



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
School of Social
& Political Science



Year 1 Planning for Success

Professional Development
Toolkit

STUDENT
DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE + my future.
+ my plan.



Welcome

Starting at university is a mix of emotions – excitement, nerves and anticipation.

This is a time to try new things, meet new people and learn more about who you are and what you want to achieve.

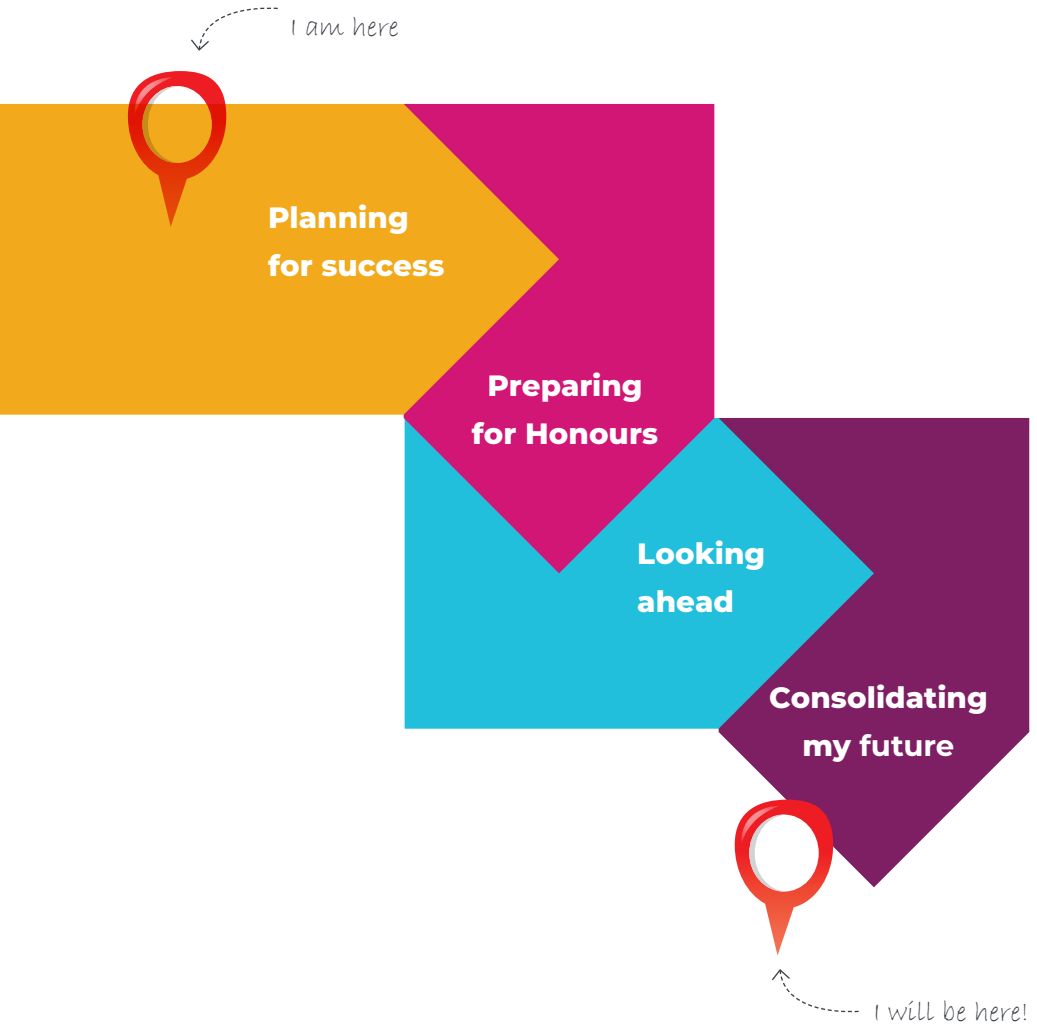


"I have managed to secure an internship and have achieved better marks this year, both of which have definitely been influenced by the SDO coaching and the SPS Edinburgh Award."

Your academic work is just one part of the university experience.

This toolkit is designed to help you identify your professional development goals, build your CV and make the most of the year ahead.

My development journey



Your Student Development Office

The Student Development Office (SDO) in SSPS is here to support your professional and academic development throughout your degree.

