal discussions with fellow learners.		Developing techniques for dealing with practical situations.	
Seminars.		Being in the limelight.	
<p>You'll find suggested categories on page 73 of Section 3 - Feedback but your own classification may well be valid, so take the opportunity to debate any deviations with fellow learners or colleagues.</p>			

In the introductory workshop for this module, you will be completing a questionnaire to identify your own learning style. (If you're an activist, you may already have done so – you'll probably not have read this before attending the opening session. If you are a reflector, you will probably have read this text before the Introductory Workshop – since you prefer to go into group situations well prepared!)

Activity 1.2

Use the DMU self-study pack **Managing your Learning** to reinforce what you have learnt here. In particular, read through section 2 for another look at Kolb and undertake activities 4 and 5:

- Identify your learning 'SWOTS' (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats).
- Planning to maximise your strengths and work on your weaknesses.

1.2 Reflective Practice and the Learning Log

Bines and Watson⁴ describe 'reflective practice' as *'encouraging students to examine the relationship between theory and practice in their work experience and developing skills and attitudes which will enable them to monitor and control their progress and professional development.'*

It is, in essence, the working through of the Kolb cycle (action, reflection, analysis and planning) on a continuous basis, so that, for example, you:

- 'Learn from experience' by recording events, reflecting on them, working out why things happened the way they did and planning how to build on successes and minimise weaknesses.
- Assess the relevance of theory to practice by planning interventions based on theory, then monitoring and analysing the results.

On the basis of questions asked by previous students on this course, it might be useful to take a further look at the relationship between **theory**

and practice now, before moving on to take a look at **learning logs** and diaries.

1.2.1 Theory and Practice

A **theory** is an idea, or system of ideas, which tries to **explain** observed events, in terms of the different factors at work, and to **predict** what is going to happen. The purest type of theory is scientific. Working with inanimate objects, scientists can replicate the same experiment under controlled conditions over and over again to come up with an equation that explains both cause and effect in the form of a mathematical equation. For example, when a gas is heated, its volume increases. If the volume of the gas is kept constant, then the pressure of the heated gas increases. This allows the scientist to come up with the formula, $P = T \times V$ (pressure is a function of temperature and volume). This formula – based on a theory about how the molecules of gas are behaving (which **cause** the pressure and/ or volume to rise) – also allows the scientist to make calculations that **predict** exactly how much pressure will be generated, by heating a particular gas in a vessel of a specified volume.

People, of course, are not like gases. Every molecule of nitrogen reacts in exactly the same way as every other molecule of nitrogen at any time of day, week, month or year. People are much more complicated and often react quite differently from another person - and even from the way they reacted to the same situation only an hour before. Every reaction they **do** make has an effect (both on themselves and others), which then influences further behaviour - depending on the consequences of earlier behaviour for themselves and the reactions of the other people involved. There is no way of controlling all the variables in the situation to make scientific predictions or analyses of cause and effect.

There is, then, no 'pure' **theory of crime**. Early criminologists, such as Lombroso did search for a universal explanation of crime, based on

biological abnormalities, but their theories have always been discredited. Contemporary criminologists tend to rely on the notion of multiple causation and to use a combination of psychological, sociological, economic, structural, political and other theories in their attempts to understand the 'Why?' of a single offence/ offender. You'll find out more about these theories of offending both in the Part One module People, organisations and society and in the Part Two module Criminological perspectives on probation.

The most important job a probation officer ever has to do is to identify, with individuals, the basis for their offending (to understand the patterns within a theoretical framework). If this process is not afforded proper time and attention, then the practice that follows is likely to be ineffective. This means that the Probation Officer (PO) has to ask the question 'Why?' (though not necessarily using the word repeatedly!) as often as necessary, to get as close as possible to understanding what has triggered the offending behaviour.

For example, the main bones of a conversation might run as follows:

PO: *Why did you break into the shop?*

Offender: *To take videos.*

PO: *Why did you want videos?*

Offender: *To sell them off.*

PO: *What for?*

Offender: *I needed the money.*

PO: *Why?*

Offender: *To buy drugs.*

PO: *Why?*

Offender: *I'm addicted to heroin.*

PO: *Why did you start taking heroin?*

Offender: *I was depressed.*

PO: *What about?*

Offender: *I just felt bad about myself.*

PO: *Why?*

Offender: *I never did anything right. I argued with my family, got excluded from school. Had no job, no friends.*

PO: *Tell me some more about all that.*

Offender: *I couldn't stand the teachers. I couldn't read or write properly and they never helped or explained anything. At home I used to argue with my Dad because he'd get drunk and hit my Mum.....*

As the **'Why?'** questions continue, the PO gets closer to the root of the causal chain, and finds that a complexity of factors may be at work – psychological (such as poor self-esteem), sociological (such as relative poverty) and structural (based on relative lack of power in an unequally structured society). You'll be taking a look at some of the most common factors associated with offending later in this module. Until you've established a clear and accurate picture of the factors involved for a particular offender, it is not possible to determine the most appropriate **intervention(s)** for her/ him – whether sentence disposal (at Pre-Sentence Report stage or supervision programmes at sentence implementation stage).

The **'Why?'** questions, help to establish a theoretical base which, in turn, leads logically to the **'How?'** questions – which help to establish which methods are most likely to be effective in reducing the client's offending.

For example, if the probation officer had stopped after the first three questions, s/he might have deduced that money was the main problem. Later s/he establishes that drug addiction is an underlying cause and, even later, that low self-esteem underpins the drug problem, and that this

stems from negative school and family experiences. Each of these factors in the causal chain of the offending requires different action on your part (arranging help with budgeting, a place in a drugs project, social skills training, possible referral to counselling services and so on).

