



# Notes to support effective learning

## Methods of learning

It can be helpful to consider

- the range of learning methods that we may be able to use
- which of them suit us personally

Evidently, we often have to learn something in a certain way as this is the means that presents itself to us. However, when we have a choice, the method we choose can significantly effect how well we learn. Many learning experiences include more than one method.

### **Methods of learning include the following:**

- group or pair discussion
- presenting to a group or to a colleague
- participating in a question and answer session
- attending a presentation/talk
- 'shadowing' another professional
- learning by doing
- reading and perhaps taking notes (You might follow this by self-testing or writing on what you have learned)
- experiencing and reflecting
- seeking feedback from others on your skills and performance
- thinking through a problem or issue on your own

You might find it useful to think about which of these you are drawn to/which you have found effective in the past (and which you haven't).

## Making the most of a learning experience

Regardless of the extent to which a learning experience matches our preferred learning methods, we can do a lot to maximise what we get from it. The following may be helpful.

### In advance:

- Think about what your personal objectives are, i.e. what you personally want to get out of the experience.
- If you are attending a course/study day, submit questions before the event where you can.

### While learning:

- Be aware that asking questions is, for most people, central to their learning. Our questions help us to meet our personal objectives, and actively engage us in the learning process, so that we are more likely to remember what we encounter. Ask for the opportunity to ask questions, if this is not automatically offered.
- Re-visit your personal objectives through the learning experience, so that you can act if they are not being met.
- Discuss with others what you are learning/have learned – both during and after the experience.
- Focus on the positive during the learning: what you are getting from it, rather than how it could be better.
- Try to free your mind from other concerns and preoccupations during the learning experience or event.

### Afterwards:

- Immediately afterwards, ask yourself what are the most useful skills/knowledge that you have acquired, and how you will apply this/these.
- Reflect on the *outcomes* (i.e. how much you have learned and what you will do/did with it) and also the *processes* (how useful was the experience and how it could have been improved for you).
- Try to look back on what you have learned at a later date, as well as immediately afterwards. Were your initial thoughts about the utility of the experience borne out by what you have subsequently managed to achieve with it?