We offer a wide range of interactive workshops and events, providing you with guided frameworks and toolkits to support you as you build your CV and prepare for the next stage in your career.

All SDO staff are trained coaches, able to offer 1-1 support tailored to you. Through our Edinburgh Awards and skills workshops, we can help you to identify career goals, plan next steps and chart your way to success.



Lucie



Nicola



Lee

Join the SDO for:

- Skills workshops and career masterclasses
- Professional Development Awards and Certificates
- 1-1 coaching

How to use this guide

The Student Development Office is here to support you at each stage of your degree.

This booklet is focused on your **first year**, helping you to settle into university life and master the move to higher education.

You'll find a mix of toolkits, resources and reflective exercises designed to help you structure your time, identify your 'why' and set your own development-focussed SMART goals.

Key Themes: core skills for your first year

Toolkits: information and frameworks to guide your development

Reflection: interactive materials to help you set goals and measure success

Resource: where and how to access additional materials and support

Here are some of the key themes to get you started.

Goal setting

First year lays the foundations for your time at university. Goals give structure to the year and help you focus on what's most important to you. Some of your goals may span more than one year of study.

Time management

The adaptation to individual learning at university is a new challenge for many. Effective time management will help you to make the most of your degree experience. Starting the year with a plan will help you to manage deadlines and avoid burnout.

Reflection

Reflection enables you to learn and grow from experience. As you move through the year, set aside time to reflect on your progress, identifying both successes and areas for future development.

KEY THEME

Goal setting

Setting goals helps you to plan your time and ensure that you are working effectively and efficiently. Goals help you to visualise your future and provide a powerful motivator during times of challenge. Once you know what you want to achieve, goal setting will help you to manage your time and direct your efforts and activities.

The Student Development Office uses the **S-M-A-R-T** model for goal setting:

- S – Specific
- M – Measurable
- A – Achievable
- R – Relevant
- T – Timebound



How to set goals

Part 1: 'The big picture' - thinking longer-term

Select a timescale for your goals and set aside 10-15 minutes to visualise the 'future you'. It's up to you how far into the future you want to plan. Ask yourself these questions: What will you do during this period of time? What will you be most proud of? What challenges will you face? What values will the 'future you' hold? Now you know what you want to achieve, and by when, it's time to break down those goals into smaller, more achievable steps.

Part 2: Setting incremental targets

For each point identified in step 1, choose the length of time that it will take you to achieve that goal (such as 1 month, 3 months or 6 months). Now start to think about what your progress towards that goal will look like after 1 week, 1 month and so on.

For example, if the 'future you' has just graduated with a first-class degree, step 1 may be to focus on establishing a strong academic foundation in year 1.

Big picture: Graduate with first class degree

- Step 1: Build strong study habits and time management skills during year 1
- Step 2: Map key dates for each course into your academic calendar (essay deadlines, exams, presentations). Decide when to start and finish each piece of work.

- Step 3: Use key dates to plan each week and assign set study times for every class
- Step 4: Assign specific tasks to each study session, identify where to source reading materials and where to work.
- Step 5: Set your day-by-day schedule for the week – remember to include time away from your studies

Part 3: Staying on track

Ensure that you include regular review points in your step-by-step plan. Taking time to reflect on progress is important as it will help you to identify early where changes can be made. Keep in mind that even the best plans may need to adapt sometimes and you won't always be able to stick to your schedule. Try and remain flexible and open to different opportunities.

You can use the reflective exercises in this guide to help you get started with setting goals for the year.



"I absolutely loved the journey of the Edinburgh Award for Professional Development. The skills workshops helped me to interact with my peers and work collaboratively on our skills learning initiative."

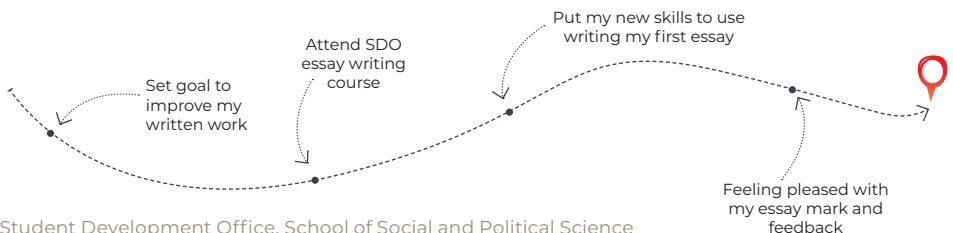
Take 5 minutes to quietly reflect before writing your answers. Try to be as descriptive as possible

Goal Setting: The Big Picture

What are my expectations for university?

