



European Initiative for the
Promotion of Informal Learning



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

Managerial Competences for the support of informal learning in the workplace.

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Introduction.

The INFLOW project identified a number of areas in which managers required certain competencies in order to be able to recognise and support informal learning in their business. These were linked to the four macro-level areas in the [Company Award \(Annex 1\)](#)

There was also an individual award for supervisors at Level 4 but arguably this did not differ significantly from the ordinary employees award and in fact became the [Advanced Practitioners award. \(Annex 2\)](#). There was a need identified for managers to be able to identify their support for informal learning in the workplace.

Framework of competencies for managers supporting informal learning in the workplace

Within this Transfer of Innovation project, a more sophisticated framework of competencies for managers has been developed which they can demonstrate through e-portfolio use. It is important that the support of informal learning should be part of general management functions. Therefore, the approach taken has been that common management competencies should be utilised and linked to informal learning support.

These competencies can be found in National Occupational Standards (NOS). The main areas of the UK NOS is shown in the figure below and the breakdown of these in [Annex 3](#).



Figure 1 The diagram above illustrates the functional areas covered by the management and leadership standards. They were identified by consulting widely with employers, individual managers and other stakeholders during the course of the standards review project. (www.management-standards.org.uk)

There are also clear links to [EFQM® \(The Fundamental Concepts of Excellence\)](#) and to the [Investors in People Framework](#).

The proposition for this project was to seek to link competencies involved in the management of informal learning in the workplace to the areas above. This will promote the understanding that the support of informal learning is key to management as well as enabling individuals to use the portfolio developed within this project as evidence against NOS and to support the achievement of other management qualifications.

Table 1

Key managerial skills/ functions to support informal learning in the workplace and links with Figure 1 above.

Managerial skills / functions	Area of Figure 1
Can manage own resources and professional development by utilising informal learning opportunities	A
Can identify the strategic importance of informal learning to the company	B
Can develop appropriate strategies within the company to support informal learning	B
Can communicate to employees the processes / opportunities for informal learning within the company	E
Develops / maintains a culture within the company which encourages and values informal learning	B
Ensures that skills and knowledge acquired informally are valued as part of the company's recruitment, induction and appraisal processes /staff performance	D
Develops / maintains provision of learning opportunities for colleagues	D
Supports individuals to develop and maintain their performance	D
Can motivate employees in order for them to learn in the workplace	D
Can establish valid and appropriate measures for evaluating the performance of the organisation	F
Can develop or use quality systems already in place to evaluate the contribution of informal learning to business processes and staff performance	F

These criteria have been linked to specific activities in the workplace which can be easily identified by managers themselves and used as evidence of their managerial support of informal learning in the workplace and contributions to the achievement of business objectives as well as personal development.

These potential activities are indicated in [Table 2](#) overleaf.

The project will pilot this approach with managers in hospitality, retail and the IT Service Sectors and will develop an e-portfolio approach to the recording of activities which can be used for the recognition and validation of a manager's activities in supporting informal learning in the workplace.

Table 2 Criteria for the recognition and validation of management competencies supporting informal learning in the workplace with suggestions of potential supporting evidence to be provided by managers.

Criterion Number	Managerial skills / functions	How might you demonstrate this? ¹
1	Can manage own resources and professional development by utilising informal learning opportunities	Attendance at professional development seminars / workshops / networking <i>with reflection / write-up on what you have learnt.</i> <i>Reflection / Write up of specific examples which show learning from clients / suppliers or colleagues + supporting witness statements or equivalent where possible e.g in blog on e-portfolio</i> <i>Example of Personal Development Plan which includes informal learning from a variety of sources</i>
2	Can identify the strategic importance of informal learning to the company	<i>Provide three examples of how informal learning is strategically important to your company e.g</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ is incorporated into the strategic plan of your company, your mission or your aims and objectives as a company ▪ enables innovation and creativity within your organisation within your risk strategy ▪ contributes to the company's ability to respond to challenges especially in new areas – market opportunities, change of economic conditions, change of production processes ▪ enables your company to understand your competition ▪ use of skills and experiences of culturally diverse workforce for business benefit ▪ motivation of staff and reduced turnover of staff
3	Can develop appropriate strategies within the company to support informal learning	<i>Provision of strategies or equivalent documentation or witness statements etc which show what processes you have put in place or are implementing across the company or your department or team which support informal learning.</i>

