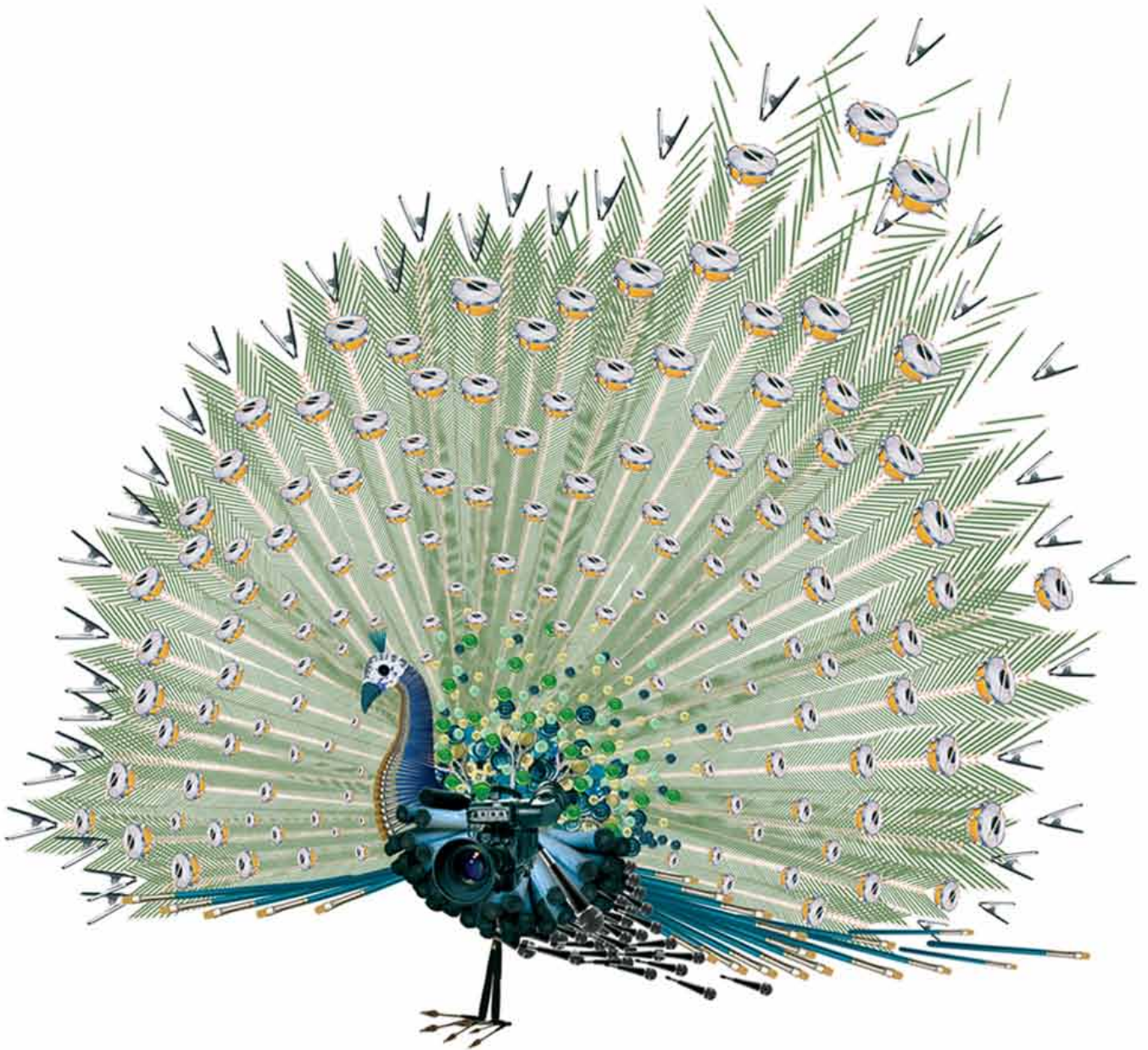


# CREATIVE AND MEDIA DIPLOMA ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

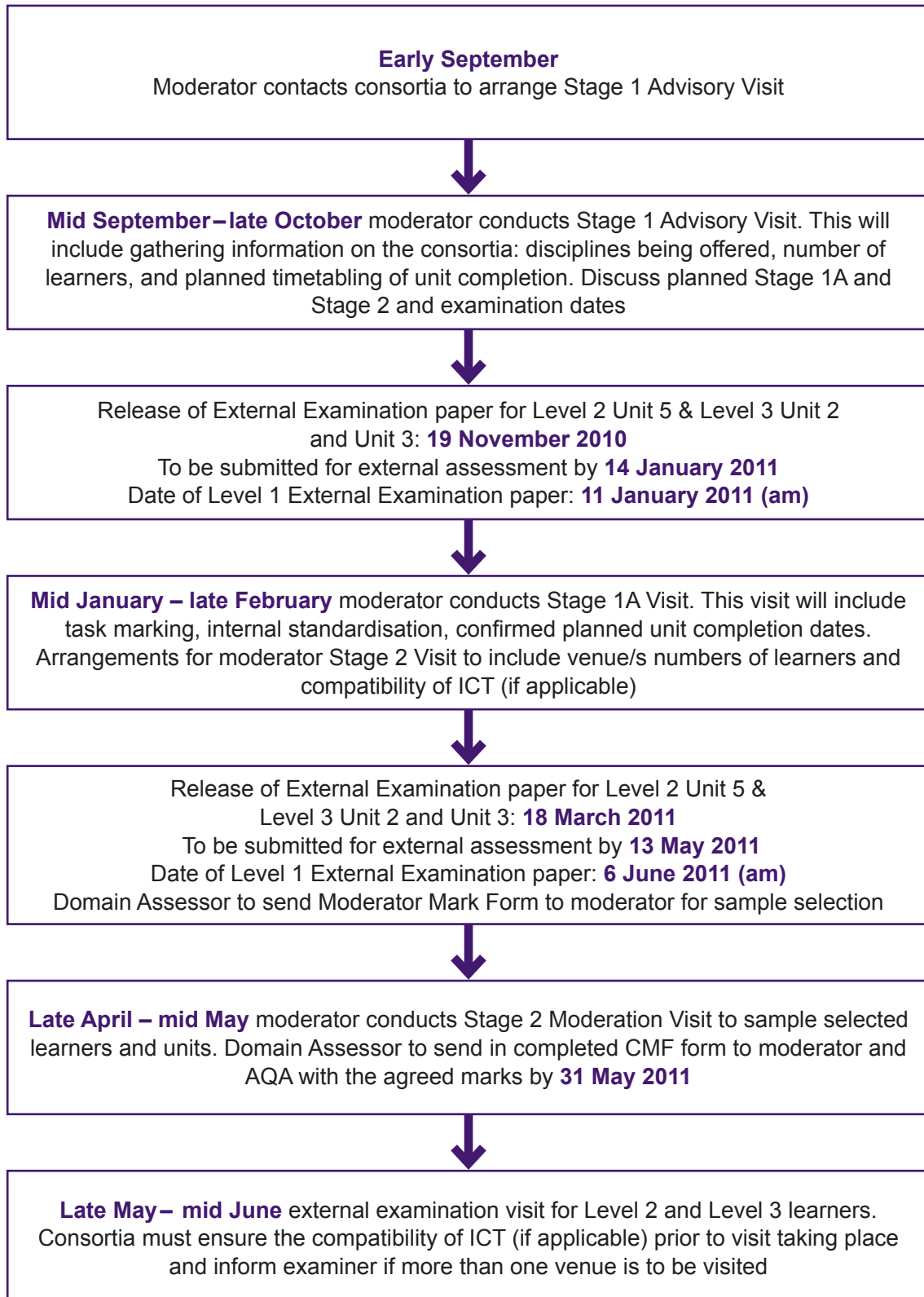




## Contents



## Creative and Media Diploma Flowchart 2010/2011





## Components of Assessment

### Principal Learning

The Creative and Media Diploma Principal Learning specifications address a variety of transferable skills that are used throughout the Creative industries. It is no accident that within the learning outcomes and assessment criteria outlined in the specifications, continual reference is made to some of the most commonly used skills, whatever the area of creative practice being explored. In particular the '*plan, do, review*' model of creative practice requires the learner to develop a practical understanding of the value of research, analysis and review, and the presentation of ideas. In addition, as a rehearsal for making a 'pitch' in the 'real world', consideration of the customer/audience is pivotal.

It is with these important requirements in mind that some additional notes on the assessment of the processes of research, review and aspects of presentation are offered.

### Research

The quality of initial and subsequent research is crucial to developing the informed creative process. The importance of this research is recognised by the fact that this part of the process usually carries 25% of the mark allocation for units within the specification.

Primary research, direct learner contact with sources of information, the customer, artists, designers, performers, media companies etc, is highly valued and develops good practice.

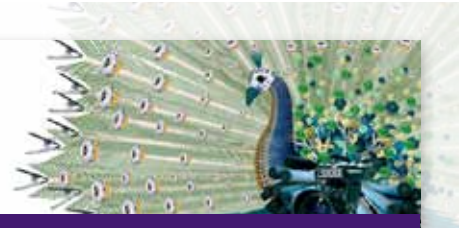
Total reliance on secondary research, on the other hand, is not highly valued. The use of internet sources for research is inevitable, easily accessible and of huge potential value, but should be treated with caution. Lack of any selectivity or critical judgement can all too readily occur from its ease of access, ease of use and apparently inexhaustible amounts of information.

