SESAME
PROGRAMME

Study Guide
(including Quick Start Guide)

Acknowledgements

SESAME

Welcome to SESAME

Welcome to SESAME!

This Study Guide provides a detailed and thorough introduction to the SESAME programme and to learning at a distance. It also introduces you to some real SESAME students who have offered to share their experiences of the SESAME programme. We hope you will enjoy reading their stories and that you will find them both informative and inspirational!

Although we recommend that you read through this guide before you actually start work on the study materials, we do appreciate that you are a busy owner/manager with a business to run. You may find it more convenient to read through the Quick Start Guide and then, when you have the time and space, work through the rest of the study guide at your leisure. If you are familiar with studying at a distance, the study guide may repeat much of what you already know. Please use the study guide as a resource – it is there to help you, but is not intended to take up valuable time if you are anxious to get on with your studies.

In this guide we aim to:
- answer all your questions about the SESAME programme
- provide detailed information about how to draw up a learning contract and keep a learning journal
- explain how the SESAME programme is assessed
- introduce you to the structure of the SESAME programme modules.

We hope that you find it helpful and useful.

Quick Start Guide

The purpose of this Quick Start Guide is to provide a speedy and concise introduction to the SESAME programme, and to answer some of your most important questions.

We strongly recommend that you take the time to read through this guide *before* you begin work on your first study unit. You may find it helpful to photocopy these pages and pin them over your desk, so that you can quickly refer to them whenever you need to.

Key questions and answers

What is the SESAME programme?

The SESAME programme has been created by Anglia Polytechnic University (APU) and the National Extension College (NEC), and is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

Do I have to pay anything ?

No, the programme is paid for by the European Social Fund. However, in order for us to be able to collect the funding from the ESF we need you to:

1 tell us how much your time is worth
2 work out how much of your time you spend on SESAME-related activities
3 send us, at regular intervals, an accurate time sheet

On pages 18 and 19 of the study guide you will find an example of how to calculate how much your time is worth.

Is there any formal recognition or qualification for me if I complete the programme?

Yes, if you wish you *can* work towards the Diploma of Credit in Small Business Management which is accredited by Anglia Polytechnic University (subject to validation).

If you decide that you want to achieve this Diploma, you will need to collect a total of 60 credits. As each SESAME module, when successfully completed, will give you 20 credits, you will need to work through three modules, and produce three project reports to an appropriate standard, in order to gain the required 60 credits.

On the other hand, you *can* decide to work through the programme purely for your own benefit, without seeking any formal recognition.

The difference between these two routes through the SESAME programme is shown in the diagram below.

1 Skim the study guide.

2 Calculate how much your time is worth.

3 Complete and submit a timesheet at regular intervals.

4 Draw up a learning contract.

5 Keep a learning journal on a weekly basis.

6 Complete the assignments and submit them to your tutor for assessment.

Route 1 – Without Credits

7 Prepare a project report when you have completed the module.

Route 2 – With Credits

7 Prepare a project report when you have completed the module.

On satisfactory completion of all these elements for one module, receive 20 credits towards the Diploma in Small Business Management accredited by Anglia Polytechnic University.

Recommended   Required

How much time will it take?

You are expected to:

- devote 120 to 150 hours to each SESAME module that you study.
- spend between 5 and 10 hours each week working on the programme – this includes reading the study materials and working through the activities, thinking, reading, talking to people, applying your learning, and so on.

Do I have to do it all on my own?

No, you don't have to do it alone! You will have a tutor whose role it is to help and support you throughout the programme by offering coaching and advice. Your tutor will contact you during the first week of the programme.

What should I do first?

Here is a Quick Start Checklist. Please photocopy this Checklist and pin it over your desk. This document will guide you, step by step, through the programme and help you to see at a glance which tasks you have completed, and what still needs to be done.

Quick Start Checklist

We suggest you tick each box as you initiate each task. This will help you to see at a glance where you are, what has been completed, and what comes next.

- ⬤ Choose whether you are going to work through the module purely for your own benefit (Route 1); or whether you are going to work towards the Diploma of Credit in Small Business Management
- ⬤ Go to pages 18 and 19 of the study guide and calculate how much your time is worth
- ⬤ Draw up your own learning contract. Pages 21 to 27 of the study guide will help you to do this
- ⬤ If you decide that you want to work towards the Diploma, you will need to keep a learning journal. Pages 28 of the study guide will show you how to do this
- ⬤ If you choose to complete the assignments, read through pages 28 to 30 of the study guide
- ⬤ Regardless of whether or not you intend to work towards the Diploma, we recommend that you submit a project report when you have completed the module. Details of how and when to do this can be found on pages 31 to 32 of the study guide
- ⬤ It is vital that you complete a time sheet every week. Your time sheet should be sent at regular intervals to:

The Administrator
European Social Fund Unit
First Floor, Ashby House
Bishop Hall Lane
Chelmsford CM1 1SQ

You should fill in a time sheet every week, but you only need to send one off every five weeks as indicated on your Study Planner.

Use the space below to make a note of your tutor's name and contact numbers so that you can refer to this information quickly and easily:

Tutor's name:	**Contact numbers:**

Open SESAME

We would like to begin by introducing you to some SESAME students. The people you will meet in the next few pages enrolled on the very first SESAME programme. Some of them have since gone on to study a second module.

We hope that their stories will encourage you to write your own story – the story of your journey through the SESAME programme.

Julie Uttridge

'I was employed to set up a new company providing services to pharmaceutical companies involved in clinical research. I had six months in which to carry out a feasibility study and then build a team to establish the company. I was in charge and on my own. Although I've managed people in the past, this was the first time I was the one steering the whole ship, and it was a real challenge.

Even though I was well qualified to do the job – I had 19 years nursing experience in the NHS, some as a hospital sister working on research projects, I decided to enrol on the **Workforce Development** module, as I felt that would be really helpful and useful to me.

Although it was sometimes difficult to fit in work on the programme between the demands of a growing business and commitments at home, I feel that I gained a great deal from it. In particular, the course helped me to develop and empower my staff, both as individuals and as a team.

By the time I'd finished the course, the demands of the company were pretty much all-consuming and so I decided not to complete the final project… but even now I find it useful to refer back to the study materials.

Christine Kalume

'I embarked on the SESAME **Workforce Development** module when I was appointed to a senior management job in an international charity. The charity had undergone a major restructuring it was my job to lead and develop the new Information Production and Management Team.

Even though I was well qualified to do the job - I'm a wife and mother of two children, have a Cambridge University degree in archaeology and anthropology plus an MA from Birkbeck College, London, in African Studies I didn't feel confident in taking on such a senior management role.

I found the course material very clearly written and well-balanced, as it is practical and theoretical at the same time. The learning journal, in which you record what you learn, and explore how to use what you've learned in your job, was very valuable. It helps you monitor and evaluate your experiences.

The SESAME course encouraged me to have an open approach with the team. As a result we were able to share ideas and communicate openly - ask questions and admit honestly what is not working as well as what is working.

When I faced the prospect of having to make someone redundant the SESAME course helped me … it gave me the skills I needed to undertake a review over a probationary period and then, when this was unsuccessful, employ disciplinary procedures. And when I had to recruit people into new posts, the SESAME project helped me to explore lots of ideas and learn to encourage team dynamics.

During the course I had weekly conversations with my tutor. He gave me practical advice, and I used him as a sounding board to check if I was going in the right direction. He was very good at helping me to tailor the course to achieve what I wanted.

All in all, the SESAME programme gave me support and the confidence I needed to help me to function really effectively in a managerial role.'

Roland Dalais

'My background is French African and I came to England from Mauritius 27 years ago to train as a mental health nurse. I would like to have done a university course and got a degree but when I came here but, at 18, I did not have the opportunity. After becoming a registered mental nurse I worked my way through the ranks to become a manager in the NHS. Now I'm the manager of a nursing home at Weston-super-Mare, one of two - the other is in Frome, Somerset - which are owned by my brother.'

'The first module I chose was **Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness**. Unfortunately care and business have to go hand in hand, and basically I'm running a small business. I felt I needed to know rather more about the business side of the job to broaden my outlook.'

'I found the study materials well laid out and sequenced. Jargon was cut to a minimum which makes it easier for people who have little time - I work eight days a week! The course used simple English language. I found little to complain about. I could organise my work flexibly which suits people like me, and it was helpful having a tutor on the end of a telephone line.'

'I browsed through the study materials first and then talked to my tutor. It was helpful that my tutor tended to go at my pace rather than dictating to me, and I really felt that she understand the pressures of my day-to-day work.'

'I found it very helpful to write things down in the Learning Journal, and using keywords makes it easier to go back over what you have learnt. By recording all your thoughts as you go through the module, you can develop a system of referencing back.'