¹ Some suggestions as to how you might do this. This list is not exclusive and you don't need to show evidence of everyone mentioned. 3 different examples for each criterion should be maximum required. Discuss with your "supporter". If your organisation is working towards or has adopted the EFQM Concepts of Excellence or the Investors in People standard then please link into them – see annexes



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4	Can communicate to employees the processes / opportunities for informal learning within the company	<p>You need to <i>show examples</i> of how you have explained this to employees through instigation of processes such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Job rotation / work shadowing communications ▪ Briefings to managers / supervisors regarding supporting new staff to learn informally (induction) ▪ Briefings to new staff done by yourself ▪ Appropriate communication channels taking into account what media, languages, styles, timing and pace are most appropriate e.g team meetings <p><i>Evidence - videoed, audio recordings, witness statements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support for special personnel to communicate opportunities to other workers e.g. Union Learning Reps in UK ▪ Appraisal / staff performance review communications ▪ Quality Circles <p>Works notice boards Newsletters</p>
5	Develops / maintains a culture within the company which encourages and values informal learning	<p>An organisation's culture is its "way of doing things". You need to be able to <i>reflect on and document</i> how this encourages informal learning and how you have contributed to this.</p> <p><i>You need to provide evidence of how you have supported the systems in place.</i></p> <p>How has your own behaviour reinforced these values and assumptions? <i>You can record your reflections on this.</i></p> <p>How have you communicated agreed values regarding informal learning to people across your organisation? <i>You can give specific examples.</i></p> <p>You might be able to <i>demonstrate</i> how you have countered messages that conflict with the organisation's culture valuing informal learning</p> <p>You might be able to <i>show how</i> you have empathised with others' needs and made time to support them in valuing informal learning</p>



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6	Ensures that skills and knowledge acquired informally are valued as part of the company's recruitment, induction and appraisal processes /staff performance	<p><i>You can provide evidence of informal learning / focus on experience acquired present in person specifications or advertisements for job roles and that people were recruited in light of their informal learning OR you have set in place procedures with HR for this to take place.</i></p> <p><i>Induction processes you have put in place or organised / implemented have opportunities for informal learning to take place to both new staff (and existing ones).</i></p> <p><i>This knowledge and skill acquisition is recorded, recognised and therefore validated within your department / organisation (see also criterion 9) for example, during at the end of a probationary period within the company. Need examples.</i></p> <p><i>You have instigated special awards internally to reward such skills acquisition (see also criterion 9) Need examples.</i></p> <p><i>The recording and recognition of learning "on the job" is a serious part of appraisal / staff performance reviews and therefore contributes to its validation in the workplace. You have instigated procedures for performance reviews or monitor them so the importance is clear to all staff. Need examples.</i></p>
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7	Develops / maintains provision of informal learning opportunities for colleagues	<p>You can show <i>at least three examples</i> from within your organisation which show that you have developed / supported opportunities for colleagues to learn from each other for example through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ job rotation schemes introduced / supported ▪ work shadowing opportunities introduced / supported ▪ formal and / or informal mentoring schemes introduced / implemented ▪ less experienced being placed with more experienced in your organisation / department / team ▪ staff committees / team meetings being supported by you either through attendance where appropriate or by allowing work time for these activities ▪ policy making / organisational / departmental / team logistics, developed / managed by you, encourage communication / social interaction between team members ▪ clubs and associations in the workplace ▪ recognition of diverse cultures in terms of company calendars and special events
8	Supports individuals to develop and maintain their performance	<p>You encourage and empower individuals to take responsibility for developing and maintaining their own self-awareness, performance and impact. <i>Your colleagues can provide examples of where you have done this and supported them to maintain their performance through informal learning.</i></p> <p>You have supported the individual in identifying their particular needs, abilities and preferences in line with the business objectives of the organisation and you have established the skills they need to develop and / or behaviours they need to change, for example through individual learning plans. <i>Examples substantiated by colleagues / documentation</i></p> <p>You have planned the development and then encouraged, or through influencing others have encouraged, the opportunities for new skills / behaviours to be applied in the workplace. <i>Examples substantiated by colleagues / documentation</i></p>