What skills and strengths do I already have?

What are my expectations for first year?



What am I most looking forward to?

What concerns or worries do I have?

What does **personal development** mean to me?

What are my **personal development** goals this year?
(Remember S-M-A-R-T)

1.

2.

3.

What does **professional development** mean to me?

What are my **professional development** goals this year?
(Remember S-M-A-R-T)

1.

2.

3.



KEY THEME

Core Skill: Time Management

Time management is a skill that can be learned, practiced and refined. Good time management helps you work smarter - to meet deadlines, to produce your best work and to reduce stress and anxiety.

Building in time to manage and plan your activities allows you to proactively focus on the most important tasks at hand. Knowing that you have allocated enough time to complete an activity enables you to produce your best work, avoiding a last-minute rush and reducing the impact of unforeseen events.



When planning your studies, think about the following:

Each week

When are your taught classes or engagement points each week? How much reading do you need to complete ahead of the class and how long will that take? What other work do you need to prepare (eg. questions for group discussions)? Where are the resources that you need and how can you access them?

Each semester

When are the submission deadlines for your courses? Do they overlap with each other? How can you plan your time to give every assignment the attention it deserves? How long will each piece of work take (reading, writing and revisions)? How do you submit your work and who should you contact if there are any issues?

Each year

What are your goals for this year? Can you set incremental steps to break down each goal into smaller parts? Remember to use the S-M-A-R-T technique when setting your goals.

TOOLKIT

The Graduate Attributes

Every student is unique. You have your own experiences, learning and way of approaching life. The quality, depth and breadth of your experiences while at The University of Edinburgh help you to develop characteristic attributes that set you apart from your peers.

See the Graduate Attributes Framework on the next page!

The Graduate Attributes Framework helps you break down these important development skills into easily accessible categories.

The Framework is made up of two parts:

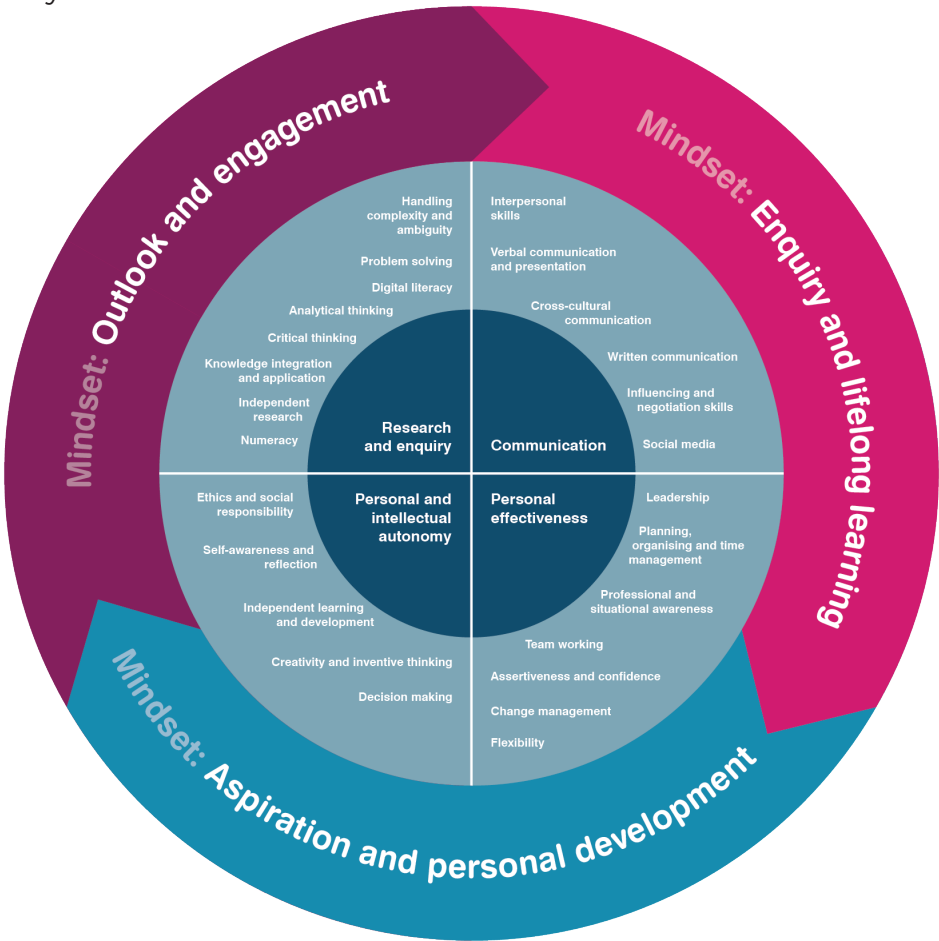
- 1. Mindsets.** How you think about yourself and the world around you
- 2. Skillsets.** The specific skills that you will develop during your time as a student

