Managing your Competencies

Second Edition, Teachers' Guide

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Introduction

The training and testing of competencies represents a new challenge for higher professional education courses. An even greater challenge, however, is getting students to reflect on their competencies and coaching them to improve them. This book will aid them. The various assignments will help students to develop their own personal development plans. They do not have to do every assignment in the book: together with their teacher – who will often be the career supervisor – they can determine which assignments to do and in what order. Students will use the assignments they have selected to develop their own personal development plan. This book represents a study method that can be applied to the entire curriculum. At our own institute of higher learning – Stenden University – it is being used from the first to the fourth year of study. Before this book was written, the assignments that it contains were used in every year of the economics and management courses as well as in the technology courses.

This book is targeted at all higher professional education courses in which competency training plays a central role. It also represents a tool for all teachers who are coaching students to develop their competencies. Career supervisors, mentors and project group supervisors will also be able to put this book to good use. We will deal further with this in the next chapter.

A competency is a combination of knowledge, skills, inherent traits and attitudes. This book contains assignments that deal with all these aspects. Chapter 1 explains in simple terms what a competency consists of. Each subsequent chapter focuses on a particular topic. Chapter 2 ("Who am I?") is about inherent traits and attitudes, and the following two about knowledge and skills, with Chapter 3 dealing with individual skills and Chapter 4 with skills needed to work in a group. Chapter 5 contains assignments aimed at helping students to make their career choices more concrete. Chapter 6 deals with various things that will always come in handy: instructions on interview techniques and feedback, for example.

We also bring the PDP Toolbox to your attention. This digital aid will make creatingfolios easy and natural, since students use the toolbox both to do the assignments and to file the results. They start adding to the toolbox in their first year and by the end of their final year it will be full, a folio having thus been formed without conscious intent. Our initial observations also suggest that students simply enjoy working with such a digital gadget. We will deal further with this in the commentary on Chapter 1.

This teachers’ manual contains a commentary on the assignments in the various chapters. We have made use both of our own experiences and the experiences of other users. We provide a commentary on each assignment in each chapter, including, of course, assignments new to this edition. In a preliminary chapter, however, we will provide more general information, tips, suggestions and background material. This manual concludes with a separate chapter on installing and using the PDP Toolbox. It contains a lot of technical information, making it important reading for systems managers.

We wish you much success and pleasure with our book.
Roel Grit, Roelie Gut, Nico van der Sijde
General instructions to teachers

In this section we will firstly address the matter of how this book can be used for personal development plans. We will then give some suggestions relating to which assignments to do and in what order. We will then provide some general coaching tips, all based on our own practical experience. The section will conclude with directions for using the PDP Toolbox.

PDP: your own learning path but with directions

The literature on PDPs stresses the importance of students mapping out their own learning paths. Higher professional education is, after all, no longer focused on supply but on demand. As such, teachers must give their students the opportunity to map out their own paths. At the same time, however, you will need to provide them with some directions since they will otherwise not know which way is best for them. Indeed, our assignments do steer students in certain directions. At the same time, however, there is room for individuality: each student will tackle the assignments differently. This book is above all a non-prescriptive one. Students are not obliged to do all the assignments and can choose the ones they want to do and in the order they choose. It is up to you and the student to select an individual pathway through the book.

And indeed, it will be an individual pathway. The crux of the matter is not what the college has to offer but what each individual learner needs. Each student’s PDP will focus on their specific problems, targets, learning objectives and study activities. They will decide for themselves what it is they can already do, where they are heading for and what they have to do to get there. As such, they are in control of their own learning. But naturally, while it is all well and good that students are able to manage their own learning paths, some guidelines are still essential. The assignments contained in this book are, in fact, intended as guidelines.

Assignment order: some pointers

Appendix 12 contains a table setting out when to do each assignment. However, these are merely suggestions. As mentioned previously, students do not have to do every assignment, nor is there any set order in which they should be done. What the table does show is that the book can be approached in a random order. The table also shows that the assignments can be spread out over more than one study year. It is up to you and the students jointly to determine which assignments to do and in what order.

We mentioned in the introduction that each chapter has a particular theme: Chapter 2 deals with individual traits and attitudes; Chapter 3 with individual skills, Chapter 4 with group skills and how the profession is perceived in Chapter 5. As you see, we have chosen to arrange the chapters thematically rather than chronologically: you may very well choose to deal with skills first, and only after that with attitudes, or perhaps you will choose to toggle between chapters. Maybe after reflecting on how the profession is perceived you will choose to go back to attitudes and skills. In short, how you go through the book is up to you and the students.

Perhaps Assignment 3.1 lends itself to being done first: it is an assignment that is suitable for intake interviews with students. When you explain (early in the course) how the PDP Toolbox operates you could get your students to do Assignments 1.1 and 1.2.
Assignments 3.11 up to and including 3.13 are intended to help prepare the student in the lead-up to doing an internship. Assignment 4.1 is intended to assist group evaluations during the very first educational projects. The assignments in Chapter 5 are obviously best done at the end of the student’s course.

Having said this, there are many other options, even tailoring your approach to target individual student needs. With this in mind we give various suggestions for combining assignments in the chapters to come. You could, for example, use the assignments in Chapter 4 on competencies relating to group processes as material for mentor discussions. A number of these assignments also contain a section on personal reflection. This teachers’ manual gives various pointers for discussing these assignments too and giving feedback on them.

Our intention in this book has been to suggest what choices are available rather than imposing choices. Various assignments dealing with how to set study targets by means of a four-step approach (see Chapter 6.1) have been included, as have assignments which involve self-reflection (which may come in handy for mentor discussions). But we also realise that doing too many assignments may have an adverse effect. We would not want you to take things to such an extreme that your students become sick of thinking about their own motives – we merely want to suggest ways of channelling personal reflections. The choice is yours: you decide what assignments should be done and in what order. Here and there you could also, of course, scrap parts of the assignments.

We would, however, draw your attention specifically to the final assignments of Chapters 2, 3 and 4. These assignments require the student to combine the results of earlier assignments in the chapter in question and thus reach an overall picture. As we see it, that overall picture can be put to profitable use as a foundation for coaching sessions with teachers and mentors. But do make clear arrangements with the student about which assignments should be included in the final assignment and which not.

**Suggestions for PDP coaching**

Ongoing feedback is crucial to student motivation. Various parties are involved in a PDP: not only the student in question but also school and vocational field parties. The school’s involvement is not limited to formulating goals and objectives: it must also coach the student. While they are doing the assignments students will reflect on their competencies: what drives them, what they are able to do, what they still need to learn and how they can tackle this. It is wise to support them in this by giving feedback on the assignments. These assignments will give students something to go by when they formulate their PDPs as well as giving you something to go by when you coach them. It would be pretentious to suggest that any one approach is best. We will, however, provide a few suggestions.

- When you give advice on study planning, try to take account of the student’s needs and learning style. This is easier said than done, however. Chapter 2.8 contains a test on learning style and the step-by-step approach to personal reflection in 2.2 may also provide some leads.
- In our experience, asking a lot of probing questions in relation to the assignment results is fruitful. Probe particularly for concrete examples and motivation (Did you enjoy doing this? Why?). This type of probing can provide the student with a sense of direction while leaving him or her with freedom of choice).
- Keep in mind that competency management is a relatively unknown terrain, and not only for the student but for you too. Mutual sharing of ideas with colleagues on how to coach and to give feedback can be very useful.
- A number of teachers may be involved in the course at various times. They will include mentors discussing reflective assignments (Chapters 2 and 3), leaders of project groups discussing assignments in Chapter 4 and so on.
• With some assignments, professionals from the vocational field could be brought in: see, for example, Assignments 3.12 and 3.13 and various assignments in Chapter 5.
• Make good use of the relatively hard data from in the Toolbox, particularly exam results and feedback scores.

When you plot out an individual learning path with a student, respect the fact that that learning path is the student’s own. Each student holds individual rights over his or her learning path and is responsible for his or her own competency management. After all, learning targets that are not specifically your own are not going to be any use to you. But at the same time, make sure that the student is not just making random choices. It is a good idea, therefore, to fully discuss the learning path individually with the student. You and the student could jointly make arrangements about the following:
• What the student wants to achieve during a stipulated period of time (in a year’s time, for example) in terms of goals and competencies
• Why he or she wants this (personal motivation, therefore)
• How he or she intends to go about it (plan of attack, strategy: see also 6.1)
• How to make the intermediate results tangible (assessment, testing; see Sections 1.3 and 1.4).

As far as the first point is concerned, question the student thoroughly about how he or she interprets certain competencies. What skills, knowledge and attitudes form part of the competency in that student’s opinion? Never let students glibly adopt competencies they have been referred to here and there. Unless they have thought things through this is merely playing lip service to individual learning. With regard to this, point out that the PDP functions as an electronic portfolio (1.3 and 1.4).

Testing can take many forms, of course. It is important to always bear in mind that a test is an instrument: a way of giving a sharper focus to the PDP. One of the consequences of not passing an exam could be making changes to the PDP. A teacher’s reactions to a presentation could have a pass-on effect to the PDP. A list of some ways to go about testing follows below:
• Reflective reports (in fact, these are crucial to this book)
• Reflective presentations
• Evaluative or coaching sessions
• 360 degree feedback (see, in particular, the assignments in Chapter 4, but also those in 2,3)
• Exams
• Demonstrations
• Assessments
• Personality or behavioural tests (such as the Belbin or the Enneagram tests in this book)

These testing methods could be used in conjunction with assignments in this book. For example, you could have students put their test results in their PDP Toolbox, or competencies and competency grades they have achieved. You could also consider more unconventional means: photo collages, poster presentations or video films. These too can be filed in the PDP Toolbox. Imagine that the Belbin test (see 4.4) has shown your student to be highly creative, scoring high in the roles of ‘Resource Investigator’ and ‘Plant’. Various group evaluations (see Chapter 4) have also shown the student to be highly creative. Why not then offer the student the opportunity to demonstrate that creativity via a photo collage or other creative form? The student in question may well be able to demonstrate his or her abilities much better than a student who writes a reflective review! Imagine that another student wants an assessment based on doing a sales talk or holding a bad-news interview with somebody acting the other role. There is no doubt that a film of such a talk (or something of a similar type) constitutes relevant assessment material.

Finally, three more tips of a general nature for coaching sessions.
The first is to follow the rules for giving feedback and listen actively. You could refer to 6.3 and 6.5 for this. The literature often suggests using the I-I-You procedure when giving feedback.

- I notice that... (Give a factual description of what you have observed).
- What I think about that is... (Give a concrete personal message about the feeling.)
- How do you feel about that? (Invite the other person to react.)

A concrete example: ‘On the last six occasions that homework was set, I notice that you didn’t do it. I think that’s a pity, since we had made concrete arrangements about this. Does that strike a familiar cord with you?’

By following this procedure you will avoid discussions of too emotional a nature and you will have established clear lines to follow if you decide to give feedback.