'My project was about communication in the workplace. This is a very important issue for us as my brother runs the other home about 40 miles away. I did know the basics, but the course was a good chance to refresh and update: it offered me new ways of looking at things and new approaches that were very helpful.'

'I know that the course has helped in the business. I've made subtle changes to the way I talk to relatives and other health professionals. We now have more informal staff meetings and have introduced staff training in communication. It has helped to refresh things in a lot of ways.'

'My first module went well and I achieved 20 credits towards the diploma so I am following the same pattern in tackling the second module. It's my goal to achieve the 60 credits and get the Diploma.'

'My advice to someone else would be "Enrol now!" Anybody who gets the chance to do the SESAME programme would be silly to turn it down.'

Andy Coles

'I am an engineer who is now a senior operations manager for a Birmingham-based national company which services and maintains equipment for big commercial customers. It was our managing director who brought the course to my attention and asked if I would fancy studying **Financial Management**.

I'm responsible for the section which looks after catering firms and we do a lot of work for firms like Whitbread's, McDonalds and motorway service stations. Ultimately I'm responsible for the financial side of the catering section as well as the technical operation, and that's why I decided to do the course.

I think the programme was very good and very informative. There were times when, coming from a technical background, I struggled a bit to get my head round the finance. But I would speak to my tutor and she would put me on the right lines and tell me not to worry… which was very reassuring. I also worked with our company's finance director who had agreed to be my mentor in the office.

The Learning Journal was useful because it made you keep up-to-date with what you were learning. That was valuable for me because time, more than anything else, was a struggle.

My project was about putting in place procedures to save time and money for the company. As a direct result of the work I did on the project I've now introduced two new systems; one for reducing the amount of time our engineers spend travelling from one job to another, and one for tracking the credit notes we issue to our customers. The bottom line is that I'm really pleased I did the course.'

Father Paul Brook

Father Paul Brook looks after the Sacred Heart parish in Bradford on a budget of £16,000 per year. Although thoroughly trained to save souls, Father Brook did not have the skills he needed to structure a budget, work out costs, undertake investment appraisals for new equipment and prepare the church accounts for auditing. He was enthusiastic about the **Financial Management** module.

'You are running a church for God but, in effect it's a small business, and you have to try to make it work as a business – for example, the church accounts have to be audited.'

'When I was first appointed, one of the things I was asked to do was to establish an annual budget. Whilst I have training in various areas, mathematics has never been my forte. Thus, the course seemed to be heaven-sent.'

'The course introduced me to the idea of strategic planning. For example, I had never given any thought to whether it was better to buy a photocopier or go down the leasing route. Eventually, as a result of the course, I realised it would be better to buy a computer and a printer and not bother with a photocopier... all of this sort of thing was a bit of a revelation to me. The course made me think about things I hadn't considered before.'

'The tutor contact was helpful and, of course, being able to work when I want to, an hour here, and an hour there, was perfect for me.'

'The Mission statement I drew up for the parish is "To build on the life and faith we have and to become more fully a community based on the love of Christ with new life both spiritual and social." I'm using what I've learned about financial management to help the parish to fulfil that Mission statement.'

'I would certainly recommend the SESAME course to people and, in fact, I'm hoping to do a second SESAME module, next time on information technology.'

Now that you have read the stories of Julie, Andy, Christine, Roland and Father Paul, begin to give some thought to your own story. The activity below will help you start to structure your thoughts.

ACTIVITY LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

What would *you* like to be saying to prospective students by the time you have finished the programme?

1 You may find it helpful to think first of all about what made you decide to enrol on the SESAME programme. Note down your thoughts here. If you have a particular problem or question which you are hoping to solve, write down some details here.

For example: 'Should I sell the company or keep it and expand?'

2 Next, consider what you hope to gain from the programme? Consider, for example, how you would know whether you have solved your problem or answered your question.

For example: A clearly developed business plan which maximises profit and minimises risk would help to resolve this dilemma.

3 Finally, what would you be doing differently in say, six months – one year's time, to indicate to yourself and others that the programme has been successful?

For example: Implementation of the business plan with indications that the business is increasing profitability.

4 Now write your own 'quotation' summarising what you hope to gain from the programme.

The rest of this Study Guide will, as its title suggests, guide you through the SESAME programme. It provides some essential information and some information which is merely useful. It also contains some activities, which we encourage you to complete.

Please do take the time now to read through this guide. Studying while working is a challenge at the best of times, and this guide contains some useful ideas for making the best use of your time and for making the most of the SESAME programme.

Introduction to the SESAME programme

Now that you have enrolled on the programme and have received your study materials, you may be asking yourself a number of questions, such as:

- 'What is SESAME really about?'
- 'How can SESAME help me?'
- 'What makes it different from other distance learning programmes?'
- 'Do I really have time to fit something else into my schedule?'
- 'Where can I get help?'
- 'Free training? Seems too good to be true. What's the catch?'
- 'What assessments will I have to do… and by when ?'
- 'Once I've finished, what then?'

Let us look at these questions in turn.

'What is SESAME really about?'

The SESAME programme was originally the result of a collaboration between Anglia Polytechnic University (APU) and the National Extension College (NEC). SESAME is supported financially by the European Social Fund (ESF) to help individuals develop the skills required in an increasingly global marketplace.

SESAME aims to:

- develop the business and entrepreneurial skills of owner-managers and SME employees across the manufacturing, commercial and service sectors
- recognise the difficulties which smaller businesses may have in releasing staff for training and tries to overcome them
- improve the provision of management training, making it more accessible, affordable and relevant to small firms.

SESAME has been developed by a large team of people, which includes administrators, academics, educational developers, writers, editors, designers and project managers. Many of these people run or work in small business themselves, and so are well aware of the issues facing small businesses every day.

'How can SESAME help me?'

SESAME has been developed to help you make the most of your business and get what YOU want out of the programme.

SESAME aims to:
- offer relevant and rewarding business training and education
- encourage participants to gain knowledge, skills, abilities and confidence
- provide opportunities for active learning
- offer appropriate tutor support
- provide opportunities to relate learning directly to the workplace in order increase personal and organisational potential
- acknowledge and value participants' achievements
- develop SESAME as an efficient and cost-effective partnership
- encourage participants to form a network of like-minded business people (sometimes referred to as a *community of practitioners*) and remain involved with the programme as it grows.

'What makes it different from other distance learning programmes?'

Most distance learning programmes consist of specially prepared materials supported by a tutor so that you can learn away from the conventional environment of classrooms, training rooms or lecture theatres. There are usually assignments to be completed and sent to a tutor for marking. In these respects, SESAME is little different from many other distance learning programmes.

MODULE | Study Guide | Study Planner | Learning journal | Project report
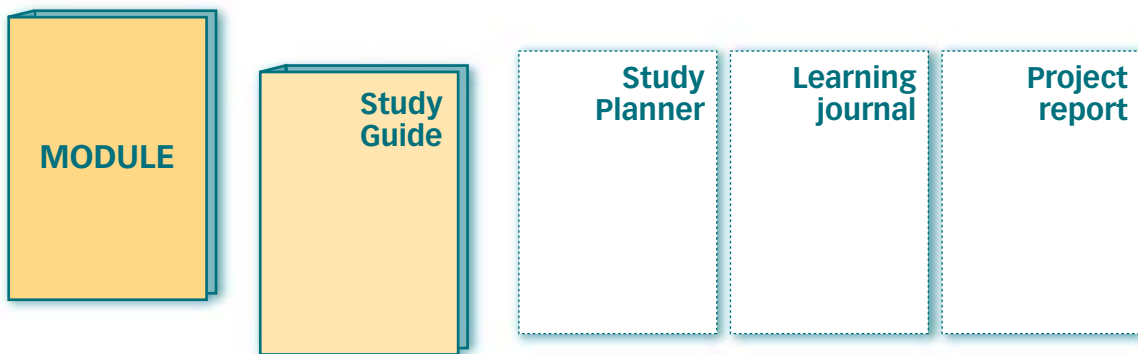
The materials (shown above) are highly structured so that you can easily find your way around them. In addition, each unit includes a number of features which are specific to *distance* learning materials. These are designed to help you make the most of your studies and include:
- contents – to help you find your way through the materials
- section introductions – to give you an overview of the main themes of the section
- individual topics covered at a glance on two pages
- discussion of concepts and key points
- activities – to help you to check your understanding of the text and apply what you have learnt in your workplace
- checkpoints – to help you assess how your business is doing in a particular area.

That is where the similarity ends, however. SESAME is also an *open* learning programme. Open learning is said to be *learner-centred*, which means that it focuses on *your* needs rather than the needs of the institution or the demands of a particular qualification.