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9	Can motivate employees in order for them to learn in the workplace	<p>You promote the benefits of learning to colleagues and make sure that their willingness and efforts to learn are recognised. <i>Reflect on this and give specific examples in your portfolio.</i></p> <p>You, by your actions, actively encourage individuals to reflect on their progress and articulate their thoughts and feelings about it. <i>Substantiated by colleagues with examples.</i></p> <p>You can describe the principles, methods, tools and techniques involved in providing specific feedback to colleagues in order that they can improve their skills, reinforce effective behaviours and enhance their motivation to achieve the desired standard of performance through learning informally. <i>Description and at least one example could be quoted.</i></p>
10a	Can establish valid and appropriate measures for evaluating the performance of the organisation and the contribution of informal learning to improved business processes and staff performance	<p>You can show what valid and appropriate measures have been established / put in place by you in your organisation for evaluating performance and in particular the impact made by informal learning.</p> <p><i>Evidence – processes and procedures implemented by yourself or with other</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How you constantly seek to improve performance ▪ How you have developed systems to gather and manage information and knowledge effectively, efficiently and ethically ▪ How you make appropriate information and knowledge available promptly to those who need it as part of the informal learning process ▪ Continuous improvement culture / “no blame” culture etc ▪ <p><i>Monitoring data collection evidence used and links with informal learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Customer / Supplier / other Key Stakeholder feedback ▪ Staff retention rates / turnover / staff satisfaction surveys ▪ Informal data collections linked to informal learning opportunities you have put in place
OR		
10b	Can develop or use quality systems already in place to evaluate the contribution of informal learning to business processes and staff performance	<p>You can demonstrate your use of the company’s / organisation’s quality system in evaluating the impact made by informal learning on your business .</p> <p><i>Evidence – processes and procedures implemented by yourself or with others as for 10a</i></p>

Annex 1. Enterprise / Company Award

Criteria

1. Employers demonstrate a commitment to supporting informal learning.
2. An environment is established in which informality and collaboration can flourish.
3. Work processes demonstrate support for informal learning.
4. Evaluations are used to assess the contribution of informal learning to business performance.

Outcomes	Indicators To achieve each outcome a company / enterprise must demonstrate the ability to:
1 Demonstrate a commitment to support informal learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify how informal learning is strategically positioned in the company ● Develop appropriate strategies for enabling informal learning ● Communicate to employees the processes/ opportunities for informal learning
2 Establish an environment in which informality and collaboration can flourish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Value informal learning as part of the recruitment process ● Establish / maintain relevant induction process/es ● Value informal learning as part of the staff development process ● Recognise informal learning in the appraisal process
3 Demonstrate work processes supporting informal learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrate communication channels supporting informal learning ● Select opportunities to enable informal learning ● Provide appropriate social and personal spaces ● Encourage social structures and events
4 Evaluate the contribution of informal learning to business performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assess the importance of informal learning to business outcomes ● Assess the importance of informal learning to staff performance.

Annex 2. Advanced Practitioner Award

Criteria	How demonstrated –	Potential sources of evidence
Can identify what has been learnt	❖ by completion of e-portfolio or equivalent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ePortfolio with reflective discussion (and/or products) of learning acquired by informal means – journal of discussions with colleagues, report of visits to clients/workshops etc
	❖	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪
	❖	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪
Is motivated to learn and improve own performance	❖ by working on your work skills in your own time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ supported examples
	❖ by changing a habitual work routine in order to improve performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ explaining what changed and why and how this change in work process contributed to enhanced performance
	❖	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪
Consults and works with others	❖ by asking help or advice from a supplier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ specific examples which can be confirmed by supplier or others
	❖ by asking for help or advice from experts in other specialised companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ specific examples which can be confirmed by others
	❖ from clients' / product /service users' experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ specific examples which can be confirmed by others
	❖ by involvement in management, planning etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ specific examples which can be confirmed by supporting evidence such as minutes, audio records, other employees
	❖ by solving problems with other work colleagues leading a team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ specific examples which can be confirmed by supporting evidence such as minutes, audio records, other employees