Sarah Jarvis, writing as a trainee probation officer in West Yorkshire in 2002, describes her thoughts and the processes she followed to integrate theory and practice during her training programme. You are encouraged to find a copy of this article – almost certainly there should be one held within your probation area.⁵

1.2.2 Learning Logs and Learning Diaries

Because you will need to provide evidence of your learning and its effects on your practice, for the NVQ element of your qualification, it's important that you keep a regular 'learning log' throughout this programme. This log will form part of your portfolio of evidence.

In [Box 1.1](#), Else describes the use of **learning logs** as an aid to developing reflective practice.

Box 1.1, Learning Logs and Reflection Skills.⁶

Learning logs often play an important role in the management learning contract (MLC), particularly those which address behavioural issues. The Contracts are structured around the learning cycle, and are used to reinforce that cycle to enable the learner to consciously go round it to encourage and develop skills of reflection, and to keep a record of learning and achievement.

In today's climate of NVQs and Records of Achievement, keeping a learning log is becoming an integral part of any training programme, and the key skill in keeping a relevant, valuable log appears to be that of reflection.

It can be frustrating to observe the different degrees and depth of reflection for individuals. Occasionally the learner does reflect in depth, does draw conclusions about what they have learnt and what action to take for the next time. Unconsciously using the learning cycle to restructure their reflection. But, more often, reflection is only surface deep: the learner has recorded what has happened but has not, apparently, reflected on or analysed the situation. Consequently, the conclusions drawn, (if any) regarding their own learning and development, are limited.

This recurring problem has raised the question: **Is structured reflection important to learning?**

Learning from Experience

Honey and Mumford in 'The Manual of Learning Opportunities'⁷ state that learning opportunities, in common with any other sort of opportunity, are easily missed. A major task, therefore, for trainers and development specialists is to get people to recognise and make use of opportunities for learning. Most people agree that they learn from experience, but that it is an accidental and unconscious process.

There are many advantages of consciously learning from experience, and of expecting to learn from both future and past experiences. For example:

- It helps you to learn from your successes, not just from your mistakes.
- It makes it more likely that you will transfer your learning.
- It can help you to plan for future similar situations: to plan what you will do the same, what you will do differently.

So what do we mean by reflection?

Paula Allman, 'The Nature and Process of Adult Development'⁸ suggests that reflective thought is a basic thought structure which emerges when adult and which allows for the development of more advanced forms of thinking, such as dialectic thought. Reflecting on how we think about the content of our environment and experiences may be a necessary prerequisite to asking questions, discovering problems and to contradiction becoming a basis for thought.

In her article, Allman quotes a number of conclusions drawn from the research of others:

- Neugarten (1977), reported that reflective thinking became increasingly prevalent during middle years of adulthood.
- Piaget (1976) suggested that reflection during adolescence reached maturing only when the adolescent stops using reflection to oppose experience and begins to use these processes to interpret and predict experience.

However, 'adult' does not necessarily mean of a certain age. The ability to reflect, to question; does have a relationship to age, but not always: it also has a relationship to general maturity.

Mezirow suggests three main concepts of reflection:

Affective reflectivity: becoming aware of how we feel about the way we are observing and understanding, thinking or acting, or about our habits of doing so.

Discriminant reflectivity: where we assess how effective are our perceptions, thoughts, actions and habits of doing things.

Judgemental reflectivity: where we become aware and make our value judgements about our perceptions, thoughts, actions and habits in terms of their being liked and disliked, beautiful or ugly, positive or negative.

Through all these stages we are personalising what is learnt by applying insights to our own lives, rather than merely intellectualising.

Nancy Dixon⁹ suggests that the reason adult learners do not transfer their learning and development to the workplace is because the new skills conflict with the assumptions they have previously made about themselves, others and the organisation.

She proposes that critical reflection is necessary for adult learners to bring to conscious awareness the assumptions that underline current skills and to test those assumptions to find out whether they are achieving the desired goals.

Little effort is put into the development of this skill by most adult learners, and their trainers. How can we encourage adult learners to go through the stages of reflection so that they can make judgements about their own behaviours and perceptions? Easy! By asking them to keep a learning log.

Problems

When we introduce the Learning Circle to managers they enthusiastically agree that they know they learn. But they do not necessarily know how to learn from experience: they assume that it will happen: that they will learn purely by having the experience.

To help learners to consciously learn from their experiences they are encouraged to critically reflect on their experiences by keeping a regular learning log for a set period. The discipline of keeping the log on a regular basis, following an agreed format, must surely aid and improve the reflection skills of the learner.

However, there are a number of problems with this apparently logical and simple approach:

- It requires a high level of self discipline.

- It is easy to skip, to conclude 'that will do', particularly when feeling demotivated or passive.
- It requires a high level of self confidence to analyse your own behaviour.
- You sometimes just do not know what you are looking for, what your are reflecting on.
- It can make you feel unhappy, uncomfortable about the situation you have just been in, and subsequently discourage you from reflecting the next time.
- It is hard to reflect when you are being criticised – you are too busy defending yourself.
- It is easy to lapse when something more important turns up.
- It is hard to complete when things are going well.
- It will stop if you cannot see the benefits.
- It is boring when nothing exciting or momentous has happened.
- It is hard when you have no support, or are feeling alone/ threatened.
- It can't just be thought about, it must be written down.
- It is hard to pick up once put down.
- It is difficult to distinguish between facts and assumptions.
- It can be difficult to identify how your feelings and thoughts relate to your actions and vice versa.

Despite all these problems, it is accepted that learning by reflection converts informal and accidental opportunities into more efficient learning opportunities, and encourages planning for future opportunities.

The key to a successful log may be in making it immediately valuable and beneficial. To achieve this it is important that the learner keeps an accurate and relevant log, based on a clear structure, to enable them to improve their skills of recording and reflection right from the start.

Format

Our experience suggests that the format of the logs invariably take the form of a combination of the approach recommended by Peter Honey⁷ and Pedler, Burgoyne and Boydell:¹⁰

- An accurate account of what happened, analysing the behaviour of the learner in terms of feelings, thoughts and ideas, and of the behaviour of any other involved in the situation.
- Conclusions drawn from the experience, including the possible causes and potential consequences.
- A plan of action for next time, drawing on the learning from the experience.
- The log is kept for a specified time period, with a specified number of entries, about particular events, or types of events.