It is also worth developing the, perhaps obvious, notion that research informs decision making. It is necessary to use research not just to produce it. In a desire to fulfil the assessment objectives in order to gain marks, learners can often treat processes 'mechanically', overlooking their intrinsic function and importance. Using the results of research in the process of developing ideas is seen as a necessary part of meeting the requirements of a brief and the client in addition to producing an outcome containing value and purpose.

### Reviewing work and collecting feedback

Reviewing progress has value at a variety of points throughout the creative process and should be seen as a continual process rather than one that only occurs at the end as a form of summative evaluation. Learners should develop strategies to build regular review into the working process and recognise it as a way of informing and improving both process and creative outcome. It also regularly contributes 25% of the marks allocated to individual units.

A constant dialogue between ideas and their author can be encouraged through the use of 'sketchbook' or 'diary' processes. These can be facilitated in a variety of ways to suit the needs of the learner, utilising both paper based and digital formats; visually and audio based.



It is important to consider where the information which informs the review comes from. Although valuable at times, peer assessment is not always appropriate or revealing. The need is often for objective, informed but constructive feedback and criticism. In this sense the selection of independent but informed observers may be more pertinent and, importantly, more in tune with critical practice in the real world. (See [page 8](#) 'Working successfully with employers')

Feedback is never an end in itself. Feedback and client evaluation should be part of the process of refinement. In other words, it should lead to a statement or action which demonstrates how the feedback has been used in the progression and development of the final idea. It is worth noting that the higher allocation of marks is always awarded for the use of feedback in progressing, amending and carrying out further development of ideas.