The second tip is to use a combination of open and closed questions. You will find more about these terms in 6.6. Open questions allow you to break the ice to a certain degree and give the student the opportunity to tell his or her own story. This is an important point, since the PDP has to be the student’s story, not yours. But it is also your task to help the student make his or her story tangible, and you can do so by posing closed questions and constantly probing. In our experience, it is always useful to ask for concrete examples.

The final tip is to use the STAR method, particularly in evaluation discussions. With this method you use a checklist of sorts, a procedure for choosing the most appropriate questions and putting them in an appropriate order. STAR stands for Situation, Task, Action and Result: factors that you run past the student one by one. After that you should ask about:

- S: what situation were you in? (The student describes in detail a work-related situation at the place of employment or during a project.)
- T: in that situation, what was your task or role? (Was the student, for example, chairing a meeting, carrying out a concrete assignment or defending a certain point of view?)
- A: evaluation of the action relating to that task:
  - What did you do? Why?
  - What didn’t you do? Why not?
  - What could you have done? Be specific.
- R: What was the result of the action? Are you satisfied with it? Do you think that you achieved your goals? Be specific.

You will sometime have to manoeuvre backwards and forwards: hesitation on the student’s part about the result may form a pretext for taking a second look at the action taken; hesitation about the action taken may cause the student to go back to the task. This checklist is a useful tool for you and the student since it will help you to analyse how the student performed in certain situations. Imagine, for example, that a certain course of action had little result. This may have been because of the action taken, but it may also have been because there were flaws in the way the task was performed or the situation was assessed. Moreover, in giving an account of the situation and the task, the student will often be saying something about what drives him or her. The STAR model is, after all, also about why a certain course of action was taken.
1 What is competency management?

This chapter deals with background theory: what a competency is, what it is composed of, how the book is divided up. It is useful to refer back regularly to the theoretical basis during teaching and coaching sessions, particularly in the first year. After all, it is advisable for students to constantly keep track of how they are developing their competencies in all their aspects: not only their skills and their knowledge but also their attitudes.

To get students motivated, you could emphasise right from the start that competency management is an essential part of being able to perform well in a job interview as well as to function well in the chosen career. A PDP is not just something they need for getting through school but is also a crucial aspect of getting a job and holding that job down. Screening of candidates for a job is done solely on the basis of what those candidates are good at: their competencies. The employer will constantly be asking him or herself whether that particular person with those particular competencies is capable of holding that particular position within an organisation of the employer’s particular type. The employer will also want to know how the candidate has developed his or her competencies and whether he or she is capable of developing them further. Bear in mind that nowadays, ongoing self-development is an essential part of any career.

However, the main motivational reason for keeping track of one’s PDP is the fact that what the employer wants to know above all is in what way the candidate in question is different to any other candidate. After all, it is not the fact of having a diploma that will be decisive, but the face behind the diploma: the individual in all his or her uniqueness. And the way to convince the employer of that uniqueness is being able to demonstrate it via a PDP. Having a ‘database’ of examples is also essential: being able to provide hard evidence of specific and distinctive competencies.

There is an explanation in 1.4 (and earlier, in the chapter ‘Study guide’) of how the PDP Toolbox works. One suggestion is to get students to install their Toolboxes during a combined teaching session for all students. You could run through the Toolbox’s various functions orally again (students are sometimes inclined to gloss over things). At the same time you could set Assignments 1.1 and 1.2 as practice assignments. It is also a good idea to check regularly that students are maintaining their Toolboxes and adding to them. While we have not made the Toolbox compulsory, we would advise you to do so. After all, this digital aid can function as a portfolio since all the assignment results will be stored in it over the years. A digital portfolio: what a good way of saving paperwork for both you and the student!

Assignment 1.2 is intended to get students thinking about their competencies early in the course. Not only will they not have thought much about their competencies but the very concept of a competency is likely to be foreign to them. Things will become more tangible as soon as the student starts thinking about what exactly a competency consists of:

- What skills are required in order to have this competency? What do you have to be able to do?
- What knowledge is needed in order to have this competency? What do you have to know?
- What attitudes (motivation, the things that drive you) are needed to have this competency?

To repeat: students must be able to answer these questions themselves. They themselves must be able to identify the various aspects of a competency. They must also be able to reflect on their own skills, knowledge and attitudes, and do so in a focused way. This will not be successful if they cannot analyse competencies.
Assignment 1.2 sets the analytical process going. It may prove useful to discuss this assignment in front of the whole class as students will benefit from sharing their insights. In this, the second edition, this section has been revised and the section on personal traits and talents repositioned.

To wind up, Assignments 1.3 and 1.4 are important ones: in them the PDP Toolbox is put to use as a digital portfolio, and this represents an important step in competency management. Make sure you get your students to do them regularly: as they do them they will be adding relevant data to their PDP.
2 Who am I?

This chapter is about the ‘softer’ sides of competencies: personal traits and attitudes (the latter being very important). Things such as what drives us and our motivation – things that are relatively difficult to test – are also discussed in this chapter. As such, it is advisable to discuss all these assignments thoroughly once they have been done. It is particularly important to do this with the assignments in Section 2.10: after doing these assignments, the student will have built up a composite picture of who he or she actually is.

It is up to you and the student to determine which assignments to set and in what order. With sceptical students who reject anything wishy-washy you could start with the Enneagram (2.5) and/or Kolb’s learning styles (2.8). These are tests which deliver relatively tangible ‘hard’ data. Experience has shown that most students find tests of this sort very interesting. You could also elect to get students to start off by doing several assignments from Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. By approaching things this way they will have already acquired some degree of self-understanding, meaning that they are more able to tackle the assignments in Chapter 2. Assignment 3.1 (actually an intake assignment), however, should be done before any of the assignments in Chapter 2.

We ourselves have given various assignments in this chapter to sceptical higher professional education students as well as technology students early in their courses. As long as the teacher can keep the lessons light-hearted and take an exploratory and interested approach instead of a judgemental one, we have found this works well. It also helps if the teacher refers to his or her own experiences: his or her own Enneagram type or personal learning style, for example.

For coaching, we would suggest that you consider dividing the tasks: a number of the assignments could be done in a classroom setting or as part of another module. A number could be done in preparation for a mentor session, for example. This would mean that the mentor (or career advisor) could focus on discussions while the teacher ensures that the assignment is done to a suitable standard. This would then give the career advisor some reliable assignment results on which to base the discussion without needing to spend time supervising the assignment.

2.1 Why self-analysis?

Before you get students to do the assignments, it is a good idea to quickly go through the theory contained in the chapter. You will then be more capable of explaining the usefulness of the assignments to the students, therefore providing them with motivation to do them.

2.2 Self-reflection

To start off with, it may be a good idea to emphasise the fact that self-reflection is quite a simple thing: it is nothing more than thinking about oneself. This will make the concept less ponderous. The first assignment – a step-by-step plan – is suitable for first-year students and beyond. Devising a step-by-step plan is a skill in itself and practice makes perfect. The assignment can also be tailored to suit individual needs: for example, students who have difficulty introducing themselves could devise a step-by-step plan with a focus on this skill; those who find it hard to present arguments could focus on this in their plan.
This assignment has some similarities with 2.8 (on Kolb’s four learning stages) and 6.1 (a step-by-step plan for setting study targets), making it possible to combine the assignments in various ways.

The other assignments in this section are intended to address the issue of identity – who am I? – in a relatively playful way. They are suitable for every year of the course. The things that people disapprove of strongly or hold up as an ideal say something about who they are. It is a good idea to discuss these assignments afterwards, probing in particular into the why and wherefore of likes, pet hates and ideals can produce a lot of additional information. These are things that students find easy to talk about, and in doing so they provide an image of who they are. This will not only be useful for themselves but also for teachers and mentors. You could point out that pet hates often indicate an ‘allergic reaction’, and that allergic reactions can indicate certain core qualities (see 2.4).

2.3 Receiving feedback

This section contains what might be the students’ first exercise in receiving feedback. It is a relatively simple one: it is about receiving feedback from friends and acquaintances. This exercise will also provide useful material for talks with mentors and other teachers. In our experience, students are sometimes a bit hesitant about doing this assignment, though they end up being quite happy with what they have learned about themselves via their friends and acquaintances. Moreover, it is quite a relaxed assignment: giving and receiving feedback in a group context is more confronting.

If you also want to relate it to the giving of feedback, you could always refer to the I-I-You procedure, described in the general instructions to teachers. Sections 6.3 and 6.4 delve further into the giving and receiving of feedback, though are more suitable for advanced students.

2.4 Core qualities

We advise you to firstly introduce this exercise in a classroom setting: give a brief outline of the theory, then a couple of examples of core qualities, then ask a student or two if they can give another example of a core quadrant. Make things interactive as soon as you can. Using the examples you could write down a particular strength and then ask what quality you would get if it were carried to an extreme, then what quality would represent an allergic reaction to it, and so on. Examples taken from your own experience (of your own core qualities and pitfalls, therefore), will make the lesson more lively and lower the threshold for the student.

This exercise may come in handy at various times. Even first-year students with a bit of experience in self-reflection will be able to manage it quite well. The exercise can be done as an assignment in its own right, as part of a module or in preparation for a mentor discussion. It can also be combined with assignments from Chapters 3 and 4. After all, whenever the student is thinking about strengths, weaknesses and learning objectives, it makes sense to map out core qualities, pitfalls and challenges. Core qualities can also be used in conjunction with group evaluations (see Chapter 4): students can make core quadrants for each other or a sort of combined core quadrant for the group as a whole. Ofman himself has combined core qualities with the Enneagram: all the more reason for combinations with 2.5.

The advantage of such combinations is that when evaluations are done, qualities and pitfalls will enter the discussion fairly spontaneously. With the Belbin test (see 4.4), for example, there is sure to be mention of the ‘Shaper’ being energetic, though sometimes too much so. In fact, qualities and pitfalls will instantly find their way into the dialogue. Associations with ‘living examples’ of this sort will make core quadrants less abstract.
Note that with this assignment, you may come up against the following problems:

- It can be very difficult to verbalise qualities, pitfalls and challenges. Consequently, feedback on this assignment can be very useful.
- A lot of people are unaware of what their core qualities are and so if they use qualities as their starting point they may fail to complete the quadrant. We often receive reproaches rather than compliments – hearing more about our pitfalls, therefore, than our good qualities. So stress that it is sometimes easier to start with our ‘allergies’ and pitfalls:
  - If starting from an allergy, ask questions such as ‘What sort of person can’t you stand?’, ‘Why?’, ‘What does this say about you?’ (With those who can’t stand layabouts, it’s a fair bet that one of their core qualities is plenty of drive.)
  - If starting from a pitfall, ask questions such as ‘what reproaches are sometimes directed at you’? ‘Is there a grain of truth in them?’ ‘Can you come up with some examples?’ (If a person is accused of being pushy you won’t find it hard to come up with ‘drive’ as one of that person’s core qualities.)
- A lot of students have difficulty identifying their challenges because they confuse them with their allergies. Those with a lot of drive find patience challenging, but they often construe patience as doing nothing, which is their allergy. Firmness of purpose will be a challenge for flexible people, but they are inclined to confuse this with their allergy: inflexibility. Circumspect people confuse adaptability (their challenge) with carelessness, and so on.
- Allergies can serve a useful purpose because they heighten awareness. For example, those who are allergic to carelessness will be the first to detect it. Students are sometimes reassured to hear that that allergy also has a positive side.
- Qualities are sometimes confused with values. If this is so, students are not seeing the pitfalls. Honesty (seen in the form of behaviour or as a value) can be exaggerated, with the potential pitfall of either naivety or of being too direct. Integrity may have a potential pitfall too: being too rigid with principles, maybe even tending towards fundamentalism. But if students consider integrity and honesty as values that are not negotiable, they will not see their pitfalls.
- According to Ofman, working hard on oneself with the goal of effecting a radical transformation is pointless. For him, change is self-acceptance, and consequently also accepting one’s own faults, and there are three steps towards self-acceptance:
  - Observing yourself carefully: looking at all aspects of those quadrants and analysing just what is going on.
  - Taking responsibility for your own lack of balance: recognising that you are not perfect. Admit to having not only good qualities but also pitfalls and allergies, and acknowledge that you not only hurt others when these manifest themselves but also yourself.
  - Last but not least, taking a critical but unbiased look at yourself, not ignoring your imperfections. This is the only way you will get to see what your challenge is.