In an open learning programme you are encouraged to:
- ask your own questions
- set your own goals
- plan your own time
- decide what you want to learn, and how you want to learn it.
- assess your own progress.

If you decide that you want to gain formal academic recognition for the work you do – the *Diploma of Credit in Small Business Management* is accredited by Anglia Polytechnic University (subject to validation) – your work will also be assessed by others.

The SESAME programme has been carefully constructed to encourage you to learn actively and to apply your learning to your work. This emphasis on relating learning to work is sometimes known as *work-based learning*.

The assessment strategy has been specially devised to ensure that it is as flexible and as relevant to your work as it can possibly be. We have also tried to build assessment into your work on the programme so it does not come as a nasty shock just when you think you have finished your work on the module.

A note about activities

The activities and checkpoints are there to help you learn. Please don't be tempted to skip them – they will help you digest and absorb the new ideas which are presented in the sections. If you have trouble with the activities, make some notes (ideally, in your learning journal, which we shall come to later) and speak to your tutor so that you can resolve any difficulties as soon as possible.

'Do I really have time to fit something else into my schedule?'

Most of your learning on the SESAME programme will take place at work, during normal working hours.

You are expected to devote between 120 and 150 hours to studying the module. Exactly how you allocate your time will depend on your work and domestic commitments as well as on your individual preferences. However, your employer expects you to spend about ten hours per week working on the SESAME programme. Bear in mind that, by studying, we don't mean only the work you do while going through the modules. Thinking, reading, researching, reflecting, writing, applying what you have learned at work, even talking to people at work, may all count as part of your study time.

Distance learning can be a very rewarding way of studying because you have the freedom to study when and where you choose. However, along with the privileges of studying by open or distance learning, come some responsibilities as well. You will have to be disciplined if you want to be successful. Although you are expected to spend work time studying the SESAME programme, you will probably still have all your other duties to perform. It is, therefore, a good idea to take stock of your resources and the time available to you right at the start of the programme.

One good way to do this is to carry out an audit of how you currently spend your time. There are only 24 hours in a day, and working, sleeping, eating, travelling and so on take up a great deal of that time. Most people only have five or six hours left in which to look after the children, take care of the house, socialise and relax … so finding time to study can be difficult, but not impossible.

ACTIVITY HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME?

Note down how you have spent the last seven days. If you can't remember, then start to keep a log now, for the next seven days. Write down all the essential things you do and then begin to identify the things which are not essential, like reading newspapers and watching television. You may find it useful to photocopy the chart below and complete one chart every day, for the next seven days.

6am – 7am

7am – 8am

8am – 9am

9am – 10am

10am – 11am

11am – 12 noon

12noon – 1pm

1pm – 2pm

2pm – 3pm

3pm – 4pm

4pm – 5pm

5pm – 6pm

6pm – 7pm

7pm – 8pm

8pm – 9pm

9pm – 10pm

10pm – 11pm

11pm – 12 midnight

Here is a typical summary of one day's activities.

Nine hours sleeping

Half hour bathing/showering, etc.

One hour doing household and garden chores

Two and a half hours cooking, eating and clearing up.

Eight hours working

One hour doing some sort of exercise

One hour socialising: seeing friends, talking to children, speaking on the phone to friends or family

One hour unaccounted for

That leftover hour could be used for studying….

Now that you have identified how you spend your time, you may need to do a bit of reorganising to make time for your studies. Bear in mind when you are at your best – some people are at their most alert and receptive first thing in the morning while others get a second wind late at night. Some people like to work in short bursts while others prefer a longer stretch of several hours at a time.

ACTIVITY MANAGING YOUR TIME

Think about when (and where) you are most likely to be able to work on the SESAME programme. Is lunchtime a possibility or are you more likely to study early in the mornings, before work, or late at night? Perhaps you travel to work by train and bus and could use this time to work on the programme.

When I am most likely to be able to study

When I am at my best….

You may find that the times when you are most likely to be able to study and the times when you are at your best do not, in fact, match up. In that case, as with most things in life, you will have to make compromises. While you may not be able to use your most productive time for studying every day, try to make sure that you have one or two study sessions each week when you can make really good use of the time.

Here are some possibilities:

'I used to get up early and spend an hour studying before anyone else in the house was awake. Then, as a way of revising, I would try to grab 15 minutes sometime during the day at work to write some notes on what I remembered from the morning's session'

'My manager agreed to give me one afternoon per week to study. We organised my work so that it wouldn't be a problem for anyone else and it worked really well. The benefit to me was that I got a chunk of study time to myself, and the benefit to the company was that as I was learning, I was able to contribute my new knowledge to the business.'

'Where can I get help?'

Just because you are studying at a distance does not mean you have to do it all without help.

There are several different types of resources which will help you make the most of your work on SESAME:
- personal support
- professional support
- practical support
- your tutor.

Personal support

Since distance learning requires a considerable time commitment, you should, ideally, have the support of your family and friends if you are intending to study at home. It would be nice to think that this support would be of a practical nature – perhaps helping out with the cooking or cleaning.

Although Alison's family thought it was a good idea for her to embark on the SESAME programme, they didn't immediately leap to help out with the housework. Although, at the beginning, they joked about dinner not being on the table or their clothes not being ironed, it was clear that they were not pleased.

Alison had to be very strong to point out that if shirts needed ironing and food needed cooking, it was their responsibility as much as hers. She explained, very clearly, that with the combination of working and studying, she was working more hours than any of them. They were a bit surprised to begin with, but gradually all the family began to do more to help around the house.

Not all families will respond in this way, but they need, at the very least, to be aware of your involvement in the programme.

People can offer support in many different ways. A friend who does similar work may be a good sounding board for your thoughts about the programme. Sisters, brothers, parents or partners may provide support in terms of making sure there is something for you to eat, or helping with domestic chores, or even dragging you out to movies or football matches to make sure you get *some* rest and relaxation.

Professional support

It is crucial that you have the support of your manager and immediate colleagues in order to make the most of your studies. Tell as many people as possible that you are studying on the SESAME programme.

Ideally your colleagues will work with you to provide peer support and perhaps even some peer assessment. It is helpful to gain the views of your colleagues as to how your behaviour at work is changing during the course of your studies. You are also encouraged to involve your colleagues in some of the activities and to draw on their thoughts and reflections.

ACTIVITY FINDING SUPPORT

List below the names of people who you feel might be able to give you support. Opposite each name, briefly note the kind of support they might provide. Try to include a mixture of personal and professional support. Some typical examples are listed for you.

Name	Type of support
Sue, my manager	arranges weekly lunchtime pizza to encourage team building
Paul, my old college tutor	helps me think through problems at work
Jack, my partner	will make sure there's something to eat when I get home
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

Professional support comes in many forms. There are bound to be people from your past or present who can help you, by talking over ideas, reading your work, helping solve day-to-day problems at work. If you want to, you can formalise this support, by arranging to work with a mentor on a regular basis. On the other hand, if you can't or do not wish to have a mentor, then that is absolutely fine. Whatever you decide, it is important, when studying by distance learning, not to become isolated. There are many ways of keeping in touch with other people and sharing some of what you are learning.

> *'I worked with our company's finance director who was my mentor in the office.'*
> **Andy Coles**

Bear in mind that not everyone will react positively to your studies. Your academic endeavours may change people's perceptions of you and alter the dynamics of your working group. While there may not be much you can do about this, it is something to be aware of.

Shantum initially had problems with colleagues at work when they found out he was studying. None of them had ever studied unless forced to do so. When Shantum took his study materials to work to read in the lunch break, one of the group picked up his notes… 'Management styles?! What are they? What a load of jargon!'

However, by the time the lunch break was over, the whole group knew a little more about management styles and Shantum had had valuable practice at presenting ideas to and debating ideas with a sceptical audience. An even greater 'plus' was that one member of the group had become genuinely interested and proved an ongoing source of support. When Shantum needed time off to work on his project report, this colleague offered to stand in so that Shantum could be released for a few days.

Adapted from Davis, M. (1993) *A Students Guide to Open Learning*. **London: Macmillan Magazines**

Working with your tutor

Your tutor will be one of your most valuable resources throughout the programme. He or she will follow your progress closely through the module. Your tutor will contact you during the first week of the programme. Thereafter, he or she will expect to have frequent telephone contact to help, coach and advise you. He or she will read and comment on your written work and try to help resolve any difficulties which may arise.

> *'We identified an individual study plan and approach, using appropriate sections of the materials to work on.'*
> **Dr Angela Carter**

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor as soon as problems arise or there are issues to discuss – he or she is there to help you make the most of your studies and will be pleased to hear from you. However, it is probably more helpful for both of you if you can establish mutually convenient times for phone calls.