You might wish to refer to the section on 'Presentation' later in this document for suggestions about how learners may effectively present their ideas and findings.

## Collaboration

Team working within Creative industries is ever present and is vitally important. The Creative and Media Diploma Principal Learning qualification recognises this and overtly offers opportunities for learners to develop their knowledge, understanding and practice of the skills involved.

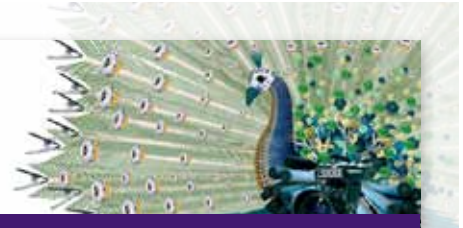
Assessment of group work clearly provides some challenges. Differentiation of an individual's contribution and performance in many situations is a matter of familiarity and fine judgement. The teacher, as a regular observer of a learner's performance over a period of time is in the best place to make these judgements. There is, however, a requirement that this judgement is moderated, and therefore a need to have access to the evidence that has informed it.

Within both internally assessed units and externally assessed units, teachers and consortium will need to develop strategies to support learners to enable this access of evidence to take place. In some circumstances, a simple way to facilitate this may be for the consortia staff to endorse a statement of contribution made by a learner. The diary/sketchbook/journal format also enables a log of contribution to be kept. It may even be that similar evidence occurs within separate submissions that are accompanied by a written, audio or annotated visual statement describing a learner's individual contribution. Teamwork forms part of the PLTS (see [page 13](#))

## Evidence requirements

The process of moderation or external assessment relies on finding evidence. The process is a positive one where the assessor is looking for evidence of what a learner knows, understands and can do, in order to give credit.

The process can be facilitated by the signposting of evidence. Learners can help by labelling and organising work as they produce it. The assessment criteria will provide a useful guide as to how evidence can be organised and learners should be encouraged to take on this responsibility as part of making their practice coherent and in order to avoid making the process of preparing for assessment an onerous task for teaching staff.



## Delivery

### Order of completion of Units

At all three levels of the Diploma Principal Learning there is a logical approach to the order of units in the specifications which lends itself to sequential delivery, in that the first units tend to be investigative and research based, and therefore develop the skills and understanding of the creative and media sector required to further knowledge and experience.

There are also clear connections between some of the units in terms of developing ideas and then producing them. For example in Levels 1 and 2, the investigation of ideas undertaken in Unit 2 forms the basis for a creative outcome in Unit 3. In Level 2, Unit 6 forms the preparatory work for the creative outcome presented in Unit 7, and in Level 3, the planning, research and preparation of a commission in Unit 5 is brought to fruition as a creative output in Unit 6.

Throughout all three levels units are structured in a very similar way, incorporating the four generic themes together with functional and personal, learning and thinking skills. The requirement to develop skills and understanding should develop throughout the course. This would be expected to be demonstrated in the outcomes of Unit 4 in Level 1, Unit 7 in Level 2 and Unit 6 in Level 3.

### Teaching and Learning Strategies

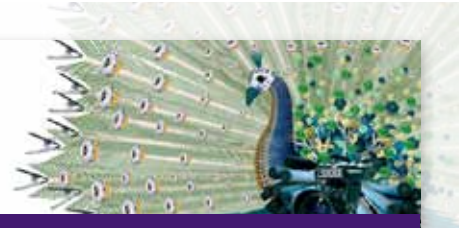
Delivering the Diploma requires a holistic approach to teaching and learning that puts learning within the real world of the Creative and Media industries. It is desirable to embed functional skills in a creative and media context as well as practising them in other, more generic, contexts. The development and delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills comfortably relate to creative and media working practices and are in fact embedded within the Principal Learning units.

The following strategies may be useful in underpinning the delivery of the Diploma:

- engaging in different forms of collaboration
- experiential learning, encouraging learners through the process of planning, doing and reviewing to develop an understanding of their own learning
- adding value through the use of current media and digital technology
- embedding English, Mathematics and ICT in a creative and media context to develop functional skills
- encouraging risk taking and self-reflection in order to take ownership of learning
- differentiation to challenge all learners to achieve beyond their expectations.

The following strategies may be useful in encouraging the development of independent learning:

- the learner could be encouraged to develop individual plans when researching individual artists/performers etc and their work
- they might also confirm short-term targets and plan how they will be met within the context of a long-term project such as a festival or creation of an artefact.



The following strategies may be useful in relation to the development of ideas and reflection:

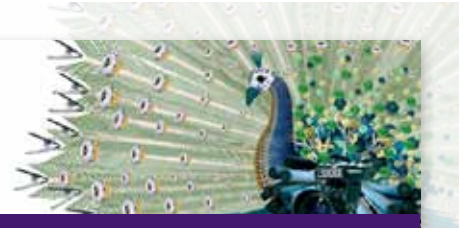
- use thought showers or mind maps when generating or identifying links between ideas
- consider a 'pros and cons' chart when discussing different methods of production
- reflect on personal performance through questions such as 'What went well..., even better if..?', 'If I don't know who does?'

Making and keeping a record of ideas, plans, reflections and creative outcome are key to both effective progress and provision of evidence which has value. Learners should be aware of a range of alternative ways of recording their participation, thoughts and experiences such as videos, CDs and DVDs, digital presentations, audio conversations and transcripts, photographs and drawings, as well as written diaries. More information and suggestions regarding this can be found in this document in the section on Presentation.