To encourage the learner to keep accurate and relevant logs and to improve their skills of reflection it is important to negotiate and agree in detail:

- The format of the learning log.
- What it will look like.
- The depth of reflection required.
- The type of incidents or situations to reflect upon.
- When to reflect and for how long.

It's worth distinguishing at this point between a **learning log** and a **learning diary**. The former is part of the assessment process and, as such, is available for others to read and assess, whilst the latter is a more personal journey that you would only share with others from choice. Anything that is relevant evidence – and that you are prepared to share – you will copy to the learning log on a regular basis. The two documents are described in more detail below. (*Note: The NVQ requirements talk about a 'reflective journal' – which sounds like a diary. However, what they term a reflective journal actually corresponds with our learning log. Let's hope this is not too confusing.*)

A Learning Log

This is used to document evidence of your learning, in preparation for the NVQ (reflective journal) element of this programme. You'll find a sample page layout for a Learning Log in [Appendix 1](#) of this module on [page 77](#).

A Learning Diary

This is a more informal notebook, in which you **record** your thoughts, feelings and learning on a more regular basis – like a personal diary – and **plan** for further learning opportunities/ skills practice, based on what you have learnt. You should write things down *'as soon as possible to avoid forgetting, but allow enough time for reflecting on each experience to gain optimum benefit'*.¹¹ Ideally, you will do this daily (at most weekly), at a similar time of day – so that it eventually becomes second nature. You should *'keep entries brief – otherwise you will give up or delay writing'*.¹¹

Potential **contents** of the **learning diary** include:

- New ideas or approaches that seem worth trying out.
- Your comments on the results of trying things out.
- Questions you want to raise with your PDA or tutor.
- Insights that you've had into your own preferred way of learning or your own abilities.
- Comments on what you have learnt from marked assignments.
- Comments on what you have learnt from observation of colleagues, partnership agencies, offenders (or even in non-work life – from the newspaper, your friends' behaviour or from TV coverage of job-related topics).
- How you feel about your progress.
- Your plans for how to make the most of your strengths and overcome any difficulties (Be realistic – you need a challenge but not the prospect of becoming demoralised).

- Greene and Gibbons¹¹ also suggest that you ask yourself questions to help focus your thoughts on specific events or topics, rather than learning in a haphazard way – the example they give is '*Why do we interrupt each other?*'

The main **benefits of the learning diary** are that it:

- Prompts you to reflect on what (and how) you are learning – and to capture key points in the learning log for the collection of evidence.
- Gives you a record of how you have progressed:
 - There may be elements of learning that are not directly relevant to the assessment of individual competences but are, nevertheless, very important indicators of where you have moved from and to.
 - Elements that **are** directly relevant to the required competences can be transferred, in the appropriate format, to your **learning log**.
- Can trigger your memory about material you studied earlier but had half forgotten, or about items you planned to follow up later.

Activity 1.3

- 1. For a week, keep a diary in which you jot down the ways in which you are using:**
 - **Else's three elements of reflectivity (Affective, Discriminant and Judgemental).**
 - **The four main elements of the Kolb cycle.**
- 2. Discuss with fellow learners the benefits and drawbacks of each approach to recording learning, planning opportunities for further learning and integrating your learning into your practice.**
- 3. Within your action learning sets, develop a suitable proforma for recording your learning in a way that allows you to develop reflective practice skills.**

So far, you've looked at the relationship between theory and practice but our thinking and our actions are also influenced by our values and beliefs. It's important that we become more critically aware of such influences and, where necessary, learn to counter them. All too often, what we consider to be 'objective' accounts of what is – or has been – happening turn out to be unconsciously biased.

Roger Woddis illustrates such bias in an amusing poem:

'Ethics for Everyman'

Throwing a bomb is bad, dropping a bomb is good;

Terror, no need to add, depends on who's wearing the hood.

Kangaroo courts are wrong, specialist courts are right;

Discipline by the strong is fair if your collar is white.

Company output 'soars', wages of course 'explode';

Profits deserve applause, pay-claims the criminal code.

Daily the Church declares, betting-shops are a curse;

Gambling with stocks and shares enlarges the national purse.

*Workers are absentees, businessmen relax, different as chalk and
cheese;*

Social morality has a duality, one for each side of the tracks.

Roger Woddis

Time, then, to take a look at what we mean by 'diversity' and anti-discriminatory practice.

1.3 Statement of Principle on Diversity and Anti-Discriminatory Practice

Diversity and Anti-Discriminatory Practice – A Life-Long Journey

Diversity and anti-discriminatory practice (ADP) issues and their implications are interwoven throughout the Community and Criminal Justice Programme and are concerned with justice, fairness and the rights of the individual.

In 2003, the National Probation Service issued its diversity strategy **The Heart of the Dance**.

The Service's Head of Diversity, Diane Baderin, sets the context, writing:

"There is a great deal of passion, expertise and willingness in the National Probation Service (NPS) to achieve equitable, fair and accessible practices both within the workforce and for those receiving its services. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report, the Thematic Inspection Report, 'Towards Race Equality', the Home Secretary's employment targets, Human Rights Act 2000 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, all provided the background against which the race equality agenda has evolved. The wider diversity agenda is rooted in the Welsh Language Act 1993, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, European Union directives and evolving issues of social inclusion and community integration. These legislative, political, economic and social drivers make effective management of diversity an essential business imperative for an organisation in pursuit of excellence. Action has become the key evidence of an organisation's commitment to diversity, hence this strategy's emphasis on demonstrable evidence and the achievement of best practice.

The Heart of the Dance reflects the NPS firm commitment to action."