> *'My tutor encouraged me to take time, stand back … and reflect …'*

The first contact with your tutor should begin to establish a learning plan.

ACTIVITY TUTOR CONTACT
1 Give some thought to communication between you and your tutor.
2 Do you want your tutor to contact you regularly, say once a week?
3 Or would you prefer to phone your tutor when you have something to talk about?
4 Would you prefer to communicate with your tutor by 'phone, or by e-mail ?
5 Is it all right for your tutor to phone you at work, or is it better at home?
6 Are you prepared to give your tutor the number of your mobile 'phone ?
7 What is the latest time you are prepared to accept 'phone calls from your tutor … 19.00h? 22.00?

Your answers to this type of question will help to establish a good way of working with your tutor – one which suits your way of learning, and your goals for the programme. Your tutor will contact you at the beginning of the programme, and the main thing is to be aware of what will work best for you, and then to negotiate so that you reach a mutually agreeable arrangement.

Practical resources

This study guide accompanies the book which contains the majority of the course materials. There are many references to other books, journals and websites in the course book. It is advisable to read as widely as you can around the subject in order to broaden your understanding. You may like to browse the local library or the Internet for additional resources.

'I was eager to pursue the follow-up reading – the hardest bit was actually getting a library card for South Bank University to get the books.'
Christine Kalume

Access to literature will depend on where you live. However, the Internet is a rich source of information which anyone can access, with the aid of a computer and a modem.

As an associate student of Anglia Polytechnic University, you may be able to gain access to other university libraries. Further details about this and other issues relating to Anglia Polytechnic University will be sent to you separately.

'Free training? Seems too good to be true. What's the catch?'

You might be forgiven for thinking that the SESAME programme is that rare thing: something for nothing. Although you don't have to pay anything to enrol on the programme, you do have to commit your time and energy.

You can contribute to the SESAME programme in at least two ways. The first, and initially the most important contribution, is to let us know how much time you spend on the programme by filling in and sending off your time sheet.

Your time is valuable to us. In order for us to draw down the funding to pay for this and future developments of SESAME, we need you to let us know:
a) how much your time is worth
b) how much time you spend each week on SESAME-related activities

Here is an example of how one SESAME participant worked out how much she was worth.

Sian works a standard 37.5 hour week as an accounts manager for a small computer consultancy. Her annual salary is £28,200. The company pays the equivalent of 5% of her salary into a pension scheme. Sian gets 20 days holiday each year and the company recognises ten bank holidays, so she actually only works for 46 weeks each year.

In addition to paying pension contributions, Sian's employer also has to pay Employers National Insurance contributions at 11.8% (as of July 2002).

Annual cost
The first calculation is the amount the company pays to get Sian to work for them each year:
Annual cost = annual salary (£28,200) + 5% pension contribution (£1410) + 11.8% NI contributions (£3327.60) = **£32,937.60**

Weekly cost
In order to work out how much a week of her time is worth to the SESAME programme, Sian has to divide this annual cost (£32,937.60) by the number of weeks she actually works in a year (46):
Weekly cost = £32,937.60 / 46 = £716.04
So, her weekly cost to her employer is **£716.04**.

Hourly cost
Now she has to figure out her hourly cost. Since her working week is 37.5 hours, Sian divides her weekly cost of £716.04 by 37.5:
Hourly cost = £716.04 / 37.5 = **£19.09**
£19.09 is, therefore, the hourly rate that Sian uses as the basis of her weekly calculations of the contribution her time makes to the SESAME programme.

Activity **HOW MUCH ARE YOU WORTH?**	
Work out how much you are worth per hour and make a note here for future reference.	
Annual salary	
Plus employer's pension contribution (if relevant)	+
Plus employer's NI contribution at 11.8%	+
Equals total annual cost	=
Divided by number of weeks worked in a year	/
Equals weekly cost	=
Divided by number of hours in a working week	/
Equals hourly cost	=

Every week, please make sure that you complete a time sheet showing how much time you have spent on the SESAME programme. At regular intervals (probably every five weeks) forward the time sheet to the SESAME Administrator at Anglia Polytechnic University.

'What assessments will I have to do… and by when ?'

As you saw in the Quick Start Guide:

- If you intend to work through a module *without* seeking any kind of formal recognition, the only assessed work that you may wish to do is the **project report,** which you will need to complete once you have finished the module.
- If you intend to work towards credit towards the Diploma in Small Business Management, the assessed work is:
  a) the learning journal
  b) the project report
- If you choose to do the **optional** written assignments, you should negotiate with your tutor when they must be completed. You may like to fill in the dates here.
  a) Assignment 1 – to be submitted to your tutor at the beginning of week _____
  b) Assignment 2 – to be submitted to your tutor at the beginning of week _____
  c) Assignment 3 – to be submitted to your tutor at the beginning of week _____

'Once I've finished, what then?'

There are many possibilities after you have completed your first SESAME module. If you have decided to gain formal academic credit for your work on the module, you may be intending to carry on studying, perhaps with a view to gaining a degree. You should discuss your goals with your tutor.

There are currently nine SESAME modules, and more are being developed all the time. If you have enjoyed your work on this module and found it valuable, you may like to consider enrolling on another SESAME module.

Alternatively, you may like to embark on a different course of study. Anglia Polytechnic University has a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses and there are many distance and open learning courses available from the National Extension College, the Open University and other providers.

Becoming part of a network of business people (*community of practitioners*)

> *'One of the reasons I go on courses is to benefit from the experience of all the other people on the course.'*

This quotation is from a woman who runs a small holiday establishment in Wales and is typical of many people who attend courses. While this is more difficult when you are studying by distance learning, it is not impossible.

Your participation in the SESAME programme makes you a part of the community of practitioners who are involved in work-based, distance learning. Many of these people will be interested in the same things you are interested in and, as small business owners or employees, are likely to have similar problems. Each student on the SESAME programme has his or her own network of people to whom they sell or buy goods or services, turn for help or advice; in other words, people who form part of a network.

You can exchange information and ideas by meeting up with people who live or work in the same area (or the same line of work), organising online discussions or simply exchanging email addresses and keeping in touch that way. This kind of network enables people to share ideas, perspectives and resources and offer support.

You may find it useful to be able to share experiences with people who have already completed a SESAME module, but equally, you may be able to benefit from the experiences of those who are currently studying. Newer students would undoubtedly gain from your experience, and you may find that you learn as much from 'teaching' as from 'learning':

> *'Learning and teaching should not stand on opposite banks and just watch the river flow by; instead, they should embark together on a journey down the water. Through an active, reciprocal exchange, teaching can strengthen learning how to learn.'*
> **Loris Malaguzzi, (1920-1994)**

We also welcome your thoughts as we develop new SESAME materials, so that we can continue to make both new and existing modules as helpful and relevant as possible.

If you would like to remain involved with the SESAME programme in any way, please contact:
The SESAME Administrator
The European Social Fund Unit
First Floor, Ashby House
Bishop Hall Lane
Chelmsford CM1 1SQ.

Drawing up a learning contract

You have already begun thinking about your own aims for the programme, and have given some thought to how you might manage your time. Now, we would like you take the next step and begin thinking about drawing up a learning contract. This is part of taking responsibility for your own learning which we touched on earlier. It is also an important part of increasing your self-awareness which will, in turn, make you a more effective learner.

You may find it useful to read through the rest of this study guide and then return to this page to think in more detail about your plans for the programme.

A learning contract is simply a way of clarifying expectations:
- what you expect to gain from the programme
- what you expect from your tutor
- what your tutor expects from you.

Your tutor will want to agree a plan with you within the first two weeks of the programme. Bear in mind the following:
- you do not need to complete the plan all at one time
- the plan can change as you work through the programme
- your initial plan will form part of the learning contract between you and your tutor
- the purpose of the plan is to help you organise your studies and apply the material in this study guide to your own professional needs
- the plan begins with where you are now, in terms of what you do and don't already know
- the plan helps you see what you need to learn and how you need to learn it
- the plan helps you decide how you can demonstrate what you have learned.

You may find it useful to use the Study Planner (included with the other forms you will receive) as the basis of your learning plan. We have deliberately left space so you can write in notes and dates of when you intend to do things.

Where are you now?

One of the first steps to self-awareness is to establish where you are now. Try to make some time to think about your strengths and weaknesses, as this will allow you to build on your strengths, and minimise your weaknesses.

ACTIVITY STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Make a list under the headings below of what you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses. If you are struggling to identify strengths, think about what you enjoy doing – most people are good at doing the things they like.