## Choosing disciplines

Consortia will choose from the list of disciplines included on the pages related to Sector Related Disciplines within the specification and combine disciplines according to the rules of combination for their chosen level. The choice of disciplines will be related to the range of facilities and expertise. Consortia will need to audit the provision available across the settings to ensure a range of opportunities for learners. It is in the spirit of the Creative and Media Diploma that the range should be broad and therefore provide the greatest scope for personalisation.

For information and suggestions about the combination of disciplines and a range of activities please look at the Diploma Schemes of Work available at the following link on the AQA website [diplomainfo.org.uk](http://diplomainfo.org.uk)



## Working successfully with employers

A crucial element of the Creative and Media Diploma is the central position of employer engagement. There are three strong reasons why it is vital to prioritise employer engagement and nurture strong, sustainable working relationships.

- 50 per cent of all principal learning must be applied.
- Each learner must carry out at least 10 days' work experience.
- Employer engagement offers learners an alternative learning environment where they can practise their skills in a real-life context that will prepare them for employment.

Employer engagement	Purpose and benefit
<b>Practitioner workshops</b>	Invaluable to the learners' experience. These could be one-off workshops or a practitioner-led project. Examples: working with a choreographer to develop a commissioned piece, or with a multimedia author to design an ad campaign.
<b>Continuing professional development in industry</b>	This could be one day or spread over a longer period. This is essential for practitioners to keep their industry experience up to date. Many arts organisations have a range of continuing professional development opportunities available.
<b>Design brief</b>	An excellent way to provide applied learning. Employers set a live brief/ commission for learners. It is most effective if they do this in person. Within agreed timescales, the learners present an interim pitch/solution to the employer, who gives feedback. The employer again gives feedback on completion.
<b>Virtual case studies</b>	These would create a tangible resource available across the consortium and could be a project for the Diploma. Each case study would include details of staffing, facilities, operations, marketing, funding, background and even a virtual tour of a venue or business. This would cover elements of themes one, three and four across a range of disciplines, depending on the chosen case study.
<b>Career case studies (DVD)</b>	A series of filmed interviews with a range of people working across the Creative and Media industry, discussing their education, training, career path, current job and essential skills. This could be created in conjunction with the venue/ business case study. Again this would be a tangible resource available across the consortium and perhaps a project in itself. Covers themes one and four, depending on the questions asked.
<b>Mentoring</b>	This could be useful for both teachers and learners and is valuable in skills acquisition.
<b>Visits</b>	Essential for the Diploma so that learners can experience the real working environment.



## Presentation

An expansive notion of 'presentation' should be considered. The emphasis is on the communication of ideas and information in creative ways. The vehicle for the process of communication is only limited by imagination. Examples might include video/DVD, blogs, podcasts, websites, short performances, exhibitions etc (or a combination of vehicles).

Presentations need not take the form of a PowerPoint performed live to an audience. Often presentations of this nature result in a nervous and wooden performance that fails to do justice to the creative outcome. No matter how slick the PowerPoint slides may be, if the learner delivering the content is uncertain and the delivery stilted then the presentation falls flat.

The table below identifies examples of presentational vehicles and potential methods of capturing feedback.

Presentational vehicles	Capturing Client & Audience Feedback
Blog	Post Comments
VLE (e.g. School or College)	Post Comments
Exhibition/Display	Comments Book Questionnaire/Feedback Form
Time-based media (Video, Film etc.)	Questionnaire/Feedback Form
Performance	Recorded Q & A from a live audience Feedback Form
Podcast	Message Board
Social networks (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace)	Post Comments/Message
Mobile Phone	SMS
Web-based presentation	Email or Message Board
Website or webcast	Email or Message Board
PowerPoint with audio commentary	Recorded Q & A from a live audience Questionnaire/Feedback Form
PowerPoint without audio commentary, delivered 'face to face'	Recorded Q & A from a live audience Questionnaire/Feedback Form

Whichever option (or combination of options) candidates choose as the vehicle to present their creative outcome, they will need to identify themselves, giving their name and candidate number. This will ensure that the external moderator or examiner can clearly differentiate individual candidates.

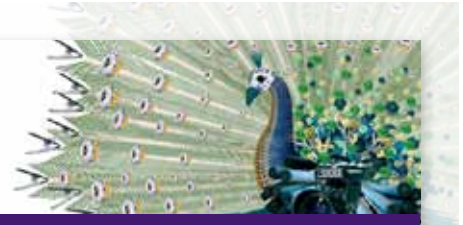


All presentations, however effected, need to be 'recorded' and made available on the day of the Stage 2 Moderation visit and the External Examiner visit. The 'presentation' is intended to showcase the creative outcome, **not** describe the creative journey.

The method of client and audience feedback is as 'expansive' as the potential presentational vehicles. The aim is to receive feedback that will provide opportunities for review, self-reflection and, where necessary, modification of the creative outcome. The main thing to realise is that the client and audience do not have to be physically present in a room in order to offer meaningful feedback. Anthony Gormley did not sit next to the Angel of the North every day in order to receive and respond to feedback!

The creative journey can be documented via a variety of means: it is not mandatory that the process be relayed via continuous prose. A far more engaging way of informing the audience of the creative process may be a blog, sketchbook or journal, where the vibrancy of the process can be best captured in a visually attractive fashion.

An example from the 2009 examination series was where candidates worked on producing a creative outcome based around a commission from a local heritage centre. The creative outcome was a site-specific performance 'presented' to a live audience. Post-performance, there was an opportunity for audience feedback via Q&A and a feedback form was available for completion and collection. This client and audience feedback informed the candidates' review and evaluation and modifications were made to the performance in light of this. The creative process or 'journey' was documented via individual candidate blogs, which were made available for external moderation.