The last step is the hardest by far, and here coaching comes into its own. If you are the coach, make it clear that in this process of self-examination, your task is to offer support. It must never be to force a complete character change on the student, which would mean completely different core qualities. What you can do is assist in helping the student make relatively minor behavioural adjustments aimed at making the best of the qualities that are already there.

2.5 The Enneagram

Students are often interested in tests of this sort since they are still finding out who they are. In our experience, even advanced first-year students (i.e., those in the second half of their first year of study) can get quite a lot out of the test. However, it is a good idea to introduce the test by stressing that the intention is not to pigeonhole
people. People are always more than their test results alone, and a test result should
never be more than a basis for further investigation. This and other tests in this book
have been included for this purpose: to form a picture from more than a single vantage
point. During the discussion following the test, it is a good idea to ask the students
what the results mean for them personally. ‘I’m an achiever and an individualist’ is
meaningless hype unless students can come up with concrete examples which
demonstrate that they conform to these types. To give concrete examples is to give
form to the figures, and consequently we ask for examples in this assignment. In the
post-test discussion you could try to draw out more from the examples. It is our
experience that discussing the examples they give can be particularly insightful for
students.
Apparent contradictions can also be a good basis for further investigation. A person
might, for example, obtain high scores for the ‘Five’ type (the Investigator) and the
‘Eight’ type (the Challenger) though these types would seem contradictory. It would be
a good idea to check with the student that he or she really does identify with both
these types. If so, it could be useful to check whether this combination is making the
student act inconsistently or quite the opposite.
The Enneagram test may be done as an individual assignment or in combination with
core quadrants (2.4) or group evaluations (see Chapter 4). Students who are doing
Assignment 4.1 for a second time individually could also do an Enneagram and you
could invite them to draw links to this Enneagram in their reflective report.
Getting students to do this assignment twice, with a gap of a couple of years in
between, should be considered. Doing a test twice will often give a good picture of
personal development. Ask students to ponder any similarities and differences
between the two test results.

2.6 Values and motives

This section has been differently organised to the way it was in the first edition: the
emphasis is now less on norms and values and more on motives. It is a good idea to
give prior instructions, focussing particularly on whether students understand the
difference between norms, values and motives. The issue is whether the student
understands that we are delving for behavioural motives: what gets people going and
causes them to act the way they do. At the risk of being too simplistic, what is it that
makes us want to get out of bed each morning? If you like, take a few examples from
Appendix 3: for some people, ambition and a desire for adventure motivate their
actions. Others, however, may be more motivated by the desire for economic security
and family happiness.
This assignment lends itself to being combined with training in applying for jobs
(Chapter 5) or with individual profiles (3.17). It could also be done in conjunction with
Section 3.11, which deals with preparations for one’s own internship (it is good to be
aware of one’s motives). Doing the assignment in conjunction with competency profiles
(especially 3.18) is an obvious possibility. As we see it, it is a useful assignment for all
years of the course. A course and career advisor could use this assignment as the
basis for coaching in attitudes.

2.7 Motivation

This is a new section (that is, it was not in the first edition). It deals explicitly with
intrinsic and extrinsic student motivation and ties in well with the previous sections (on
individual motives) and the sections on learning styles that follow. The assignment is
very useful as the basis for mentor sessions both of the usual type as well as those
that aim to get a student who is ‘stuck in a groove’ back on track again. Naturally, in
the latter, probing into motivation may deliver new perspectives to both the course and
career advisor and the student. Section 3.14 deals with motivation, but more in
connection with concrete personal goals. This section (and the accompanying
assignment) highlights the connection between the student’s motivation and his or her personality. But there is nothing against combining 2.7 and 3.14.

2.8 Learning styles and Kolb’s Learning Cycle

Since this test will provide information about learning styles, it can obviously be included in a module on career skills. It can also deliver information that the mentor will find useful. It is a good idea to give prior instructions in which the purpose of this assignment is made clear: knowing what your natural learning style is will make it easier to know how to tackle the course. Teachers will also find it useful to know this about their students as it will provide them with additional means for tailoring their coaching to suit the student. It can obviously be done in combination with the step-by-step approach to self-reflection (see 2.2) since this way of approaching the process of personal reflection has similarities with Kolb’s ideas about learning from experience. Please note that each learning style’s weaknesses can be seen as constituting pitfalls as described by Ofman (see 2.4). Not considering the alternatives – a weakness of decisive people – is the pitfall that goes with the positive quality of being able to establish goals and priorities. Consider, therefore, tying the test in with core quadrants. And just as we suggested you do with core quadrants, you might start out with pitfalls and allergies and thus arrive at the student’s positive qualities and strengths (see the suggestions in 2.4).

In order to give you a sound basis for coaching, we will describe some professional situations that each type is inclined to be involved in. They may help you think up work methods that have a natural affinity with particular learning styles. Or you could advise students to avoid certain situations and actively seek out others. The underlying idea here is that each learning style will find its own manner of putting Kolb’s learning cycle into practice.

Doers like to start with concrete experiences. They are good at active experimentation and excel when they are required to adapt to new circumstances. They are often found in marketing or sales. They are known for being able to leap in at the deep end and get going instantly since in doing so they give expression to their need to act and to be daring. They prefer practical situations that correspond to identifiable real-life issues. Simulations of real-life situations will need to present them with obstacles that they cannot find a way around initially. However, this should only be temporary since constant failure will cause doers to lose their motivation.

• The post-assignment discussion: make sure you and the student spend some time going over what has happened. What went well? What did not?
• Theory: Why does a certain approach work and not another? Make connections with concrete observations and the conclusions the group comes up with. If needs be, have a list of tips handy.
• Form small groups and have them apply these tips to new situations (active experimentation).

Dreamers like to start with making observations and thinking about things. Since they have good imaginations they excel at viewing every angle of the situation under scrutiny. They often become personnel managers. They are known for their observational and mental prowess. Dreamers attach a lot of importance to contemplation and interpretation, have a rich imagination and take people and feelings seriously. They look at things from all angles. So as their coach or instructor, you could do the following:

• Make inventories of various experiences, pose hypothetical questions, base conclusions on observation and reflection. But do make sure that your students are aware of your purpose (though you need not make this known immediately).
• Link findings to theory (theorise and generalise), providing some suggestions in this regard. When you are explaining things, invite the group to share their own experiences.
• Ask how they would do things (active experimentation) or set some short exercises.
• Do exercises based on concrete practical situations and discuss them afterwards.

Thinkers like to theorise and generalise. They are good at observing and thinking abstractly and excel at using inductive reasoning to deduce theoretical models. They are often found in the research or planning departments. Their skill lies in their ability to bring in analytical and theoretical aspects. As a teacher you must be able to see beyond the material. Having the following in the curriculum will appeal to thinkers:
• A thorough explanation of the theory, of the research that has gone into it and of models and concepts (theorise and generalise).
• Assignments or exercises which involve applying theory (active experimentation) in combination with post-exercise discussion that prepares them for more complex practical situations.
• A practical situation which is complex and true to life (concrete experience but only after the theoretical basis that thinkers need has been laid).
• Discussion that is all-embracing and takes account of the various aspects (in order to put observing and reflecting skills to use) and relates back to the theory. Ensure that the discussion does not go on for too long.

The strength of Deciders lies in their ability to think abstractly and experiment actively, particularly when they have something to base it on: it might be a checklist or something similar. They excel at finding practical ways of applying their ideas and in thinking deductively, particularly in situations in which there is only one solution. They are often found in technical fields of one sort or another. They are known for their ability to learn on the job and like to have a clear brief. The following aspects of the curriculum will appeal to them:
• Checklists or step-by-step directions that can be put to immediate use in structured exercises (active experimentation). The post-exercise discussion should be very brief.
• Thereafter more complex exercises that are true to real life (concrete experience)
• Post-exercise discussion on the basis of a checklist. The reasons for inclusion of items on the checklist should also be discussed (observation and reflection).
• Going into things from a broader perspective (theorising and generalising): why is the checklist or step-by-step plan like it is, what rationale is behind it? If needs be, look at the tips given previously and what links them.

2.9 Active learning attitude and learning style

This section is new. The idea behind it is quite simple: learning that is competency-based demands an active learning attitude on the part of the student, manifested specifically in a learning style that is oriented towards practical application – an applicational learning style – and (more particularly) focussed on finding meaning – an experiential learning style. Many students, however, have a reproductive learning style (particularly in the initial stages), and are thus too passive and too little concerned with actively constructing their own learning pathways. The assignments in this section will not, of course, bring about a radical change. But they will help: they will make students aware that competency-directed learning demands a certain attitude towards learning and by doing the assignments they can gain some insight into their attitudes towards learning and improve them. We would suggest that you consider combining this section with 3.6 (on being proactive) and 3.7 (on setting targets). Section 2.9 (and the assignments in it) could also be used if you describe in general terms what a competency-based curriculum actually is. As soon as students hear that an active learning attitude is required they will investigate whether they have such an attitude.
2.10 Your personal development plan

The assignments in this section require students to include all the results of assignments in Chapter 2. If they do a good job of this assignment it will contain a lot of information about their attitudes and motives. Poor performance will mean that they still need a good deal of coaching in this area. In either case, a plan for personal development will contain a lot of material for coaching sessions. With a relatively intangible concept like attitude it is useful to have material of this sort.
3 What can I do as an individual?

This chapter contains various assignments in which students reflect on individual skills. Because there is some variety, students will not feel that they are doing too much of the same thing. As mentioned previously, it is up to the teacher as well as the student to determine whether all of the assignments should be done or only a selection. The order in which they are done can also be varied. Teachers can choose according to the individual: they may get students who are poor planners to repeat Assignment 3.8 (on time management) several times; students with motivational problems could be asked to do 3.14 several times, and so on.