For example:

Strengths	Weaknesses
management skills	team working skills
practical skills	communication skills
knowledge, research	
self awareness, reflection	

Strengths	Weaknesses

You may remember, for example, Father Paul Brooks whose strengths lay in saving souls, but was less well-prepared to save (or manage) money for the parish. Similarly, Andy Coles' strengths lay in engineering rather than in financial management.

It is important to remember that often a weakness is only the other side of a strength. For example, someone who cites *impatience* as a weakness could very well turn that quality into a strength if it means that he or she gets things done quickly and efficiently. Someone who is rather disorganised may also demonstrate a more relaxed attitude to work and working relationships, which can be a boon in highly charged, pressurised and stressful situations.

Try also to be aware of old labels – you may have been cast as the 'unacademic' one in the family and steered in more practical directions. However, this does not mean that you can't learn – it may simply have been that the motivation was lacking or that the teaching and learning methods were inappropriate. In fact, SESAME students with four or fewer GCSEs did just as well as students who already had degrees and post-graduate qualifications.

The second part of identifying where you are now, for the purposes of SESAME, is to go on to read through the aims and contents list for the module you are studying. You can flick through the text to get a feel for the content and approach. Consider the areas in which you feel confident or proficient and those in which you feel weaker. It may be that you really feel you know nothing about the subject you have chosen to study and that is precisely why you chose to study it. Equally, there may be some areas in which you have some existing skills and knowledge.

ACTIVITY WHAT DO I KNOW?
Look at the list of contents at the beginning of the module you have chosen to study. How much do you know already? Jot down some brief notes, relating to the content headings and learning outcomes at the beginning of each section. You can do this in your learning journal or write directly on to the contents page. Then you will have a way of gauging how much you have learned as you work through the module.

By identifying those topics and areas where you already have some knowledge then you will be able to see, straight away:
- the topics and areas where you simply need to *brush up* your existing skills and knowledge
- the topics and areas where you will need to *focus* your time, energy and attention.

Here is a typical response from a new 'open learner'.

'When I started the course, I was genuinely surprised to discover that I actually knew far more than I realised. Of course, there was some new information, but mostly the course helped me to put my thoughts into some kind of order, reflect on what I already knew and, perhaps most important of all, apply my existing knowledge to new situations.'

What do you need to know?

This is where you should revisit your reasons for studying this module. Is there a burning question which needs an answer, a problem which needs to be solved, an issue which needs to be addressed?

With this in your mind, and after the last activity, you can devise your own personal learning outcomes. These should, of course, relate to the learning outcomes for the module, but it is an opportunity for you to identify your own priorities. You may, for example, want to find out more about difficulties arising in teams.

Talk things over with your tutor, who should be able to help you formulate some outcomes or objectives. These may, of course, be very similar to the learning outcomes for each section!

ACTIVITY WHAT DO I NEED TO LEARN?

Jot down here a list of your own aims or outcomes. Try to think of at least four. Begin each one with

'By the time I have finished this course I would like to be able to:
e.g. *establish our suitability for entry into the international marketplace*
e.g. *recognise the influences of our family history and culture on the business*

1

2

3

4

Make sure that each of your outcomes is *measurable* and *achievable*. Don't just say '*I want my business to be very profitable*' because you can't measure this, and you won't know *when* you have achieved it. Instead, set yourself specific targets so you can see whether or not you have achieved them. For example:

- *I want to increase my profits by 10% by Christmas*
- *Every month, from now until next June, I want to acquire one new major customer who spends more than £1000 per month with the business*
- *By the time I finish the SESAME programme I want to have in place a proper annual budget, and a complete book keeping system*

Each of these objectives is measurable because you can see at a glance whether or not they have actually been achieved – for example, *by Christmas you either have or have not increased your profits by 10%.*

How do you need to learn it?

Once you have decided what you need to know, you can think about how you need to go about learning it. Some people learn by reading books (although not many!), some people have to try things out for themselves. Some people enjoy sitting in lectures, while others prefer a more informal chat with colleagues. Some people doodle while they are listening because they feel it helps them concentrate – others make mind maps, while still others know they have to revise new material almost immediately and then again at regular intervals. Some of the learning will be through your work on the study materials, of course, but much of it will be through your experience at work.

ACTIVITY HOW DO YOU LEARN?

Do you know how you learn?

Write down here a list of three things you have learned in the last ten years, and opposite each one, write down how you learned it. We have listed two examples.

I learned how to drive	*by lessons and practising and failing my test three times*
I learned how to use a new computer program	*trial and error – and a book by the side of the computer to help when I was really stuck*
1	
2	
3	

People learn in different ways, but most people learn by doing. And when we devise activities for these SESAME modules we make sure that they give you a chance to actually apply, in a practical way, what you are reading in the text.

Some of the most common ways of learning are:
- reading through the material in the units
- completing the activities
- writing summaries of what you have read
- trying out new ideas and methods at work
- talking to people
- writing things down
- asking questions
- drawing diagrams or pictures
- looking up references and doing further reading.

Another good way of learning is by experience – *especially your mistakes*. Everyone makes them – the trick is to capitalise on them and turn them to your advantage. If you can analyse what went wrong and find a way of doing it better the next time, that will have been a valuable bit of learning (see the section on reflective practice later in this study guide).

How will you know when you've learned it?

You will remember that one important aspect of an open learning programme is that you are encouraged to assess yourself. Recognising what you have learned is a key aspect of this self-assessment. It means giving some thought up front as to how you will recognise the changes which indicate that learning has taken place.

As far as formal assessment is concerned, there are several ways in which you will demonstrate your learning throughout the programme. Your learning journal (see page 28) is one way, along with discussions with your tutor. The project report is another way. The project report is a formally assessed piece of work.

ACTIVITY HOW WILL I KNOW THAT I KNOW WHAT I KNOW?

How will you know (and how will others know) when you have learned it?

Look back at the list of things you learned in the last activity. List them again below and opposite each one, say how you knew when you had learned it.

e.g. learning to drive	*passed my test*
e.g. learning a new computer program	*put up a web page which people complimented*
1	
2	
3	
4	

You may be able to reassure yourself and your colleagues that you are learning by changes in work practices and behaviours. You may like to speak to colleagues to gain their opinion of the ways in which you (or your work) have changed as a result of studying this module. It may become obvious in increased productivity or enhanced staff morale. Keep notes of all your observations and those of others, if this is possible.

> *'My project was about putting in place procedures to save time and money for the company. It did help and there have been changes. Every firm gets some dissatisfied customers who query invoices and are awarded credits. Now we have a system for analysing how many credits go through and where the fault lies.'*
> **Andy Coles**

It may be that you will feel confident in your learning only when your tutor has given you a Distinction for your project report. As an adult learner in charge of your own learning, we would encourage you to regard this as only one of several possible indications of success.

> *'One of my students managed to identify very clearly the problem he wanted to solve in the first couple of weeks, when he was drawing up his learning plan. That was the most important thing for him. Although he did go on to complete the module, he had done the most important thing for him, which was to articulate a problem. Once that was done, he quickly found a way of solving it.'*
> **Steven Henderson, SESAME tutor**

This quotation from a tutor reminds us that, as in *The Hitchiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, where the answer is '42', the most difficult part can be identifying the question. In some cases, this may constitute a successful learning outcome and should be recognised as such.

What about the future?

Your learning shouldn't stop when you reach the end of this module. Please remind yourself to revisit this activity when you have completed your work.

This is the point at which you should go back to your original learning plan and evaluate your progress. There may be some areas in which you still feel you would like to learn more. Maybe new areas have come to your attention as a result of your studies on this module. As well as highlighting what you have learned through the module, your project report should help to identify some of the things you need to work on in the future.

ACTIVITY **WHERE NEXT?**

Begin by identifying any gaps between what you had hoped to achieve and what you have actually achieved. If you have systematically ticked off subjects you have covered to your satisfaction, you should be able to see any omissions.

Now make a note of any new issues that have come to light as you studied the module.

If you completed your project report, list anything that you need to find out more about as a result of recommendations you have made.

One possibility is to go on to study another SESAME module. Current modules are:

- Workforce development
- Marketing
- Financial Management
- Micro Learning Organisations
- Business Law
- Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness
- Globalise: International Issues for Small Businesses
- Family Matters: Family Issues in Small Businesses
- WISE: Working In Social Enterprise

New modules are being developed all the time.

There are many excellent courses in management training. Both Anglia Polytechnic University and the National Extension College are good sources of courses in this general area and you will doubtless be able to find others.

Your tutor should also be able to give you guidance as to where you might go to find answers to your new questions.

What do you expect from your tutor?