This Programme's approach to diversity and anti-discriminatory practice shares this commitment. As the Director General of the Probation Service, Eithne Wallis, says in the Strategic Framework (2001-4) document for the National Probation Service, 'A New Choreography':

"Valuing and achieving diversity is synonymous with good practice and essential to the core business of the NPS with offenders, victims and communities. It must, therefore, be integrated into all aspects of the Service's work otherwise it will fail in its duty." (Stretch Objective V11: pp.33-37)

The National Director (2001) also suggests that *"Inclusiveness, equality and fairness are required to ensure simple justice" i.e., "...no-one should be excluded from the NPS or the services it delivers because of their gender, race or ethnicity, religious beliefs, disability or sexual orientation"*. These examples are but some of the many sources of prejudice which can influence our interactions with others. During the Programme we will explore the wide range of areas of potential discrimination which may prevent the achievement of the notion of 'simple justice'.

Placing particular emphasis on the concept of 'justice', and to help you integrate an anti-discriminatory approach in your practice, challenge discrimination and promote social justice, we will travel through three learning stages. Firstly we will explore the concepts of justice and fairness. Secondly we will examine the implications of ADP for us all and yourself as an agency worker. Thirdly, we will examine issues of power and powerlessness, and suggest strategies for practice which enable people to behave more confidently and responsibly in society.

In stage one, starting from the premise that justice involves treating everybody fairly, we will examine what we mean by this, and how we take account of difference. There is evidence that the Criminal Justice System

treats certain groups of people in a manner which is unjust, and we shall explore that evidence.

In stage two, indeed throughout the Programme, we will need to analyse and critically reflect upon the attitudes, socialisation and values which inform how we personally treat others. Developing self-awareness can be a difficult and uncomfortable experience on our personal journey, yet essential. We will examine the implications of our self-awareness in working with individuals and other organisations, with whom it may be necessary to challenge their attitudes, values and behaviour, recognising, however, that critical self-awareness concerning behaviour is an equally difficult and uncomfortable process and experience for them. We will explore strategies for use in practice to help you deal with these issues.

During the third stage of the journey we will explore issues relating to power and powerlessness. Personal and role power within the agency will be examined and you will learn how to recognise the proper and improper use of power and to challenge the abuse of power.

Learning about how to practise in an anti-discriminatory way is a continuous, life-long journey for students and staff alike. By incorporating periodically reviewed diversity and ADP objectives in your learning agreement and personal development plan throughout the Programme, we will provide you with the opportunity to learn about diversity and anti-discriminatory practice and to reflect upon yourself and your interactions with others, so that you can incorporate and evaluate your learning within your professional practice.

As a learning process, first of all it may be useful to discuss the difference between discrimination and oppression; anti-discriminatory practice and anti-oppressive practice. Harlow and Hearn¹² suggest, based on Thompson,¹³ that:

- **Discrimination is about resources** (it is concerned with the unequal treatment of individuals or groups and prejudicial behaviour acting against the interests of those people who belong to relatively powerless groups within the social structure.)
- **Oppression is about power** (it is concerned with the degrading treatment of individuals or groups, brought about by the dominance of an individual or group through the exercise of power.)

However, the terms tend to be used interchangeably. Essentially, discrimination and oppression are a result of power and difference in society. People who hold the power define what is the 'norm' and people who differ from this perceived 'norm' are frequently disadvantaged and discriminated against.^a

Discrimination takes place at a number of levels:

- At an individual level, people tend to operate on the basis of their 'common sense' view of the world, without stopping to think how they acquired their opinions about what is 'true'. For example, they might view offenders either as 'mad' or 'bad'; 'deprived' or 'depraved' (in the words of the *West Side Story*

^a You may like to think back for suitable experiences. You'll discover in the Values and ethics module, Thompson has since produced another book (1998) called *Promoting equality: challenging discrimination and oppression in the human services*.

song). They might view the poor as individually feckless or as the products of an unfair society, which has denied them opportunities.

- Different groups in society have different 'cultures' which help to determine an individual's views of the world and to stereotype the behaviours, attitudes and feelings of other groups. (Big boys don't cry, women are bad drivers, gay men are child molesters and so on). Young children learn such stereotypes through constant exposure to them in their family/ community – and may or may not develop the critical skills to see beyond them as they grow older.
- The ways in which people are defined affects the way in which provision is made for them. The cultural boundaries of people who run institutions may mean that, whether consciously or unconsciously, they build discrimination into the processes and procedures by which the institutions are run. The majority of institutions in our society are managed and run by white, heterosexual men, which puts black people, women and the gay community at a disadvantage. (This is changing, with more people from traditionally disadvantaged groups beginning to be appointed to management positions – but slowly. If you look at the two groups with most influence on the probation service – judges and MPs – the vast majority are white men.)

Discrimination takes place through a number of processes including:

- **Stereotyping** – reducing the 'other' to a simplified set of references. You can catch yourself out in this process when you use 'they' to refer to someone from a group other than your own. *'They always do this. They wouldn't want this.'* For

example, a white person might believe that '*Asian communities look after their own*' (with the implication that s/he doesn't need to bother too much). It's important not to make assumptions, but to ask the appropriate questions to find out what the individual wants/ needs.

- **Marginalisation** – provision has often been based on such assumptions, which leads to further marginalisation of the oppressed group. For example, special schools exclude people with physical or mental impairments from mainstream provision, physical or cultural barriers may be put in the way of people's access to buildings or facilities (the group in power – either consciously or unconsciously fulfil their own interests without consulting/ considering those of others).
- **Infantilisation** – disadvantaged groups are often treated as children, for example women may be referred to as 'girls', baby talk may be used with old people.
- **Medicalisation** – using medical terminology (usually in a hospital context) to describe people – for example 'schizophrenic', 'manic-depressive', 'paraplegic' – diminishes the person behind the label, treats them as 'different', as 'invalids', as having less status and significance. It also reinforces the lay person's view that the doctor holds all the knowledge and the answers, and therefore the power over someone's life.
- **Dehumanisation** – people are seen as 'types' or 'categories' (another type of labelling) rather than individuals – for example in the probation context people might talk about 'the alcoholic', the 'domestic violence case', the paedophile. Rather than thinking about catering for the needs of the oppressed group,

the group in power are concerned only with 'the way we've always done things'.