## Personal Learning and Thinking Skills

### Guidance for teachers

#### Introduction

The incorporation of the six areas of Personal Learning and Thinking Skills into the 14-19 Diploma framework underpins one of the principal tenets of the qualification, in that it is a qualification designed to help learners develop the broader transferable skills that are needed to be both successful in employment and to be able to play a full and active role in society. Employers have contributed to the debate about the nature of these skills in the context of the broader national agenda of raising the school leaving age amongst concerns about how we are equipping our young people with the knowledge and skills needed in an increasingly competitive global market place.

Central to the delivery of the Diploma is experiential learning, or learning through doing. This encourages us to focus our learners on the learning process which, in turn, has implications of the style of pedagogy adopted in the classroom. Learners most likely to achieve success in this context are able to plan, ask questions, make decisions, work with others, all types of behaviours and qualities identified in the PLTS. However, reassuringly, this emphasis on developing independent, active and co-operative learners is not new to teachers already familiar with Assessment for Learning and Personalising Learning agendas.

#### Aim of this guidance

This guidance is intended for teachers who are involved in working with the Principal Learning units of the AQA Diploma in Creative and Media. It sets out to answer the following questions:

- What is the Framework of Personal Learning and Thinking Skills?
- How do the PLTS fit in with Principal Learning?
- How can I teach PLTS?
- How can I make sure that all my learners engage in PLTS?
- How can I track learner progress with PLTS?
- Are PLTS formally assessed?

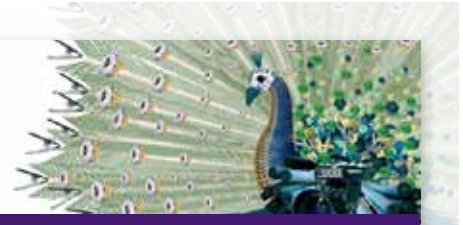
#### What is the Framework of Personal Learning and Thinking Skills?

The information below has been taken from QCA guidelines on recording PLTS and sets out the six areas of Personal Learning and Thinking Skills. Identified within each area are the personal qualities and skills which illustrate what that area looks like in practice. The challenge for the teacher is to generate opportunities for learners to engage in tasks which enable them to develop and practise each of them.

#### Independent enquirers

##### Focus:

Young people process and evaluate information in their investigations, planning what to do and how to go about it. They take informed and well-reasoned decisions, recognising that others have different beliefs and attitudes.

**Young people:**

- identify questions to answer and problems to resolve
- plan and carry out research, appreciating the consequences of decisions
- explore issues, events or problems from different perspectives
- analyse and evaluate information, judging its relevance and value
- consider the influence of circumstances, beliefs and feelings on decisions and events
- support conclusions, using reasoned arguments and evidence.

**Creative Thinkers**

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**Focus:**

Young people think creatively by generating and exploring ideas, making original connections. They try different ways to tackle a problem, working with others to find imaginative solutions and outcomes that are of value.

**Young people:**

- generate ideas and explore possibilities
- ask questions to extend their thinking
- connect their own and others' ideas and experiences in inventive ways
- question their own and others' assumptions
- try out alternatives or new solutions and follow ideas through
- adapt ideas as circumstances change.

**Reflective learners**

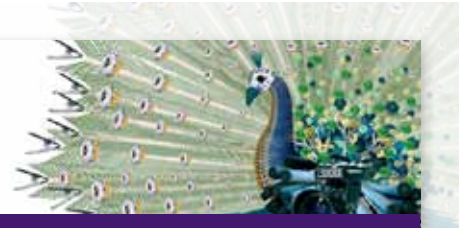
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**Focus:**

Young people evaluate their strengths and limitations, setting themselves realistic goals with criteria for success. They monitor their own performance and progress, inviting feedback from others and making changes to further their learning.

**Young people:**

- assess themselves and others, identifying opportunities and achievements
- set goals with success criteria for their development and work
- review progress, acting on the outcomes
- invite feedback and deal positively with praise, setbacks and criticism
- evaluate experiences and learning to inform future progress
- communicate their learning in relevant ways for different audiences.



## Team Workers

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### Focus:

Young people work confidently with others, adapting to different contexts and taking responsibility for their own part. They listen and take account of different views. They form collaborative relationships, resolving issues to reach agreed outcomes.

### Young people:

- collaborate with others to work towards common goals
- reach agreements, managing discussions to achieve results
- adapt behaviour to suit different roles and situations, including leadership roles
- show fairness and consideration towards others
- take responsibility, showing confidence in themselves and their contribution
- provide constructive support and feedback to others.

## Self-managers

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### Focus:

Young people organise themselves, showing personal responsibility, initiative, creativity and enterprise with a commitment to learning and self-improvement. They actively embrace change, responding positively to new priorities, coping with challenges and looking for opportunities.

### Young people:

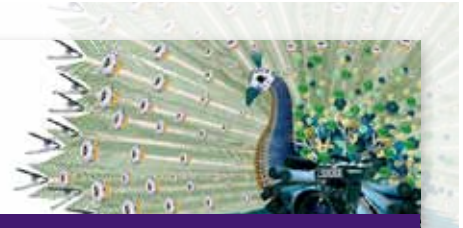
- seek out challenges or new responsibilities and show flexibility when priorities change.
- work towards goals, showing initiative, commitment and perseverance
- organise time and resources, prioritising actions
- anticipate, manage and take risks
- deal with competing pressures, including personal and work-related demands
- respond positively to change, seeking advice and support when needed
- manage their emotions, and build and maintain relationships.