In this part of the learning contract, you need to list the ways in which you would like your tutor to help you. You have already given some thought to this aspect of the programme, and you should remember that studying at a distance has its own set of demands and necessitates a different kind of contact from that which you would have in a college or training course setting.

The following is an example checklist of some of the things you and your tutor might reasonably expect from one another:

I expect	My tutor expects
Courtesy and respect at all times	Courtesy and respect at all times
Weekly telephone contact	Weekly telephone contact
Open and honest communication	Open and honest communication
Willingness to listen	Willingness to listen
Recognition of my specific situation and circumstances	
Confidentiality	
Accurate record-keeping	
Helpful and constructive feedback	

The following checklist suggests some of the things which you might reasonably expect from a tutor. Some will be more important to you than others, and it will help your tutor to know which these are. It will also be good for you to know what you expect – if your expectations are clear, you are less likely to be disappointed.

You will need to decide on the frequency and method of contact which is best for you, as well as the approach which is most likely to suit you. Then talk to your own tutor to refine this list so that you both know what is expected.

Tick the box alongside each statement you intend to include in your checklist of what you expect from your tutor.

- Weekly telephone contact
- Monthly telephone contact
- Contact at work
- Contact at home
- Contact initiated by me
- Contact initiated by tutor
- Email contact
- Acknowledgement of my situation
- Willingness to listen to problems
- Relaxed, friendly attitude
- Businesslike, traditional attitude
- Willingness to listen
- Expert opinions
- Help with written assignments
- Guidance on project report
- Source of information and knowledge
- Experience in and/or knowledge of my business sector
- Academic expertise
- Someone to direct me
- Someone who will follow my lead
- Someone to motivate me
- Someone who is open to different ideas
- Someone who will push me when I'm flagging
- Someone who will just let me get on with things in my own way
- Courtesy and respect at all times

Your tutor is NOT expected to become your own personal small business advisor. They are there to help you make the most of the SESAME programme and not to advise you on your own business problems, except in so far as they relate to your project.

What does your tutor expect from you?

Here is a checklist of what your tutor will expect from you. Each individual tutor will also have particular expectations, which he or she will make clear to you.

- Courtesy and respect at all times
- Commitment to the programme
- Reasonable contact at mutually convenient times
- Assignments, if you intend to do them, handed in on time.

Keeping a learning journal

If you are planning to work towards gaining the Diploma in Small Business Management, you are **strongly recommended** to keep a learning journal. If you are working through a module purely for your own benefit, keeping a learning journal is **optional**, but it is a useful tool which can form the basis of discussions between you and your tutor.

Research by Dr Neil Conway and Dr Rob Briner (2001) at Birkbeck University has found that keeping a journal or diary at work can help you survive and thrive. Not only can they be used to keep track of your time, but they can also:

- keep track of both negative and positive feelings
- provide insights into how people relate to one another
- provide a release for things which are bothering you
- encourage reflection
- help you recognise changes in yourself and others
- identify patterns
- make you more efficient by helping with time management
- offer a 'reality check' amidst of the mysteries of organisational culture and politics.

Source: 'Why keeping a diary at work can help your career' by Tola Awogbamiye in *The Guardian* Saturday July 28, 2001

Your learning journal will give you the opportunity to keep notes on:

- what you are learning
- how you are learning it
- how new skills and knowledge may be interacting with your work
- your thoughts and ideas for the future
- questions and concerns.

In addition, you can use your learning journal as a:

- critical incident or reflective diary – recording significant learning and work experiences
- record of written work – published or unpublished, as well as letters, memos, reports, etc.
- private diary for examining personal issues (you do not need to submit this part of the journal unless you wish parts of it to be seen in the context of your learning)
- log for future learning/training needs.

You might use your learning journal like a scrap book, keeping letters, memos, meeting minutes, articles, etc. that stimulate your thoughts and ideas about the project report. Remember – the project report is a **requirement** if you are studying a SESAME module and submitting your work for assessment for credit.

Here are some other useful references if you are interested in keeping a journal.
Progoff, I (1982) *At a Journal Workshop* Dialogue House
Price, D (1999) *How to Make a Journal of Your Life* Ten Speed Press
Senn, L (2001) *The Many Faces of Journaling* Pen Central Press

Assessment

The SESAME programme is not intended to be a purely theoretical or academic programme. It is meant to help you at work. In keeping with the spirit of the programme, the assessment has been designed to reinforce a work-based approach to learning and encourage you to take new ideas and learning into the workplace.

Assessment is also an important part of your learning – something we actually do much of the time without realising it. As you become more aware of *how* you are learning, the need to evaluate your progress will assume greater importance and be less threatening. Sadly, assessment is all too often associated with exams and fear of failure. We would like you to think about assessment very differently in relation to the SESAME programme.

There are several aspects to assessment:
- being clear about the expectations – yours and other people's
- establishing the criteria
- meeting the criteria
- gaining feedback from others
- considering how to do better next time.

The Diploma of Credit in Small Business Management

One possible motivation for embarking on the SESAME programme is the possibility of gaining academic credit.

Each SESAME module forms part of the Diploma of Credit in Small Business Management, which was established especially for the SESAME programme and is accredited by Anglia Polytechnic University (subject to validation). Each module in the programme has a value of 20 credits. In order to gain the diploma, you would need to collect 60 credits, so you would have to complete three modules.

You may also be able to transfer the 20 credits you receive for your work on this module to other courses of study at other universities.

If you decide you want to gain academic credit for your work on this module, you will need to complete the project report and achieve a satisfactory pass mark.

Criteria for assessment (learning outcomes)

Your work on this module will be assessed at Level 1 (first year undergraduate) – this reflects the nature of the material you are studying rather than your ability.

At this level you should be able to:
- show a clear understanding of the assessment tasks
- demonstrate relevant skills and competencies
- express ideas coherently and in a structured manner
- show an awareness of the relationship between theory and practical skills
- begin to develop competence in analytic skills
- show an awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses.

Grading scheme

In line with university regulations, the standard APU grading scheme is used for SESAME:

70–100	First class
60–69	Upper second
50–59	Lower second
40–49	Third
0–39	Fail

25% of the marks are awarded on each of the following criteria:
- Your definition of the problem.
- The project methodology that you use.
- The quality of your assessments, evaluations and conclusions.
- The extent to which you demonstrate reflection, personal learning and creativity.

The written assignments

Do bear in mind that the written assignments are **optional**, regardless of whether or not you are working towards achieving credits for satisfactory completion of the module. There are a number of advantages to completing the assignments, should you choose to do them. The assignments will:

- provide an opportunity for contact with your tutor, who is there to give you helpful comments and feedback on your work
- provide an opportunity for you to find out what you know and to synthesise your ideas
- help you relate your learning from the module to what you actually do at work (and vice versa).
- help you show that you can meet the learning outcomes.

The headings below are the same as those used for the project report. Our intention is that your assignments, together with feedback from your tutor and any resulting improvements, should form the basis of your project report.

Bear in mind that, if you choose to complete the assignments, they will need to be handed in by the dates agreed with your tutor. Make a note of these dates below.

Assignment 1: **Learning plan and Identification of a problem or issue and justification of its choice.**
To be submitted to your tutor by:

By now you should have established a learning plan and work on the module.

Please submit the learning plan which you have agreed with your tutor. This forms the basis of your learning contract.

Decide on an issue or problem for investigation in your project report. The activities you did earlier in this study guide should have helped you identify the reasons why you wanted to study the module – these may be related to a particular problem or issue.

Feel free to use any of the reflective techniques described in the Appendix to help you complete this part of the learning journal. Remember that the main aim here is for you to begin to make sense of and learn from your experience.

Your work may be submitted in a format agreed with your tutor, subject to a word limit of 1500.

Assignment 2: **Identify and discuss the skills and knowledge needed to solve the problem.**
To be submitted to your tutor by:

Decide which of the tools and techniques you have studied may, or may not, be appropriate to your own situation. You may test things out, in small or larger ways – write about your experiences and theories here. Remember to continue questioning – what makes one technique seem to work better than another?

Your work may be submitted in a format agreed with your tutor, subject to a word limit of 1500.

Assignment 3: **Solutions and proposals (or recommendations).**
To be submitted to your tutor by:

How can you create (or enhance) your learning organisation?

This is the opportunity for you to test out your ideas on the basis of what you have learned: hypothesise, theorise, speculate, consider. Think about the techniques and approaches you have tried out – which might you wish to take forward to use again or to implement as part of your strategy?

Remember to write down references for anything you read which might contribute to solving your problem – your report must be properly referenced. (See Appendix II)

Your work may be submitted in a format agreed with your tutor, subject to a word limit of 1500.