Activity 1.4

Now refer to your Handbook on Anti-Discriminatory Practice.

You should by now have had the chance to work through the first four exercises. Turning to exercise five – Who am I?

A few suggestions here:

- Take some time to think about the social groupings to which you belong (race, gender, sexuality, age, ability and so on) – and their relative power base in society.
- Complete the exercise as set out, even if it feels uncomfortable or difficult. This is all part of the learning process, and it is important that you share as much of this as you can with your PDA/ tutor. You can move on to do exercise 6 when you have completed number 5.
- Consider the building in which you work. If you were an offender approaching it for the first time, how welcoming would you find it if you were:
 - Black?
 - Physically impaired?
 - Gay or lesbian?
 - A male working class teenager?
- How might your agency work to reduce any negative associations?

1.4 Planning and Time Management

Do you often find yourself:

- Wondering, at the end of the day, where the time has gone – you seem to have been slogging away for hours but have little to show for it?
- 'Fire fighting' your way through – constantly attending to the urgent tasks rather than organising your days to get the maximum benefit from them (including the all important leisure/recovery activities)?

Have you ever identified at which part of the day you function most effectively (are you a night owl or a lark?) – and set that aside for the most difficult things you have to do? (And, conversely, set aside your 'afternoon lull' time for polishing off all the little tasks that don't require a lot of thought.)

How realistic are you in estimating how long your most frequent tasks will take you? If you find it difficult to manage your time, or are of the opinion that life is to be lived rather than organised, take some time now to consider the personal traits that affect your time management and how you can work effectively with them.

Activity 1.5

Complete the [Time Management](#) study pack.

You may want to return to some of the activities in this study pack such as Activity 14) at the end of the module, when you are ready to put together your personal development plan.

In the meantime, for your scheduling activity, you might choose a shorter-term goal like completing this section or completing the module. When you are counting the number of activities involved remember that some of them – like this one – involve undertaking several activities from the DMU study guides.

Remember that you will get the most benefit from your reading if you complete the activities, rather than simply reading the text! Active learning, as you should by now have read, is more effective than passive learning.

1.5 Use of Resources

The resources available to you during your course of study fall into three main categories:

- **Reading material:** The Module Guides, Module Readers, Module Texts and background reading from books and journals that you will find in the library.
- **Computer-based materials/ communication:** Including the Internet, Email and electronic conferencing.

- **People:** Your Action Learning Set, work colleagues, Module Leader, tutor and PDA.

1.5.1 Reading Material

Did you know that there is more than one way to read a book or article? To make the most of your reading, you will first need to be sure about why you are reading it and what you want to get out of it. You also need to make notes about what you have read, in a way that helps you to recap the key points at a later date – whether you are revising for exams or wanting to apply your learning to a current field of practice.

Use the DMU self-study pack **Reading and Note-Taking from Written Sources** to polish up your reading and note-taking skills. There are plenty of exercises to help you to practice the skill and reinforce your learning. You should also read (and complete the exercises!):

- Pages 18-23 of the **Managing Your Learning pack** – the section on **Deep and Surface Learning**.
- The three research packs in the series – **Research Methods**, **Questionnaire Design** and **Planning a Sample Survey**. These will help you to make sense of books/ journal articles that report on research findings, by helping you to understand:
 - What is involved in research.
 - What can and cannot be achieved by research.
 - The terminology and methods used.

They will also help you to ask pertinent questions about research studies, such as *'How many people were involved? How significant are the results? How might the questions asked have affected the answers received (and the validity of the results)?'*

As the **Research Methods** pack points out *'practice and experience in research is one of the most effective ways of learning about research'* (page 31). You'll not be getting much experience of this nature until the Part Two **Research** module in this programme (although in the **Values and Ethics** module, you'll do a small-scale survey of your agency's Equal Opportunities policies). In the meantime, *'any research work that you undertake needs to be closely supervised'*, (page 31 again).

When you do move on to doing research, you will probably find it useful to re-use these study packs. However, you'll then be reading them in a different way – as you'll understand when you have completed the **Reading and Note-Taking from Written Sources** pack.

1.5.2 Computer-Based Materials/ Communication

In traditional university education, your communication with other students and with your tutor takes place face-to-face. In this programme, although you will meet people at the introductory workshops to each module, the majority of your interactions will be through [Blackboard](#) – the university's computer-conferencing facility.

You will be given a hands-on session learning how to use [Blackboard](#) at the introductory workshop – along with a handout for future reference – so technical explanations are not included in this module. However, it's worth taking a look at other aspects of its use.

Just like any other form of communication, [Blackboard](#) allows you to:

- Suggest ideas.
- Ask challenging questions.
- Suggest possible solutions to others' problems and queries.
- Explain your position on issues.

- Debate others' positions.
- Share your past and current experiences in the field under debate – and compare them with those of others.
- Receive constructive feedback on your own contributions.
- Give your own constructive feedback on others' contributions.
- Develop your ideas through your interactions with others.

Activity 1.6

- 1. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of seminars on Blackboard compared with face-to-face seminars and conversations?**
- 2. How might you work to build on the advantages and overcome the disadvantages?**

Feedback can be found on [page 74](#).

You will also be using your computer to access on-line materials including the Internet and the on-line library catalogue. Remember that you can print off leaflets about using these from the DMU library web page, <http://www.library.dmu.ac.uk>. Click on the **Study Skills** link to explore the resources available.

Seminar

Use Blackboard now, to participate in the first seminar of the course – in this case, based on what you have already learnt in this module and during the Introductory Workshop. The seminar topic can also be found in the [assignment document](#).