## Effective Participators

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### Focus:

Young people actively engage with issues that affect them and those around them. They play a full part in the life of their school, college, workplace or wider community by taking responsible actions to bring improvements for others as well as themselves.



### Young People:

- discuss issues of concern, seeking resolution where needed
- present a persuasive case for action
- propose practical ways forward, breaking these down into manageable steps
- identify improvements that would benefit others as well as themselves
- try to influence others, negotiating and balancing diverse views to reach workable solutions
- act as an advocate for views and beliefs that may differ from their own.

## How do the PLTS fit in with Principal Learning?

The principal learning units of the Diploma in Creative and Media incorporate skills and knowledge around the following four themes:

- Creativity in context
- Thinking and working creatively
- Principles, processes and practice
- Creative business and enterprise

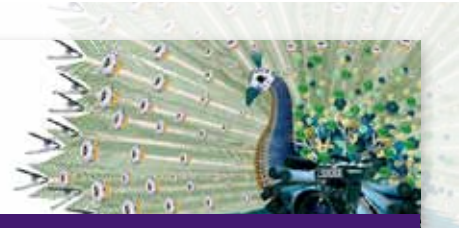
In each unit of the AQA-City & Guilds specification, learners are offered a **Plan-do-review** model of learning and are encouraged to explore these themes through their responses to given briefs which ask them to research, plan and produce artefacts or outcomes for particular contexts and audiences. The completion of this process provides a test of the complete range of personal learning and thinking skills. The learner who has the opportunity to practise and develop those skills is more likely to achieve higher levels of success. In recognition of this, the specification sets aside specific number of hours for this to be achieved.

## How can I teach PLTS?

Some teachers of the Diploma work with a curriculum model which timetables PLTS separately from Principal Learning. Lessons are based around schemes of work which incorporate problem solving and/or skills for life activities. Time here is also used to help prepare learners for work experience placements, additional support for the Project, and to provide opportunity for learners to engage in personal target setting and review activities. Other curriculum models entirely integrate PLTS in the delivery of Principal Learning. What is important here is that opportunities are identified to develop PLTS and that time is set aside so learners have sufficient opportunity to develop them. Consortia need to make their own decisions about what kind of delivery model suits them but it is important that collective decisions are made regarding how PLTS are going to be covered and recorded.

## What kinds of activities promote PLTS?

Examples of these are given in the AQA-City & Guilds specification which illustrate the QCA framework, but an immediate response to this is activities in which learners are not passive learners and one in which this is reflected in the classroom environment. It is worth considering at the outset of the course the nature of the relationship between teacher and learner and how simple things like the layout of the classroom furniture can facilitate and promote active learner engagement. Clearly too, learners need ongoing access to research facilities and need to be given guidance about how to conduct research and record research findings. For example, too often learners download from the internet, feeding pages of unedited pages into a research folder without selection or comment.



What has been missed here is the opportunity to develop independent enquiry which then impacts on a crucial Assessment Criterion. Similarly, learners need to be given challenges of organising and planning their own time in order for a task to be completed. There are different levels of challenge depending on the nature of the learner. Often both Level 1 and Level 2 Diploma learners for example, find great difficulty in planning to interview a visiting speaker or to prepare for an external visit. Alternatively, Level 3 learners can find it challenging to present an analytical and evaluative review of their work. So it is important to differentiate and tailor PLTS tasks and expectations according to individual learner needs. The follow examples have all been taken from a Level 3 Unit 1 assignment:

### Example 1

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Here the learner is beginning to explore initial ideas in response to a brief. Very effective use has been made of a spider diagram and it is clear that the learner has revisited the diagram to explore further ideas. In doing so, the learner is developing as an Independent Enquirer which in turn will impact on performance in the Level 3 Assessment Criteria 1: **Exploration, development and assessment of ideas in response to a brief.**

### Example 2

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The Diploma frequently generates opportunities for learners to work in pairs or groups. However, when doing so, it is crucial that each learner plans and records their individual work. Here the learner has devised a clear and systematic time plan and in doing so is setting out targets and time deadlines to reach. This is excellent practice, illustrating the PLTS of **Self Management**, a personal skill which is so important throughout all stages of a completion of a brief.