Naturally, the assignments in this chapter may be done in combination with assignments in other chapters. For example, as we will suggest later, Assignment 3.2 lends itself to being done in combination with 4.1. You could also refer back to 2.5 (on Enneagram types) or ask students to draw up a core quadrant depicting their core qualities and what they become if they are taken too far, their allergies and their challenges (2.4). Assignment 2.8 requires students to reflect on their learning style (Kolb): it lends itself to being combined with 3.2 (on individual progress) or 3.8 (on time management).

With all of these assignments, one outcome might be that some students will realise that their standards need to be improved or that they need to take a closer look at themselves. In this case, you could suggest that they do 6.1 (Study targets in four steps) and the first assignment in 2.2 (Steps in self-reflection).

In this second edition, most of the many newly added assignments are to be found in Chapter 3 and most of them have to do with formulating personal goals.

3.1 What can I do already?

This assignment is intended to be used as an intake tool and it lends itself to being done in conjunction with the initial mentor discussion. We suggest that you discuss the results of this assignment in some depth for reasons that include the probable lack of familiarity among students in relation to self-reflection and such things. Students are also inclined to have difficulty identifying their strengths and weaknesses at first and consequently, steady but persistent probing may bring up a lot of additional information. In particular, ask for specific examples since examples are what make matters concrete. If this approach is not successful, investigate what it is that the student enjoys doing at school and why. In our experience, persistent questioning of this sort will be more productive if the students have been able to force themselves to think things through first and make some notes. Moreover, if there is something down on paper you will at least have something to go by initially: having absolutely nothing in writing will mean that you will have to find a starting point.

3.2 How far have I progressed?

This represents a continuation of 3.1. Halfway (or a semester) into the intake year, students will be recording the progress they have made. They will also be reflecting on the competencies needed for their career (assuming at least that they have been included in the course requirements in a form that is accessible to the student). If students have had some experience of being in project groups during the past half year it is advisable for them to look at the progress they have made in this area. One way of doing this is by discussing the results of Assignment 3.2, done in combination with Assignment 4.1, with the mentor. Alternatively, Assignments 3.2 and 4.1 could be included in an orientation module on careers or career skills or something similar.
If the career advisor observes that the student is a poor planner, he or she could suggest combining 3.2 with 3.8 (on time management) and/or 3.9 (on establishing priorities). Another option is to examine learning styles (2.8 and 2.9). If the career advisor detects motivational problems, this assignment could be combined with 2.7 or 3.14. If the student is not good at creating goals, combining it with 3.7 is an obvious choice. Assignment 3.2 could be repeated several times, enabling the student to keep track of his or her progress throughout the course and to discuss it with the mentor.

In this, the second edition, the main difference is that in these assignments we require students to come up with hard evidence rather than merely coming up with some examples. We have opted for this since portfolios are playing an increasingly important role in competency-based education. The issue is, of course, what constitutes a piece of evidence and what does not. The points shown below are tentatively offered as suggestions:

- Extensive notes made in preparation for meetings
- A self-designed folder
- Test results relating to a minor subject or a project
- An overview of exam results
- A checklist used in a minor subject or minor project
- Information selected by the student
- Mid-term or final assessment reports
- Letters from a client complimenting the student
- Video films of a successful presentation
- Assessment and test material
- Pretty well anything that the student can find to demonstrate that he or she has acquired certain competencies.

We would suggest that the students introduce each piece of evidence by outlining exactly what the piece of evidence in question demonstrates and how. Teachers would otherwise have to spend far too much time investigating this themselves. Moreover, getting students to write a brief summary of their competencies accompanied by some evidence that they have mastered them has much to recommend it. As well as making marking easier, the student is forced into doing a certain degree of organisation. Particularly with more complex subjects, we would also recommend that in the intervening period you ask students to bring in some bits of evidence to discuss with the group. Simple questions such as ‘what are your main achievements?’ and ‘what evidence do you have to support this?’ may often be all you need to ask. In our experience, this is a good way of helping students to realise just what will serve as appropriate evidence and what not. Sometimes it takes a discussion of this sort for creative students to realise that they can present their draft folders as evidence of their creativity, for very punctual students to realise that their carefully drawn up timetables should be a central part of their portfolio, and so on. Discussion of learning goals after they have been formulated is important enough to be treated separately, and will looked at under 6.1, ‘Study targets in four steps’.

3.3 Four behavioural types

This section is quite similar to Chapter 2 and the assignments in it, and can be combined with various assignments in that chapter. We would advise setting this assignment for somewhat more mature students: first-year students may have not acquired quite enough self-knowledge yet to be able to judge whether they are introverted or extroverted types, and will not always see the relevance of these concepts. Having said this, however, our first-year students did find this assignment quite a lot of fun to do.
3.4 Four behavioural colours

Students often find this assignment more understandable than Assignment 3.3, despite the fact that 3.4 builds onto that assignment (and such things as the distinction between introvert and extrovert). It is the same as the assignment in 4.7 only there it is a group assignment for project purposes. It is up to you whether you get students to do one or both of the assignments. The individual assignment could also be done as a small-group assignment during a tutorial. Whatever form the group assignment takes, doing it as a group assignment has the advantage that students have a great deal of fun trying to guess each others’ ‘behavioural colour’.

You can make this assignment a more lively and enlightening one by introducing these behavioural styles at the hand of some good examples. You could even indicate your own type. A bit of acting talent would not go astray here. With some student groups you may find it helpful to let students act out each others’ behaviour or to ask questions such as ‘Who is the reddest type in the group? In what sense?’

In the discussion that follows this assignment it is useful to not only investigate the most identifiable styles but also those that do not strike a familiar cord with the students. Why would this be so? What does this say about their motivation? Note that the student is, in fact, investigating four issues: how do I deal with challenges (red), how important for me is it to be able to influence others and to pass on my enthusiasm (yellow), how important for me are harmony and stability in my environment and within the team (green), and how important to me are precise guidelines, procedures and details (blue). You could go through all these questions with the student. This instrument was designed originally in conjunction with a test: the MDI scan. While there is no doubt that this is an excellent test, it is an expensive one. On its own (minus the test, therefore), this assignment is useful enough to obtain a global impression, particularly in conjunction with the other assignments in this book. You could consider the MDI scan if your students are following a highly targeted course of coaching and very specific form of assessment.

3.5 Basic behaviour versus response behaviour

This assignment is particularly useful for students who have motivational problems at school though behave quite differently at home. Their ‘response style’ may be at odds with how they usually behave and this may be preventing their corresponding fundamental strengths from manifesting themselves at school. The trick to this assignment is a simple one: looking at what you find stimulating outside of school hours, looking at how you act when you are at school and drawing your own conclusions. Or even simpler: ask yourself whether you really are yourself when you are at school. If not, what can you do about it? Consider combining this assignment with 2.7 and 3.14 (both of which deal with motivation).

With this assignment, it is crucial that the results be thoroughly discussed since you would be fooling yourself to think that students can draw the right conclusions on their own. If the discussion is not useful, you could perhaps consider doing the MDI scan since this will clearly show the difference between fundamental behaviour and reactive behaviour. You could also consider combining this assignment with those in Sections 2.1 and 2.2.

3.6 Being proactive

This section (as well as Section 3.7) is new to this edition. Its premises are fairly simple: without proactivity (and an active attitude towards learning), competency management is just not possible. Since proactivity is also an important aspect of virtually every career, we felt it necessary to include a section on it. There are three assignments in this section. If necessary they could be combined with each other.
• Assignment 3.6 requires students to investigate how proactive as against reactive they are.
• Assignment 3.7 requires students to investigate this in greater depth, focussing more on concrete experiences via a logbook. It is up to you to decide whether this is taking things too far or not. The regular use of a logbook in assignments intended to enhance training in managerial qualities or the like is something that could be considered. Otherwise you could consider only asking those students who really need to get going and become more proactive to keep a logbook.
• Assignment 3.8 requires students to be proactive immediately: they will stipulate which competences they intend to develop and how. This is a useful assignment since competency-based education requires students to take every opportunity they can find to think actively about developing their competencies. On the other hand, students must be up to this assignment. Obviously, they should be given this assignment only after they have done Assignment 3.6 and/or 3.7 to a satisfactory standard and only when they can be expected to have a relatively clear idea of the competency profile required by their course.

3.7 Setting targets

This section is new to the second edition. Target setting lends itself naturally to being combined with proactivity (3.6) since without targets one will not know where to direct that proactivity. But on the other hand, if the student shows no signs of being proactive at all, setting targets is not going to help matters much either. This section (and the various assignments contained in it) is about two types of target: a personal manifesto expressed in the form of a mission or a motto, and actual and specific objectives. The idea behind this is that formulations of personal manifestos without reference to specific and concrete targets may end up being too vague. However, as the common denominator behind specific targets of one kind or another, such manifestos can be very illuminating indeed. Students sometimes set goals without being aware of their reasons for choosing that particular goal and no other. One then wonders what the underlying reason for the choice is. The underlying reason should be reflected in a personal manifesto. One could describe a specific target as being an expression of one’s personal manifesto put into operational form. If a person chooses the motto ‘Quality must come first’ as an expression of his or her personal manifesto, each individual target should exemplify his or her striving for the highest quality standards. Whenever the student in question does poor work, that student can be called to account on the basis of his or her manifesto and targets.

In our experience, even first-year students are quite capable of drawing up a personal manifesto and to derive targets from it. They often find such a manifesto a handy tool: it provides a foundation of sorts from which they can determine which goals are relevant to them and which are not. Teachers can promote this relatively easily by looking at each personal manifesto and asking for the student to specify examples and actual experiences, then following this up by asking questions such as ‘and how do you intend to achieve this in your present project?’ An assignment to create an attractive logo (or something similarly creative) will arouse a lot of active interest as well as producing greater insight into underlying motives if the teacher is able to delve further. Creative projects of this kind may also sometimes provide unexpected angles on students. These assignments lend themselves to group discussions: a project group can benefit greatly from joint deliberation about specific targets and the group’s common manifesto. It is also a useful exercise: a project group in the professional field should always be able to adopt an identifiable position and students cannot practice this enough. It was partly with this in mind that we included some group assignments in this section. Another consideration was that for students, discussions are a particularly good source of mutual stimulation and learning.
3.8 Time management

This is an exercise that is aimed in particular at making students aware of what they do with their time. In general, students timetable their activities on a purely irrational basis, not really aware that they are making choices of one kind or another. Often it is only after the exercise that they start to become aware that they are putting a lot of time into things that do not deserve to be prioritised. This exercise will hopefully help them to plan their time better. It is a good idea to discuss the exercise results thoroughly with students who are poor planners and to delve into why they spend their time the way they do. The assignment can obviously be set in conjunction with mentor discussions (see, for example, 3.2) and on occasion with learning styles (2.8).