You can use the Graduate Attribute Framework to help you identify your development priorities each year.

The SDO uses this tool to shape the skills training that we offer. You'll find that all of our workshops and events are mapped onto the Graduate Attributes Framework. This helps you to select the workshops that align best with your own development goals.

University is a space to develop yourself in many ways, not just academically. The graduate attributes shown below highlight some of the skills you can learn at university.

These skills will appear throughout this booklet and will be the basis of your reflection and goal setting over the course of the year.



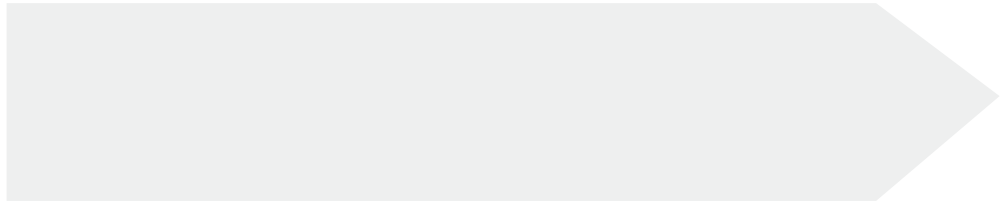
Reflect on each mindset in the box provided - what do they mean to you? How can you link them to your personal development?

Graduate Attributes Framework:

The 3 Mindsets

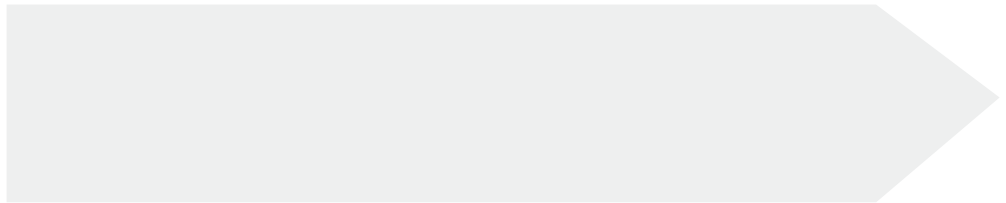
Outlook and Engagement

↳ [Read about this mindset](#) 



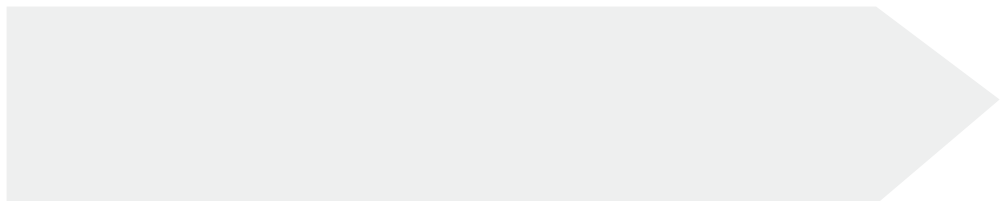
Aspiration and Personal Development

↳ [Read about this mindset](#) 



Enquiry and Lifelong Learning

↳ [Read about this mindset](#) 



REFLECTION

Skillset: Research and Enquiry

Graduate Attributes Framework

Skills:



Numeracy



Handling Complexity and Ambiguity



Problem Solving



Digital Literacy



Analytical Thinking



Critical Thinking



Knowledge Integration and Application



Independent Research



Rate yourself 1-5 against
each of these skills:
1 = lots to do
5 = highly developed



[Read full explanations for these skills](#)