1.6 People

There are five main groups of people with whom you will undertake learning or on whom you can call for support: Module Leaders and tutors, PDAs, your 'Action Learning Set' and your work colleagues.

Module Leaders and Tutors

Module leaders and tutors will be guiding and managing the electronic seminars and helping with the **academic** input.

PDAs

Practice Development Assessors organise the **skills learning and practice** sessions to complement the academic learning. They also act in the capacity of traditional personal supervisors, providing moral support and supervision, and assessing you in the workplace.

Action Learning Set (ALS)

Action Learning Sets are a well-tested method of enabling and encouraging learning in a range of different settings. An ALS is more than just a discussion group, although this is part of its function. The main purpose is to facilitate the achievement of a particular task collectively rather than individually. For more information about forming and using an ALS, see the [Student Handbook](#).

Probation Service Colleagues

There are many places in the Module Guides where you will be directed to 'discuss the topic with experienced colleagues'. There is likely to be a wide range of ideas, opinions, techniques and expertise for you to draw on

in the workplace, particularly since the probation field has changed substantially over recent years.

A rich mine for you to prospect then – but not without its problems (like any mine!). For example, the probation service will have particular expectations of you as employees, albeit trainees. You will be expected to work to the objectives of the service, follow national standards and work within policies of the service. However, the university requires you to develop the capacity for critical reflection and analysis. This means that you will be expected to:

- Challenge current orthodoxy where knowledge and research suggests there may be other, alternative ways of thinking and practising.
- Think for yourself and not just accept what others say uncritically.

You may also have to navigate your way through the minefield of conflicting priorities. For example, how would you weigh each of the following against the others?

- Your line manager wants you to undertake office duty – and can argue convincingly that it will meet your learning needs. (S/he may claim that the fact that she is also short-staffed is a secondary issue!)
- You are keen to gain experience of office duty, knowing you will learn from it. You may also want to be seen as a useful member of the team.
- Your PDA wants you to spend the day studying for a session she is running next week on 'listening skills'.

This is why it is important for you to develop a Learning Agreement in which you try to identify potential conflict points and gain agreement as to how these will be resolved.

1.7 Presentation of Finished Work

There are four main ways in which you will be expected to present your work and for which you need to acquire the appropriate skills and techniques:

1. **Essays** and **case studies** (for academic assignments)
2. **Reports** (for work-based assignments)
3. **Verbal presentations** (in both settings)
4. **Examinations** (in the academic context).

First, a note on case studies. For a number of assignments during the course of this programme you are asked to include reference to **case studies**. For the Foundation Practice Portfolio in Part One and for the Assessing and Addressing Offending Behaviour module in Part Two, this case material **must** be drawn from your own practice, as these assignments specifically require you to reflect on your own practice. These assignments are assessed jointly by your PDA and tutor, with the former being able to assess, in particular, the integrity and authenticity of the work described.

For other assignments, it is **preferable** if you can draw on your own work – as this will strengthen your learning and demonstrate a good understanding of the real meaning of integration. However, we recognise that it is not always possible to find appropriate case material from within your own practice. If the assignment is asking you to draw on particular case material, then you should negotiate permission to use another

officer's case material, made suitably anonymous. In these assignments, you would need to hypothesise about the work you might have undertaken and make it clear it is not your actual practice.

In all assignments where you use either your own case material or that of a colleague, you **must** ask your PDA to sign the cover sheet that you send in with your assignment, to confirm either that it is your own case, or that you have the permission of a colleague to use it. If you are sending the assignment in by email then you must ask your PDA to email the administrative staff in the PDI to confirm this. You'll find that there is a DMU study pack available for each of the remaining highlighted topics, so there is little point in covering the same material here. Just a few points:

- It's probably best to leave each pack until you have to prepare the presentation in questions. (You'll forget the key messages, if you don't have to apply them straight away.)
- Remember your effective study techniques and take a break between studying each pack should you have need of them all within a short space of time.
- The main difference between essay and report writing is the need to stick to common formats in the latter. The formats of many of the reports you write in your probation work will be laid down by National Standards (for example, Pre-Sentence Reports). Work with your PDA to develop a list of common probation reports – and a plan for contributing to each main type.
- Keep the packs handy as reference sources, too, whenever you need to write an essay, prepare a report or deliver a presentation. Alternatively (or additionally), prepare yourself a 'Performance Aid' which summarises the key points in bullet form for ease of quick reference in use on-the-job.

Three more DMU publications – in this case more reference materials than study packs – will be essential tools when you come to write your first (and subsequent) assignments:

- The **Information Citation and Control** pack – because it is important that you always:
 - Explain how you came by the information you are using and quoting.
 - Present published material in the text using an accepted method of citation.
 - Make quotations properly in your text.
 - List your published sources correctly in the bibliography.
 - Make appropriate references to empirical information, appendices and illustrative material.
- A leaflet/ quiz **Are you a Plagiarist**, (because, as the introduction to this leaflet points out – whether you pass off someone else's ideas as your own innocently, accidentally or deliberately, you will still fail).
- The **Infolines** pack giving guidelines on using library resources when preparing short talks, essays, presentations and in-depth projects.

Effective teamwork is the main topic for [Section 2 - Producing your Assessment Documents](#). However, you might want to take a look at the DMU study packs **Working in Groups** and **Managing Your Group Project** at this stage. Although the latter appears, at first sight, to be concerned with more substantial projects involving questionnaires and detailed research, the interpersonal organisation and management is just

as relevant to developing, say, a joint seminar. Make particular use, then, of Sections 2:2 and, when you have completed your presentation, Section 3 – especially the *process* elements.

Activity 1.7

Read the extract below and reflect on the ideas presented here. Do any of them apply to you as a man/ woman? Answer the following questions with these ideas in mind:

- 1. What effect might your identity (be it race, gender, class, sexuality, physical ability or age) have on your ability to learn?**
- 2. In what ways can you help to mitigate any negatives and build on the positives?**

Your work on these questions should also help you when you come to write your Personal Development Plan.