3.9 Establishing priorities: procrastinators, yes-men, wasters and planners

This new section (it was not in the first edition) is an extension of the previous section on time management, and as such provides additional tools for time management and planning. Students are firstly given an explanation of how the tool works: they learn (once again) that with everything that they do they should firstly ask themselves whether it is important and how pressing it is. First and foremost, though, they will find out what their particular type is: are they procrastinators, yes-men, wasters or planners? Naturally, while most people have elements of each type, it is always useful to look at your experiences and determine what type has predominated at any one time. Moreover, learning to recognise typical behaviour (how a procrastinator, for example, usually acts) can be the start of a change for the better. This is why we want students to determine for themselves what type they are (3.14). In the assignments that follow, students will start to establish real priorities (3.15) and make a weekly timetable (3.16). Those who have particular difficulty with planning would profit from combining 3.15 with 3.16 and discuss each in depth with their teacher or career advisor.

3.10 The Deming cycle: plan, do, check, act!

This, too, is a new section. It expands on 3.8 and 3.9, both of which deal with time management. In particular, this section is about monitoring the way one plans things. In real life – both in the student’s life as well as in the vocational field – there is more to planning than merely making timetables. To start off with, plans always have to be checked – something that is frequently overlooked in real life. It is also essential to be able to adjust one’s plans: in our current society we must be able to revise our plans on an on-going basis – all the more reason, therefore, to practise checking and adjusting our plans. We decided to use the Deming cycle because of its relative popularity in the modern working world as a tool and because it is a simple and useful way of checking things. The accompanying assignments serve a dual function: firstly, as practice material for checking and adjusting plans, and secondly, as a monitoring tool for both the student and the teacher.

3.11 Contact with interns

In this assignment, students will interview students who are doing an internship or those who have already done so. This will help them prepare for their own internship and will also add to the image they have of their chosen career. The information they will get from contact with students who are somewhat more advanced and only slightly older will often be more understandable to them than information that teachers provide.
Assignment 3.7 could be included in a module on career skills or career orientation or something similar and could be combined with initial reflections on career competencies (Part C of 3.2). As an additional assignment, you could get students to give oral presentations on the topic and thus encourage a class discussion on career skills. As another variation on this, you could get students to interview those about to graduate or recent graduates.

3.12 The student’s own internship

This assignment should be done immediately prior to or as the students’ internship commences and they reflect on their learning objectives for the first time. It is essential for the supervising teacher to discuss the assignment with his or her students as soon as possible. It is particularly important to try to identify the student’s underlying motives with the objective of making teacher and student alike aware of what their expectations of each other are, not to mention the student’s aspirations and the things that he or she is apprehensive about. If you like, you could ask the student to take notes during the discussion. These notes could supplement the answers to this assignment. We would again stress the importance of discussing the student’s learning objectives in depth. For more about learning objectives, see Section 6.1. For more about personal objectives, see Section 3.7.

3.13 Learning through internships

We originally designed this assignment with an internship in mind, though it can also be used in school projects (if desired, in combination with assignments in Chapter 4) or during combined practical and theoretical segments (at the end of a semester, for example). It can also be useful as a way of demonstrating competencies acquired elsewhere: the student could be asked to make a report in which he or she shows how out-of-school activities of one kind or another have provided training in relevant competences. If this assignment is done in conjunction with an internship, it is a good idea to have the results of 3.8 (and any notes that may have been taken) close at hand. Thorough discussion of the assignment results with the teacher and wherever possible, the internship supervisor, is also important. Students always experience their internship as vitally important and so it is important for them to reflect back on it in some depth.

3.14 Motivation and development

This is an assignment that could serve more than one function. It could play a part in a standard mentor session halfway through or at the end of the first year, as a follow-up to 3.1 and to supplement 3.2. It could also be set for students whose motivation seems to have taken a dip. With the latter, it is sometimes useful to also get students to formulate their learning objectives according to the guidelines set out in 6.1. It could then be combined with 3.7 (on setting targets) and maybe also 3.6 (on being proactive). Whatever the choice, the post-assignment discussion will almost be more important than the assignment itself, particularly if the students are unmotivated. The assignment will lend structure to the discussion that follows since the students will have had to put quite some energy into putting down in writing the factors that motivate them. Even motivated students will find this helpful. Note that since motivation and attitude have a lot in common, you could certainly consider combining Assignment 3.10 with assignments in Chapter 2. In particular, it has a lot in common with Section 2.7 since this also deals with motivation, albeit more with the issue of ‘Who am I?’ and less so with personal objectives.
3.15 Higher education thinking and working level: ten generic core qualifications

This is an assignment for more advanced students for whom the issue of meeting high professional standards has become immediate. It could be linked to assignments in Chapter 5: for example, 5.5, which deals with looking into job options. After all, many jobs require intellectual and professional standards of a high level. You could also consider combining this assignment with weightier aspects of the course: the final year, an internship or minor studies. In fact, the issue that students are required to investigate is whether they are already functioning at a high professional level.

3.16 Higher education thinking and working level: the Dublin descriptors

This section is a new one in this, the second edition. As with 3.15, the underlying intention is gauging whether the student is functioning at a high professional level. Since the first edition, the Dublin descriptors have come into prominence and hence needed to be included in this book. Moreover, as descriptors, they are extremely lucid. This section can be used at the same time and for the same target group as described in Section 3.15. We ourselves have put the assignment to use when students apply to do certain minor studies. Students who were not able to demonstrate that they had met the standards prescribed by the Dublin descriptors were not admitted; students who were able to do so immediately saw the relevance to the minor in question, the more so since this assignment was combined with 3.18, which is about the career’s competency profile. In particular, however, the assignment is useful for monitoring and final assessment purposes. You could consider getting students who are in their final year to do this assignment (with its accompanying portfolio of items of evidence) in order to demonstrate that they really have reached the required professional level. For further information about items of evidence, see the comments relating to Section 3.2.

3.17 My personal profile

Teachers should realise that students may sometimes have trouble identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and consequently we would recommend that they only be asked to draw up a personal profile when they have practiced self-reflection and have had a lot of feedback. A personal profile could be put together in the fourth year of study in combination with training in applying for jobs (see Chapter 5 and also 6.8, amongst others) though doing so in an earlier year of the course and discussing it personally with a mentor is also an option. You could also consider combining these two options. In any case, we would suggest that you consider getting your students to draw up a personal profile on several occasions and compare the profiles. This will provide them (as well as the mentor) with a good opportunity to get an overview of the progress they have made.

Personal profiles can be drawn up in conjunction with various other assignments: with core qualities (2.4), Enneagram types (2.5), Belbin test results (4.3) and a number of other tests and reflective exercises in this book as well as with the final assignments in each chapter (from which a new overall picture constantly emerges).

3.18 Professional competence profile

Reflecting on competencies – leading to an initial picture of the future career – was first brought up in Section 3.2. That picture will have been fleshed out during students’ internships and practical projects. The time has now come for a professional competency profile to be drawn up. We have improved on the first edition in now
asking students to reflect explicitly on their knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour. In our experience, this allows the student more scope to really examine in detail every aspect of a particular competency, which in turn enables them to isolate their strengths and weaknesses: some might need to brush up on their knowledge; others might need to work on their motivation. Since the Dublin descriptors delve explicitly into knowledge and application of knowledge, students will be brought more in line with them. This assignment could be done several times: some time after an internship, and again just before the student finishes the course, as an aspect of training in applying for jobs. It ties in well with minor studies too: you could get your students to apply to do at least one of the minor studies and demonstrate in their applications that they possess the career skills required by the minor study. Training in job applications targeted at specific careers could be included in some of these minor studies. A professional competency profile can serve a good purpose in this regard. It goes without saying that this assignment lends itself to being done in combination with assignments in Chapter 5.

3.19 Keeping your PDP up to date

This assignment will give students a sort of an overall picture of what they can do and what they are competent in. It provides highly interesting material for a mentor discussion and highly interesting material for a module (or part of same) on career skills for advanced students. Combining the two is also a possibility.
4 Where do my team skills lie?

Since teamwork is an important aspect of most professional careers we have devoted an entire chapter to the subject. Most of the assignments take the form of group evaluations in conjunction with individual evaluations. Students are asked to reflect constantly on their competencies in relation to group work and will also be given feedback on them from fellow students and teachers. Students will frequently be asked to make a reflective report based on the feedback.

We have aimed at variety: students will not object to doing a lot of group evaluations as long as they do not have to do the same thing all the time. We would suggest getting students to at least do Assignments 4.1 and 4.2. But as mentioned previously, students should not by any means be made to do every assignment. You may decide to leave some assignments out or combine some with others (for example, 4.2 with 4.3). You could tailor your approach: if, for example, your teams are fairly mediocre and require more intensive coaching, you could combine various assignments to be done simultaneously. You could also scrap some parts of an assignment. For example, the reflective part need not always form part of every assignment. Too much self-reflection may well have a demotivating effect.

Student reflections may be discussed by several categories of teacher:

- By supervising teachers who refer to student reflections when they coach these students during Project X.
- By teachers supervising Project Y, who because they are familiar with student reflections during Project X now know more about those students’ prior histories.
- By mentors, who because they have access to such documents have more tools for coaching students.

Assignment 4.9 (in which students combine data derived from all of the assignments in Chapter 4) is particularly relevant to this last category.

We would suggest that where possible, group evaluations be supervised by teachers. Having said this, we realise that this will not always be possible. You could consider getting more advanced students to do their group evaluations without a supervising teacher, though we would suggest that in such a case you set a few guidelines beforehand. For example:

- Every student must be given an opportunity to say
  - What they think the group is doing well
  - What they think the group is doing less well
  - Which team members are performing well and in what way
  - Which team members are performing less well and in what way.
- In giving feedback, students should stick to the rules governing feedback as much as possible, and must observe the I-I-You procedure (see general instructions).
- All students must be allowed to say what is on their mind before there is any discussion. However, the chair should summarise what has been said and the minute-taker should note down the key points.
- Discussion may only take place when every student has had their say.
- Only after a discussion should the group draw its joint conclusions and make arrangements and establish learning objectives for team members or the group as a whole.

In our experience, students themselves experience the above as workable procedures. The teacher can refer to the minutes to check that the evaluation has been serious and fruitful.

Assignments in the other chapters may be combined in various ways with those in this chapter. If the teacher is only coaching the group from a distance (and not during its actual meetings), then he or she could, for example, elect to have every student hand
in a brief self-evaluation at the end of every week. See Section 3.13 for how to go about this. If the Belbin test (4.4) or a similar evaluation (for example, 4.1 or 4.2) shows that some issues need to be addressed and the teacher would like to investigate the factors that underlie them, he or she could refer to 2.4, which deals with core qualities and these same qualities in an ‘extreme form’. It may be useful to, for example, indicate that the weak point of the Belbin ‘Shaper’ type (4.4) or an extremely ‘Red’ type (4.7) is indeed pushiness, but that that this represents an extreme form of the core quality of decisiveness. As part of the discussion that follows the assignment, students could even map out each others’ core quadrants (see 2.4). In the discussion that follows 4.9 (in which the students are required to put all the assignments together) it may prove useful to investigate their Enneagram type (2.5). The possibilities do not end here.