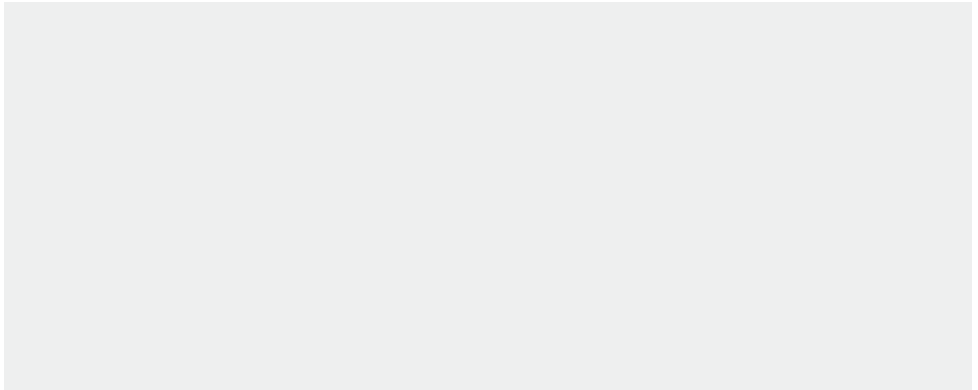


REFLECTION

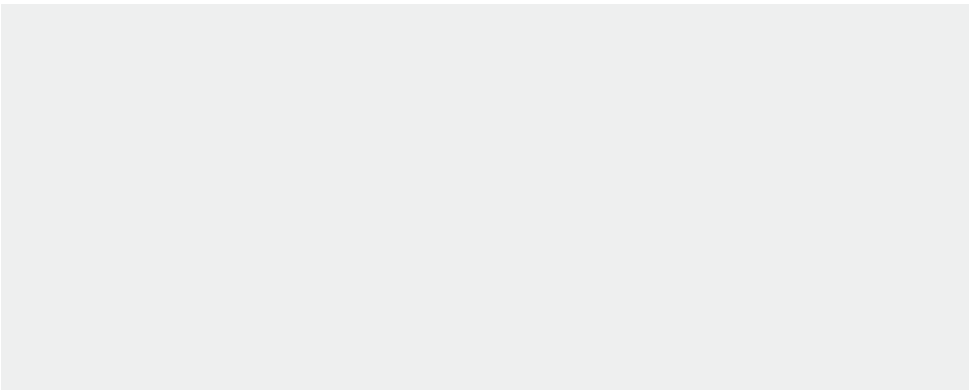
Reflection on Research and Enquiry

Think about the skills on the previous page.

Which skills do you feel most confident in and why?



Which skills do you feel the least confident in and why?



REFLECTION

Look at your rating of skills in **Research and Enquiry** and use this to choose a skill to develop. We recommend focusing on one of your lowest rated skills.

Selected skill:

Why did I select this skill?

Set goals (remember S-M-A-R-T)

1.

2.

3.

**Check-in points**

Set dates in the boxes below and add a reminder to your phone calendar to check in on your progress.

Check-in 1

Check-in 3

Check-in 2

Check-in 4

REFLECTION

Skillset: Communication

Graduate Attributes Framework

Skills:



Interpersonal Skills



Verbal Communication and Presentation



Cross-cultural Communication



Written Communication



Influencing and Negotiation Skills



Social Media



Rate yourself 1-5 against
each of these skills:
1 = lots to do
5 = highly developed



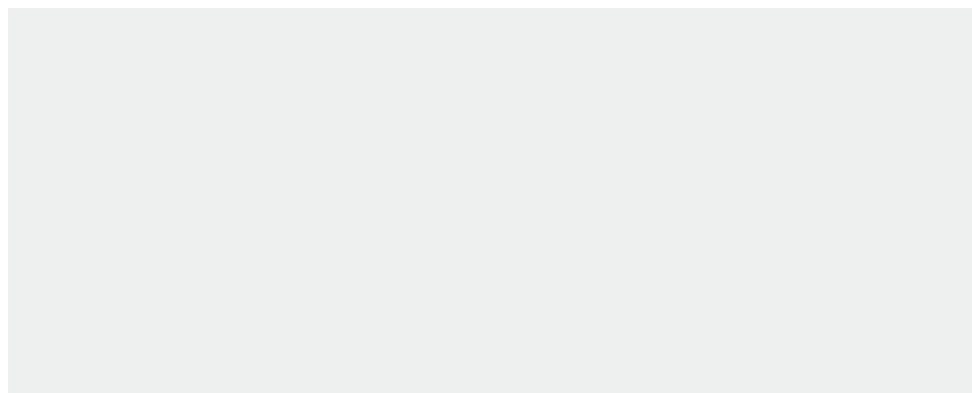
[Read full explanations for these skills](#) 