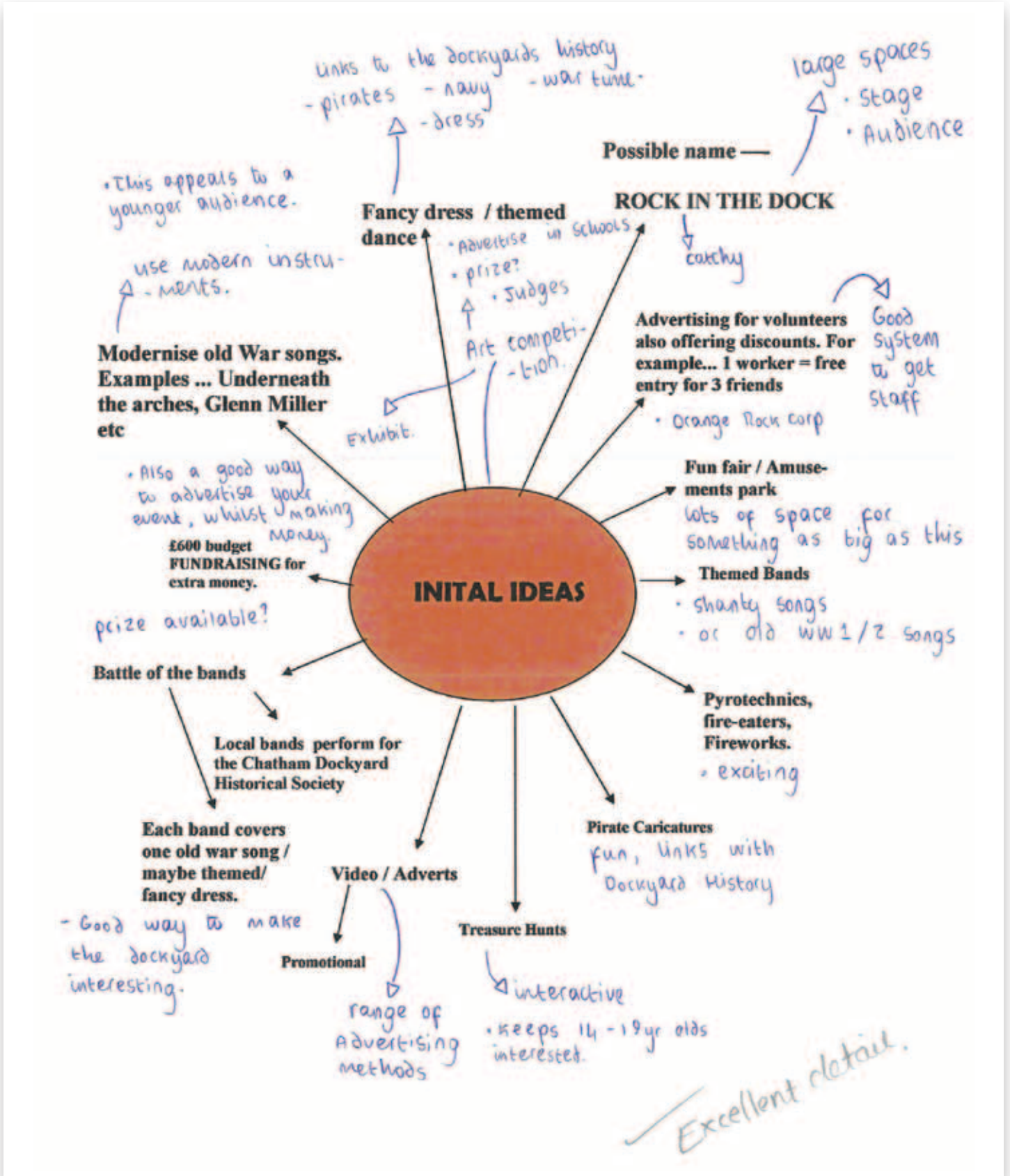
### Example 3

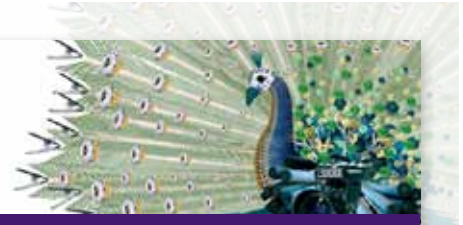
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Here is an example of a learner review and self-assessment of initial targets. It is excellent practice to encourage ongoing review and self-assessment and in doing so develop the PLTS of a **Reflective Learner**.



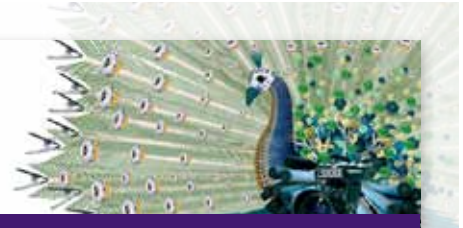
Example 1





## Example 2

Individual Time Plan			
Week Beginning	Task	Details	Deadline
November 10th	Time Plan	Go through completing the time plan with Sophie, I need to add my input on how we should divide our time up.	November 14th
November 17th	Draft Questionnaire	I need to say what questions I think are relevant to ask and why.	November 17th
	Print out Questionnaire	I need to print out a sufficient amount of questionnaires and distribute them.	November 18th
November 24th	Lead Meeting	I need to act as chairman for the meeting and make sure that all points are heard and understood by group members.	November 24th
	Evaluate Draft Adverts	I need to proof read each piece of text and give my own critical analysis of the visual adverts.	November 26th
December 1st	Lead Meeting	I need to act as chairman for the meeting and make sure that all points are heard and understood by group members	December 1st
	Review of budget	I need to brief our group in how the expenditure of our sponsorship money is being affected within our project; I need to talk about any issues I have had and gather any feedback from the group.	December 2nd
December 8th	Introduce Presentation	I will need to look at what we need to do to produce an effective presentation to the dockyard; and apply what I find to the primary steps of forming our presentation.	December 12th
December 15th	-	-	-
December 22nd	Christmas Break		
December 29th			
January 5th	Complete Presentation	I will need to start bringing everything in our presentation together so we can practice it to make it as effective as possible	January 9th
January 12th	Present Presentation	Finalise presentation and present it with group to the Historic Dockyard Chatham	January 14th



## Example 3

### Week 1 Evaluation form

#### ***What were your targets for this week?***

Our targets for this week were to visit the dockyard and start our initial research into what we had to do to meet our given brief. We had to take important notes on understanding what we were to do as a group to make an effective event. When walking around the dockyard, our targets were to write down in detail as many notes as possible to help us with our research.

#### ***In what ways did you meet your targets?***

I met my targets by taking thorough notes on what sort of spaces/facilities/resources we had to use in our group. We also had to identify in our group initial thoughts on the dockyard and what we could do which would appeal to our target audience.