These assignments may indicate that the student needs to improve his or her performance. If so, you could refer him or her to 6.1 (‘Study targets in four steps’) and the first of the assignments in 2.2 (‘Steps in self-reflection’).

### 4.1 Group assessment

Evaluations have shown that students following higher professional education courses at the Hogeschool Drenthe have found this assignment to be useful and valuable, as have their teachers. Feedback in which students discuss the way they have performed as part of the group and the performance of the group as a whole has a positive effect on the group process. Moreover, feedback from fellow students as well as the supervising teacher contributes towards the student’s self-knowledge.

This assignment is targeted at first-year students who are having their first experiences as members of project groups. We recommend getting students to do this assignment in two short consecutive projects. Doing so will make it easier for both students and teachers to keep track of the progress that is being made. Part 3 of this assignment (post-assignment self-reflections) may be discussed by the supervising teacher, who will determine whether the reflections have been adequate to the purpose. The student’s reflections could also provide some material for a mentor discussion, giving the mentor a new angle on coaching. As well as this, the teacher supervising the second project may refer to the student’s reflections on the first project.

This assignment can be done at some depth, particularly if it is being done a second or even a third time. Consider combining the final reflective assignment with an Enneagram test (2.5) or an assignment to devise a core quadrant (2.4). The checklists are intended to give the students something to go by. We get students to give each other a final mark and so obtain a clear overall assessment. It is our experience that final marks are particularly good at promoting lucid discussion.

It would be ideal if these assignments could be ‘fed back’ to students under the supervision of the teacher overseeing the process, with the students giving each other feedback. When the feedback session starts, the teacher should have the following listed (on paper, therefore!):

- The group’s strengths and weaknesses according to the students themselves
- The strengths and weaknesses of each team member (the picture the feedback scores in particular give).

The way these are listed may take various forms:

- Each student could be given a graph showing where he or she is placed in relation to the average feedback score.
- A table with at the top the scores that the student has given him or herself and underneath this all the individual scores (= those scores that fellow students have given the student in question).

The second option is best done with digital checklists that automatically generate the relevant data in the form of a print-out.
Should this all be impossible because of lack of time, then the following steps will suffice:

- Firstly, jot down in shorthand form the answers to open questions about oneself from Student X.
- Then quickly read through all the feedback scores, noting only the things that are striking (for example, that everybody give X a low mark for ‘listens attentively’ or that X’s average is very high).

Students are inclined to think that feedback represents an interim assessment. However, feedback sessions represent no more than an interim diagnosis. Make students aware of this at the earliest opportunity. The objective is solely to list the things that are going well as against those that could be improved. Add that since the students are still in the middle of a learning process, there is no shame in still having things to learn. The minutes-taker should be made aware of what he or she needs to record: not everything that has been said though certainly the strengths and weaknesses (or rather, the things that have been learned/the things that still have to be learned) of the group as a whole as well as for each individual team member. Arrangements about learning objectives should also be noted down.

It is essential that students themselves be allowed to say what they think about the group as a whole and about themselves as individuals. Then and only then will they themselves be in charge of their own group process. The following steps should be followed:

- Start off by talking about the group. Everybody should be given the opportunity to say what they think the group’s best points are. Encourage students to mention as many strengths as possible! Should they forget some of them (strengths that they have already mentioned in writing but are now overlooking; strengths that are obvious to you but not to them) bring them up! Do this with poorly functioning groups as well: they, in particular, will profit from knowing what they can do. Take the opportunity to throw in the odd bit of pep talk: (‘well, you certainly do have quite a number of strengths’ or something to that effect). This will usually serve to break the ice.
- Then and only then run through the group’s weaknesses, or rather, the things that could be improved (again, encourage the students to bring them up, throw in those they have overlooked, and so on). Whether the group is a strong or a weak one, allow the students to expand on what can and should be improved.
- Then announce that you are going to discuss each team member individually. Emphasise again that this does not mean ripping each other’s performance to shreds but giving feedback from which to learn. Get your students to alternate in doing this: Catherine talks about Peter’s performance first, then Peter gives his opinion of Catherine. The group should be allowed to add its bit too. The advantage of an alternating approach is that you will thereby gently coerce students into talking about each other and everybody will start to loosen up. As well as this, everybody will get to have a say.
- Then ask Catherine what it is that Peter does so well (and encourage the group to add its bit).
- After all of Peter’s good points have been enumerated, ask either Catherine or Peter what could be improved (and again, the group should have a say too).
- If suggestions for improvements have been made, get the group (or even the student in question) to give some concrete comments on them. If necessary, provide some suggestions yourself and make sure you check that the student has understood and intends to follow them up.
- If no one has anything to say, you could ask some direct questions. For example, if the scores indicate to you that the group finds Peter a bit arrogant, you could say ‘What is Peter like during discussions? Is it easy to get the upper hand from him? Is he swayed by strong arguments? OK, let’s say that Peter perseveres in his opinion: we agreed that this was one of his strengths. But does he overdo that perseverance? Or is he simply persistent in the right sort of way?’
• If despite this sort of probing nobody dares to mention any negative aspects, you should indicate that the scores suggest that Peter could improve in the following ways (which you then proceed to list).
• Summarise at regular intervals what the students are saying.
• When Catherine has said all she wants to say about Peter, allow him his turn to talk about Catherine.
• Give your own opinion of each team member. Remember, though: allow the students to have their say first! Make sure you respect any opinions that differ from your own.

One more tip for livening things up: we often start with open questions such as 'Who is the hardest worker in this group?', 'Who has the best ideas?', 'Who puts the most work into his or her answers?', 'Who has the best grasp of the theory?' or 'Which team members ensure that the atmosphere is good or are the team’s jokers?' A couple (no need for all) of these questions will often be enough to break the ice. They often provide a sort of bridge in: sometimes it will instantly become clear who are the group’s strongest members and who the least so.

Make sure that you do not insist that all the rules of giving feedback be followed, especially not the first time. Your students should not be overwhelmed by information. But do remind them of the feedback rules (see 6.3 and 6.4). It can also be useful to provide training in giving feedback prior to or after group evaluations of this sort. A communication teacher, for example, could do it in the form of a role-play situation. Finally, do not overlook the importance of minute-taking and follow-up. The teacher should initially assess how well the minutes have been taken. The minutes should include such things as arrangements relating to effecting improvements and how everybody should tackle them. Such arrangements should be included in the individual reports as well. Students will need to be called to account if they fail to keep to the arrangements.

4.2 Group assessment for advanced students

This assignment is aimed at students who have had some experience of project-based learning and its corresponding evaluations (see 4.1). In our experience, this open and relatively simple assignment form is quite effective.

The written parts of this assignment should be checked by the supervising teacher, who should also preside over the evaluation discussion. However, at least part of this task could be left to the students themselves.

Students should hand in their documents prior to the evaluation discussion. What is the best way of giving feedback on them? In our experience, ‘cutting and pasting’ works effectively and efficiently, whether done physically or digitally. In this way two types of documents can be generated:
• A document listing all the group’s strengths and weaknesses
• For each group member, a document listing all his or her strengths and weaknesses as that person sees them, and pasted below all the assessments that the individual group members have given that person.

Having these documents in view during the evaluation discussion will help you keep track of things.
It is essential to let the students speak for themselves during the evaluation discussion. You should adopt the role of chairperson rather than spokesperson. Go through the discussion points in the order in which they are shown in the assignment. For additional suggestions, read the instructions for 4.1 above. When assessing individual members of the group, two approaches are open to you. You could ask 'Who would like to start mentioning Charles’s strengths?' or you yourself could choose a student to start things off. As a variant on this, you could ask Charles to give James feedback first (allowing the group to have its say too), followed by James giving Charles feedback. With shy groups, structuring things like this carries the advantage of
eliminating the risk of awkward silences but the disadvantage of reducing the spontaneity. It is up to you and the group to decide which choice is best. Since students will already have had some experience in giving and receiving feedback, you can insist on a higher standard than with 4.1. You could make sure that checklists relating to giving and receiving feedback and comments on how feedback should be given and received are at hand. If you think that the feedback checklist is too long you could make use of the I-I-You procedure (see the chapter in which general instructions are given).

4.3 Competency-based group evaluation

This section is new. However, the idea behind it is straightforward: in competency-based learning, projects revolve around competencies, and hence it is logical that the competencies in question should play a role in group evaluations. We would suggest that these competencies be mentioned somewhere: in the project handbook or minor study workbook. The assignment’s objective is not only for students to evaluate each other and give their opinions but for them to get a clearer picture of the competencies via the evaluation. To help keep things concrete, we require students to look at all four components of a competency: knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour. We tend to use this assignment in minor studies aimed at career orientation, where it produces good results. Many students consciously choose their minor studies with their future career in mind and so are particularly interested in the relevant competencies. It is recommended that you organise tutorials on competencies at the time of doing evaluations: consider asking a professional in the vocational area or a course teacher to hold them. They will give the student a better picture of what the career requires in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviour, and this in turn will provide a better picture of what this project, with its career focus, requires of the student. It is also a good idea to do the evaluations in conjunction with a course teacher since he or she will often have more of an overview of the required competencies than an ordinary coach. Assignment 4.3 may be repeated. Doing so will help the student put together a useful folder of competencies.

4.4 Group evaluation using the Belbin test

For reasons of copyright we were unfortunately unable to include the Belbin test in this book. But you could refer students to the Internet, include the test in a handout or get the students look it up in the book by Belbin himself (1993). The fastest way is via the Internet since the results will be automatically calculated. Some Internet tests include a type that we have not discussed: the ‘Specialist’. However, in our opinion, this type is closer to being a task type than a character type: within a group, a specialist is distinguished primarily by his or her expertise and acumen in certain specialised areas. It is our experience that students really enjoy doing personality tests, particularly the Belbin test. The results are often found to be useful in terms of the personal insights they deliver. Personality tests also help them to understand each other better. We would repeat the comment we make in 2.5 (on the Enneagram): our intention is not to pigeonhole students but to give them an additional tool for use in investigating their own identity. We would also repeat that it is about giving students models with which to identify rather than scores.

A combined lecture and seminar on the Belbin test in which various project groups participate is a good way of reinforcing this assignment. It could be held by a teacher of communication. It is even worth considering getting students to do their own Belbin test during the lecture/seminar, with the teacher outlining at the start the strengths and weaknesses of the various roles, then looking at the most usual role combinations, preferably illustrating them with reference to individuals within the student group itself.
A lecture/seminar of this kind would suffice to give students enough understanding of the Belbin test and the theory behind it, making it easier for them to do the test (and discuss the results).