REFLECTION

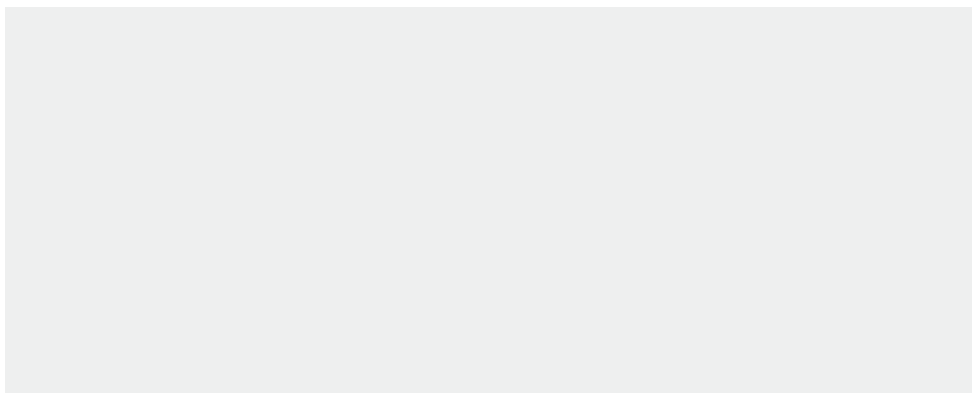
Reflection on Communication

Think about the skills on the previous page.

Which skills do you feel most confident in and why?



Which skills do you feel the least confident in and why?



REFLECTION

Look at your rating of skills in **Communication** and use this to choose a skill to develop. We recommend focusing on one of your lowest rated skills.

Selected skill:

Why did I select this skill?

Set goals (remember S-M-A-R-T)

1.

2.

3.

**Check-in points**

Set dates in the boxes below and add a reminder to your phone calendar to check in on your progress.

Check-in 1

Check-in 3

Check-in 2

Check-in 4

REFLECTION

Personal and Intellectual Autonomy

Graduate Attributes Framework

Skills:



Ethics and Social Responsibility



Self-awareness and Reflection



Independent Learning and Development



Creativity and Inventive Thinking



Decision Making



Rate yourself 1-5 against
each of these skills:
1 = lots to do
5 = highly developed

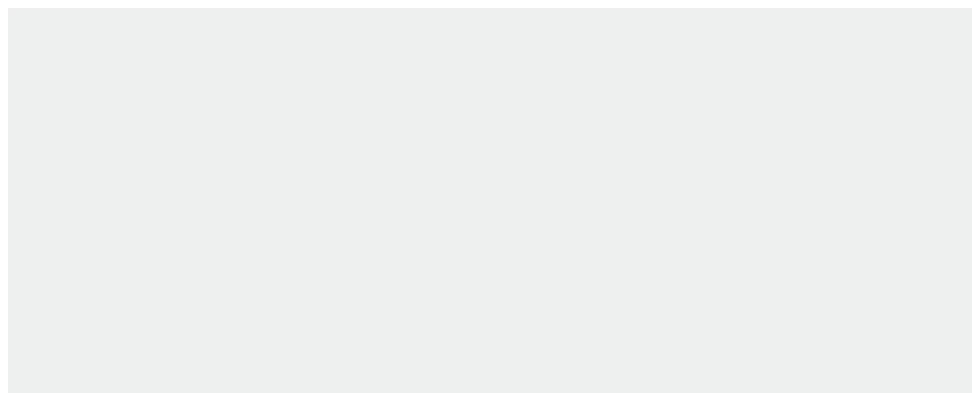
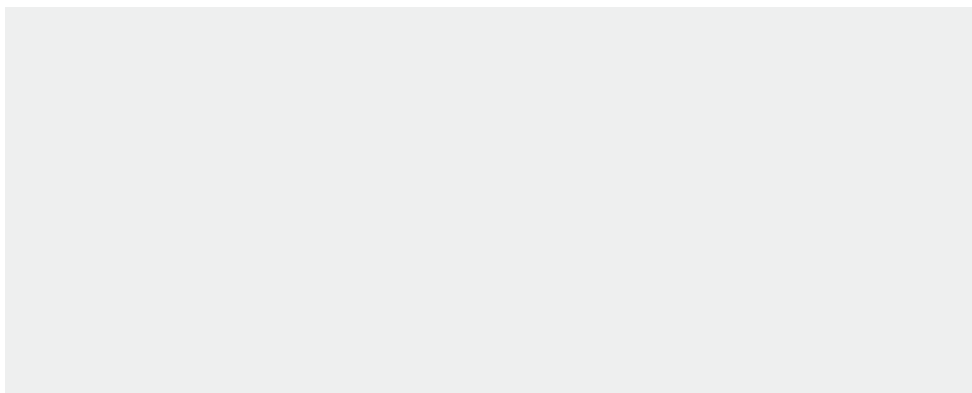