Box 1.2, Pedagogy: Learning Styles.

Jessica Blackmore (1996)

Differences Between Men's and Women's Learning Styles

Not only do adults have different learning styles than children, but men and women do not approach the world of "thinking" in quite the same way either! In 1968, William Perry did a study of undergraduate New England college students (male). From this study he determined that young men pass through a developmental sequence in their thinking modes. Perry isolated nine stages in the sequence, but in outline the stages form this pattern (Bodi 1988; Cranton 1992, 47; McNeer 1991):

Perry's 'Developmental Process'

- 1.** Male students see the world as black/ white, right/ wrong-- they are convinced there **IS** one right answer.
- 2.** Male students see there is diversity of opinion, but feel that authorities that describe diversity are poorly qualified, or just 'exercising students' so students will be forced to find the 'right answer' themselves.
- 3.** Male students begin to feel that diversity is temporary. They feel that maybe the 'right' answer just hasn't been found yet.
- 4.** Male students understand that diversity is a legitimate state, but they would still prefer to know what is 'right'.
- 5.** Male students see that everyone has a right to his or her own opinion.

6. Finally the male student develops a personal commitment to the relativistic world...

Nearly 20 years later, Belenky et al. wondered how women fit into this 'male' scale (if at all). In their 1986 study they discovered that women indeed do have different "ways of knowing." Unlike Perry developmental stages, Belenky et al. chose not to describe the way women think in a staged sequence, although women do move from one style of thinking to others as they mature and gain life experience. In outline, Belenky et al. found that women have the following possible "ways of knowing."

Belenky et al. 'Women's Ways of Knowing'

- Silence: women students feel mindless and voiceless, subject to whims of external authority.
- Received knowledge: women students feel they can receive knowledge, but not create it.
- Subjective knowledge: truth and knowledge are private and subjectively known or intuited.
- Procedural knowledge: women students are invested in learning and applying objective procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge.
- Constructed knowledge: women students view knowledge as contextual and can create knowledge found objectively or subjectively.

Section 2 - Producing your Assessment Documents

Objectives

When you have completed this section of the module, you will be able to complete a Personal Development Plan and Learning Agreement. You should also be prepared for completing your written assignment.

The Learning Outcomes for this **Foundation Skills and Methods** module require you to draw up (as mentioned on [page 4](#)):

- A **Personal Development Plan**, which sets out your primary learning objectives and the resources you'll need for meeting them;
- A '**learning log**' to capture your learning (and help you to build a **portfolio of evidence** of work required for the four practice-based modules); and
- A **Learning Agreement** between the four partners to the learning process – you, your PDA, your line manager and your tutor – setting out the responsibilities of each party to the contract.

You have already covered the topic of learning logs on [page 31](#). In this final section, you'll be introduced, in turn, to the process of drawing up a:

- **Personal Development Plan.**
- **Learning Agreement.**

2.1 Personal Development Plan (PDP)

Your [Personal Development Plan](#) should describe your learning needs and objectives – and the resources you need to meet them. The PDP will be available on [Blackboard](#).

There are three stages to the PDP, in each of which you draw up a list of objectives – targeting six particular developmental needs – and review your progress six months later. The first two stages correspond to Parts 1 and 2 of the course, while the third covers the transition into full time employment. At this stage, we are concerned with the Initial Plan.

The main steps in completing your PDP are as follows:

1. Consult the [Student Handbook](#) to identify the main requirements of you – the learning outcomes – for each of the four academic Part One modules and the [Introduction to Foundation Practice](#) to find the expectations for the **Foundation Practice** modules.
2. Identify your current strengths and weaknesses in each of these areas and pencil these into Section a) of Stage 1 of the PDP.
3. Discuss your analysis with your PDA, explaining how you think you can demonstrate these competences, based on recent work experiences. If your PDA doesn't agree, you'll need to identify opportunities to demonstrate the skill/ underpinning knowledge while the PDP is observing.
4. Identify the main areas in which you need to acquire **new** knowledge and skills – in other words, identify your primary learning needs. Prioritise these needs, choosing a maximum of six broad-based objectives to work towards, and write these into Section b) of Stage 1 of the PDP. At least one of these

objectives must be based on an activity(ies) from the ADP handbook. Some examples might be:

- You might feel that you have a good theoretical knowledge of some of the causes of crime but limited direct experience of interviewing offenders. You might choose to target your learning towards the core skills of interviewing and communication skills.
- You may have considerable experience of working with offenders but limited knowledge of the underpinning theories – you might choose to target your reading towards particular subjects among the Part One modules (for example, paying particular attention to the **People Organisations and Society** module?).
- You might have a basic understanding of the 'What Works' material but feel confused by some of the terminology such as criminogenic need or responsivity. You might want to find out more about them and discuss, with colleagues, what they mean in practice.
- You may have extensive experience of working in white communities but little of working with other races and nationalities. You might decide to focus on finding out more about black communities and culture and to read around issues of race in the Criminal Justice System.
- You may be confused by the notions of anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice, and set yourself the task of finding out more about these concepts. Try and be focused and specific about your initial aims here, and link these to work on the ADP Handbook.

- You may be terrified at the thought of working with computers and decide to find a training event in your service.
5. Practice the SMART objectives routine that you will later use with offenders: make sure the objectives you write in column 1 of the grid for Section b) are Specific, Measurable, Realistic and Time-bound (You'll also need to Agree them with your tutor). For example, *'By Christmas, I will have discovered, through reading research studies, at least three ways in which the research indicates that black people are disadvantaged by the criminal justice system'*.
6. Now you need to decide – and log in column 2 of the grid for Section b) – how you are going to meet the objectives. At least one of your objectives should relate specifically to the practice modules and detail the types of work activity in which you need to engage, to meet the learning outcomes for **Foundation Practice**. You might, for example, ask to:
- Shadow experienced colleagues.
 - Observe – and then take part in – a group-work programme.
 - Co-write a few PSRs.
 - Undertake some court work.
 - Visit and liaise with a range of community-based organisations with which your agency has partnership links.
 - And at least on **must** relate to the ADP Handbook.