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Has adapted to new situations and learnt informally	❖ by performing tasks with an increasing degree of difficulty	▪ specific examples which can be confirmed by others
	❖ by practising new procedures or advanced techniques	▪
	❖	▪
	❖	▪
Accesses relevant knowledge and experience	❖ from experts brought into the workplace	▪ specific examples which can be confirmed by others
	❖ by visiting other companies' premises	▪ specific examples which can be confirmed by others
	❖ by accessing other external information / knowledge resource	▪ specific examples which can be confirmed by others
	❖	▪
	❖	▪
Supports others with informal learning in the workplace	❖ assisting other employees to identify their own informal learning	▪
	❖ acting as a role model in work shadowing situations	▪ situations described
	❖ being able to identify contributions to improved business performance achieved in the mentoring process	▪
	❖ having the capacity to explain processes and methods	▪

Annex 3. The National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership UK

Section A - Managing self and personal skills

- A1 Manage your own resources
- A2 Manage your own resources and professional development
- A3 Develop your personal networks

Section B - Providing direction

- B1 Develop and implement operational plans for your area of responsibility
- B2 Map the environment in which your organisation operates
- B3 Develop a strategic business plan for your organisation
- B4 Put the strategic business plan into action
- B5 Provide leadership for your team
- B6 Provide leadership in your area of responsibility
- B7 Provide leadership for your organisation
- B8 Ensure compliance with legal, regulatory, ethical and social requirements
- B9 Develop the culture of your organisation
- B10 Manage risk
- B11 Promote equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in your area of responsibility
- B12 Promote equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in your organisation

Section C - Facilitating change

- C1 Encourage innovation in your team
- C2 Encourage innovation in your area of responsibility
- C3 Encourage innovation in your organisation
- C4 Lead change
- C5 Plan change
- C6 Implement change

Section D - Working with people

- D1 Develop productive working relationships with colleagues
- D2 Develop productive working relationships with colleagues and stakeholders
- D3 Recruit, select and keep colleagues
- D4 Plan the workforce
- D5 Allocate and check work in your team
- D6 Allocate and monitor the progress and quality of work in your area of responsibility
- D7 Provide learning opportunities for colleagues
- D8 Help team members address problems affecting their performance
- D9 Build and manage teams
- D10 Reduce and manage conflict in your team
- D11 Lead meetings
- D12 Participate in meetings
- D13 Support individuals to develop and maintain their performance
- D14 Initiate and follow disciplinary procedure
- D15 Initiate and follow grievance procedure
- D16 Manage redundancies in your area of responsibility
- D17 Build and sustain collaborative relationships with other organisations

Section E - Using resources

- E1 Manage a budget
- E2 Manage finance for your area of responsibility
- E3 Obtain additional finance for the organisation
- E4 Promote the use of technology within your organisation
- E5 Ensure your own actions reduce risks to health and safety
- E6 Ensure health and safety requirements are met in your area of responsibility
- E7 Ensure an effective organisational approach to health and safety
- E8 Manage physical resources
- E9 Manage the environmental impact of your work
- E10 Take effective decisions
- E11 Communicate information and knowledge
- E12 Manage knowledge in your area of responsibility
- E13 Promote knowledge management in your organisation
- E14 Support team and virtual working
- E15 Procure supplies
- E16 Select suppliers through a tendering process
- E17 Outsource business processes

Section F - Achieving results

- F1 Manage a project
- F2 Manage a programme of complementary projects
- F3 Manage business processes
- F4 Develop and implement marketing plans for your area of responsibility
- F5 Resolve customer service problems
- F6 Monitor and solve customer service problems
- F7 Support customer service improvements
- F8 Work with others to improve customer service
- F9 Build your organisation's understanding of its market and customers
- F10 Develop a customer focussed organisation
- F11 Manage the achievement of customer satisfaction
- F12 Improve organisational performance
- F13 Manage quality systems
- F14 Prepare for and participate in quality audits
- F15 Carry out quality audits
- F16 Manage the development and marketing of products/services in your area of responsibility
- F17 Manage the delivery of customer service in your area of responsibility
- F18 Prepare sales proposals and deliver sales presentations
- F19 Sell products/services to customers