[Read full explanations for these skills](#) 

REFLECTION

Reflection on Personal and Intellectual Autonomy

Think about the skills on the previous page.

Which skills do you feel most confident in and why?**Which skills do you feel the least confident in and why?**

REFLECTION

Look at your rating of skills in **Personal and Intellectual Autonomy** and use this to choose a skill to develop. We recommend focusing on one of your lowest rated skills.

Selected skill:

Why did I select this skill?

Set goals (remember S-M-A-R-T)

🚩 1.

🚩 2.

🚩 3.



Check-in points

Set dates in the boxes below and add a reminder to your phone calendar to check in on your progress.

📅 Check-in 1 📅 Check-in 3

📅 Check-in 2 📅 Check-in 4

REFLECTION

Personal Effectiveness

Graduate Attributes Framework

Skills:



Leadership



Planning, Organising and Time Management



Professional and Situational Awareness



Team Working



Assertiveness and Confidence



Change Management



Flexibility



Rate yourself 1-5 against
each of these skills:
1 = lots to do
5 = highly developed



[Read full explanations for these skills](#) 

REFLECTION

Reflection on Personal Effectiveness

Think about the skills on the previous page.

Which skills do you feel most confident in and why?

Which skills do you feel the least confident in and why?

REFLECTION

Look at your rating of skills in **Personal Effectiveness** and use this to choose a skill to develop. We recommend focusing on one of your lowest rated skills.

Selected skill:

Why did I select this skill?

Set goals (remember S-M-A-R-T)

🚩 1.

🚩 2.

🚩 3.



Check-in points

Set dates in the boxes below and add a reminder to your phone calendar to check in on your progress.

📅 Check-in 1

📅 Check-in 3

📅 Check-in 2

📅 Check-in 4

*Use this page to
write a message to
your future self!*

Chosen Development Attributes: Rationale

How will each of your chosen four skills have improved by the end of the year? What do you need to do to get each of these skills to a ranking of 5 – highly developed?

Research and Enquiry



Communication



Personal & Intellectual Autonomy



Personal Effectiveness



KEY THEME

Reflection

Reflection is a conscious examination of past experiences, thoughts or ways of doing things. Its goal is to surface learning about oneself and the situation and to bring meaning to it in order to inform the present and the future (Reflectors Toolkit, Careers Service).

Reflection, as a tool for learning, is a powerful method of understanding past situations to develop and progress in the future. Identifying areas for improvement enables you to actively change your future experience.

Activity

Take 5-10 minutes to think about a recent study experience (such as a tutorial). Think about the following:

- What went well?
- How do you feel about the experience?
- Do you think you presented your ideas well or could you refine your arguments?
- Were you able to engage in discussion with your peers?
- What could you have done differently?

Building in time each week to reflect on your learning will help with consolidation of knowledge, as well as expand your portfolio of professional 'soft skills'. You can use the Graduate Attributes Framework to help you identify which skills to focus your reflections on.

Top tip

Add 30 minutes of reflection time to your diary each week. Put future sessions in your diary now, to make sure that you prioritise this activity.

Reflectors' Toolkit

More information and tools to help you reflect:

 [The Reflectors' Toolkit](#) 

RESOURCES

Skills Workshops and Training

The SDO offers an extensive variety of professional development and academic skills workshops.