And finally, you should note – in the final column – the modules where you can find material that is relevant for your chosen objectives. Because you are considering fairly broad-based objectives here, (rather than specific module learning outcomes) this might be spread across a number of modules. If you note down the module and page numbers in this column, it will save you having to find the material every time you want to work on that objective.

2.2 Learning Agreement

This is provided on your coursework CD, in electronic format.

The [Learning Agreement](#) is a contract between you and your PDA, line manager and tutor. As with most contract negotiations, each person documents what s/he expects from the agreement and negotiations take place until each party is satisfied that their rights and interests are safeguarded. The process of drawing up this agreement, with the discussion, negotiation and fact finding required, is just as important as the final product.

Activity 2.1

What resources and support do you expect to receive, from the other people involved in the agreement, whilst on the programme – and what do you expect to give in return?

What expectations do you think these others have of you and what expectations do you think are reasonable?

Use the following table to jot down your thoughts.

	I expect to receive...	I expect to give...
The University		
Your PDA		
Your line manager/ The Probation Service		
	They will expect..	Reasonable?
The University		
Your PDA		
Your line manager/ The Probation Service		

And finally, the essay assignment. Did you do the reading about essay writing as part of your Section 1 work? If not, you might want to return to page 30. Should you wish to consult further, part 6 Essay Writing, in the Student Skills Guide by Drew and Bingham,² is very useful. (Essay

writing is going to play a significant part in your academic life so it makes sense to get it right from the start!)

Good writing and good luck!

Section 3 - Feedback on Activities

3.1 Feedback to the Third Element of **Activity 1.1**

Learning Activity		Learning Situation	
Internet searches	R, T	Working against a strict deadline	A
Role play/ simulation	A	Being intellectually stretched	T
Library research	R, T	Putting together a detailed report	R
Brainstorming	A	Generating ideas without feasibility constraints	A
Group problem solving	A	Observing others (e.g. role play or film)	R
Project work	T	Plenty of time to chew over the topic	R
Games	A	Identifying reasons for success/ failure of initiative	T
Following a role model	P	Immediate opportunity to try out learning on-the-job	P
Informal discussions with fellow learners	A	Developing techniques for dealing with practical situations	P
Seminars	T	Being in the limelight	A

3.2 Feedback to [Activity 1.6](#)

1. The advantages and disadvantages of seminars on [Blackboard](#).

Advantages:

- For the reflectors among you it provides a more amenable situation, in which you have time to consider your responses, rather than having to think quickly. It also allows you to research a topic before you contribute – and have the reference material to hand as you construct your contribution/ response.
- For less confident speakers, it may be seen as a safer environment – they don't have to face the usual interruptions or be put off by the body language of listeners.
- The 'attendance requirement' of a minimum of three contributions to each seminar also ensures that everyone contributes – nobody can hide at the back of the class! In traditional seminars, some people tend to dominate the conversation and always get their points in so quickly that others can feel, at worst, demoralised or, at best, able to sit back and enjoy the conversation without actively engaging in it – not an effective learning situation. [Blackboard](#) therefore provides better opportunities for those who are not so quick on their feet and a more varied range of views for all to consider.
- You may find it easier to concentrate on the debate without the inter-personal distractions that often occur in group situations.

- Because you will have the whole set of contributions in front of you:
 - You may find it easier to integrate the developing strands than is possible in a face-face seminar; and
 - The conversation is less likely to go off on a tangent as can sometimes happen, in face-face seminars, when a minor point creates an attractive diversion.

Disadvantages:

- For the activists among you, it is not so immediate – you may not get replies to your queries for a while and/ or comments on your contributions to seminars.
- For confident speakers who enjoy the cut and thrust of debate, it may seem tame and depersonalised.
- For those who rely on the positive body language of their listeners to give them feedback about how they are doing, it can be unnerving to simply send the message off into the ether.
- For those unfamiliar with technology, it involves learning about – and operating – the technology at the same time as trying to learn – and debate – the subject.

2. How might you best work to build on the advantages and overcome the disadvantages?

Remember the range of potential reactions when you are contributing to seminars or communicating by Email. You need to:

- Log on regularly so that contributors get feedback as soon as possible.

- Consider how your message might come across, without non-verbal communication to support it, and rewrite until you are sure it conveys what you intended.
- Write in the most accessible way you can and read your contribution back to yourself a number of times to make sure it can't be misinterpreted.
- Be supportive to other contributors – encouraging those who have not yet contributed and giving feedback to those who have.
- Keep your feedback constructive. You don't have to agree with other contributors but you need to word disagreements in a way that encourages people to continue the debate rather than undermining their confidence.
- Refrain from dominating the discussion – this is just as important in [Blackboard](#) as it is in face-face seminars.
- Find someone who is more familiar with the technology who is willing to be your helpmate when you are experiencing difficulties – but don't forget that the course tutor is also available for advice and reassurance.

Appendices

Appendix 1, Suggested Format for Learning Log.

Significant occurrence:

(Description of what happened).

Application to practice:

(The impact that this event will have on my work, study or the practice of my team, does it raise any questions about service policy).

Diversity and ADP issues:

(Use/ abuse of power by agencies and individuals, implications for this situation of PCS analysis, would things be different if the identity of the people involved (race, sexuality, gender etc) was different).

Theoretical links and associated literature:

(Is this event a good illustration of a particular theoretical perspective or does it contradict something that you have read? Include any references to relevant literature).

Critical analysis:

(Why did this happen? How might the outcome have been different?)

Learning points:

(What I have learned from the situation? E.g. about practice, about theory, about myself as a student or a practitioner, how did it make me feel)

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