Just as with the Enneagram test (see 2.5), some role combinations may appear contradictory: the 'Team Worker' and the 'Shaper' combination, for example. It is interesting to see whether the student is able to identify with both roles and whether he or she is able to unite them harmoniously. A 'Shaper' who can get on with others – a person who is able to exert pressure on others in a relatively unpushy way – would be a harmonious combination, but a pushy person who dares not push since he or she likes to be liked would be a discordant combination. Take a 'Plant-Monitor' – an ideas person who is able to simultaneously analyse everything: is this person discordant (analysing his or her ideas into the grave) or is he or she a balanced person (able to analyse his or her ideas to give weight to them)?

Note that the Belbin test also looks at motivation. A true 'Shaper' will be motivated by factors that are intrinsically different to those of the true 'Team Worker'. By alerting the student to this you will make the student aware that the Belbin test also provides some insight into motives, motivation and attitude, and consequently to the question (addressed in Chapter 2), 'Who am I?' During the group discussion it may prove useful to point out that the various group roles could also indicate differing motives within the group.

You could combine Assignment 4.4 with 4.2: the Belbin test combined with an open discussion of each others' strengths and weaknesses. A joint combination with 4.3 is another possibility, since 'Shapers' will have different competencies to 'Monitors'. You could also consider having students do the Belbin test twice: in, for example, their second and fourth years. They could then investigate to what extent their group roles have changed and why. Experience shows that change is often accompanied by personal growth, and it is satisfying to have this registered somewhere. Get your students to reflect on the similarities and differences between the test results.

### 4.5 Group roles

You can leave it entirely up to the students to do this assignment themselves (and discuss it themselves afterwards). In principle, all the teacher needs to do is check the minutes. One condition, however, is that students should have had some experience in doing group evaluations. They can get this experience by doing Assignments 4.1 and 4.2 first.

This assignment could also be slotted in when the situation requires a special approach. We often use it with groups that have reached an impasse. If this is the case, this assignment can offer some useful ways around the impasse since it provides some insight into who plays which roles within the group. We sometime combine it with the Belbin test (see 4.4). If you put the assignment to use in a coaching situation targeted at poorly functioning groups, make sure that after it has been done there is an in-depth discussion of it with the teacher. Any arrangements relating to ways of improving performance must be carefully recorded. If the group is performing really badly, coaching based on individual reflective reports is a good approach to take.

### 4.5 Four communication styles

As indicated, you could get students to do Part A only, making it more a personal reflection than a group reflection. Should you elect to set the entire assignment – including the group reflection – then we suggest that you set it for advanced groups that have already completed Assignments 4.1 and 4.2. Combining it with 4.4 is sometimes a good idea since this combination will come up with some interesting associations. The Belbin 'Shaper' type is, in general, more an action type than a people type. As a rule, the teacher does not have to be present for a good discussion
to take place: a teacher need only refer to the results and the minutes. As with the Enneagram and the Belbin test, this assignment does not aim to pigeonhole students either.

Note that these styles say something about motives: a person who likes action often has different priorities to a person with a ‘people focus’. If you set this assignment as a self-reflection (Part A only) then you could chose to discuss the results of the assignment in more depth if you like. Should you opt for a group reflection you could get students to investigate any differences they find significant. In this case, the assignment will provide some insight into the various motivations within the group.

4.7 Behaviour in a team

This assignment is only suitable for students who have already done 3.4, 4.1 and 4.2. The theory in 3.4 is essential background knowledge and without experience in doing group evaluations (4.1 and 4.2) students will be at a loss with this assignment.

In our experience, this assignment can provide a very useful insight into group processes. A ‘Red type’, for example may find it useful to learn how he or she can communicate better with a ‘Blue’ fellow student. The assignment also provides individual insights: am I a goal-oriented or a more cautious type, or do I have aspects of both? A so-called MDI scan may enhance such insights (see 3.4), though is costly. This assignment can be very useful if you have really poorly functioning teams, especially if it is done in combination with the test. If the teams are functioning at least moderately well, the assignment will be useful enough without the test. Even if students are inclined to assess each others’ styles in a somewhat less precise way than the test would, it will still provide enough material for a fruitful and illuminating discussion.

4.8 Team-building and team roles

While this is also an assignment for advanced students, we have on occasion set it for first-year students. Like 4.6, this is an assignment that may give a boost to teams that are functioning below par, though well-functioning teams will also find it useful since they will understand better why the team is functioning well. If the team is functioning at least moderately well, the post-assignment discussion can take place without a teacher being present. Poorly functioning teams will require additional coaching. The assignment may be combined with 4.2, 4.4 (the Belbin test) and 4.6, and in extreme case (teams that are not doing at all well) even with all three.

4.9 Keeping the PDP up to date

After this assignment, the student will have obtained an overall picture of what his or her team competencies consist of. A good way of following up on the report would be a coaching discussion with the career advisor. A teacher versed in probing techniques may well be able to find connections that the students themselves are oblivious to.
5 What do I want to become?

This chapter includes assignments of various kinds, all aimed specifically at gaining a clearer career picture.

5.1 Your future sphere of employment

There are two assignments in this section: Assignment 5.1, which is a new assignment dealing in particular with checking expectations in relation to specific careers, and 5.2, which revolves around analysing competencies. Assignment 5.1 is a good one to combine with training in applying for jobs and with talks given by professionals in the vocational field. This also applies to Assignment 5.2. You may find it useful to combine Assignment 5.2 with 5.4: an interview (or interviews) with people who come from specific vocational fields would lend more substance to an investigation into what these vocational fields demand in terms of competencies. Doing 5.2 (on analysing job advertisements) and 5.3 (on an excursion to a company) in conjunction with each other would also add substance to the information. You could also consider dividing the group up into smaller groups and getting them all to report back to each other on the assignment at a particular point in time, thereby increasing the likelihood of the assignment being approached from various different angles.

5.2 Analysing situations vacant

As an introduction, you may find it useful to get the entire group to discuss one or two job advertisements. Consider a teaching session in which the competencies required explicitly as well as implicitly by the job are examined systematically. What skills are needed? What areas of knowledge? What sort of attitude too: should the successful applicant be highly ambitious or quite the opposite? You could consider combining this assignment with 2.6 (on norms and values) and investigating what values are appropriate to the job.

Students are usually keen to know what opinions are commonly held by those in the chosen vocational field. As such, it is worth considering asking a business professional to hold a guest lecture in which the competencies that are specifically looked for when a job vacancy is advertised are described. Do make sure that all four aspects of a competency come under scrutiny: knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviour. Do not overlook behaviour: a person with knowledge of the vocational field is the best person to explain what results will count for those in that career.

5.3 Visiting a company

In our opinion, it is very useful for students to go on frequent excursions to companies and to report on them. An interview with a student doing an internship with a particular company (see 3.11) could also be combined with a visit to the company itself. The intern could undertake to show the students around. Something similar may be possible with students about to graduate. The excursion could be combined on occasion with an interview (see 5.4), which would certainly add depth to the picture the student has of the vocational field. Do make sure, however, that excursions from school are tightly organised and that precise feedback is given on reports relating to the excursion. It could even be given by a professional in that particular field.
5.4 Sphere of employment research

Students enjoy interviewing people who have careers in the area students are interested in and it is not usually difficult to find suitable people to interview. People apparently enjoy talking about their profession. The assignment may be done individually or in groups of two. Two heads are better than one, and it also saves on correction time. One advantage of doing the assignment individually, however, is that the interview can be angled to reflect the interviewer’s own interests and hence add to that aspect of his or her PDP.

In our experience, students sometimes find it hard to establish what it is they want to find out in the interview and to really stick to this. Make sure, therefore, that you lend support to the student’s preparations as much you can. We have found that having a checklist of interview questions and really probing into the interviewer’s motives in asking particular questions will provide useful feedback. You could ask questions such as ‘Why do you want to ask that particular question and what do you hope to achieve by it?’, ‘Explain one more time what you two are aiming for’. If you go about things this way you will be providing support without making students a mere mouthpiece.

There is a risk that students will simply follow your suggestions for questions to ask and not ask enough questions that stem from their own interests. It is a pity when this happens because such an interview will not provide much impetus for personal development. Encourage students to determine their own objectives and to ask questions about things they really do want to find out about.

When you discuss this assignment afterwards you may find it useful to ask the students whether they really have achieved their interview goals. We would recommend that you pay special attention to whether they have probed deeply enough: have they been persistent in their questioning? Is the information they have obtained concrete enough? You could even tie the interview in to a reflective assignment in which the student addresses such matters as:

- What was positive about the interview? (Did I meet my objectives? Did I choose my questions well? Was there a good mix of open and closed questions?)
- In retrospect, what could I have done better?
- When I hold the next interview, what learning objectives do I want to meet?

5.5 Research into employment possibilities

This investigation is particularly suitable for students who have already reflected deeply on what they want since it is more about identifying jobs that the student finds suitable than simply what jobs are available. The assignments in Sections 5.1 up to and including 5.4 are, of course, logical choices as preparatory assignments, though also the personal profile (3.18) and the professional competency profile (3.19).

5.6 My dream job

This section is very similar to the previous one, but with more emphasis on personal motivation and needs.
6 Support strategies

This chapter looks at ways you can help students tackle the assignments set out in the previous chapters.

6.1 Study targets in four steps

Particularly in the initial stages, students find it difficult to set appropriate study targets, often choosing ones that are far too global (‘in ten year’s time, I want to be a director’). They also find it difficult to formulate the steps they need to take to reach their targets. Here are some suggestions:

- Get the students to draw up a draft form of their study targets first, and provide concrete feedback in relation to them (particularly ways they can improve on them).
- Get the students to choose a highly concrete goal (for example, ‘in six weeks’ time I want to get at least a mark of 5.5 for maths’), and then get them to plan towards this in a concrete way (how many pages they will need to read a day, how many hours they will need to spend on it a day and so on).
- Keep in mind that it is only by regularly practising setting study targets that students will get the knack of doing so.
- Consequently, make sure they start practising doing this as soon as possible.
- Provide feedback on the study targets and try to identify the reasons behind these particular choices and motives (‘why this particular study target and not that one?’).

You could divide this task among various teachers. For example, Assignment 3.2 could be tackled in the first year during a career choice module, with the teacher in question paying particular attention that the four steps are fleshed out satisfactorily. Feedback and asking of pertinent questions in relation to the assignment can then be provided by a mentor. The advantage to the teacher is that he or she does not then have to quiz each student individually, and to the mentor that the study targets will have already been checked for appropriateness.

You will have noticed that we have thought up a lot of assignments that contain a section on study targets. However, by no means do we want to create the impression that each of these assignments has to follow the outlined approaches. While it is important to set study targets, it can be taken too far.

This assignment shares some aspects of Assignment 2.8 (on Kolb’s four learning phases) and the assignment that falls under 2.2 (on a step-by-step approach to self-reflection).

6.2 Points of action and logbook

This assignment has an additional value in that the student is required to tie his or her reflections to highly concrete examples. Having to describe real and concrete instances will help the student to avoid vagueness.