Led by experienced tutors, practitioners and guest speakers, these interactive sessions are tailored to different years of study, allowing you to select the level of expertise most appropriate to your interests and needs.

We work closely with our wide network of public, private and third sector partners, both UK and international, to ensure that the professional and academic skills training we offer is consistent with evolving sector requirements.

All our workshops are clearly mapped against the Graduate Attributes Framework. Workshops are usually two hours long and feature a mix of teaching and groupwork. Workshops must be booked in advance. Previous workshops have included:

- Time management
- CVs and cover letters
- Academic study skills
- Critical thinking
- Leadership
- Finding internships

 [Workshops and events](#) 

Academic Skills Sessions

can be particularly useful within first year as they cover the basic skills necessary for succeeding within your degree.

SDO Edinburgh Awards

Students in SPS are eligible to take part in two school-specific Edinburgh Awards – Professional Development and Professional Development with Leadership.

The Edinburgh Award is a series of events and activities designed to strengthen your CV and help you stand out in the job market. The Award recognises and rewards your involvement in activities undertaken alongside your degree programme and aims to enhance and improve your experience as a student.



**More on
the SPS
Edinburgh
Awards** 

Our SPS Edinburgh Awards feature a mix of skills workshops, student-led activities and one-to-one coaching with a member of the SDO coaching team.

To complete the Awards, you'll need to attend at least 20hrs of skills training workshops. You can use the log at the end of this guide to keep track of your progress.

REFLECTION

Professional Development Log

Use this space to log your attendance at SDO workshops. After each event, set aside 15 minutes to reflect on your learning.

- What skills have you developed?
- How can you put them into practice?
- How can you measure development in this skill?

Workshop title		
Date	Hours	Key Skills Identified

Workshop title		
Date	Hours	Key Skills Identified

...more space on the next page!



REFLECTION

Professional Development Log

Workshop title		
Date	Hours	Key Skills Identified

Workshop title		
Date	Hours	Key Skills Identified

Workshop title		
Date	Hours	Key Skills Identified



REFLECTION

Professional Development Log

Workshop title

Date

Hours

Key Skills Identified

Workshop title

Date

Hours

Key Skills Identified

Workshop title

Date

Hours

Key Skills Identified



REFLECTION

Professional Development Log

Workshop title		
Date	Hours	Key Skills Identified

Workshop title		
Date	Hours	Key Skills Identified

Workshop title		
Date	Hours	Key Skills Identified



Professional Development Session

Reflections

[illegible]

Workshop title	
Key skills identified	Reflections

Workshop title	
Key skills identified	Reflections



Reflections

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REFLECTION

Professional Development Session Reflections

Workshop title	
Key skills identified	Reflections

Workshop title	
Key skills identified	Reflections

Workshop title	
Key skills identified	Reflections



REFLECTION

End of Year Reflections

Now that the year is coming to an end, revisit your goals to see the progress you have made.

Go back to each goal and over the next few pages, reflect upon how your skills have adapted and grown.

What changes have you made?

Rank your confidence in this skill using the 1-5 scale:

- 1 – lots of do
- 5 – highly developed

How has that number changed since your first assessment at the start of the year?

Reflect on your goals on the next two pages.

REFLECTION

Big Picture Goals - Personal Development

Rate your confidence 1-5
1 = lots to do
5 = highly developed



My goal:

Successes

Further Development

My goal:

Successes

Further Development

My goal:

Successes

Further Development

REFLECTION

Big Picture Goals - Professional Development

Rate your confidence 1-5
1 = lots to do
5 = highly developed

My goal:

Successes

Further Development

My goal:

Successes

Further Development

My goal:

Successes

Further Development

Rate your confidence 1-5
1 = lots to do
5 = highly developed

Graduate Attributes Goals

Research and Enquiry goal

Successes

Further Development

Personal and Intellectual Autonomy goal

Successes

Further Development

Personal Effectiveness goal

Successes

Further Development

Communications goal

Successes

Further Development



Further reflection space

[illegible]



Further reflection space

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Further reflection space

[illegible]



Useful information

Contact:

ssps.student-development@ed.ac.uk

Find out more:

[**Visit the Undergraduate Skills Hub**](#)

