Unit 3: Professional Practice

Unit code	**L/618/7398**
Unit type	**Core**
Unit level	**4**
Credit value	**15**

Introduction

In the workplace, it is essential to be effective as a communicator, critical thinker, analyser, team worker and team leader. These skills are needed on a daily basis in order to carry out designated tasks as part of a job role. The development of academic competence and the continuation of lifelong learning and continuing professional development (CPD) are 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 skills that enable tasks to be completed successfully and facilitate effective decision making. Working with others in a group environment such as an academic setting or in 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, reflective practice and working towards various goals are encouraged in the workplace through an appraisal framework. Professional development includes at higher levels of learning and the ability to demonstrate effective research skills and academic reporting skills.

This unit covers the development of communication skills and communication literacy and the use of qualitative and quantitative data to demonstrate analysis, reasoning and critical thinking. Students will carry out tasks that require working with others in a team-based scenario and planning and problem solving.

On successful completion of the unit, students will be able to demonstrate leadership skills through the dynamics of team working. Through reflective practice, they will be able to evaluate the contributions they make as an individual and those of others.

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.

Understanding of the reasons for communicating with internal and external stakeholders, e.g. responding to queries, technical support, providing instructions, raising awareness of issues.

Considerations when communicating with internal and external stakeholders, e.g. maintaining privacy and security, tone of voice, use of technical vocabulary or jargon, company image.

Consideration of issues relating to inclusion and diversity when communicating and interacting with others.

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.

Demonstrate resourcefulness and creativity when solving problems.

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 problem solving, 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 and strategy, problem-solving and short-term development projects, flexibility and adaptability, team player.

Individual responsibility when working as part of a team.

Working effectively on individual and collaborative tasks regardless of levels of supervision.

Allocation and management of tasks between members of the team, identifying team members' strengths, communicating requirements and expectations effectively.

Teams and team building:

Selecting team members e.g. specialist roles, skill and style/approach mixes.

Identification of team and work group roles.

Stages in team development, including team building, identity, loyalty, commitment to shared beliefs, professionalism.

Team health evaluation, including promoting and maintaining a safe and secure working environment, 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 responsibilities, including employment legislation, ethics, employment rights and responsibilities.

Maintaining a productive, professional and secure working environment.

Performance objectives:

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

CPD, including 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, including 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:

Plan to include current performance, future needs, opportunities and threats to career progression, aims and objectives, achievement dates, review dates, learning programme or activities, action plans, personal development plans, ongoing commitment to CPD.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria

Pass	Merit	Distinction
LO1 Demonstrate a range of interpersonal and transferable communication skills to a target audience		
P1 Demonstrate effective design and delivery of a training event for a given target audience, using different communication styles and formats **P2** Demonstrate 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 used in 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 the design and delivery of the event.	**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 methodologies in the design and delivery of an event.	**D2** Evaluate the overall success of the event delivered, in terms of how well critical reasoning and thinking were applied to achieve the end goal.

Pass	Merit	Distinction
LO3 Discuss the importance and dynamics of working within a team and the impact of team working in different environments		**D3** Critically evaluate your own role and contribution to a group scenario.
P5 Discuss the importance of team dynamics in the success and/or failure of group work. **P6** Work in a team to achieve a defined goal.	**M4** Analyse team dynamics, in terms of the roles that group members play in a team and the effectiveness in terms of achieving shared goals.	
LO4 Examine the need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and its role within the workplace and for higher-level learning		**D4** Evaluate a range of evidence criteria that is used as a measure for effective CPD.
P7 Discuss the importance of CPD and its contribution to own learning and motivation. **P8** Review different motivational theories and the impact they can have on performance in the workplace. **P9** Produce a development plan that outlines responsibilities, performance objectives and required skills for future goals.	**M5** Justify the role of CPD and development planning in building motivation.	

Recommended Resources

Textbooks

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

Forde, C. et al (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 - Japan Institute for Group Dynamics

Professional Development in Education - Taylor and Francis Online

Web

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

Links

This unit links to the following related units:

Unit 6: Planning a Computing Project

Unit 16: Computing Research Project.