The project report

To be submitted to your tutor by the last week of the programme

The project report is the only formally assessed piece of work in the programme, and **must be completed** if you are seeking to gain academic credit for your work on the programme.

Your project report can be:

- a standard 4,500 word, written report
- a one page written summary, together with a video recording, audio cassette, CD-Rom or other evidence you would like to present
- a detailed plan of a new system which you have implemented at work together with brief written comments describing the system
- samples of new documents you have introduced at work, together with written or taped comments on the documents made by members of staff now using the documents
- any combination of the above.

The main thing to remember when preparing your project report is that it should provide evidence that you are able to meet the learning outcomes for the module.

Your project report will:

- be a reflection on existing practice together with what you have learned, and the improvements that you have already made, or intend to make in the future
- contain a cogent argument as to why you have chosen one set of recommendations over another
- provide a means for you to pull together all the work you have done on the module and apply it to the workplace.

As you can see, your learning journal (*if you choose to keep one*) and your assignments (*should you choose to complete them*) will provide much of the information you need to prepare the project report.

The project report should be based around the:

- identification of a problem or issue and justification for its choice
- identification and discussion of the skills and knowledge needed to solve the problem
- solutions and proposals (or recommendations).

When preparing your report, be sure to include the following:

Introduction

This section introduces the topic you have chosen for analysis and briefly explains why you have selected this topic. It introduces the general *context* which, in this field of study, will be a description of the organisation and the department or section where the incident or problem took place and your role within it.

It also gives an overview of the report and, like a road map, describes the 'route' or structure which you will follow; the methodology you used (e.g. critical incident analysis) and how you went about gathering your information, i.e. personal observation, questionnaire, interviews, focus groups, etc.

Background information

Once you have introduced your topic and described the context, you need to indicate briefly what the background to the particular problem is. Say, for example, your problem situation is 'difficulties with people getting along in the team', your background here might include the fact that someone new has joined or perhaps two teams were welded together or a new initiative like 'best value' or restructuring has had an impact on the team. This section provides a specific context relating directly to the problem rather than simply a general description of the organisation.

The problem, situation or incident (experience)

Here you will give a full description of the problem or situation in very good detail. Describe how you saw it: where and when it occurred, who was involved or, if it is a general problem and not a specific incident, flesh out all the relevant details.

Observations (reflection)

If you are writing up a critical incident, you will describe here why the incident is important to you and your feelings about the incident. Also include other thoughts you might have had at the time and whether this has happened before.

Analysis (making sense of the situation)

Here you should identify the formal theory related to what you are describing. For example, if your incident or problem was 'the team not getting along or not being productive', theories of group dynamics would be of value. You would then relate the theory to your incident or issue and say *how* it relates or why it doesn't relate.

If there are no formal theories to draw on, we can use 'common sense' theories or 'theory in use'. These are simply little rules or models that we create from day to day (actually lessons we have learned from previous experience!) to help us understand the world better.

So, for my 'team' example, I may have noticed in the past that people are reluctant to share information if they feel threatened. I might then deduce that, if I can help reduce the threat (what ever that might be) and encourage openness in the team, I can improve relationships between team members.

This section explores the question 'what have I learned?' or 'what am I learning?'

Recommendations (planning for better action in the future)

This tells what action, if any, you will take in the future as a result of what you have learned.

Conclusion

This should return to the original question and perhaps draw the focus back out again to anywhere else we might apply the learning.

Bear in mind that your tutor will help you plan and structure the report so that, as well as meeting the criteria for assessment, it will be genuinely useful in the workplace.

Becoming a reflective practitioner

We begin this section with an activity, to give you some practice in reflection.

ACTIVITY WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What do you think of this study guide so far?

What would you do to make it better?

After the first group of students had completed the SESAME programme, students and tutors told us that the study guide was too long and too theoretical. We listened to all their comments and thought a lot about how we could improve the study guide. We had meetings and tried out different approaches. We reflected on what would make the study guide more interesting and easier to use while still containing the necessary information. The result was still not perfect – and was still long – but was, we hoped, better than the first study guide.

This is the third 'edition' of the study guide. It is still long and still theoretical, but it also contains opportunities for reflection and activity and has a different page design to complement the page design of the new modules. Indeed, the new design was itself the result of students telling us that the modules were heavy and unwieldy to carry around and looked, frankly, boring. We hope that the study guide – and the study materials – are continuing to improve.

The point we are making here is that people learn and improve through reflecting on their experiences. Some people regard the ability to reflect as the hallmark of a professional, as opposed to someone who simply does the job.

Academics and theorists have written a great deal about reflection and reflective practice. If you want to read some of the theories and models which have been developed, we have included some of the most well-known in an appendix at the end of this study guide.

In essence, the practice of reflection is not difficult, and it is quite likely that you are already doing it in your work and in your everyday life. The fact that you have enrolled on this programme indicates that you have given some thought to what you do well – or at least to what you don't do so well – and this is the basis of reflection.

ACTIVITY PRACTISING REFLECTION

Think of an incident which has occurred during the last few days. It doesn't really matter whether it was at home or at work – the main thing is to take some time to reflect on what happened.

Briefly describe the incident: what happened?

What did you do in response to the incident?

Was the outcome satisfactory?

If so, what did you do to contribute to the success?

If not, what would you do differently next time?

Here is a story which illustrates the reflective process we are trying to encourage.

Six-year-old Imogen was playing on a raft. In her eagerness to hop off the raft and on to the island in the middle of the small lake, she forgot to hold on to the rope which is used to tie up the raft. We watched as the raft floated away and out of her reach. She burst into tears as we watched her imagine herself marooned on the island. Various attempts to push the raft closer to her failed -–the distance from our shore to the island was just too far because, as it transpired, she had left the long oar on the shore in her rush to get on the raft before her older sister.

After several rescue attempts, we told her that she would just have to sit on the island until the raft floated either closer to us or to her. Realising that there was nothing much to be done but wait, and reflecting on her own carelessness, she sat quietly in the evening sunshine.

In due course the raft floated close enough to enable us to rescue her.

Later, when asked what she had learned from this incident, Imogen replied:

'I will not get in a strop with my sister. Next time I will remember to hold on to the rope.'

That's about all there is to it. Even small children do it. Most of us go through this process many times each day, both at work and at home, and it is one of the ways we learn best.

The key stages of the process are:
1 Identify the incident or problem (the experience).
2 Think about what happened: who was involved, what each person did, what the outcome was (the description and reflection).
3 Now consider what might have been done differently to produce a different outcome (your analysis of the situation – can also include your thoughts and feelings about the knock-on effects, what led to the situation arising in the first place and what is *really* going on?)

You can also use this process to help you keep track of what you are learning:
1 What have you learned?
2 How do you know you have learned it (i.e. what are you doing differently now to indicate that there has been a change in either your skills, your knowledge or your attitude?)
3 How is this affecting your work and what might be the implications for the future?

This process is the one we would like you to use throughout the programme. Your tutor will be looking for evidence of this approach as much as he or she is keen to know that you have understood a particular theory or learned a new skill.

Finally

Please refer often to this study guide – it is intended to serve as a guide through the programme. We hope you enjoy your studies now and in the future.

References

Boud, D., Keogh, R. and Walker, D. (1985) *Reflection: Turning experience into learning*. London: Kogan Page

Johns, C. (1994) 'Nuances of reflection' IN *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 3: 71-75

Kolb, D. (1983) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development.* Hemel Hempstead: Prentice-Hall.

Tripp, D. (1993) *Critical Incidents in Teaching*. London: Routledge

Appendix I
Theories and models of reflection

There are several models or techniques which have been developed to assist the reflective process. They all have a similar aim: to provide a way of thinking about and recording experience. Three of these models are set out below. They are not intended to constrain you but to help you begin to structure your thinking in the most effective way. All the models described here share crucial similarities. Feel free to mix and adapt them to your own situation – the important thing is that you take time to reflect upon your work and your learning and learn from your experience.

Kolb's experiential learning cycle

David Kolb (1983) identified the following stages in learning.

Experience – identify the problem, situation or incident

Reflection – your thoughts about the experience. Has it happened before? How was this time different? How did it make you feel? Why is this aspect of your work particularly important or particularly troublesome?

Making sense – your deeper analysis of the situation – what caused a problem or what made it work well? What are the knock-on effects? How did it arise in the first place? What is *really* going on here?