#### ***How do you know that you met your targets?***

The notes we took helped us to think of any more initial ideas we had. After brainstorming our ideas in the group we had collected a good number of ideas which we could use to meet the brief.

#### ***What, if anything, hampered you meeting your targets?***

In our groups we were given the freedom to choose whatever we wanted to do at the dockyard. Doing so we must only use 2 mediums such as; dance, drama, music, art, media. As a group we found it hard to decide which of these mediums we could use in our group.

#### ***What would you do differently to ensure that your problems were resolved?***

I would try and sit down with our group and have a meeting about what each individual member of the group is interested in, so we could then focus our event's 2 mediums around things as a group we were all interested in. We could find out each other's personal preferences as to what mediums they would like to use, and then match them up with our group's member's choices.

#### ***What are your targets for the next week?***

Our targets for next week are to develop our ideas further and do research into any ideas we have to try and think if they are going to have any complications. We need to research our initial ideas thoroughly to see if we can actually pull them off.

#### ***What other problems have you encountered this week?***

At this early stage in our projects development, we couldn't answer any of the questions we had about applying our initial thoughts to the venue. We were hampered by this because we couldn't start to develop our idea until we actually knew if it was going to work.

#### ***What did you do OR what are you hoping to do to resolve these problems?***

We are hoping to undertake large amounts of research into seeing if any of our initial ideas can be applied to a venue or a space within the dockyard. Doing further research will resolve our problems because we will be able to answer all our questions which we couldn't answer before.

#### ***Say three other ways in which your week has been successful?***

1. We successfully introduced ourselves to what we had to do to meet the brief.
2. We started to get some ideas together as a group and move ourselves in the right direction.
3. We started to plan meeting dates for our groups so we can discuss agenda items in the future that might arise.



## How can I make sure that all my learners are engaging with PLTS?

Firstly, it is **crucial** that learners are themselves familiar with and become increasingly confident in talking about PLTS. They also need to be encouraged to monitor and track their own development. QCA guidelines argue that learners need time for “skills talk”, that they become able to use language to describe skills and are able to understand why they are important to the creative and media sector. A successful class activity that many teachers begin with is a Skills Audit through which learners are first presented with the named PLTS and are then asked to rate their strengths and weaknesses. They can then be asked to track and monitor their performance as they progress through the units. The AQA-City and Guilds Learner Diploma Handbook by Kevin Lole provides excellent exemplification of this. It is also recommended that learners at all levels are encouraged to reflect on their PLTS in logbooks/journals as they record their learning *journey*.

The example given below has been taken from a Level 2 Diploma unit. Notice how the learner has been asked to identify which PLTS she has engaged in and to evaluate strengths and weaknesses. It is clear that the learner has been given ownership of the PLTS framework and is able to engage in this **skills** talk. Of course, the next challenge here would be how the teacher could help that particular learner develop her strengths and improve areas of weakness.

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- dealing with competing pressures (SM5)
- respond positively to change, seeking advice and support when needed (SM6)

Evidence:

**I have shown (SM3) by recording my homework in my planner and setting aside time for each of my different subjects homework to be completed**

Effective participators:

- decide on practical ways forward, breaking tasks down into manageable steps (EP3)
- identify improvements that would benefit yourself and others (EP4)
- try to talk-through, negotiate and compromise differing viewing to reach workable solutions (EP5)

Evidence:

**EP4i have done this in my dance lesson by using showing how to improve for others in there dance and asking for advice.**

What PLTS do you think that you are best at?

**I think the PLTS i am best at are team work creative thinkers and self managers.**

Why?

**Teamwork because i love working with other people and i enjoy hearing other peoples ideas. Creative thinkers because i like asking and answering questions and adapting ideas**

Which PLTS do you think need further improvement?

**Reflective Learners**

Why? **Because I don't set goals.**



## How can I track learner progress with PLTS?

In terms of methodology, many teachers set up spreadsheets in which they record both coverage of PLTS and individual learner performance. However, what is more important is that teachers delivering the Diploma across a consortium are engaged in ongoing dialogue about activities they can develop to promote PLTS and to arrive at a shared understanding about how learner performance should be monitored. In terms of Quality Assurance procedures, QCA guidelines provide excellent suggestions and advice about how this might be achieved.

## Are PLTS formally assessed?

PLTS are not formally assessed in that they attract a summative grade or score which impacts on their Diploma grade. However, it is important that ongoing formative assessment of PLTS is completed and feedback given to learners giving advice about how skills can be improved. Once again, teachers sharing the delivery of the Diploma within consortia need to arrive at a common understanding about what they would expect to see as learners improve a skill within a given area. This is essential because the degree of competency in PLTS is directly related to Diploma Assessment Criteria and will therefore impact on performance. It is also important to remember that PLTS have a vital bearing on other areas of the Diploma and indeed the wider curriculum.

## Conclusion

To conclude, Diploma teachers need to design schemes of work and lesson plans which facilitate and create opportunities for Personal Learning and Thinking Skills which in turn will help to develop active and independent learners. These skills should not be regarded as *additions* to learning but should be placed at the heart of the Diploma curriculum and should form a central role in ongoing teacher/learner dialogue. Finally, consortia are encouraged to seek further advice from their AQA moderator in exploring further development of work in this area.

## Resources and references

AQA-City and Guilds Specifications for the Diploma in Creative and Media

Lole, Kevin (2009) Creative and Media Learner Handbook: Level 2 Diploma, AQA-City and Guilds

QCA guidelines on recording personal learning and thinking skills in the Diploma: January 2008