This assignment can be done in conjunction with 6.1 and can be used with every assignment in which study targets play a role (see Chapters 3 and 4 in particular). It is also suitable for ‘distance guidance’. As an internship supervisor, you could require a student doing an internship to keep a logbook and send it to you once a week for a written response. A similar approach is suitable for distance supervision of project groups: the individual logbooks will provide an insight into both individual progress as well as the processes being followed by the group as a whole. It is also a useful strategy if you want a student to focus on specific weaknesses: the logbook should show evidence that the student is, indeed, doing so.
6.3 Giving feedback

Knowing how to give feedback is a supportive technique that can be put to use in various types of group evaluation (see Chapter 4). Consider holding a separate tutorial on this technique immediately before such an evaluation. The person supervising the evaluation will find it handy to have the rules relating to the giving of feedback at hand. We would not advise combining evaluation with training in giving feedback: this would be too much for a single session.

If students find it difficult to remember the feedback rules, refer them to the ‘I – I – You’ procedure. This was described in the second chapter of the teachers’ manual, ‘General instructions to teachers’.

6.4 Receiving feedback

Knowing how to receive feedback is also a useful skill to have when group evaluations of various types are being done. As such, it is a good idea for those supervising group evaluations to have the rules handy. But it is also a skill that can come in handy during mentor sessions: some students are better at receiving positive criticism than others. It could even be a topic to discuss in relation to an internship: sometimes it is a good idea to check how the student is dealing with workplace criticism.

6.5 Active listening

Many courses give training in active listening, and rightly so. The checklist that forms part of Assignment 4.1 also rates the student’s listening skills. If the student scores low on this account, it may be a good idea to teach the active listening technique. Together with the teacher and the other students, the student in question could investigate which items on the ‘active listening’ checklist require attention. Some additional training in this area may need to be provided.

6.6 The interview

An interview is a useful tool for obtaining information about various occupational areas not to be found in the literature, and students will consequently find it an extremely useful way of getting a clearer picture of the career they have chosen. Since Section 5.4 provides information about interviewing, it only remains to be said here that this assignment can be done in various ways: for example, as an assignment additional to a particular module, as part of the preparation for an internship, as a way of mapping out the vocational field at the end of a course of study, and so on.

6.7 Time management

This section contains tips for time management. They may form part of the instructions given for the time management assignment or be given during the post-assignment discussion (see 3.8 or even 3.9). Students who are very bad at planning should be encouraged to keep a logbook (see 6.2) in which they record their attempts at following up on the tips that they regarded as most useful.
6.8 The letter of application

This can be done in conjunction with training in applying for jobs (see 5.7 in particular, and Assignment 5.18). It may prove useful to practice writing letters of application in general (for example, in modules to do with writing skills). Feedback on the letter and the CV should focus in particular on the issue of whether the student has demonstrated that his or her specific competencies match the competencies specifically referred to in the job advertisement well enough. It is obviously a good idea to address this matter in conjunction with an analysis of the job vacancy in question (see 5.2). It is also a good idea to compare the individual profile (see 3.18) with the letter of application and the CV with a view to checking that the student is presenting all his or her strengths as mentioned in the individual profile to best advantage. The actual issue is whether the student has succeeded in matching his or her profile to the job.

6.9 Your curriculum vitae

For the sake of clarity, this is treated separately, though the same comments apply as above, in the section on the letter of application.

6.10 The job interview

Job interview training can take many forms. A few are outlined below:
• Each student does a job interview in front of a committee (role-played by teachers and/or actors)
• Students form groups of at least three players and act out in turn the roles of applicant, job interviewer(s) and observer(s). In between each session, at least one supervisor gives feedback to the groups.

In both cases, it is wise to base the job interviews on actual job advertisements. It will ensure that the student really does practice applying for a job seriously. The observers are advised to have the job applications tips close at hand and use them as a checklist. Feedback on the interviews should focus on the same crucial issue as with the letter of application: has the student demonstrated that his or her specific competencies correspond well to the competencies specifically mentioned in the job advertisement?

Training sessions of this sort are often experienced as somewhat threatening. Here are a few tips:
• Always mention the things that have gone well first.
• Make it clear that everyone finds job interviews difficult.
• If needs be, briefly outline any difficult job interview experiences you may have had.

It is a very good idea to combine training sessions in doing job interviews with assignments in which competencies are considered, such as Assignment 4.3. See also Sections 3.2 and 3.18.

6.11 Networking

A new section in this edition, networking has been included because it is becoming increasingly important. It also lends itself to being combined with 6.6 – on interviews – and equally well with job interview training and assignments in which competencies are considered. After all, networking is all about selling yourself on the basis of realistic career expectations in conjunction with a realistic estimation of your own competencies.
7 Using the PDP Toolbox

This chapter looks at the properties of the PDP Toolbox and sets out step-by-step how the systems manager can install this program for teachers and students on the network.

7.1 Properties

The PDP Toolbox that accompanies the book *Managing your Competencies* is a computer program with a database. It offers students simple ways – described in the book’s study guide – of keeping track of their personal development plan. You, as their teacher, can acquire experience with the PDP Toolbox by installing the program on a PC. You must have sufficient rights over that PC: in most colleges, the systems manager will not permit you to do this on one of their own network computers. You could, of course, install the program on your own personal computer.

The book *Managing your Competencies* can also be used without the PDP Toolbox. Students can do the assignments and keep track of their progress on paper or via their word processors. You could also ask them to hand their assignments in.

If you get your students to use the PDP Toolbox, they can do so in several ways:

1. They can install the PDP Toolbox on their own computers, print out the results and if so desired, hand them in to you in paper form.
2. As above, but the students put their data on a diskette or memory stick via one of the PDP Toolbox’s functions. Your PDP Toolbox will enable you to view the students’ data and if you so desire, discuss it with them.
3. Students install the program (including the data) on a memory stick attached to their PC via a USB port. After the memory stick has been attached, the PC will have acquired what amounts to another hard disk. It can be used just like a hard disk, though with the disadvantage that it is slower than a hard disk. The advantage is that it is easy to transport and can be used on any suitable PC.
4. The PDP Toolbox is centrally installed on your college’s network and students do their assignments at school. Each student’s data is saved to the user’s space (for example, the user’s U: disk) on the network’s hard disk. See also Section 3.

While data can be copied from the PDP Toolbox, documents from the PDP Toolbox’s archives cannot. Make sure your students are aware of the importance of making back-up copies.

If you want to use the PDP Toolbox yourself, you can do so in various ways:

1. You could take a traditional approach and have your students print out their data from the PDP Toolbox and hand it in.
2. After ensuring that your college’s systems manager installs a PDP Toolbox on your PC or on the college’s network, you could get your students to hand in their data on a diskette or memory stick and you inspect the data via the function ‘different database’ on the installed PDP Toolbox.
3. After making sure that a PDP Toolbox has been installed on your PC or on your college’s network (see Section 7.4), the student (or systems manager) could be asked to allow you access to the section of the student’s U: disk where the PDP Toolbox’s data is stored. You inspect the data via the function ‘Other database’ on the installed PDP Toolbox.

Students can protect their profile data by using a password. They could pass on that password to others (to a teacher, for example) who want to view that data.
7.2 Technical information (for the systems manager)

This section contains technical information useful for your college’s systems manager (amongst others).

The Toolbox’s technical properties:

- The program operates via MS Windows (from Windows 98 on).
- All program files are to be found within a single program folder whose location can be changed.
- After installation, the program is relocatable to any folder.
- None of the files should be placed in the Windows system folder.
- The program will not overwrite any part of Windows.
- It does not use or install any supplementary dll files.
- In a network environment with multiple workstations, nothing needs to be installed on the individual workstations. All of the software is on the server.
- It is compact and consequently quick to operate (a maximum of 3 Mb).
- It is based on its own fast Topspeed database and so there are no additional costs associated with supplementary database licenses.

7.3 Network installation by the systems manager for student access

When the PDP Toolbox is installed, all data will automatically be transferred to the data folder situated directly within the program files (for example, in a stand-alone computer, at c:\pdptoolbox\data)

If the program has to be installed on a college network disk (such as P:), you will only have to install the PDP Toolbox once, in the folder P:\pdptoolbox. In view of the fact that each student has to be able to access his or her own data, a place must be created for storing these personal details.

The file program.ini contains some comments. Also visit the website www.managingyourcompetencies.noordhof.nl for tips that you may find useful and for answers to questions.

Approach the task as follows:

1. Install the PDP Toolbox automatically via the installation program setup.exe, to be found on the website, in the folder P:\pdptoolbox. P: is the network disk on which you should install the PDP Toolbox. The installation program will create two folders within the application folder: pdpdata and pdparchief. The student’s data will be filed in these (a single-user environment). Partially empty files (only some of the files contain data) are to be found in the folder pdpdata.

2. Since each student has to be able to access his or her own data, the file program.ini must be adapted to show where these personal details are to be found. For example, if you have defined a U: disk as user space, you put the value data = U:\ in the file program.ini, (in which case the data will be placed in U:\pdpdata). You can also choose U:\documents (in which case the data will be placed in U:\documents\pdpdata).

3. You then create a shortcut for the student in the start menu or desktop. It should have the following properties:

   - The ‘target’ is P:\pdptoolbox\pdptoolbox.exe
   - At ‘Start in’ you enter P:\pdptoolbox

4. The first time that the student connects with the PDP Toolbox via the menu, the program looks to see whether the folder U:\pdpdata already exists. If not – and this will be the case when the program is started for the first time – then the following complete files will automatically be copied from the folder P:\pdptoolbox\pdpdata to the student’s user’s space U:\pdpdata:

   - opdrachten.tps (contains the prescribed assignments from the book)
   - cniveau.tps (contains the prescribed competency levels)
   - sbeoordelingen.tps (contains prescribed evaluation criteria for use in course planning).
• **activiteit.tps** (contains predefined activities that need to be done in time registration exercises)

**Comment**

If you want to adapt the predefined values in the files mentioned above to suit purposes of your own, you will have to do so before the students have started up their PDP Toolboxes. The adapted files will then be copied to the student’s user’s space the first time that the toolbox is put into use. At the initial start-up, the PDP Toolbox will automatically prepare a number of empty files (actiepunt.tps, beoordeling.tps, competentie.tps, cvalgemeen.tps, cvopleiding.tps, cvwerk.tps, document.tps, logbook.tps, uren.tps).

5 The student can then keep his or her data relating to the personal development plan up to date in the PDP Toolbox.

6 If the PDP Toolbox is started up again, the folder U:pdpdata will already be there. The steps listed under point 4 will be skipped over and the program will start up straightaway.

### 7.4 Network installation by the systems manager for teacher access

Network installation to service teacher needs is approached in the same way as it is for students. The teacher can use the PDP Toolbox to inspect the student’s data stored on diskette or memory stick. If the teacher needs to be able to access student data via your college network, he or she must have permission (both reading and writing rights) to access each of his/her students’ U:\pdpdata folders. The amount of work that this entails may perhaps make this not feasible. You may elect to give students the right to adapt their own rights in relation to this folder. Any other solutions will depend on your network and the possibilities it offers.