Plans for improvement – engaging in this process helps us learn from experience in a very effective way. This is where we set out the possibilities for change and better practice.
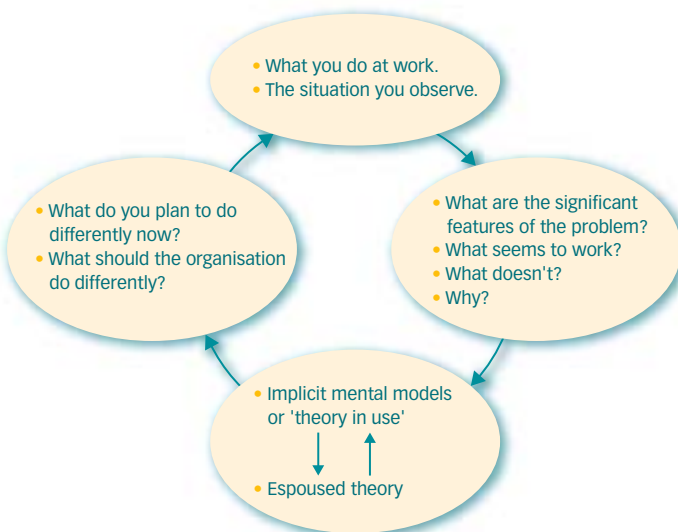
Critical incident analysis

Critical incident analysis is another well-known way of establishing a structure for your reflections. Critical incident analysis as a technique originated during World War II, when the US Air Force needed to select and train air crews quickly. Instructors were asked to answer four questions about their trainees in an attempt to discover why pilots failed the training programme. Here are the questions:

- When was the last time you saw a trainee pilot do something effective or ineffective?
- What led up to this situation?
- Exactly what did the trainee do?
- Why was it effective or ineffective?

The questions demanded factual answers – not intuitions or unfocused feelings about particular individuals.

Today, critical incident analysis is used by professionals in many fields, particularly as part of the reflective process. It can help identify the areas which professionals themselves recognise as critical.

Critical incident analysis should take into account questions like the following:

Where the event occurred, relevance and impact on situation.

When it happened: was this an important factor?

Who was involved?

What happened – a detailed description.

Why the incident was critical or significant to you?

What you were thinking about as it was taking place?

What was most satisfying or dissatisfying?

What you might have done differently?

Why you might have done this differently?

What action, it any you will take as a result of this learning?

Johns' model of structured reflection

Johns (1994) devised his model for nurses and other health care professionals. With slight adaptation, it is as suitable for any professional who wishes to learn from experience.

1 Description
   – Describe the incident or problem or issue.
   – What are the key issues within this description which you need to pay attention to?
2 Reflection
   – What was I trying to achieve?
   – Why did I act as I did?
   – What were the consequences of my actions?
   – How did I feel about this experience when it was happening?
   – How did others involved feel about it?
   – How do I know how they felt about it?
3 Influencing factors
   – What internal factors influenced my decision-making and actions?
   – What external factors influenced my decision-making and actions?
   – What sources of knowledge did or should have influenced my decision-making and actions?
4 Could I have dealt better with the situation?
   – What other choices did I have?
   – What would be the consequences of those other choices?
5 Learning
   – How can I make sense of this experience in the light of past experience and future practice?
   – How do I now feel about this experience?
   – Have I taken effective action to support myself and others as a result of this experience?

Johns, C. (1994) 'Nuances of reflection' IN *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 3: 71-75

Tripp's model of structured reflection

Finally, here is Tripp's model of structured reflection.

Questions used to examine a critical incident

Kind of judgement	Information required	Questions asked	People involved
Practical	Procedural	What should I do? How? When? Where	For and/or with whom?
Diagnostic	Descriptive Causal Effectual Affectual Semantic Explanatory	What happened? What made it happen? What does it do? What does it feel like? What does it mean? Why did (does) it occur?	Who was involved? Who acted? For whom? For whom? To whom? With whom?
Reflective	Personal Evaluative	Do I like it? Is it a good thing?	Do others like it? For whom?

Based on Tripp, D. (1993) *Critical Incidents in Teaching*. London: Routledge

Appendix II
Referencing

It is important to reference your sources accurately and correctly. This not only helps you and others to find the source of your ideas if you or they should want to find out more, but it also ensures that you will not be accused of plagiarism.

The most common form of referencing is known as the Harvard System.

It works like this.

When you refer to a source in the text, you should cite the author and year of publication, e.g.
Tripp (1993) outlines his model of structured reflection.

At the end of your work, you then give the complete information for the reference, thus:
Tripp, D. (1993) *Critical Incidents in Teaching*. London: Routledge

If you are referring to a chapter in a book or an article in a journal, magazine or newspaper, the reference is written like this:
Awogbamiye, T. (2001) 'Why keeping a diary at work can help your career' in *The Guardian* Saturday July 28, 2001
or this:
Johns, C. (1994) 'Nuances of reflection' IN *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 3: 71–75

Appendix III

Finding information on the Internet

Many people are frustrated in their attempts to search for information on the Internet because their searches are too broad. This brief guide aims to help you refine your searches so that you are more likely to find the information you really want.

Searching on the Web

Search engines
A search engine is a database that retrieves information based on what you enter. A Web search engine uses a search agent (called a spider) to look through its database – the way each spider gathers information is unique.

Web directories
A Web directory is a site that categorises Web pages, so that you can browse links to pages by topic. Several search sites combine directories with search engines.

Searching for information
Investigate the specific features of the site you are using and use the online help files.

Features include:
- search categories
- power search
- most popular sites
- current news stories
- child friendly search (parental control)
- options for rating results
- reference links
- ability to enter question rather than terms

Narrow your focus – be specific. For a search within a greater subject (eg gardening), try searching for a specialist engine.

If you find useful pages not immediately relevant to your search, bookmark them to return to later. If you 'edit' bookmarks, you can put them into folders.

When you check a link, use the back button on your browser to return to your search results. Remember some links may be out of date or broken. If a page seems to take forever to load, press the stop button on your browser and return to your search results.

Be aware that anyone can put up a website with relative ease – do not assume that all information you find is correct or up-to-date.

Use maths for a precise search, remembering that you can combine terms:

Method	Example	Result
+ sign to include words	+ Plymouth + UK	pages that mention both Plymouth and the UK
- sign to exclude words	+ Dartmoor – prison	pages that mention Dartmoor but do not mention prison
" " for exact phrase	"Dartmoor Prison"	pages that contain the exact phrase, Dartmoor Prison
title: for page title (t: at Yahoo)	title: sheep	pages that contain the word sheep in the title
host: for host sites	Plymouth –host:gov	pages that contain the word Plymouth and are not hosted by the government.
	Plymouth host:uk	pages that mention the word Plymouth and are hosted in the UK
? for wildcard	Eve?e?t	finds sites containing any word that could match e.g. Everest, Everett, etc.
* for wildcard	sing*	finds sites containing all words stemming from sing, e.g. singer, singing, sings

Many additional features are available, some of which are peculiar to specific search utilities.

How to search for people
For simple UK information, without email addresses, use the online phone directory.

Information available is from public sources and/or supplied by individuals.

The more information you have to begin with, the easier your search will be.

Use the online help facilities.

You can add yourself to most directories; follow onscreen directions.

How to search for companies
First, try **www.name.com**, **www.name.co.uk** and **www.name.net**.

If you want company business information (eg financial reports), you may have to pay for it.

If you want a *type* of company, use the online Yellow Pages.

Useful Addresses: Search Engines/Web Directories

URL	Notes
http://www.altavista.com	can enter whole question frequently used links specific categories current news stories drop-down boxes to narrow search
http://www.excite.com	frequently used links current news stories stock reports horoscope!
http://hotbot.com	frequently used links drop-down boxes to narrow search
http://www.infoseek.com	current news stories uses categories to narrow search
http://www.lycos.com	search options to narrow search top 5% Web sites link
http://www.northernlight.com	results from search grouped into Custom Search Folders open the folder most closely matching your want
http://webcrawler.com	help at bottom of page uses categories to narrow search
http://www.yahoo.com	information in categories to search within Yahoo child friendly option (Yahooligans)
http://my.lycos.com/safetynet/safetynet.asp	allows you to screen possibly objectionable sites from Lycos
http://www.askjeeves.com	enter entire question rather than single words
http://www.metacrawler.com	searches several other engines
http://www.mamma.com	searches Yahoo!, Excite, Infoseek, Lycos, Webcrawler, Altavista and HotBot

Useful Addresses: Personal and Company Directories

URL	Notes
http://www.bt.com/phonenet.uk	entire UK phonebook
http://www.bigfoot.com	Click 'search Bigfoot' on the Bigfoot homepage
http://www.infospace.com	
http://www.whowhere.lycos.com	
http://people.yahoo.com	currently, you can't add your own details
http://companiesonline.com	mainly American companies brief company profile is free, detailed reports cost $20
http://www.eyp.co.uk	the Yellow Pages, online for the whole of the UK

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